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CANCELING VS. #CANCEL CULTURE: AN ANALYSIS ON THE SURVEILLANCE AND DISCIPLINE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOR THROUGH COMPETING DISCOURSES OF POWER

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CANCELING VS. #CANCEL CULTURE: AN ANALYSIS ON THE SURVEILLANCE AND

DISCIPLINE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOR THROUGH COMPETING DISCOURSES OF

POWER

by

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Thesis

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Canceling vs. #CancelCulture: An analysis on the surveillance and discipline of social media behavior through competing discourses of power

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Abstract

Canceling and #cancelculture have become the topic of many debates over free speech and accountability for oppressive behaviors in social media discourse. This thesis examines Twitter discourse from two recent racism-based cancel cases. Using Foss and Gill's (1987) adapted epistemic rhetoric framework and emphasizing elements of Foucauldian surveillance and discipline in the discourse, I conduct a comparative qualitative examination of Gina Rodriguez's and Chris Harrison's cancel discourse. I contend that in the cancel process, Twitter users engage in surveillance to discipline one another on multiple levels: first, as cancelers use the practice to discipline oppressive behaviors on social media, and second as the anti-cancel group disciplines engagement in the #cancelculture. As Twitter users struggle to contend for power through discourse about each cancel case, members of the dominant culture invalidate canceling as a practice to maintain the status quo. Ethical and moral debates erupt over #cancelculture, directing the discourse away from a resistive tool to challenge dominant ideologies on social media. In the power struggle between pro- and anti-cancel groups, anti-cancel rhetoric tends to have more power to create knowledge and control discourse on Twitter. In each case study, the most significant knowledge produced is a negative connotation with #cancelculture and the impression that practicing canceling is not the "right" way to challenge harmful dominant ideology.

Keywords: canceling, cancel culture, Twitter, social media, dominant ideology, resistance, discursive struggle, power, knowledge, Foucault, epistemic rhetoric

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Canceling vs. #CancelCulture: An Analysis on the Discipline of Social Media Behavior Through
Competing Discourses of Power

Introduction

Over the last few years, "canceling" individuals and organizations on social media

increased significantly. While "canceling" does not have a formal definition, it usually begins

when cancel groups call out an individual or organization for intolerable behavior and messages.

Often, a subsequent boycott or sabotage will take place. For example, after the CEO of Goya

Foods publicly praised former President Donald Trump, viral tweets called for a boycott of Goya

products by encouraging followers to make their own instead (Thomas, 2020). As for sabotage,

prominent examples include loss of jobs, college acceptances or scholarships, and even

expulsion after operators of cancel culture report back to the corporations or schools of their

targets (Thomas, 2020). It is hard to pinpoint the exact moment when the act of canceling

became labeled as a culture. However, this phenomenon has transitioned from shocking, isolated

incidents to what seems like daily social interactions in recent years. Some instances of cancel

culture stand on their own, such as the booming #MeToo movement, which ousted many

prominent men as sexual predators. Others do not transform into a more significant social justice

movement but indicate a need to cancel someone based on the target's pattern of intolerant

behavior or messages on social media.

The act of canceling has also produced consequences and punishments outside of social

media. Canceling has gotten Kevin Hart fired from jobs (Newton, 2018), Taylor Swift ostracized

and dethroned as "America's sweetheart" (Aguirre, 2019; Bailey, 2019), and piloted Lena

Dunham's transition from quirky to "tone-deaf and pampered, a by-product of cushy white

privilege" (Wolcott, 2017). Even non-celebrity persons can feel the effects, like Stephanie

Freeman a high schooler from Georgia who posted a racist video that went viral on TikTok

(Guinness, 2020). The reach of cancel culture has no boundaries, and cancel tactics originate from both sides of the political spectrum, though conservative-leaning efforts are not associated with cancel culture. Politically conservative-led cancel efforts notably include efforts to have Kaepernick removed from the NFL (Vera, 2018), and bans on companies that threaten conservative values like Goodyear (Shepherson & Shalal, 2020), or Carhartt (McCann, 2022). Further, the struggle over power, in the Foucauldian terms of producing knowledge, varies from incident to incident prompting a need to study this phenomenon on a case-by-case basis.

This project studies the presentation of surveillance and discipline as Twitter users struggle to produce knowledge in the discourse of canceling and "cancel culture." In this study, I use a qualitative approach to analyze the discourse produced from two cancel cases. In the first case, I examine the cancel discourse surrounding Latinx actress Gina Rodriguez, who audiences canceled after she posted a video of herself singing the n-word to the Fugees' "Ready or Not." Then, I analyze the cancel discourse surrounding Chris Harrison, the former host of ABC's *The Bachelor,* who audiences canceled after he defended the racist actions of a show contestant. Using Foss and Gill's (1987) epistemic framework, I break down the discourse in each case as audiences struggle over the discursive practices, rules, roles, power, and knowledge involving each case. Using a Foucauldian lens, I explore the cancelation approach to correct a perceived wrong through word-of-mouth and word-of-viral-tweet destruction. In particular, I emphasize Foucauldian concepts of discipline and surveillance in each cancel case. Harrison's and Rodriguez's cases illustrate how the act of canceling is a modern attempt at disciplining individuals at a time of immense access to survey one another and maintain a status quo.

I contend that the discursive act of canceling is a simple act of resistance that serves to discipline intolerable traits from a digital social sphere, but ultimately reinforces dichotomous

ideologies as the cancel approach becomes a target of disciplinary attempts. I focus on

Foucault's concepts of power, surveillance, and discipline to examine this social media

phenomenon. Further, I engage an epistemic framework developed by Foss and Gill (1987) from

Foucault's theory of episteme to analyze the discourse surrounding two cancel cases found in

Twitter data.

In examining the discourse, I aim to answer one central research question: **RQ: How are surveillance and discipline presented in cancellation discourse?** To explore elements of

discipline and surveillance specifically, I use an epistemic approach to dissect significant

components of the knowledge production process. An epistemic approach to understanding this

phenomenon is necessary because it is a relatively unstudied social media practice. An epistemic

approach identifies knowledge production in depth from its inception to its implications.

Information sharing and knowledge production on social media are separate from time and

space. Social media practices create new rules to follow and new forms of discipline if rules are

broken. In each case, perceived rule violations initiate the cancellation and discourse about rules

becomes an important focus of early discourse about each case.

I analyze two cancel cases that occurred at different points in time as "cancel culture" is

identified and contested power attempts dissuade social media users from this practice. One case

comes early on in "cancel culture" discourse, while the other case is an example from later in the

discourse. Gina Rodriguez and Chris Harrison were both canceled for actions deemed racist.

Audiences canceled Rodriguez for what they determined was explicit racism after she became

the subject of backlash from the Black community for committing several microaggressions.

Audiences canceled Harrison for passive and implicit racism in which he condoned explicitly

racist actions and inadvertently perpetuated racism. To study these cases epistemically, I turn to

Twitter discourse to observe how different factors which impact power. While the behaviors that Rodriguez and Harrison got canceled for do not take place on Twitter specifically, the discursive act of canceling does, leading me to focus this study on Twitter discourse.

Additionally, because internet culture has developed significantly through generations some clarifications of how Twitter discourse is used in this project is necessary. First, the nature of Twitter allows users to change their display name to anything they want to represent them. Because users take advantage of this feature to represent themselves on Twitter in a myriad of ways that do not connect to the actual person I do not include their display names with their tweets in the results. Instead, I compiled tweets into appendices per case and gave each tweet a number according to order of appearance in the results. See Appendix A and Appendix B for the complete citations of each tweet. Second, Twitter users have developed a new internet vernacular with acronyms and phrases constantly evolving. I have intentionally edited any acronyms and abbreviations to their long form for readers unfamiliar with the terms. Third, I did not censor any sensitive language to let the impact of the words involved in this contentious power struggle to be just as impactful in this work as initially stated on social media. As a result, this thesis includes uncensored uses of the n-word and other profanity. This language is only in the context of direct quotes from both canceled targets and Twitter data. Ultimately, this preserves the voice of the Twitter users who engaged with cancellation and the actions of the cancel targets by portraying their intentions, frustrations, understandings, and other feelings toward "cancel culture" and the targets of cancellation.

Literature Review

Cancel Culture vs. Canceling

The current literature on cancel culture comes from various popular culture outlets, and a few academic works. Comedians Tom Segura and Pete Davidson have referenced cancel culture in recent comedy specials (Hachache, 2020; Orley, 2020). Articles on cancel culture have been increasing in the New York Times, NPR, and smaller news outlets like Vox (Mishan, 2020; Kurtzleben, 2021; Romano, 2020). It now has dedicated, lengthy entries in Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Wikipedia (*What it means to get 'canceled,' 2021*; *Cancel culture 2020*). Even former president Barrack Obama commented publicly on cancel culture and its hold on young activists (Rueb & Taylor 2020). While this new wave of resistance has become a part of the public discourse, it remains understudied in academia. Academic works specific to canceling define the practice and identify its historical foundations. The limited works that analyze cancel culture do not examine power as integral to the practice. In this review of the literature, I build working definitions of canceling and cancel culture and examine the gaps in how communication scholars have studied this phenomenon.

The term "cancel culture" stems from our understanding of "call-out culture," which Jenkins (2019) defines as "the tendency within progressive and activist spaces to publicly highlight instances or patterns of oppressive policy, behaviour, and language use by others" (para. 3). The term "call-out" describes a process that bridges two standard communication practices particular to communities of color. Huell (2020) explains that the term is a hybrid of call-and-response performances and shoutout performances. As a principle from African American oral tradition, the call-and-response style of performance is categorized as an utterance led by an individual (call), followed by a group utterance in unison (response) to emphasize the

communal nature of the moment (Sale, 1992). Similarly, the shoutout is a public acknowledgment of someone on a communal platform (Huell, 2020). Both traditions of call-and-response and shoutouts emphasize community acknowledgment and communal understanding of a moment. As the call-and-response origin suggests, there is an expectation when calling someone out that they will respond publicly as well. Canceled individuals do not always respond. When they do, a typical response includes an explanation, an apology, or some combination of both.

Evaluators of *cancel culture* have assigned it to the millennial arsenal of protest alongside safe spaces and trigger warnings as a youth-driven, liberal act (Noah, 2019; Mishan, 2020). As a result, the conservative-leaning side of cancel culture goes unnoticed and even unlabeled, despite using the same tactics. Some strong examples include publishing the criminal records of victims of police brutality to invalidate arguments about police reform (Henao et al.) Alternatively, former President Donald Trump took to various media forms to call for a boycott of "radical left" businesses (Peterson, 2019). Throughout Trump's presidency, the US has seen a rise in right-wing protests, with targets of these protests including Harley Davidson, Oreos, Macy's, Goodyear, the NFL, and more (Stantucci, 2020). With Donald Trump as a figurehead for patriotism in the United States, his social media presence has helped shape discourse on canceling and cancel culture. According to Santucci (2020), many conservative-leaning cancelations have originated or gained traction from a tweet by the former president, assigning discursive power to Trump's social media channels.

In a Daily Show interview, Ta-Nehisi Coates reminds the audience that "cancel culture" is new but canceling is customary in American society. Coates uses the Salem Witch Trials as an example, claiming one's opinion of cancel culture "has more to do with who is doing the

canceling than it does with—you know— what we think about canceling" (Noah, 2019). On a deeper level, if a dominant group member engages in canceling, it is harder to see this behavior as a new phenomenon because it has become part of the purview of daily power transactions. For example, Bonilla-Silva (2014) labels a form of this institutionalized practice as colorblind racism and explains that colorblind racism has risen in popularity in the United States over the last decade. While it is exceedingly rare to find an individual that still openly subscribes to the Jim Crow ideologies of a subhuman race, it is still evident that systemic racial inequality persists. Bonilla-Silva (2014) explains some of the ideologies behind the persistence of system racism. Specifically, Bonilla-Silva (2014) attributes the most held cultural stereotypes, a belief that segregation would naturally occur, and the depreciation of racial problems as the primary reasons for persisting systemic racism. These ideologies infiltrate the dominant perspective and create a status quo of quiet and subtle forms of racism to go unaddressed. The cases of canceling analyzed in this project include the presence of these ideologies.

Communication Scholars have only recently begun to critically examine the implications of canceling as a practice and the damage of creating the "cancel culture" label. Clark (2020) gives a brief history of the term cancel culture and how we came to it. Clark very carefully teases out the complicated queer-BIPOC origins of cancel culture in this piece. According to Clark, Black Twitter, a subset of Twitter that represents Black culture within the digital space, initially utilized the term "cancel" humorously through memeification of the practice. Observers of the practice co-opted the reference to express an "unfounded fear of censorship and silencing" (p. 89). Overall, Clark offers that canceling is a showcase of agency as the cancel group elects to withdraw their support for the canceled person. Further, Clark asserts that "only a perspective that prioritizes the communication histories and practices of disempowered people can

adequately decipher the phrase's use as a tool to delegitimize the dissension that echoes from society's margins" (p. 89). According to Clark, canceling is often a critique of systemic inequality rather than an attack against specific individualistic transgressions. Social media fosters critiques of systemic inequities because it easier to access and less restricted than other forms of public discourse. Social media enables users to talk back and mobilize around topics outside the view of the mainstream, until they go viral, at which point they gain the desired attention of the [mainstream news] media" (Tynes, 2012, p. 33; emphasis and qualifiers Clark, 2020, p. 90). Digital resistance and accountability practice among otherwise disempowered peoples compels users to identify who or what defines the disputed concept of the public sphere, who sets the rules of engagement, and thus what users identify as talking back to dominant discourses.

Other communication scholars have begun to set a foundation for canceling by breaking down notable cancel cases in various ways. Bouvier and Machin (2021) employ a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach to analyze Twitter data from two different racially motivated cancel cases surrounding race. Bouvier and Machin theorize the cancel approach draws in audiences because it levels the field for "voices from below" to talk back to the dominant culture (p. 309). Folks who were previously unable to share ideas and mobilize their justice movements have an easier time connecting and getting their message out on social media. The authors also discuss the minimal effort involved in joining a social media movement. Meaning, it is easy and requires minimal effort to pass along information on various social media platforms by simply liking or sharing content at the click of a button. While Bouvier and Machin (2021) discovered themes in the discourse surrounding the cases they studied which align with a

Foucauldian perspective on power, discipline, and surveillance, their study did not include an analysis of such concepts.

Similarly, Veil and Waymer (2021) build a case study on a specific cancel case and analyze the competing narratives introduced by the controversy at play. Veil and Waymer use dialectical tensions as a helpful tool to describe the central narrative's abrupt opposing position. The key findings in their research indicate a few important insights for this research. First, Veil and Waymer explain people often draw on public memory to guide current and future decision-making and dialogues. The politics of erasure often have an adverse effect because the "tarnished images" of artifacts grant them more value to the public. In addition, public memory about an artifact often creates dialectical tension in narratives and memory about the artifact because the effects of erasure can reinforce opposing viewpoints. In their case study, the authors found certain voices amplified over others in the narrative struggle to remove a mural depicting a racist history at the University of Kentucky. The authors use this information to create practical recommendations for organizations facing crises rooted in highly-charged socio-political issues. However, the authors again skirt around concepts of power as related to the narrative struggle in the case they examine, without using a Foucauldian approach specifically.

Overall, the discourse around canceling and "cancel culture" is a controversial topic highlighting a modern example of a power struggle over moving forward as a society. Canceling is a discursive act to discipline an individual who threatens the status quo of the social media space. Typically, the process includes calling an individual out for their behaviors and withdrawing support for the individual. While it looks like boycotting, the target is usually a specific person. Withdrawing support for that person can (and usually does) include tactics like boycotting, but canceling exercises employ other discursive methods. Other tactics include

spreading awareness of the offense by making it go viral on the internet, sustaining discourse, and pressuring employers or sponsors for the individual to withdraw their support. At extreme levels, doxing, or releasing a target's private contact information on the internet, has occurred. Cancelers are criticized most for efforts that extend beyond a personal withdraw of support by "concerted efforts to force institutions to de-platform people" (Kurtzelben, 2021). These concerted efforts feel like an orchestrated attack, and the opposing groups apply the *cancel culture* label to invalidate the attack. The process of canceling is, at its core, a rhetorical act whereby people try to exert control over their realities by shaping the actions of others.

Theory

Foucault: Power, Surveillance, Discipline, & Punishment

To begin with, Foucault (2000) emphasizes that power is an action or reaction that "operates on the field of possibilities" to lead a social group in a specific desired direction. This summation provides the frame of reference for understanding Foucault's Theory of Surveillance. Foucault (1977) establishes surveillance to explain the exertion of disciplinary power to reinforce the normal, or the dominant, through operators within the same hierarchical level. The process of canceling exhibits elements of surveillance as users monitor each other's behavior on different social media sites. Foucault (1977) adapts this analogy for discipline from Jeremey Bentham's panopticon. The panopticon is a circular prison structure described in letters and drawings of Bentham's from 1748 to 1852 (Ball, Haggerty, & Lyon, 2012). In the panopticon design, prisoners would be alone in a small room within the outer circle of the structure while a guard observes them from a central tower location. The prisoners cannot see the guard or the other prisoners from their cell. Bentham thought this would be the most efficient way to keep a watchful eye on the prisoners. Despite Foucault's critique of the prison's design, Ball, Haggerty, and Lyon (2012) note his ability to apply the logic of the panopticon to modern societal institutions. Foucault studied the panopticon prison design to examine a societal shift from streamlined public punishment to the lengthy discipline process through imprisonment. Foucault (1977) takes Bentham's panopticon concept and transforms it into a metaphor internalizing a rigid authority under the regime of discipline. A key difference between Bentham's original proposal of the Panopticon and Foucault's interpretation lies in the perspective of each philosopher's approach. According to Ball, Haggerty, and Lyon (2012), Bentham's work focused on the guard's perspective. Alternatively, Foucault (1977) focuses on the prisoners' perspective

relying on the assumption that they could be under watch at any time of day or night. From Foucault's (1977) understanding, the threat of being watched bred a constant fear of consequences, creating a system where the prisoners discipline themselves.

With this understanding of the panopticon's inner workings, Foucault developed the theory of surveillance to apply the design as a metaphor for automated discipline system. in societal institutions. Surveillance is an evident precursor to canceling on social media. Instinctually, surveillance applies to our digital selves the same way we would apply them to our offline selves. Each user's position on social media equates to the prisoners' position in the panopticon analogy. A single guard does not necessarily operate the guard tower with social media. As exemplified by many social media platforms banning former president Donald Trump (Denham, 2021), moderators and administrators of these platforms are certainly capable of taking a central guard tower approach to discipline. However, users of these platforms also discipline one another through a system of consequences like Foucault's surveillance. In these circumstances, rewards are followers, likes, comments, and shares. Relating to Foucault's (1977) concept of surveillance, actors interpret the outcomes of their past actions and their surrounding community's actions to regulate themselves moving forward. This form of automated self-regulation takes place on social media as well. Consequences include getting restricted temporarily or banned permanently from platforms, having content removed, and losing support from followers. When the automated discipline system fails to regulate the behaviors worthy of cancellation, the cancel group steps in to discipline the individual.

Surveillance is an essential process that leads to cancelation and provides insight into the complex power relations involved in the process. Foucault (2000) argues that power can only be examined in the context of a power relationship because we understand it through the outcomes

of actions. Therefore, power relations must be looked at retrospectively. Foucault (2000) also

noted the inherently "sparse available possibilities" for the kinds of power relationships that can

manifest within a pre-existing power structure (p. 340). In other words, power is assigned to

individuals by an existing structure and is then reciprocated or challenged through the actions of

everyone in the structure. The outcomes of everyone's actions will either validate or invalidate

their perceived power based on the responding actions of others, thus producing an automated

system of power exchange. As Foucault (2000) explains, we exert power through violence,

consent, or coercion through a combination of both simultaneously. In Foucault's explanation,

violence includes destroying any form of resistance, whereas consent includes passivity with or

without a show of force. The way individuals exert power in the system is through discipline and

punishment.

While the use of discipline and punishment have varied throughout scholarship,

synthesizing the key differences between these two concepts is vital to understanding canceling

as a discursive act of discipline. Starting with punishment, the consensus on punishment

indicates state-sanctioned consequences (Foucault 1979; Garland 1990; Jones, 2000). Foucault's

work describes punishment's transition from public and legal torture to the state-sanctioned

removal of certain liberties. Foucault (1979) explains that punishment and policing are strategies

tied to a broader system to address illegalities, binding punishment to violation of the law. To

punish someone is highly relational. The existence of prisons does not indicate evidence of

punishment. Instead, evidence of punishment exists in the power relationships between the roles

of prisoner and guard. In a modern take, Valverde (2017) describes punishment as "embodied

relationships that require constant attention and continuous financial, human, and technical

support from the institutions authorized to punish" (p. 35). Aligning with Foucault (1979),

Valverde explains it is not the existing parameters of punishments for crimes that ensure

punishment but the state that tries crimes and has the power to assign the punishment. Valverde's

explanation expands beyond the tendency to equate punishment to prisons by using language that

can indicate state-sanctioned rehabs, mental institutions, and work reformation programs, which

are also modern examples of punishment. Overall, punishment is specific to state control over an

individual. While canceling can embody the spirit of public shaming and requires its targets to

answer perceived crimes, the obvious lack of state presence separates canceling from

punishment. To explain canceling, we turn to Foucault's (1979) second central term, discipline.

Discipline does not fit as neatly as punishment into a specific category. It is a messier and

less definitive tactic. Foucault (1979) outlines the differences between acts of discipline and

punishment. The French word *surveiller* was used in Foucault's original work and later

translated quite loosely into discipline. As noted in Alan Sheridan's translator's notes in the

English version, there is no direct translation of the word surveiller in English. Sheridan argues

that to observe is too informal, to inspect does not align with the concept of surveiller, and to

supervise is the closest but still not adequate. Valverde (2017) also discusses the English

translation's lack of adequate comparison. According to Valverde, where surveillance in English

refers to an Orwellian violation of privacy, surveiller means to watch over something in French.

Valverde provides examples of signs encouraging the public to watch over their children at the

park or their luggage in the train station. In this way, discipline is not a perfect translation of the

spirit of surveiller, it but was Foucault's recommendation for the translation. Thus, defining

discipline becomes a matter of understanding how people enact discipline.

In his observations, Foucault (1979) argues that interactions of power and discipline

show that all societies do not become like barracks, schools, or prisons where the power

differential is evident and tied to obedience. Automation plays an essential role in circumstances where power is more nuanced than exerting overt control over one another. As Foucault (2000) argues, "an increasingly controlled, more rational, and economic process of adjustment" is present encouraging scholars to examine the communication networks, mediated activities, and power relations that are not so obvious (p. 339). To understand the diversity of less obvious power relations, Foucault (1979) establishes a discipline as a tactic to enact a more subtle exercise of power. Foucault explains discipline relies on regulating one's body regarding space, time, and activity. Regulating these aspects of one's daily life molds society to reflect those in a high-power position.

Affirming Foucault's perspectives, Fillingham (1993) applies the concepts of disciplining bodies to structural conventions to explain how they work. According to Fillingham's (1993) summary of disciplining bodies, the first example occurs through the regulation of space. In this instance, space refers to one's social positioning. As Fillingham (1993) puts it, everyone has a particular space in society with different expectations and responsibilities. One's position directly correlates to the amount of power they have and the level of discipline they experience. Next, their summary describes minute control of activity as the function of regulating time. Fillingham (1993) uses the 5-day work week as an example of minute activity control. As she explains, the 5-day work week establishes a "normal" work schedule with set days for work and set days for personal enjoyment.

Further, the hours of the day a person works create "normal" mealtimes and influence the children's school schedules. Finally, Fillingham (1993) describes repetitive exercises as disciplinary action. Repetitive exercises are actions that individuals must repeat, like going to school each day or repeating job tasks. The point of these exercises is to evolve onto more

complex tasks to indicate knowledge acquisition or identify a reliable history of desirable

behaviors or outcomes. Regulating individuals' space, time, and activity creates clear and

desirable paths to achieving the ultimate success within a social structure as defined by that

structure.

Since regulating bodies in a social structure with an absence of bodies is difficult, a more

abstract perspective is necessary to apply these concepts to canceling. However, s each social

media site's unspoken rules and reputations communicate space. For example, what is

appropriate to post on Twitter may not be suitable for Instagram or Facebook and vice versa.

Additionally, each social media platform's functions produce differing repetitive actions . Each

social media platform has distinct functions, including the different unspoken rules and

reputations of each site. Gaining popularity on one platform requires consistent engagement and

content creation suitable for the platform one is engaged. Creating a consistent brand or body of

content is an example of repetitive action on social media reinforcing one's popularity.

On the other hand, minute control of activity is much more difficult to understand in the

context of social media. Social media has a near-constant refresh of material rather than a set 9-5

schedule. Especially if a user has a more global reach, it is hard to maintain engagement on

social media with the most important content creators on your feed. Because of this, many social

media sites have a follow or subscribe feature that allows users to emphasize the content they

would most like to see. Users can get alerts when creators post the latest content or filter their

feeds to view a certain creator's content first, controlling what they are more likely to view and

retain on social media.

Fillingham (1993) branches from the concept of regulating bodies to other forms of

discipline seen in Foucault's work. The following method of discipline is a detailed hierarchy. A

detailed hierarchy exists as a complex chain of power through authority and training where each

level has a responsibility to watch over the "lower ranks" (p. 124). In terms of social media

operation, there is an existing chain of authority in terms of viral accounts. New users will often

mimic the content of more popular accounts through informal training to attain the same level of

virality or gain followers. The upper echelon of social media accounts may not necessarily feel

the responsibility to watch over the "lower ranks" on social media. The opposite relationship

occurs when high-ranking members do not feel responsible for watching over the lower ranks.

The opportunity to gain followers or popularity on social media is as ambiguous and

unpredictable as the varied users that one's content will reach. To maintain popularity, one must

pander to the lower ranks as the lower ranks take responsibility for watching over the popular

users. Fillingham (1993) also describes normalizing judgment through punishments and rewards

to reinforce the normal and consolidate its ranks. This form of discipline describes Surveillance

in a basic conceptualization. Normalizing judgment by exerting power through both punishment

and reward is essential to understanding disciplinary power's operation in canceling and cancel

culture. Since canceling is a discursive act, which is typically a response to other discursive acts,

I want to focus on examining the discourse surrounding it. By studying the discourse of two

examples of canceling, I elucidate principles of disciplining through social media and break

down these examples to ascertain how elements of discipline and surveillance emerge from the

discourse. Through this analysis, I show canceling as a communication phenomenon and social

practice.

Foucault in Rhetorical Studies

      While Foucault did not consider himself a rhetorical critic, his work has influenced the

field of rhetorical studies. As Kronman (1999) asserts, "Foucault is interested in the shaping

influence—the constitutive force—of ideas and systems of ideas, of ideologies and patterns of

thinking" (p. 690). As rhetorical analysis has evolved, research into systems of ideas, ideologies,

and patterns of thinking has become a field's focus. Scholars contend that Foucault's work fits

well in communication studies (Biesecker, 1992; Blair, 1987; Foss and Gill, 1987). Early

integration of Foucault into rhetoric came alongside Scott's (1967) urge for epistemic rhetoric as

arguments of ontology and reason became a contested topic in communication studies. Scott's

(1967) original call urged rhetoricians to look at the ways rhetorical acts shape knowledge and

truth. It is no surprise that scholars weaved Foucault's work on power into rhetoric with this new

direction of study. McKerrow (1989) elucidates a vital aspect of the integration of Foucault's

work was his notion that power also plays a role in knowledge production and what individuals

identify as *truth*.

In reviewing of Foucault's relationship betweeng discourse and rhetorical study,

McKerrow (1989) attempts to provide a general introduction and justification for using Foucault

to aid rhetorical study. As the author explains, Foucault's place in discourse is to identify,

examine, and question any taken-for-granted exercises of legitimized power at work. Further, a

rhetorical scholar applying a Foucauldian analysis would assume Foucault's role in their analysis

to demystify the legitimized power relations ingrained in a community. McKerrow (1989)

emphasizes Foucault's concern with power in daily life, explaining that power does not solely

exist within the power-repression formula. Instead, the hierarchy of power reflects multiple

classes and varying degrees of power. McKerrow (1989) asserts that "any articulatory practice

may emerge as relevant or consequential—nothing can be "taken-for-granted" concerning the

impact of any particular discursive practice" (p. 96). This piece sets Foucault's work up as the

grounds for a critical rhetoric approach. Two key considerations must occur when employing a

critical rhetorical approach through Foucault. First, from a Foucauldian perspective, one must understand the context within which power relations operate, including the inadvertent exertions of power in daily life, to be an agent of social change. In the rhetorical process of canceling, one must understand both the context in which the cancelable offense occurred and the social media practices that allow canceling as an exertion of power to discipline others. Second, from a Foucauldian perspective, a critical rhetorical approach, one must consider the normalization of language and public discourse's role in what is considered truth.

Later, McKerrow (2011) reiterates Foucauldian power studies taken-for-granted power relations, emphasizing creating knowledge and truth. Additionally, McKerrow (2011) describes the important distinction between power and power relations being the possibility for resistance. Power dynamics are not stagnant, and one must feel free to use the tools at their disposal to make a claim for power within a power relationship. It is also clear that a claim to power within a power relation is different from a claim to domination over the other party in the relationship. For example, in a parent/child relationship, the parent generally has domination over the child as the child is dependent on the parent for their basic needs. However, the child still has enough autonomy to negotiate power by simply asking for foods they like or clothes they want to wear. Since Foucauldian power focuses on knowledge, there is also a natural power shift when the children know more than their parents about a particular topic, like technology. The parent must rely on the child's knowledge to complete a task. The changing power dynamics in these relationships represent a lack of total control from either side. While the connection between cancelers and their targets is not as direct as the parent/child relationship, there is still evidence of power relations as determined by the support the cancelers leverage to influence their targets' behaviors.

In addition, each user develops their social media power from the ground up because everyone starts with no followers and no interactions with their content. While certain individuals who may have an existing following outside of social media may gain followers on social media quicker than an average user, they still start with no followers as the average user would. Further, as we have seen with the increase of viral social media content, a user does not necessarily need a large personal following to reach a large audience. The mechanics of different social media outlets provide a unique opportunity to examine canceling in its purest form: an exchange of ideas on social media that the community monitors. The middle-level epistemic theory outlined in Foss and Gill's (1987) framework will be necessary for understanding Foucauldian power. This project will also borrow concepts from another theory to best explain some of the rules and discursive practices shown on social media.

Drawing from Foucault, Foss and Gill (1987) develop an epistemic framework to analyze rhetorical artifacts. As a guide, Foss and Gill's (1987) framework of rhetoric as epistemic studies five central elements: (1) discursive practices, (2) roles, (3) rules, (4) power, and (5) knowledge. Each of the five units is essential to analyzing the proposed cancel cases, but they also bridge the gap between Foucauldian power, surveillance, and discipline. A Foucauldian power perspective guides the analysis to probe deeper into questions on how canceling operates. Finally, Foucault's theory of surveillance, specifically the concept of discipline, provides a lens to analyze canceling as a discursive disciplinary act while also positioning this project within the broader study of rhetoric. Foss and Gill's framework provides a roadmap through the theoretical approaches for further discussion.

First, discursive practices are described as any communicated messages, verbal or nonverbal, including "architectural forms, use of space, institutional practices, and social

relations" (Foss and Gill, 1987, p. 387). In canceling, the exchange between cancelers and targets represents the social relations and institutional practices of social media interaction. As we dissect social media behavior, canceling occurs within the guidelines of the social capitalistic nature of social media platforms. Engagement with a user's content is the primary resource of social media. In other words, if one user feels persuaded to interact with content on a social media platform, they exchange likes, comments, and shares for continued access to similar content. Then, as a discursive practice, the understanding is other users with share, like, and comment on each other's content. Calls to cancel are created and mobilized through of these discursive practices.

Next, Foss and Gill (1987) describe rules as guidelines to inform members of a specific set of people. With social media, each platform has a legally binding set of terms and conditions that each user must agree to create an account on the site. These rules govern users' conduct and assign consequences like removal of content or access for violations of their rules. In addition to this, there are many unwritten rules of social media platforms. For example, as an unwritten but agreed-upon rule on social media, it is inappropriate to engage with content that was not posted recently on certain platforms. In terms of canceling, rule violations surround the use of offensive language while attempting to appeal to a mass audience. As a subsequent rule, the use of offensive language or display of offensive behavior does not have to be on a social media platform to be discussed through social media as a cancelable act. Further, the cancel approach encourages canceled individuals to take accountability for their offenses, and opposition to the approach generally dissuades that behavior implying complex rules of engagement for the practice.

Third, Foss and Gill (1987) describe roles as specific assignments within a structure where power is assigned. According to Foss and Gill's (1987) interpretation of Foucault, roles are understood by the power a role has rather than who is filling the role. As an example, Foss and Gill (1987) discuss the role of a doctor, stating that there is little interest in "the individual gifts that enable a specific doctor to practice medicine, but rather in the rules that must be followed in order for the role of doctor to be held" (p. 389). In canceling, the focus is not on how the canceled individual gained popularity on social media but on how they maintain their popularity through their fan engagement. In each example of canceling analyzed in this project, the target's livelihood is attached to the role of celebrity. The cancelers are sometimes fans or actively anti-fans of each celebrity, encouraging others to withdraw support and effectively remove the targets of their celebrity role. Interestingly, Foss and Gill (1987) point out that a role is created and constrained by the discursive formation where it exists. In the context of canceling, the role of celebrity is engrained within the entertainment pillar of society and constrained by the expectations of fans and those who have the power to create media for celebrities.

The fourth unit described in the framework is power. For the purposes of this project, power comes from a Foucauldian perspective of disciplinary power to uphold the ideologies found within the social media world. According to Foss and Gill (1987), disciplinary power operates through conformity in an omnipresent, automatic, and subtle way to maintain continuous control over subjects. The "what if" style of discourse exemplifies power relations from a Foucauldian perspective. Foss and Gill (1987) point out that power is not always a negative force. Power can be a positive, creative force by disciplining behaviors identified as incorrect for the context in which they are displayed, as is the case with canceling. Canceling

interrupts the automatic functions of power on social media. Rather than letting specific taken-for-granted behaviors or messages go without repercussion, canceling calls those behaviors into question. In each case examined in this study, the behaviors and comments made by the targets of canceling reflected common ideologies in the social system. With Harrison and Rodriguez, the comments made after being canceled seemed to indicate ideologies that were represented in their actions, and messages were done so out of ignorance of the consequences. When a behavior is deemed intolerable, the reaction is automatically to threaten cancellation and demand an explanation. The ability to cancel empowers groups to enact change and exert some semblance of control over another's thoughts and actions. The system then engages in an arm wrestle of labeling. A person makes a racist comment; then they get canceled, then defenders of the person rush to their defense blaming cancel culture for targeting another good person.

Finally, Foss and Gill (1987) describe knowledge as "any object of discourse," anything that is considered truth, or anything that can be talked about. With canceling, knowledge examines any truths that come out of the canceling process. Each discursive act has an underlying meaning, and when a pattern of discursive acts is discovered, the underlying meanings compact into simplified knowledge. In other words, if an individual commits multiple microaggressions against the same group, it can be deduced that the individual has some sort of issue with that group. In more extreme cases, if an individual commits multiple overt acts that are against a particular group, each event becomes part of our knowledge of that individual, and eventually, the acts begin to compile into a larger condition. In the cases selected, the knowledge compacts to assign identities to the individuals like racist or unamerican. These become truths about the individual that is targeted, whether they are universally held or not.

The general understanding of Foss and Gill's (1987) application of this framework lies in analyzing the complex ways in which the five units interact to create conditions worthy of rhetorical study as epistemology. This framework was developed as an answer to Scott's (1967) call to view rhetoric as epistemic. Scott's (1967) call featured many examples which accounted for the duality of discourse, following the "demands of the precepts one adheres to and the demands of the circumstances in which one must act" (p. 17). This trend in rhetorical study ended quickly, according to its critics (Brummet, 1990; Cherwitz & Darwin, 1995; Zhao, 1991). Brummet (1990) specifically criticizes the tendency to cherry-pick examples to fit the theory rather than using the theory to understand behavior and experiences. Cherwitz & Darwin (1995) also encourage the use of other methods. In this specific circumstance, Foss and Gill' (1967) approach analyzes the general rules that regulate behavior (precepts) as well as the specific context in which the action took place (circumstances) to deduce what knowledge is produced from a rhetorical act, making it an epistemic approach. The key unit that sets this framework apart lies in the discussion of power. However, Foss and Gill (1967) state the framework analyzes "discourse that comes from individuals' occupation of certain roles, that follows specified rules, and that involves certain power relationships of the discursive formation" (p. 390). Each other unit must be analyzed separately and together to provide an accurate understanding of power.

Furthermore, with an understudied topic such as canceling, using an epistemic framework will better position this research within the field of communication studies, and more specifically, within rhetoric. In the investigation of canceling and cancel culture, this framework will be particularly helpful in understanding the processes inside and out, identifying key rules that fall under social media's scope, and understanding the roles of each person in the cancel

exchange. Applying this framework to each example of cancel culture will aid in examining power relations and the knowledge created through this process. In the proposed cases of canceling, the five components are present in each case, with four out of five referenced in the Twitter data. With social media's ever-growing communities, each user assumes a role, abides by rules both formal and informal, and engages in the production of knowledge.

Foucault's work is a complex view of interconnecting facets of power relations. This body of work has been dissected into many avenues for analysis. While a multitude of perspectives would provide an interesting understanding of this phenomenon, I employ an approach that focuses specifically on disciplining as a tactic to maintain and shift power dynamics within the canceler/target power relation within the context of social media. With social media users increasing (Briggs, 2020; Enberg, 2020) alongside the increase in cancel cases and the birth of cancel culture as a label, the canceler/target power relation becomes a locale for surveillance and, as a byproduct, creates a pool of disciplinary examples. Additionally, as individuals share more of their private lives on social media where the barrier to access is lowered, social media outlets become a virtual landscape for analyzing taken-for-granted daily interactions amongst a community of social media users. This access to one another creates a near-constant cycle of posting and sharing. These conditions replicate surveillance and inevitably breed disciplinary action. Social media's unlimited access to new and ever-changing content and exchange of social capital creates a viable community for canceling to emerge. Because canceling is an iterative process whereby cancelers adopt strategies from other cancelers and targets adopt strategies from other targets, it is a modern-day example of surveillance in the digital world.

Data Collection

The following results include Twitter data on two cancel cases that gained traction through Twitter. The first case involved Gina Rodriguez, who committed several microaggressions, then got canceled for singing the n-word on an Instagram story. The second case involved Chris Harrison, former host of ABC's *The Bachelor,* who audiences canceled after defending a contestant on the show for some racist photos and social media interactions on her Instagram account. Each case represents a unique moment in the discourse on canceling and 'cancel culture' on Twitter. Rodriguez's case represents early discourse on 'cancel culture,' whereas Harrison's case represents 'cancel culture' discourse after several years. Both cases conjured interesting and diverse discourse on Twitter.

Data was collected through Twitter scraping, where a researcher uses specific search terms to find public tweets about a topic. The search terms used to collect data were each cancel target's full name and the terms 'canceled,' 'cancel,' or 'cancel culture.' Other parameters were set per case to reach saturation within the dataset. For Rodriguez's case, any data available from 10/15/2018- 01/31/2019 was collected, resulting in 68 total tweets The dataset included tweets from 2/10/2021-6/26/2021 with at least 100 favorites or retweets for Harrison's case. Then, tweets in which the user shared a link to a clickbait article as the primary content were removed from the dataset resulting in 66 tweets.

Next, I compiled tweets into an Excel spreadsheet separated by case. I included all public information on Twitter in the dataset. Specifically, I included the tweet, username, follower count, likes, retweets, replies, and attachments. Finally, I added a column for contextual information to track public details that users did not tweet. For example, in Harrison's case, several former BIPOC contestants weighed in on the conversation through Twitter. Their

involvement was not always indicated by the content of their tweet, prompting a need to track

background context. Each spreadsheet was then uploaded as a dataset to NVivo for coding and

visualization purposes. The data were coded first into each of the five categories of the Foss and

Gill (1987) framework (discursive practices, roles, rules, power, knowledge), then additional

categories. The coding process resulted in 26 codes.

Analysis

The central conceptual framework of this thesis is Foss and Gill's (1987) epistemic

rhetoric framework. While this is a rhetorical framework, I employ a qualitative approach

(Tracy, 2019) to analyze the Twitter discourse of each case. In Foss and Gill's (1987) conceptual

framework, discursive practices are any communicated messages, including "architectural forms,

use of space, institutional practices, and social relations" (p. 387). The primary discursive

practices analyzed in both cases are the cancel target's offenses and the practice of canceling and

'cancel culture.' Then, the authors establish that rules are principles to which a structure adheres.

Twitter users rely on the discourse to judge rule violations and determine the appropriate

sanctions in these cancel cases. Next, Foss and Gill establish roles as the specific assignment

within a power structure. In Foss and Gill's interpretation, roles have to do with the power

associated with a particular assignment and have little to do with the person taking up that role.

Then the unit of power is discussed as a network of relations. Specifically, Foss and Gill (1987)

describe disciplinary power as subtle and automated conformity to norms. Finally, the

framework analyzes knowledge as "anything that can be talked about" (p. 390), leading members

of the power structure to a perceived truth. Scholars should apply this framework to break down

artifacts, ethnography, or events into smaller pieces to examine the areas in which the five units

interact to understand power relations.

In the following results, I use Twitter data at the time of and immediately after canceling

to apply the Foss and Gill (1987) framework to Rodriguez's and Harrison's cases. Specifically, I

start by coding the Twitter discourse according to the five categories of Foss and Gill's (1987)

framework: discursive practices, roles, rules, power, and knowledge. Once each tweet was coded

according to the framework, I analyzed the dataset for strong themes within each category

through a template analysis (King, 1998) that utilizes the categories of Foss and Gill to sort, but

then thematize the data within each subset of codes. Additionally, I tracked themes in the data

that did not belong to any specific framework category. I report the most salient themes in the

following results.

Results

Case #1: Gina Rodriguez

Gina Rodriguez's Hollywood career flourished with her first leading role as the Latina star of the American "telenovela" *Jane the Virgin* (Nussbaum, 2018). She quickly won over the hearts of fans off-screen, too, building connections to her audience that went far beyond those of a typical celebrity. For example, Rodriguez paid to have the dress she wore to the 2015 Golden Globe Awards altered so a young fan could wear it to her high school prom (France, 2016). Additionally, according to a profile on Rodriguez in *Time Magazine*, she considers herself an activist first, being an active member of the #TimesUp movement (Dockterman, 2019). The article also refers to Rodriguez as one of the most prominent Latinx actors in Hollywood, highlighting how she has used this status to leverage more equity in the film industry by demanding diverse cast and crew representation on projects. Dockterman (2019) ends by discussing what would be Rodriguez's next milestone after her production company sold a series to *Disney* about a Latina girl who grew up to be president. Rodriguez boasts a reputation as a champion of diversity in the industry for Latinx folks. Audiences have also accused her of multiple public anti-Black comments.

Butler and Rao (2019) explain a pattern of anti-Black comments and behavior attributed to Rodriguez. To sum up her behavior, she tweeted about a lack of Latinx characters in the Marvel franchise and interrupted her co-star Yara Shahidi explaining what it means to be an inspiration to Black women to say she was actually an inspiration to "all women" (para. 7), and falsely claimed Black actresses make the most money out of all minority women actresses (Butler & Rao, 2019). In September 2018, she even hosted a "Latina Power Lunch" for other Latina actresses, which fans pointed out did not have any members of Afro-Latina descent in

attendance (Rodriguez-LoCicero, 2018). The pattern of behavior came to a peak when Rodriguez

posted a video of herself singing along to Lauryn Hills's verse in "Ready or Not" by the Fugees,

including the line "fronting niggas give me hee-bee-gee-bees" (Jean et al., 1996, track 3). While

Rodriguez did not direct the slur at anyone and did not intend to be derogatory, it was still racist.

It was also enough to prompt users to cancel Rodriguez on Twitter. The video was deleted hours

after being posted but still resulted in her cancelation. Rodriguez's lackluster apology also points

to a more significant problem at hand. The textbook un-apology came in two parts. According to

Butler and Rao (2019), the initial video response by Rodriguez stated, "I am sorry if I offended

anyone by singing along to the Fugees, to a song I love that I grew up on. I love Lauryn Hill.

And I am really sorry if I offended you" (para. 3). This initial response was deemed problematic

by her audience because Rodriguez did not appear to take any personal responsibility (Joseph,

2019). It highlights another issue that seems to keep resurfacing into the public sphere: who is

allowed to say the n-word, and under what circumstances? Later in a written statement,

Rodriguez apologized further, saying

> In song or in real life, the words that I spoke should not have been spoken. I grew up
>
> loving the Fugees and Lauryn Hill. I thoughtlessly sang along to the lyrics of a favorite
>
> song, and even worse, I posted it. The word I sang carries with it a legacy of hurt and
>
> pain that I cannot even imagine. Whatever consequences I face for my actions today,
>
> none will be more hurtful than the personal remorse I feel. Watching my own video
>
> playing back at me has shaken me to my core. It is humiliating that this has to be a public
>
> lesson, but it is indeed a much deserved lesson. I feel so deeply protective and
>
> responsible to the community of color, but I have let this community down. I have some

serious learning and growing to do, and I am so deeply sorry for the pain I have caused

(Butler & Rao, 2019).

The individuals targeting Rodriguez called out her apologies, deeming them insincere and

untimely (Butler & Rao, 2019). For many who oppose Rodriguez, the apologies also highlight

ignorance of genuine issues that Black people face in the United States. Her perpetuation of

harmful misunderstandings and her celebrity status made her a prime target for cancel culture.

The discourse produced involving and about Rodriguez's cancelation is applied to the Foss and

Gill (1987) framework in the following results to understand better the 'cancel culture'

phenomenon.

Framework

Discursive Practices

There are two central discursive practices in Rodriguez's case. The first discursive

practice contributing to Rodriguez's cancel case is her use of microaggressions. Sue et al. (2007)

define *microaggressions* as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental

indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or

negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (p. 273). Torres-Harding et al.

(2012) describe microaggressions as hostile assaults, offensive or insulting incidents, and

incidents whereby a person of color feels devalued or ignored. Rodriguez has a history of public

comments perceived to devalue Black individuals. From falsely claiming Latinx actresses were

the most underpaid BIPOC group in Hollywood to capitalizing on Marvel's *Black Panther*

conversation to call Marvel out for their lack of diverse superheroes, audiences interpreted these

actions as pattern of attacks on the Black community. While Rodriguez's push for more

representation in the industry is significant for the Latinx community, audiences perceive her

activism as detrimental to the Black community. After Rodriguez was called out several times for committing microaggressions against Black people in the entertainment industry, she posted an Instagram story singing the n-word along to the Fugees' "Ready or Not." When Rodriguez posted the video, audiences initiated the cancel process by calling her out on Twitter. Calls to cancel are the second discursive practice involved in this case.

There are only a few direct calls to cancel Rodriguez in the Twitter discourse. In one of the most popular tweets about Rodriguez, a user wrote "Finally got enough evidence to fully cancel Gina Rodriguez" (Appendix A, Tweet #1). Attached to the tweet was a gif of Winnie the Pooh dancing. The user expresses that the video is the last piece of evidence required to "fully cancel" Rodriguez, meaning she cannot behave in the same manner and expect to maintain audience support. The tweet was also published the same day as Rodriguez's video, indicating that audiences rapidly attempt to cancel her. Another member of the cancel group tweeted "In 2020 can Latinx collectively agree to finally cancel Gina Rodriguez and focus on supporting the ever superior Gina Torres?" (Appendix A, Tweet #2). The user attached an image of Gina Torres, an Afro-Latinx actress, at a red-carpet event. This tweet shows a similar sentiment to Tweet 1 by asking audiences to "finally cancel" Rodriguez. By specifying the call to Latinx audiences the user also implies that Latinx audiences are the only ones who have yet to cancel Rodriguez. These were the only two tweets with specific language about canceling Rodriguez in the Twitter data. Other members of the cancel group focused their discourse on calling Rodriguez out.

The cancel approach typically begins when the cancel group calls out an individual or an organization. Therefore, the call-out stage in Rodriguez's case is an important tactic for the cancel group. One user tweeted "Gina Rodriguez's 'apology' isn't even an apology! She doesn't

acknowledge any harm she's caused. What do you mean 'if' you offended anyone? You obviously did so own up to it!! Your love of the song doesn't cancel your anti-blackness Gina." (Appendix A, Tweet #3). In this tweet, the user calls Rodriguez out for lack of ownership over her actions. This user reprimands Rodriguez like a child, calling her out by name to illicit a response. Another user tweeted, "Gina Rodriguez worked on a series that spoke on so many current issues. She's in the spotlight now and knows about the 'cancel culture' She should've known better" (Appendix A, Tweet #4). This user also calls Rodriguez out for the video she posted. The user cites the content of the show Rodriguez stars in and her status in the spotlight to indicate that she had the knowledge to do better. Instead, Rodriguez's behavior does not reflect that knowledge nor the messages of *Jane the Virgin.* These tweets reflect the voices of the cancel group as they call out Rodriguez for her behaviors. The initial call-out fits within canceling discursive practice.

Each example of the discursive canceling practice shows the discursive practice is expressed by calling the individual out and unmasked calls to cancel Rodriguez. There are fewer active calls to cancel Rodriguez, and these calls are memeified as per cancel traditions. The cancel group also features several users calling out Rodriguez's behavior. The cancel approach generally begins with users calling out behaviors as seen in this case. Each tweet represents the discursive practice of canceling in different forms. Following calls to cancel Rodriguez, audiences struggle to reconcile the motivations to cancel her. Primarily audiences disagree on the rules governing Rodriguez's actions leading to a contest of who has the power to determine if Rodriguez violated a rule.

Rules

Audiences contested the rules governing Rodriguez's case in the discourse. The rules are encompassed by any principle that individuals must follow to participate in the discourse in this case. The rules are rigid functions of the discourse or also be agreed upon conventions that members of the discursive formation maintain. As Foss and Gill (1987) mention, a combination of formal and informal rules usually governs a discursive formation. In Rodriguez's case, both kinds of rules are evident, but audiences focus discourse around one particular informal rule. In Rodriguez's case audiences struggle over whether non-Black individuals should say the n-word. Further, audiences struggle over the context of Rodriguez's use. With a long and painful history of othering Black people, the n-word in its many variations is a reclaimed word deemed unacceptable for non-Black folks to use. Cases of non-Black individuals, like Rodriguez, using the word have surfaced and called this unwritten rule into question over the last few years. It is important to note that use of the word by non-Black individuals is not limited to the cases that are highly publicized, and behind closed doors use of the n-word by non-Black individuals still occurs. With Rodriguez's case in particular, arguments invoke this rule as a strict rule that should never be broken. To challenge this rule, audiences discuss other non-Black celebrities who have publicly used the n-word, highlighting inconsistencies in applying the rule. Conversations about who can say what and when, especially regarding race, are not uncommon. Debate over this rule created different streams of discourse, whether minimizing the issue, condemning the actions, questioning the application of the rule, and in one case prompting another non-Black individual to say the n-word.

To begin, many users do not shy away from invoking the informal rule that non-Black individuals should not use the n-word for any reason. One user tweeted "doesn't matter if it's in

a song, if you aren't black then you cannot say the n word!" Cancel culture doesn't have the

effect it should and gina rodriguez won't receive any repercussions for her constant anti

blackness :/" (Appendix A, Tweet #5). For this user, the rule is clear: there are no circumstances

that would make it acceptable for a non-Black person to say the n-word. By default, then it was

unacceptable for Rodriguez to sing the n-word because she is not Black. Other users voice

similar concerns for this rule violation. Another user tweeted "Non-Black people should

definitely not say the n word but why try to "cancel" someone because of it??" (Appendix A,

Tweet #6). This user reflects a similar tone to the user of Tweet #5 regarding the broken rule.

Tweet #6's user is clear in asserting the rule in their tweet. However, in contrast to the user of

Tweet #5, the user of Tweet #6 questions the practice of canceling as an appropriate consequence

for this rule violation. Another user voices the rule violation "I can't believe Gina Rodriguez

went and cried on the radio saying she couldn't possibly be anti black and then has the gall to

post herself saying a slur like the cognitive dissonance is astounding" (Appendix A, Tweet #7).

This user calls Rodriguez out for the hypocrisy of her rule violation. The user of Tweet #7 in this

case is more upset with Rodriguez's violation of the rule than previous users were because of

Rodriguez's claim that she could not be anti-Black. Rodriguez's violation, posting herself saying

the n-word, is by this user's definition anti-Black and directly contradicts Rodriguez's earlier

assertions. Overall, these users highlight a commitment to the informal rule preventing non-

Black individuals from saying the n-word in public spheres. For these users, the rule violation is

enough to call out Rodriguez, but for most, it is not serious enough to warrant canceling. The

notion that Rodriguez should not be canceled is echoed in other discussions about this rule.

  Some users view the rule that non-Black folks should not use the n-word as more of a gray

area or an irrelevant issue on the opposite end of the spectrum. For users who feel the rule

violation is in a gray area, the context is important. For example, one user tweeted "I saw Gina

Rodriguez trending and at 1st I was confused [because] all I saw was peeps hating on her and not

what she was getting hare for. Turns out this woman was just singing song lyrics. This shows

how toxic cancel culture is" (Appendix A, Tweet #8). According to this user, Rodriguez was

"just singing song lyrics" which did not warrant the prominent discourse stemming from this

case. The user expresses confusion about the discourse over something as simple as Rodriguez

singing along to a song. In a similar tweet, one user added Rodriguez "said the n-word within the

context of no hatred and was just re singing a song" (Appendix A, Tweet #9). This user emulates

the gray area of the rule being the context of a non-Black person's use of the n-word. In

Rodriguez's case, her use of the n-word was not directed at any individual and did not come

from a place of hatred. To the author of Tweet #9, the context makes this an acceptable use of

the n-word while also clearly establish that in a hateful context, or outside of a song it is still

unacceptable for non-Black people to use the n-word. Other Twitter users echoed the sentiment

that Rodriguez's use was acceptable but rather than presenting a gray area for the rule, these

users did not acknowledge the rule at all.

Reflecting on Rodriguez's case, audiences found Rodriguez's use of the n-word as

acceptable and disregarded her cancelation as an unnecessary reaction from Twitter. One user

tweeted "#ginarodriguez did nothing wrong, she was just having fun. Cancel culture is so stupid!

#ginarodriguezisoverparty" (Appendix A, Tweet #10). This user's position is clear: Rodriguez

did nothing wrong. This user did not perceive any rule violations in Rodriguez's behavior and

uses this justification to dismiss calls to cancel Rodriguez. Another user took a more extreme

stance by tweeting, "In honor of Gina Rodriguez, a puertorican woman that's being shitted on for

a dumbass reason and being attacked by cancel culture, I would just like to say: nigga"

(Appendix A, Tweet #11). This user not only felt Rodriguez did not violate any rules, but also found Rodriguez's behavior worthy of repeating via their tweet. The user also clearly dismisses cancelation attempts by establishing the basis of the call to cancel a "dumbass reason" to try canceling Rodriguez.

Finally, users debated the rule when it comes to other non-Black celebrities use. Twitter users quickly began discussing other examples of non-Black individuals who have said or sung the n-word on video and had not been canceled for it. Hip hop artists like Lil Pump, Tekashi 6ix9nine, and Cardi B were called out for their use of n-word, despite being White, Asian, and Latinx. Most users wanted to draw attention to other people who should be canceled for the same behaviors, while others used the examples as an opportunity to point out flaws in the practice. One user tweeted, "@justinbieber is evidence that cancel culture only applies to women. There are countless videos of Justin using the N word and telling anti Black racist jokes. He deserves the same energy as Camila Cabello and Gina Rodriguez" (Appendix A, Tweet #12). In this tweet, the user claims Canadian pop star Justin Bieber has committed the same offenses as Rodriguez, but no one has attempted to cancel him. This user claims that Bieber should also be canceled but will not because 'cancel culture' cannot effectively cancel men. "I love how negros pick and choose which "non-negros" can say nigga. Y'all wanna cancel Gina Rodriguez but praise Cardi B, J Lo, Fat Joe and every other Latin person y'all like because of their proximity to hip hop." (Appendix A, Tweet #13). This user complains that other latinx identifying people who have said and sang the n-word have not been canceled because they were part of the hip-hop community. This user's argument is that through the process of canceling, the cancelers selectively target who they want while letting others do the same cancelable offenses. This user

expresses frustration specifically at Black people for deciding when the rule applies and when it

does not.

Overall, audiences attempted to judge Rodriguez's use of the n-word as a rule violation.

Through their evaluation, competing discourse emerged over this rule. Audiences did not agree

that Rodriguez violated a rule in the first place. Further, audiences who could agree that

Rodriguez did violate a rule did not agree that canceling was the appropriate consequence for the

rule violation. In this case, audiences also claim several other non-Black individuals who have

said the n-word in various contexts but were not canceled. In any event, the unwritten rule at the

center of this discourse, non-Black individuals should not say the n-word, was heavily contested

by audiences. The audience has difficulty producing knowledge about the facts of the case with

the contention around a rule violation. Rodriguez's role at the time also introduced complications

which made it difficult for audiences to execute canceling her.

Roles

As described by Foss and Gill (1987), roles are positions in a formation that receive

power and form discursive practices. Rodriguez fills a unique behind-the-scenes role that

informs power in her case. At the time of her cancelation, Rodriguez was not starring in any film

or media projects in an identifiable way. She was beginning a journey in directing and producing

for film and television. Audiences have more difficulty boycotting her work because she is in a

more subtle role. However, the producer and director positions have more power over the

creative industry. Rodriguez's power in being a producer/director lies in the creative control she

has in story production and the final product that gets to the public. However, boycotting

Rodriguez's projects like *Diary of a Future President* affects the young Latinx talent of the show

more than it affects Rodriguez. Additionally, if audiences do not follow Rodriguez's career closely, it's unlikely that they would know about Rodriguez's work on the project.

Much of the discourse centered on Rodriguez's identity rather than her position in the discursive formation. In discussions of the rule violation some audiences made it clear that Rodriguez's identity did not allow her to use the n-word. Additionally, audiences discussed Rodriguez's Afro-Latina heritage, her general persona as kindhearted, and prior actions to evaluate this case. Audiences did not discuss any affordances from her celebrity status as a source of power that allowed her to commit the microaggressions that led to her cancellation. Audiences did not indicate any power from a role Rodriguez held, except when audiences discuss the rule violation. Much of the power in this case lied in the power struggles within the cancel discourse instead.

Power

The Foss and Gill (1987) framework relies on Foucault's disciplinary power as conformity to an established dominant structure. In Rodriguez's case, we see both sides of disciplinary power. From audiences that want Rodriguez to be canceled we see Twitter users "talking back" (Clark, 2020) to Rodriguez's behavior in favor of assigning consequences for racist behavior. This challenge to dominant ideology disrupts the power balance for social interactions on Twitter. Because racism is systemically engrained in the dominant ideology it is a taken-for-granted part of social interaction. The nature of racism in this taken-for-granted part of life makes it difficult to interpret even when called out in examples of canceling. Therefore, Twitter users who subscribe to the dominant ideology do not perceive the behaviors as racism. This perspective is shared by its users to counter claims of racism and invalidate the arguments of those who think Rodriguez should be canceled. As an additional measure, audiences

promoting the dominant culture also invalidate canceling as a practice which automatically puts any future cancel attempts at a disadvantage for interrupting the status quo.

Foss and Gill (1987) also reiterate Foucauldian power is an omnipresent "normal" which is maintained through relationships where it is reproduced. Power in this case is taken for granted in such a way that it is often overlooked altogether. In Rodriguez's case, her relationship with the public depends on the result of the discursive struggle on whether she should be canceled. Through Twitter discourse, this notion is contested boasting a central power relationship between audiences who want to cancel Rodriguez and audiences who do not think Rodriguez deserves to lose her platform. Again, the conversation transforms to reflect a struggle between Twitter users who support a 'cancel culture' and those who do not. The focus of discipline in the discourse merely takes advantage of Rodriguez's case to propel arguments for and against the practice of canceling and the existence of a 'cancel culture' on Twitter. Users attempt to police one another in engaging in the practice of canceling which has become commonplace on Twitter but violates rules of conduct in offline life. In other words, users employ surveillance to monitor for signs of a 'cancel culture' then attempt to discipline one another by regulating participation in the practice of canceling. The cause of calling someone out using the canceling practice is lost to a larger debate over the methods of the practice. This public debate constitutes the process of knowledge production*.*

Knowledge

As the final unit in epistemic rhetoric, knowledge serves to analyze any topic of discourse stemming from the artifacts. In Rodriguez's case, knowledge production comes first at the surface level about the incident. In this case, knowledge of Rodriguez's actions produces widespread discourse about Rodriguez's character. Then, the incident is used as an analogy for

the practice of canceling and the perception of this practice as a culture. In Rodriguez's case, knowledge about the practice of canceling and a 'cancel culture' points mostly to its flaws indicating that canceling and 'cancel culture' are both bad. Finally, the iterative nature of canceling propels knowledge about how to produce knowledge through the practice of canceling. Cancelers learn what to expect if they choose to cancel someone in the future, cancel targets gain insight on boundaries they have crossed, and future cancel targets develop a toolkit on how to respond based on each previous target's experience. Some knowledge that is noticeably missing in the Rodriguez case is how to appropriately call out behaviors people take issue with if relying on the practice of canceling does not work.

Knowledge, by Foss and Gill's (1989) definition, is whatever "truth" is drawn from whatever the discursive formation determines is an object of discourse. With "truth" operating as an individualized interpretation of events, rather than a universal truth. In Rodriguez's case, the object of discourse focused on Rodriguez's character and the events first. In the above results on discursive practices, roles, and rules, the knowledge produced is primarily regarding Rodriguez's character as interpreted through her actions. Eventually the object of discourse transitions to an evaluation of "cancel culture," using Rodriguez's case as an example, rather than evaluating Rodriguez's actions. The discourse on "cancel culture" comes in three forms:

    a.   Dismissing the practice by arguing 'cancel culture' is not real

    b.   Problematizing the practice by arguing 'cancel culture' is toxic and distracts audiences from "real" issues

    c.   Critically evaluating the practice, arguing that 'cancel culture' does not work

Audiences overwhelmingly reshape the discourse in the few months after calls to cancel Rodriguez. Rather than examining the validity of canceling Rodriguez over her specific actions,

the audience argues over the validity of canceling as a practice creating 'cancel culture' as a scapegoated enemy to free speech. The following results represent the three strongest themes emerging from the Twitter data.

'Cancel Culture' is not real.

In Rodriguez's case, the most salient themes as evidence of discipline involve discourse attempting to regulate action about 'cancel culture.' The first of these themes is that cancel culture is not real. Specifically, the tweets compiling this theme point to Gina Rodriguez as an example to prove that cancel culture is not a thing. The first user tweeted,

> Hey y'all, listen up: CANCEL CULTURE IS NOT REAL. Gina Rodriguez was
> 'cancelled' for saying the n word AGAIN and posting it publicly. Backlash,
> 'cancellations', then nothing… she still gettin that @netflix money. So STOP
> PRETENDING CANCEL CULTURE IS DANGEROUS. (Appendix A, Tweet #14).

According to the research on this case, Rodriguez has only been recorded saying the n-word once. However, the frustrations over hearing Rodriguez was getting canceled again for any behavior was a common complaint among the group of users discussing 'cancel culture.' Also common among this group and seen in this tweet was the observed lack of consequences. The user urges audiences to "stop pretending cancel culture is real" citing Rodriguez as an example because she was working on projects with Netflix after calls to cancel her. Another user re-iterated frustrations about Rodriguez getting called out multiple times, tweeting "i know cancel culture isn't real [because] gina rodriguez does something racist like every 6 months and is still somehow relevant enough that we have to hear about it" (Appendix A, Tweet #15). In Tweet 15, the user points toward Rodriguez's history of microaggressions and racist comments to show how the consequences for each action have a short effect. In this tweet, the user expresses

frustration about having to hear about repeated acts of racism committed by Rodriguez despite

the purpose of canceling being to de-platform an individual. Another user also took issue with

the lack of consequences for Rodriguez after calls to cancel her were widespread. The third user

tweeted, "Yall really be complaining about how "cancel culture" is toxic (and it's not even real),

meanwhile ppl like gina rodriguez are still gonna have a whole career after publicly being

antiBlack numerous times like ok" (Appendix A, Tweet #16). This tweet represents a similar

critique on the effectiveness of cancel culture. The user tweets about Gina Rodriguez's ability to

continue working as an actress in major films and television shows after being called out for anti-

Black behaviors and comments multiple times. The user of Tweet #16 also attempts to prevent

others from reading cancel culture as toxic. The reasoning supplied is that cancel cannot be toxic

if it does not exist. This adds to the disciplinary power of canceling, by shaming another

common part of the discourse on cancel culture. While opinions on cancel culture seem to be

varied, discourse in favor of cancel culture was not present in the dataset. On the other hand, a

line of discourse that both affirms cancel culture's existence and criticizes its toxicity is present

as another salient theme.

'Cancel culture' exists but it's problematic.

The second salient theme present in the disciplinary discourse about 'cancel culture'

within the Rodriguez case is that 'cancel culture' is real, and problematic. While the opinions on

'cancel culture' as a toxic entity were varied, one popular idea echoed in the discourse was the

notion that 'cancel culture' is a distraction from more serious issues. One user tweeted "What is

cancel culture? Why is everyone mad at Gina Rodriguez but no one upset about anything else

like…pollution, inequality, housing crises, child labor, school shootings, etc?" (Appendix A,

Tweet #17). This user relies on the discourse about Rodriguez to produce knowledge that

everyone cares about her cancel case, but no one cares about other issues which the user feels are more deserving of attention. Another user tweeted, "yall give gina rodriguez so much attention as if your life depends on it when there's a whole genocide happening in syria and yemen that deserves more awareness...there's actual real world problems going on but yall feed into the toxic ass cancel culture" (Appendix A, Tweet #18). Similar to Tweet #17's user, Tweet #18's user adapts the discourse on Rodriguez's case to highlight the need for focus on turmoil in Syria and Yemen. In addition to being toxic as a distraction, audiences also discuss the toxicity of the participants of canceling.

One user specifically tweeted, "everyone is addicted to the thrill of feeling superior from cancel culture" (Appendix A, Tweet #19). Tweet #19 presents the idea that "cancel culture" has nothing to do with enforcing consequences, but instead creates a sense of superiority amongst the cancel group. The user delegitimizes the practice of canceling by claiming cancelers have ulterior motives. This user admits not caring about Rodriguez's actions, but still uses the incident to discuss 'cancel culture' and its underlying motives. Similarly, another user tweets, "cancel culture is a literal plague" (Appendix A, Tweet #20). This user calls out the toxic nature of cancelling as a practice by comparing it to a plague. Comparing the practice to an illness with mass devastating effects reminds audiences that something should be done to stop this process before the devastating effects can harm anyone else. Another user felt the toxicity of "cancel culture" present in their perceptions on the way the canceled person was impacted. A user tweeted, "we know cancel culture is counterproductive. cancel a person and suddenly their follower count skyrockets. so what? I'm still call 'em out. Gina Rodriguez and anybody [the fuck] else." (Appendix A, Tweet #21). Tweet #21 offers a distinct perspective on the effects of 'cancel culture,' stating it does the opposite of its intended goal because canceled individuals

receive an increase in followers. This user points out the counterproductive nature of 'cancel culture' as a flaw but discusses committing to the practice despite this flaw.

Overall, these tweets encompass the attitude of canceling being the wrong way to approach critique and 'cancel culture' being and inappropriate way to deal with one's feelings about a comment that was made. Like other arguments against forms of resistance or protest, these comments do not provide any alternatives to expressing resistance or even discontent with a canceled person. Discourse on cancel culture being problematic also included comments on 'cancel culture's' inability to effectively apply consequences.

Canceling does not work.

The final theme present in the discourse from Rodriguez's case points out the consequences of canceling are not enough to stop a person from using their public platform. Focused on the Rodriguez case specifically, audiences discuss Rodriguez being canceled multiple times on Twitter indicating a lack of sufficient consequences for Rodriguez to learn from her behavior. Audiences point to the repetitive instances of Rodriguez being canceled as evidence that the practice is ineffective. First, a user takes a sarcastic approach to comment on attempts to cancel Rodriguez. The user tweets "Gina Rodriguez got like 6 punches on her cancel card by now, 4 more incidents and she gets a free sandwich." (Appendix A, Tweet #22). In this tweet the user adopts a sarcastic tone to point cancel culture's inability to dole out consequences by comparing Rodriguez's multiple offenses to stamp card reward system, joking that each time she is canceled she gets closer to a free sandwich. While this approach is meant to be humorous it also presents the attempts to cancel Rodriguez as steps to a reward for her. In a similar tone, another user also assumes that Rodriguez must benefit from being canceled.

The user tweeted, "Gina Rodriguez is canceled –again? Damn, she must love being dragged by Black Twitter" (Appendix A, Tweet #23). In this tweet, the user implies facetiously the only reason Rodriguez continues to commit microaggressions against the Black community is because she must enjoy getting canceled, or dragged, by Black Twitter. For this user, it does not make sense that an individual would be called out as many times as Rodriguez was called out without learning anything from it. So, the microaggressions Rodriguez committed must have been purposeful. While the users above employed a humorous approach other users were more serious.

In a more serious tone, one user tweeted, "The fact that Gina Rodriguez is still getting roles is the reason why I'll never believe in the power of cancel culture" (Appendix A, Tweet #24). Tweet #24 calls out Rodriguez's multiple offenses as well by pointing out that Rodriguez has had multiple opportunities to try to learn from her hurtful microaggressions. This user begrudgingly joins calls to cancel Rodriguez using all the incidents involving Rodriguez as evidence to cancel her fully.

All four of the tweets are evidence of audiences' frustrations with Rodriguez's multiple offenses. The audiences all point to various offenses committed by Rodriguez to explain their view that canceling someone is ineffective. Because the purpose of canceling someone is to de-platform them, it makes sense that audiences concluded it did not work in Rodriguez's case. With the overwhelming evidence that Rodriguez was called out multiple times for microaggressions against Black people in the entertainment industry without fully losing her platform, audiences can conclude that canceling someone does not work the way people hope it will when they call out cancel targets on Twitter.

Case #2: Chris Harrison

The second cancel case examined in this essay follows the long-standing host of ABC's *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette* franchises, Chris Harrison. Harrison recently stepped down as host after defending a former contestant when photos of her at an antebellum-themed party surfaced during *The Bachelor's* 25th season. The season, which featured the first Black-identifying bachelor, ended with the bachelor Matt James in a relationship with contestant Rachael Kirkconnell. As the season progressed, allegations about Kirkconnell's past racism permeated social media. Included in the allegations were photos of Kirkconnell at an "Old South" themed fraternity party in college. Her antebellum dress and further discussions about her actions and ignorance led to the couple's split.

When asked to weigh in on the photo, Chris Harrison asked fans of the show ("bachelor nation") to grant Kirkconnell forgiveness. In the live interview with former Black-identifying bachelorette Rachel Lindsay, Harrison stated

> "we all need to have a little grace, a little understanding, a little compassion. Because I have seen some stuff online—this judge, jury, executioner thing where people are just tearing this girl's life apart and diving into life, her parents, her parents' voting record… I haven't heard Rachael speak on this yet. Until I actually hear this woman have a chance to speak, who am I to say any of this? I saw a picture of her at a sorority party five years ago, and that's it" (Bonos, 2021).

In the interview, Harrison also states that he is not the "woke police" (extratv, 2021) and questions if Kirkconnell would face the same criticism at the time of the party in 2018. Harrison's response disheartened fans of the show and former contestants. While Lindsay

candidly discussed the historical context of the pain the photo caused in the interview, Harrison

brushed the actions as naivety from young women who were having fun.

After facing significant criticism following the interview, Harrison apologized and immediately

stepped away from his role as host. Following other celebrities facing cancellation, including

Rodriguez, Harrison posted a few lengthy apologies to his Instagram account. Lindsay reported

that Harrison offered her a personal apology during a phone call shortly after the video (extraTV,

2021). Harrison also apologized publicly as a guest on Good Morning America. It was also

announced during the Good Morning America video that Harrison was working with a race

educator and strategist, as well as a prominent Black sociologist Michael Eric Dyson (Bonos,

2021). Harrison's retirement sparked a conversation about the "cancel culture" mob on Twitter.

As the showrunners tried to distance themselves from Harrison's controversy, they replaced

Harrison with a cohort of former contestants. They tried diversifying their hosts, starting with the

final episode of season 25 hosted by Emmanuel Acho, author of *Uncomfortable Conversations*

with a Black Man. Former bachelorettes Taysia Adams and Katelyn Bristowe co-hosted

subsequent seasons of *The Bachelorette.* Finally, former bachelor Jesse palmer hosted the 26th

season of *The Bachelor.* At the time of writing, ABC had not announced a permanent host for

future television show seasons.

Framework

Discursive practices

The primary discursive practice is also the call to cancel Harrison. In Harrison's case,

however, the calls to cancel him came in the form of appeals to have Harrison fired as host of

The Bachelor. Most users point out that Harrison is no longer deserving of his position. One user

tweeted, "While Chris Harrison stepping aside is a step, his ability to unlearn those troubling

beliefs can't be unlearned overnight. Therefore, he should be replaced" (Appendix B, Tweet #1).

This user is clear that Harrison needs to step away from the position entirely, not just for an

episode or two. Another user points to Harrison's *Good Morning America* interview tagging the

show's Twitter account. They tweeted, "claiming this "isn't who he is" doesn't fix your Chris

Harrison problem. It is past time for him to go." (Appendix B, Tweet #2). This user argues

Harrison is a problem for the show and based on the user tweeting this directly to the franchise

indicates a need for them to fire Harrison. Finally, one user tweeted, "Chris Harrison CANNOT

remain the host of The Bachelor franchise #FireChrisHarrison" (Appendix B, Tweet #3). This

tweet echoes other statements urging ABC to fire Harrison. The user is succinct in saying

Harrison cannot continue hosting the show. The user also employs a hashtag to add their tweet to

a collection on Twitter to simplify the main idea of their tweet: to support calls to fire Chris

Harrison. Overall, the tweets focus on the consequence the cancel group wanted to see. The

arguments were varied, but all contributed to the same initiative, which was to get Harrison fired.

Notably, in this case, usage of the term cancel was not found. Instead, users focused on

specific inappropriate behaviors or desired outcomes as the call to cancel. The anti-cancel culture

audience still interprets this focus on behavior as an act of cancel culture according to audiences

defending Harrison, and many users still called out "cancel culture" on Harrison's behalf.

Harrison pointed out in his apology that he was canceled for perpetuating racist ideology by

excusing it. In one statement, Harrison wrote, "my intentions were to ask for grace in offering

[Kirkconnell] an opportunity to speak on her own behalf. What I now realize I have done is

cause harm by wrongly speaking in a manner that perpetuates racism, and for that I am so deeply

sorry" (Harrison, 2021a). In a later statement, Harrison also explains, "by excusing historical

racism, I defended it" (Harrison, 2021b). He went on to express shame over how uninformed and

wrong his statements were. He also thanked those who reached out to "help him on his path to anti-racism" and promised to try to evolve into a person that lives up to the expectations of his audience.

In owning his mistakes, Harrison exposes a widespread practice: dismissing racism rather than calling it out. Because discursive practices are recurrent linguistic and socio-cultural practices through which dominant realities are produced (Foucault, Foss & Gill), the discursive practice of dismissing and minimizing racism serves the dominant US culture. In Harrison's case, he specifically points to his lack of proper education on the racist past of the US which led to a misunderstanding of Kirkconnell's actions. Harrison was never educated on the "antebellum south," referring to the period before the American Civil War when the agricultural industry in the US relied on slave labor from enslaved Black people. As a result, he could not understand the problem with Kirkconnell attending an antebellum south-themed party. Further, from his misinformed position, Harrison spoke with conviction that there was nothing wrong with Kirkconnell's actions. This perspective perpetuated racism and, through the discourse surrounding Harrison's case, exposed the dominant perspective because many comments on Twitter indicate the same uninformed understanding of Kirkconnell's actions.

Many Twitter comments minimize Harrison's actions. For example, one user tweeted, "Chris Harrison lost his job because he said a Bachelor contestant might have grown as a person since making a mistake in college. Society is going GREAT, you guys" (Appendix B, Tweet #4). This user minimizes Harrison's uniformed perspective to his plea for audiences to give Kirkconnell grace. This user employs sarcasm at the end of their tweet to indicate that Harrison stepping down as host over his statements reflects poorly on society. Another user opposed any wrongdoing, tweeting, "The demise/replacement of Chris Harrison over a 100% bogus charge of

racism may seem trivial, but it is a seminal moment in the institutionalization of Woke/PC

insanity, and the total castration of the white male. It is also a very stupid decision ratings-wise.

#BachelorNation" (Appendix B, Tweet #5). Despite Harrison's admission to unintentionally

perpetuating racism, this user argues there was no racism in Harrison's statements. Tweet #5's

user also calls criticism of Harrison "Woke/PC insanity" and claims it indicates a metaphorical

"castration of the white male." This statement treats Harrison as a victim of an overly sensitive

public that wants to emasculate him rather than a person who is apologetic for the racially

insensitive comments they made. Both tweets minimize Harrison's responsibility for perpetuating

the dismissal of racism and continue the pattern of dismissive behavior, highlighting the effect of

dismissal.

Rules

Rules in Harrison's case exist on two levels. Like Rodriguez's case, both written and

unwritten rules affect Harrison's case. The written rules mainly develop from the contracts each

contestant must sign to participate in the franchise. One central rule that led to the events getting

Harrison canceled is the show's rule regarding contestant interviews. According to reports from

Kaufman (2018), the show is pre-recorded and typically done filming by the time the audience is

viewing it on TV. However, contractual obligations prevent contestants from engaging in any

interviews about the show until the finale has aired to avoid spoilers. Kaufman (2018) also

reports that contestants were discouraged from sharing their political affiliations on the show.

Because of these rules, Kirkconnell could not speak about her political affiliations and beliefs on

the show or make any public statements about her social media behaviors at the time of

Harrison's interview. These restrictions make Harrison the only person attached to the show that

can be interviewed regarding the show while the season is airing. These restrictions led to

Harrison's interview in the first place and his comments. Which sparked the Twitter debate on 'cancel culture' once again. From the Twitter discourse, another unwritten rule has become the topic of discourse for many Twitter users.

While the specifics of certain rules were difficult to abstract from the discourse, there was a general tone that Harrison was racist, and he should not have been. For example, one user tweeted, "all he had to do was show up to introduce some rose ceremonies for a few weeks every year and he made $600k PER EPISODE. Yet he couldn't manage to just shut his mouth and not be racist!!!" (Appendix B, Tweet #6). This user expressed frustration at Harrison for violating the rule not to be racist, which ruined an easy, high-paying career. Other users felt Harrison's actions were representative of his true feelings. One user tweeted, "he came into the Rachel Lindsay interview with racist, Fox News, white grievance talking points about "the Woke Police." That isn't a mistake. That's a worldview. #TheBachelor" (Appendix B, Tweet #7). This user indicated Harrison sharing his worldview violated the do not be a racist rule and outed him as a racist person. The remaining tweets indicating wrongdoing by Harrison were vague in the specific rule violation he committed. Other users denied any wrongdoing by Harrison. However, as a competing discourse, certain audiences seemed to interpret Harrison's apology as a more serious rule violation.

In contrast to the perceived rule violation leading to his cancellation, Twitter users called out Harrison for apologizing to audiences for using his platform to dismiss racism. Most users went as far as calling Harrison a coward because he apologized. One user tweeted, "Chris Harrison's treatment is absurdly unjust and insane on every level, but he apologized and caved to the mob so he isn't worth defending" (Appendix B, Tweet #8). This user admits wanting to defend Harrison but claims Harrison does not deserve it since he apologized. Another user

claimed in a tweet, "identity politics took over the Chris Harrison debate, and instead of standing

up to the mob, 'The Bachelor' host has pathetically folded" (Appendix B, Tweet #9). This user

expresses the rule violation that occurred through Harrison's response to "the mob" of users who

wanted an apology. The user implies that the rule, when faced with being canceled, is to stand up

for yourself or double down. Admitting any wrongdoing or apologizing indicates the person is

pathetic. Other users echo thoughts that Harrison should have backed up his comments rather

than apologizing. Two similar tweets encourage backing up statements with vigor. The first

tweet, "Chris Harrison should have just told everyone to F*** off... They aren't going to let him

back as host and aren't going to 'forgive' him anyway.. Why grovel. Jeez." (Appendix B, Tweet

#10). In a very similar sentiment, another user tweeted "when you apologize to the woke mob

you're still going to get canceled anyway. Just look at Piers Morgan vs. Chris Harrison. You

might as well just say fuck you and keep your dignity." (Appendix B, Tweet #11). Both users

reiterated that when faced with cancellation, the best thing to do is reinforce the ideas that

triggered your cancellation. From these users' perceptions, Harrison apologized out of obligation

to an audience that canceled him regardless, so the apology was purposeless.

Overall, different audiences perceived rule violations from Harrison's behavior. On one

side, the audience felt Harrison defending a contestant's racist actions violated a rule that these

audience members felt was not difficult to follow in the first place. Harrison's invocation of

terms like "woke police" came from a place that the cancel group felt was more genuine than his

apology. While plenty of audience members came to Harrison's defense by minimizing or

outright denying Harrison's actions contributed to racism, a third perspective is represented. At

this third end to the discourse regarding rules, the audience felt Harrison was a coward and a

pushover for apologizing to the community that attempted to cancel him. The culmination of

each side of the discourse on rules represents the discursive struggle to understand and apply

unwritten rules when disciplining others. Like the Rodriguez case, audiences do not agree on

what rules Harrison broke and how the canceled person should respond.

Power & Role

In this case, Harrison is a locus of power because of his role as host of the show. The host

role has imbued power, and after 19 years of guiding hopeful young adults through the process

of finding love, Harrison is granted the utmost authority on all things *Bachelor-related*. The

discourse around Harrison's case seems to follow moments when Harrison contributes to the

discourse. It begins with Harrison's interview. Harrison owns control of the discourse as the only

person able and willing to give interviews while the season is airing. As a result, Harrison's

interview with Rachel Lindsay reflected his power to make others listen. In the interview,

Harrison spoke uninterrupted in defense of Kirkconnell. Harrison used his platform and the

interview space to say that he did not think Kirkconnell did anything wrong by posting. He

criticized the "woke police" for being so hard on Kirkconnell, and he defended her by claiming

audiences did not criticize her when it occurred. Harrison also showed a critical

misunderstanding of the historical context of the Antebellum South, which is at the root of the

controversy. Audiences were quick to point out the position of power Harrison showed in the

interview. One user tweeted, "Chris Harrison ranting for 13 minutes about "cancel culture" and

"woke police" to Rachel Lindsay, demanding to know "WHOS IS SHE?" to decide what is

racist…was disgusting. And telling. He jumped into action to protect a white woman's feelings--

WHILE belittling a black woman." (Appendix B, Tweet #12). This user calls out the power

relations in Harrison's ability to make others listen and shape perceptions of the events affecting

a show contestant when she was not speaking herself. This user also points out Harrison's choice

to use that power to defend Kirkconnell while telling Lindsay it was not her place to speak out on the matter. While subtle, Harrison's comments reinforce the silencing of oppression and oppressed voices to protect White fragility.

Regarding shaping the interpretation of Kirkconnell's posts, Harrison's reaction tells people of the same in-group and people who relate to the show how to act. Using this power, he completely dismisses the racist actions as young people having fun, despite the pain caused by their actions. He also invokes terms like PC culture and the woke police. He employs a historical emphasis on honoring traditions, all of which are commonly relied on to defend or dismiss racist actions. Harrison's dismissal of racism empowers audiences to minimize or dismiss racism and interpret the events as unimportant. Audiences then shape the discussion on the merit of Harrison stepping down from the franchise. His apology sparks a new contest of power and audience members who could no longer rely on Harrison to reinforce their beliefs. These audience members did not accept that he did anything wrong and instead reinforced their beliefs by either dismissing Harrison's apology as something he did out of obligation or attacking his character because he countered his original statements.

In this case, we see Twitter users calling Harrison out for his comments in this interview and his treatment of Lindsay. This call-out again challenges the dominant group's perspective. In Harrison's case, the dominant ideology gets reflected in statements claiming Harrison did not do anything wrong in his interview. Many people resonated with his initial statements speaking out against a new "woke" society. When audiences began to use Twitter to talk back to that dominant ideology, they attempted to reclaim some of that power. Harrison acknowledging wrongdoing and stepping down from his role as the host gives the cancel group leverage in the power

struggle. However, the dominant group reinforces their ideology and labels Harrison a traitor rather than "giving in," or more accurately, giving power to the oppressed group in this case. To illuminate discipline, in this case, the most potent example of disciplinary attempts operates through Foucault's notion that when engaged with surveillance, society will learn from how the people around them are treated. In Harrison's case, the way the anti-cancel culture group treats him after apologizing for his behavior shows others how to respond and the consequences for responding in the same way.

Knowledge

In Harrison's case, knowledge and sense-making rely on audiences trying to understand what happened. The Twitter discourse features users trying to determine who needs to be disciplined by figuring out who is to blame for Harrison's loss of employment. According to Harrison's statements and statements from ABC, Harrison voluntarily stepped down from his duties as host of the show to engage in personal growth/learning. However, audiences still searched for a deeper understanding of the situation and for someone to blame for the result. Like the Rodriguez case, audiences blamed an anonymous "cancel culture" for Harrison stepping away and began to make conclusions about canceling as a practice. Interestingly, the discussion focused on the toxicity of "cancel culture" and the lack of room for mistakes in the public eye. First, users discussed the negative impact of " cancel culture " on Harrison. One user called Harrison's case the "worst example of cancel culture you can think of" (Appendix B, Tweet #13). Another user claimed, "watching PC and cancel culture publicly castrate Bachelor host Chris Harrison is one of the most humiliating things I've ever witnessed" (Appendix B, Tweet #14). One person withdrew their application to be a contestant on the show, tweeting, "I am withdrawing my application to be on the show. I won't support the leftist media's cancel culture

that ruins people's lives" (Appendix B, Tweet #15). This line of discourse highlighted the adverse effects of cancel culture. Although hyperbolic, one user equated canceling to public castration and a humiliating experience. According to other users, "cancel culture" ruins people's lives, and when discussing Harrison's case specifically, one user felt it was among the worst of "cancel culture's" examples. The Twitter community speaking on Harrison's case did not see the benefits of canceling him. Like the users who could conclude about "cancel culture" and canceling through this example, other users were able to produce knowledge about the stifling effects of cancel culture.

In a remarkable example of Clark's (2021) definition of "cancel culture" as an "unfounded fear of silencing and censorship" (p. 89), users immediately refer to their fears that people cannot speak freely and do not have room to learn from mistakes. One user tweeted, "I am so sad and angry at the outlash he has received for speaking openly and honestly. I am tired of cancel culture. People need to be able to speak." (Appendix B, Tweet #16). This user feels Harrison was speaking openly and was disciplined for it, communicating to others that they cannot speak openly or freely without facing discipline. Another user tweeted, "there is a huge difference between being uneducated and being racist but obviously no one wants to educate people, only condemn them" (Appendix B, Tweet #17). This user points to Harrison's actions from unintentional ignorance but assesses the "cancel culture's" tendency to condemn someone's actions rather than educate an individual on their actions to facilitate growth. Finally, another user defends Harrison and produces knowledge that "it's okay for others to speak their mind but it's not okay for him to speak his. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion" (Appendix B, Tweet #18). Like the Rodriguez case, Twitter users begin a tangential conversation over the power of cancel culture and focus their efforts and attention on creating space for it.

Discussion & Conclusions

As canceling has grown as a practice, and concerns over "cancel culture" have become widespread, this communication phenomenon has transformed from an attempt at disciplining harmful dominant practices of racism to a dichotomous view of canceling and #cancelulture. In other words, the discursive act of canceling began as resistance to dominant ideologies viewed as harmful and oppressive. Still, my analysis demonstrates that the discourse on Twitter reinforces dichotomous ideological standpoints regarding racism in the United States. Members supporting the dominant ideology target the cancel approach, label it a toxic byproduct of "woke" social media and deem it a practice that members of the in-group should not use. As discursive practices, roles, rules, power and knowledge appear in the discourse, meta-communication about these components stand out as anchor points in the data. In this discussion, I unpack the similarities and differences in each case, clarify the implications according to Foss and Gill's (1987) framework, and conclude with limitations and final reflections. Before discussing key findings, I briefly review the framework and summarize each cancel case.

The epistemic rhetoric framework outlined five distinct components for a rhetorical analysis adapted from a Foucauldian perspective. The framework includes five concepts: discursive practices, roles, rules, power, and knowledge to analyze separately and illustrate how the concepts inform one another to produce a rhetorical artifact (Foss & Gill, 1989). In this study, the primary artifacts are two compendiums of tweets about two cases of canceling. In each case a perceived rule violation initiates the discursive practice of canceling. Canceling, in turn, leads to contested power struggles as Twitter users engage in discourse regarding the cancel cases and "cancel culture." Competing perspectives prompt a knowledge creation process that abandons each case's individualized conclusions and shifts to the broader cancel culture debate.

Audience-generated discourse analyzed through the epistemic rhetoric framework develops an understanding of cancel cases and the conditions that create them. Additionally, the audience-generated discourse results in a similar rhetorical process despite the different circumstances surrounding each case.

First, the two cases in this essay feature unique cancel attempts separated by time, offense, and victim, but incidentally, they produce similar discourse from Twitter users. The first case follows a young Latinx television and film actress and the consequences of publicly singing the n-word in a popular hip-hop song. The Harrison case follows an older White male television show host as he navigates the repercussions of perpetuating racist ideology by dismissing racism. Using an epistemic approach to dissect the Twitter discourse of each case shows the underlying conditions of discipline at work in canceling. It also emphasizes the discipline attempts surrounding "cancel culture" as a valid approach to apply consequences online.

After committing a few microaggressions, Rodriguez became the subject of canceling on Twitter. At the time, Rodriguez was not actively engaged in projects which made the execution of canceling her difficult. She was not acting and most of her upcoming projects were from her production company at its earliest stages. The audience weighed opinions of her role against the perceived rule violations and the consistency of calling out similar offenses. Initially, the power in this case was mainly in the hands of the audience members, who were tired of calling Rodriguez out for her multiple transgressions and moved to cancel her. Alternatively, other audience members felt Rodriguez was a good person who made a mistake. Interestingly, the discourses of knowledge consensus produced from this case focused on the validity of a cancel approach rather than drawing any specific conclusions or creating knowledge about Rodriguez.

Harrison's case differed in several ways. After using the discursive practice of dismissing racism to defend a person he was close to, Harrison also became the subject of canceling on Twitter. Harrison was the long-standing host and public authority of ABC's *The Bachelor*. In this role, Harrison's authority, accompanied by the lack of media engagement from any other parties at the time of his interview, gives Harrison immense power in creating knowledge about the incident during his interview. With his power, Harrison reinforced racist ideology, leading to his cancelation. However, Harrison's apology initiated unique discourse on rule violations. In contradistinction to those who called for Harrison's cancellation, this audience felt empowered by Harrison's initial statements and called Harrison out as a coward for apologizing and stepping down from his role as host. A more significant portion of users discussing Harrison's case followed the ideologies he portrayed in his initial statements. Therefore, the knowledge produced from this case focused on blaming "cancel culture" for Harrison's decision to step away from *The Bachelor* franchise and reopen the discourse of canceling as a valid approach to resist to harmful dominant ideologies.

The cancel cases of Harrison and Rodriguez have some significant similarities. Both celebrities committed acts that audiences perceived as racist in the public sphere. Despite widespread apologies, the audiences in each case used the canceled individual as an example of a broader systemic issue that needed vocalization. In calling out the individuals that contributed to the systemic racism being resisted in these cases, the oppressed groups who call them out attempt to claim some power to control their realities. They attempt to influence the actions of others in power to address the behaviors in a meaningful way. In response to the pressures of what is later named "cancel culture" audience members who subscribe to the dominant group ideology counter the cancel group's claims and further invalidate the cancel approach to maintain the

status quo. As the discourse shifts to the validity of canceling as a practice to call out systemic

oppression, the original claims to power are lost or abandoned in favor of the more pressing

cause. While the discourse follows this format in both cases, I also found distinct differences.

Another key difference lies in the ambiguity of canceling in Rodriguez's case. In

Rodriguez's case, the audience rapidly notices the lack of consistency with cancel culture. This

line of discourse primarily questions who can determine the targets of cancelation, and how do

they proceed? Audiences bring up several other prominent individuals who have sung the n-word

without getting canceled. It is not clear if this discourse intends to defend Rodriguez or

encourage more canceling of non-Black individuals who use the term. Moreover, several users

recognize the toxicity of cancel culture and the benefit of canceling Rodriguez, creating more

ambiguity within the discourse. Overall, discourse against cancel culture outweighs discourse in

which audience members express a gray area in Rodriguez's case. However, there was no

ambiguity in the counterarguments against cancelation in the data collected for the Harrison case.

Instead, in Harrison's case, his initial supporters also employ cancelation tactics. In this

way, Harrison gets canceled twice. First, audiences call Harrison out for being racist in a format

like Rodriguez's case. Then, when Harrison apologizes and admits wrongdoing, he is canceled a

second time by audiences who feel he is not worthy of defense after giving in to the cancel

culture. However, the second cancellation looks different from the typical process because no

power struggle is involved. Neither group is willing to defend Harrison's actions during the

second cancelation, but the groups differ on which action should result in canceling.

Beyond those differences, the cancellation targets and time of cancellation were also

important factors. As a young Latinx woman whose celebrity developed as the lead actress of a

telenovela-style romantic comedy television show, Rodriguez's audience mainly consists of

viewers of the show, with nothing to indicate contributors to the discourse extend beyond her

fans. This is not the case for Harrison as contributors to discourse extends beyond fans of his

show. As result significantly less discourse surrounds Rodriguez's case. Also, her cancellation

was relatively early in the broader discourse on cancel culture by individuals and newspaper

outlets.

On the other hand, with Harrison being a White man who ended his 19-year career over

his comments, the impact is more widespread. Some contributors to the discourse openly admit

to defending Harrison without being *Bachelor* fans. Individuals liken Harrison's treatment to the

"castration of the white male" indicating Harrison is a stand-in for the white male perspective,

which is a dominant in US culture. Harrison's case also comes after terms like "cancel culture"

enter the social sphere as a vague threat to civil liberties. All of these factors contribute to the

variations in discourse. Despite these differences, discourse rapidly shifts from the details of

cancel cases to the perils of #cancelculture in both cases. This shift is a central locus for power

contention as audiences attempt to direct the narrative in one way or another. Now that I have

identified the comparative qualities of these cancel cases, I discuss three key outcomes abstracted

from the framework application.

Key Findings

According to Foss and Gill (1987), using Foucault's concepts of power and episteme

alongside this framework should contribute three digestible implications: (1) how discourse

creates knowledge, (2) what effects on practice emerge from analysis, and (3) which foundations

are at the center of the discursive formation. The formation of their framework also relies on

Foucault's concepts of power to aid these conclusions. As a result, the Foucauldian foundations

present multiple levels of discourse. The cases feature an intricate power relationship between

the cancel group and the anti-cancel culture group. Both cases follow a similar process, creating the same effects on practice and stemming from the same foundations. I explore each of these findings before an evaluation of limitations and conclusion in the remaining sections.

First, the knowledge production process starts with discussing the details of a cancel case. Users monitor the knowledge claims produced from Twitter discourse. The discourse surrounding each event is the rhetorical starting point for knowledge about canceling. In the discourse centered on each case's discursive practices and rules, Twitter users judge the details of the cases. The discourse rapidly shifts as audiences focus on judging #cancelculture instead. This shift focuses the narrative on toxicity and negativity present in cancel culture rather than the merit of each case. As a result, users monitor engagement in #cancelculture rather than the knowledge claims created through discourse on details of the case itself. So, the canceling process begins as a social critique but becomes a counter-critique on the ethics of a cancel approach. The shift in discourse directly impacts evaluations of power and knowledge within the framework. In monitoring the effects of cancellation, audiences interpret a vulnerable state of humiliation for the canceled person. In these cases, interpretation of humiliation does not come from the canceled person's identification of embarrassment, but the audience's empathetic reflection of the situation. Monitoring social media for claims of knowledge about cancel cases and "cancel culture" leads to different forms of knowledge based on the internalization of each case.

For instance, at the first level of discourse, users monitored the knowledge claims about the details of Rodriguez's case. Except for one person, audiences generally interpret her use of the n-word as a violation of some kind. However, audiences struggle to agree on the severity of the violation. Audiences also struggle to agree that Rodriguez deserved consequences based on

examples of other Latinx individuals participating in the same offense. At the second level, users

monitor knowledge claims that center on Rodriguez's case to frame debates on cancel culture. As

a reminder, the audience shifts the narrative to claim cancel culture is not real, is toxic, or is not

effective in delivering consequences. In Harrison's case, rule violations were more ambiguous.

At the first level of discourse surrounding details of his case, audiences interpret Harrison's

taken-for-granted dismissal of racism as a harmful discursive practice. Audiences who align with

Harrison's perspective contest the racism. Harrison becomes an example of the power "cancel

culture" has to destroy a White male. The discourse briefly shifts to the toxicity of cancel culture,

until Harrison admits responsibility for perpetuating racism.

When Harrison effectively sides with his cancellers by admitting his responsibility for

perpetuating racism the third level of discourse emerges. The third level of discourse focuses

discourse about Harrison's betrayal of his belief system which resonated with many of his

supporters. The group that initially defends Harrison then engages in the same tactics as

canceling by calling him out on social media and abandoning his cause. Interestingly, the anti-

cancel culture group does not apply the cancel culture label to those actions, though they are

similar, because they derive from an anti-cancel culture audience. In both cases audiences act

upon the knowledge they retain from the contested attempts to discipline each other, leading to

the second key finding of this research.

As a second outcome, both the cancel group and the anti-cancel culture group attempt to

discipline others to not engage in a specific behavior. The discipline in each case is centered

around shaming individuals for their contributions to the discourse. The cancel groups in these

cases mobilize around examples of racism and microaggressions. Publicly calling out racism and

microaggressions is an attempt at regulating behavior. In anti-cancel culture discourse, audiences

contest the identification of racism and microaggressions. As seen in Rodriguez's and Harrison's cases specifically, the anti-cancel culture discourse dismisses their actions, denies racism, or qualifies the actions as a lesser offense to contest the cancel group's claims.

Specifically, in Rodriguez's case, the cancel group centers discourse on the anti-Black tendencies they perceive in Rodriguez's public actions and statements. They publicly call out these actions to produce a narrative of Rodriguez's actions as unacceptable. At the second level of discourse, the anti-cancel culture group reframes the narrative. They dismiss Rodriguez's microaggressions and critique cancel culture, focusing on the adverse effects only. As a result, the anti-cancel culture audiences objectify the amplification of resistant voices as a culture that thrives on negativity. In Harrison's case, the cancel group centers the discourse on the harmful effects of Harrison's comments. In Harrison's case, the anti-cancel culture group does not give any power to these claims. At the second level of discourse, they dismiss Harrison's microaggressions and reframe the narrative to critique cancel culture until Harrison apologizes. Then the discourse shifts back to the harmful effects of Harrison's actions as the anti-cancel culture group re-interprets them as detrimental to their power position. Specifically, the anti-cancel culture group interprets Harrison's actions as active participation in cancel culture, which undermines the arguments defending him that stem from this group.

In both Rodriguez's and Harrison's cancel cases, the anti-cancel culture groups point out the flaws of cancel culture to attempt to regulate engagement in canceling as a direct challenge to the cancel claims. While there were no examples of the initial cancel group countering the flaws of the practice, new examples of cancel discourse continue to emerge. The continuation of this practice is evidence that the cancel group contests the claims of the anti-cancel culture group.

The contested disciplinary attempts at the center of these cancel cases expose foundations, which I explore in the outcome.

    The third finding of this research is the underlying foundations of these cancel cases. In these cases, the underlying foundations at work are the identity threats interpreted by members of each group. The cancel groups in these cases interpret identity threats through microaggressions and racism. The identity threat is serious enough for the cancel group to call it out as a form of oppression they are experiencing. The anti-cancel culture group creates a competing narrative by expressing threats to identity in a few ways. First, the anti-cancel culture group perceives freedom of speech, and freedom from censorship as significant identity threats. The anti-cancel culture group wields these freedoms to avoid the demand for accountability created by canceling someone. In a critical exercise of power, the anti-cancel culture group leverages their threats to freedom as more important than the identity threats experienced by the cancel group. Second, the anti-cancel culture group identifies threats in the hyperbolized interpretations of the effects of cancel culture. The ability to identify embarrassment and humiliation in others and the desire to avoid such feelings serve as an additional foundation for the anti-cancel culture group. They wield their fear of humiliation as motivation to steer the narrative away from a practice that would trigger those feelings.

    The cancel group in Rodriguez's case calls her out multiple times. The perceived abuse of Rodriguez's platform to highlight her interpretation of Latinx issues at the expense of Black people creates an identity threat to the cancel group. In Harrison's case, neglecting to acknowledge the perception of racism in Kirkconnell's actions serves as an identity threat to the cancel group. In both cases, the cancel offenses threaten identity by invalidating the lived experiences of BIPOC audiences. Committing actions that are interpreted as racist by audiences

also disrupts the public perception of Rodriguez and Harrison and the cancel group determines that they should share that information.

In contrast, threats to the anti-cancel culture group rely on the perception that the cancel approach threatens their rights and feelings of security. In Rodriguez's case, the anti-cancel culture group interprets inconsistencies in canceling over the rule violation. Inconsistent canceling threatens free speech and individual perception of safety because individuals cannot predict if their will encourage cancelation or censorship. In Harrison's case, in addition to users calling out the inability to "make mistakes" when exercising free speech is discussed. Anti-cancel culture audiences use the term mistake to describe discursive practices which are commonly called out in cancel discourse. The anti-cancel culture group perceives calling out these mistakes as censorship. Finally, Harrison's anti-cancel culture group conflates his cancel case as the "total castration of the white male" and identifies it as one of the worst examples of cancel culture. This emphasis on the embarrassment stemming from cancelation is an expression of a threat to their own identity as they see themselves in Harrison.

Overall, the discourse presents some significant implications which explain the surveillance and discipline experiences through contested power claims on Twitter about these cases. The effects also demonstrate how Twitter discourse gets from canceling as a practice to "cancel culture" as a label and the foundations behind the rapid change in discourse. Ultimately as audiences monitor knowledge claims about canceling and "cancel culture," they interpret threats to their identities which motivate them to attempt to discipline one another to not engage in certain practices. As a result, the delicate and complex social justice issues contested through debates on "cancel culture" bifurcate. The anti-cancel culture group's power allows them to shift the discourse from details about each cancel case to discourse about the ethical implications of

canceling as a practice. This framework worked well to encourage clarity in multiple areas of the complex power dynamics exercised in canceling.

Foss and Gill's (1987) epistemic rhetoric framework enhances understandings of Foucault's concepts of surveillance and discipline concerning cancel cases. Most of the Twitter data encompasses multiple components, so it is difficult to make specific distinctions between them. However, it is useful to highlight the components and remain conscious of the intertwined details of power relationships. In particular, the components of rules, power and knowledge confirm that surveillance occurs in cancel cases because users monitor one another for rule violations and call them out. Additionally, the framework's discursive practices and power components confirm discipline takes place as Twitter users engage in canceling to create accountability and as opposing users challenge the cancel approach. Four of the five components of this framework are intricately intertwined and emphasized in the Twitter data. To this end, Foss and Gill's (1987) epistemic rhetoric framework nestled in Foucault's theory of episteme generates specific parameters to grasp canceling as a site of contested power. In this conceptual framework, Foss and Gill's (1987) attention to identifying the knowledge production process, the practical implications, and the underlying foundations in each case also inform the significance of a Foucauldian approach to each cancel case. However, the framework has gaps that contribute to limitations on the results of these data in each case, which are explained next.

Limitations

One limitation of the Foss and Gill (1989) framework is attempting to understand and unpack the roles in each case as the framework defines them. Audiences did not bring up the roles of each cancel target in the discourse as much as their identities. Roles should be analyzed from a structural perspective according to the framework. More specifically, one's role refers to

the affordances granted by a power position. According to Foss and Gill (1989), a role has little to do with the person fulfilling it, and more to do with the taken-for-granted power that comes with that role. The role of a celebrity in US society does allow affordances concerning a built-in audience to share a message with. However, the positionality and identity of the canceled person intertwine with their power. It is incredibly difficult to separate identity and power in these cases. If scholars expanded this framework to examine how identity impacts a person's power, it would be a better tool to examine these cases of cancel culture. That being said, including identity in this framework would still leave some components of the discourse without a place.

In the Rodriguez case, audiences expressed arguments over whether her comments made her inherently anti-Black. Most commentators argue her comments do not make her anti-Black and explain that she is a good person who made a mistake. This information contributes to knowledge, but it does not fit within the category's parameters as it has more to do with a complex summation of Rodriguez's behavior prior to cancelation than knowledge produced through cancel discourse. It did not add to Rodriguez's inherent power to be a good person. It also did not indicate any kind of rule that was violated or upheld on behalf of Rodriguez. Much of the discourse is comparative, with users referring to Rodriguez as the "least anti-Black person there is" (Appendix A, Tweet #24) but does not seem to affect the larger conversation of "cancel culture" or indicate power for Rodriguez. This line of discourse simply did not fit neatly within the constraints of this framework.

Harrison's case also produced discourse that did not fit neatly into the constraints of this framework. Audiences evaluate Harrison's performance as host of *The Bachelor*. Arguments indicate he was an insignificant part of the show for some audiences, while others argue he was instrumental to the franchise. Comparisons were also drawn between Harrison and his successors

to amplify his performance in the role. Audiences' inclinations to see that Harrison was good or bad at his job did not fit within the framework. Although audiences reveal a new issue by questioning why anyone was invested in Harrison's resignation, it does not fit in any component of the framework. A subset of discourse emerged which came to the defense of or expressed support for past BIPOC leads and contestants of the show. Within these instances, it seems to be a subtle resistance to the overwhelming shaming for participation in cancel culture. Contributors to the discourse regarding Harrison's contributions as minimal and inconsequential to the franchise served to ask those upset about Harrison stepping down, why do you care about this case? Furthermore, supporting past BIPOC contestants and leads helps resist the dominating discourse around Harrison's awful treatment. The evaluation of Harrison's significance as host, and the recognition of difficult BIPOC experiences exposed through Harrison's cancel case point to a gap in the framework. The gap prevents this framework from accounting for meaningful discourse in this case. These fundamental elements do not fit within the framework, but this framework provides a consistent lens to conduct a comparative study between each case.

Using Twitter for data collection also has limitations. While it was imperative to study Twitter because canceling and discourse about #cancelculure primarily exist in the Twitter-sphere, the micro-blogging format introduces legitimate constraints to each user's message sharing capabilities. First, Twitter's mechanics constrain messages. Because Twitter restricts users to 280 characters per tweet, nuanced arguments are hard to come by. There is no realistic way of getting around the character limit on Twitter. So, the character restriction challenges users to communicate the core of their ideas without space for their thought process or justification. Twitter discourse also shows a focus on immediately broadcasting information that can coax attention in specific directions, leading to inconsistency in the contributing to topics.

With canceling specifically, users tend to mobilize around cancel cases, creating more attention for some cases than others. For example, the available tweets for Chris Harrison's cancel case are abundant, whereas available tweets about Rodriguez's case are more limited. The differing availability of data led to different parameters for data collection in the Harrison case. These factors likely produce a polarized view of cancel discourse more carefully teased out through other outlets. At the same time, #cancelculture is a Twitter-specific problem making it necessary to study Twitter discourse.

Twitter reflects the reality of the current knowledge production process. Even the lengthier, more nuanced think pieces and articles about #cancelculture rely on the polarized view of cancel cases created and explored on Twitter. Further, Twitter and other social media sites are loci of public discourse. As Ng (2021) points out, the ease of access to contribute to discourse provided by Twitter makes it an appealing option for individuals to express their views. The ease of access to information and opinions may not produce the most well-rounded thought on canceling and #cancelculture, but it informs the public's perceptions of the practice anyway. Finally, the limits on specific talking points did not equate to a lack of diversity in opinions of each cancel case. For this project's scope, building a case study about the actions prompting cancellation adds context to the Twitter discourse. Twitter discourse still reflects the bifurcated viewpoints of real people in a modern site of knowledge creation and contested power. So, while its micro-blogging format contributes to the polarized view of canceling and #cancelculture, its nature as the locus for canceling and #cancelculture requires its study. I introduce my conclusions in the next section with these considerations in mind.

Conclusions

In the final analysis, I explore three key findings from these cases which help elucidate the nature and effects of canceling. Users monitor each other on Twitter, which leads to both groups disciplining specific behaviors. The identity threats around social justice issues at the foundations of each case are motivators of said discipline. Canceling and "cancel culture" are contentious power struggles to control narratives of identity. The discourse rapidly shifts from the merit of cancel claims to the harmful effects of cancel culture. As the oppressed groups in these cases "talk back" to dominant practices, they trigger a power struggle. In the Rodriguez and Harrison cases, members who subscribe to the dominant ideologies which perpetuate racism and microaggressions in daily interactions discipline those who attempt to call out the oppressive behaviors.

At the beginning of "cancel culture" conversations, the pushback was gentler and focused on offering alternatives to canceling. In contrast, later conversations focused on exaggerated forms of the worst possible outcomes of the practice. The rapid shifts in power dynamics at play encourage the dominant culture to protect its ideologies while invalidating other perspectives on the issue. The contested power in these cases ultimately creates an understanding and impression that cancellation is not the right way to resist oppressive dominant ideology in the eyes of the dominant group. As a result, an important question remains: what is the right way?

In each case of canceling, power and resistance exist in a contentious dialectic structure through which the discourse reinforces dominant ideologies. By using Foucault's concepts of discipline, particularly within the context of surveillance, we can understand the attempts for dominant ideological power evident in these cases of canceling. Discipline attempts originate from a perspective of resistance to harmful ideologies like the racist actions called out in the examples in this study. While audiences produce some knowledge about the canceled

individuals, a pattern of synecdoche emerges whereby the case at hand becomes a stand-in for a whole "cancel culture." Once it becomes a conversation of cancel culture, the anti-cancel culture group attempts to discipline the act of canceling out of Twitter's discursive formation. While early attempts focus on portraying canceling as a waste of time, later attempts portray canceling as brutal humiliation. In these cases, the narrative shifts from disciplining an individual to arguing over how to fit into our society. The process of canceling thus becomes a recursive reinforcement of ideological conflict, as audiences struggle for power.

As a recommendation for future research, it would be insightful to approach discourse on cancel culture as an ideograph. McGee (1980) describes ideographs as abstract virtue statements which signal particular ideologies and, in turn, garner support for specific political positions. Because discourse on canceling and "cancel culture" tends to bifurcate into a dichotomous ideological argument, it may be worthwhile to explore how discourse from opposing ideological perspectives uses "cancel culture" to represent their political and social consciousness. Additionally, studying this phenomenon from Gramsci's (1971) hegemonic perspective would offer further understanding as members of the discursive formation engage in a consistent power struggle that ebbs and flows through gray areas of permissible tactics and tolerated oppression as perspectives collide.

Finally, one piece of this practice is left unanswered. When dominant groups label the practice of canceling as a culture, despite engaging in the same tactics, what does it mean for the resistance movement? Clark (2020) clarifies that labeling it a culture serves the dominant group because it frames the "unruly discourse" (p. 90) of canceling as a culture, making it easier to invalidate legitimate social critique. Interestingly, as we see with recent examples when the dominant culture wants to respond to threats using the same tactics as cancel groups, it is not

labeled a culture. For instance, after Carhartt instituted a vaccination requirement for all

employees, members of the dominant group began to call out Carhartt for threatening civil

liberties with their policy and discouraged others from buying their products (McCann, 2022).

Supporters of a Carhartt boycott view it as the effect of consumerism rather than a cancel culture.

As another example, when Will Smith violently interrupted Chris Rock's monologue with a slap

at the Oscars, members of the dominant group called the event traumatizing. They demanded

repercussions from the academy (Segal, 2022). Calling out Will Smith's behavior is simply

viewed as accountability for his public display of inappropriate behavior, not cancel culture.

Further research is necessary to explore this byproduct of the cancel culture debate.

Overall, I analyze the discourse of cancel culture through a Foucauldian power lens, using Foss

and Gill's (1987) conceptual framework. Through this analysis I find the discourse about these

cancel cases focuses more on identifying and reprimanding a "cancel culture" than canceling

individuals for specific behaviors. I study two cancel cases regarding racism: Gina Rodriguez

and Chris Harrison. These cases differ in subject, cancel offense, and treatment, but the anti-

cancel culture group in each case gained control of each narrative. The struggle for narrative

control is a result of a contentious power struggle over identity threats. With more people relying

on social media than ever, this phenomenon has become a common practice. While it starts as a

form of resistance for some users the practice is quickly invalidated for others' perception of its

toxicity and the cycle of canceling continues. Ultimately, this social media practice exposes the

complex underlying racial tensions in the United States and highlights the continuing struggle for

racial equity.

Appendix A

Tweets cited from the Rodriguez dataset

1. [@FredTJoseph]. (2019, October 15). *Finally got enough evidence to fully cancel gina rodriguez* [Tweet]. Twitter.
2. [@BrittTorrez]. (2019, December 29). *In 2020 can Latinxs collectively agree to finally cancel Gina Rodriguez and focus on supporting the ever superior Gina Torres* [Tweet]. Twitter.
3. [@plantnard]. (2019, October 15). *Gina Rodriguez's "apology" isn't even an apology! She doesn't acknowledge any harm she's caused. What do you mean "if" you offended anyone? You obviously did so own up to it!! Your love the song or artist doesn't cancel your anti-blackness, Gina.* [Tweet]. Twitter.
4. [@FutbolSosa]. (2019, October 16). *Gina Rodriguez worked on a series that spoke on so many current issues. She's in the spotlight and knows about the "cancel culture". She should have known better.* [Tweet]. Twitter.
5. [@MICHAELGRAYS]. (2019, October 15). *doesn't matter if it's in a song, if you aren't black then you cannot say the n word! Cancel culture doesn't have the effect it should and gina rodriguez won't receive any repercussions for her constant anti blackness :/* [Tweet]. Twitter.
6. [@nexusjorge0]. (2019, October 16). *Non-Black people should definitely not say the n word but why try to "cancel" someone because of it?? Cancel culture is toxic, childish, and leaves no room for people to learn and grow from their mistakes. Gina Rodriguez does not represent Latinos and was totally in the wrong* [Tweet]. Twitter.
7. [@plantnard]. (2019, October 15). *I can't believe Gina Rodriguez went and cried on the radio saying she couldn't possibly be anti black and then has the gall to post herself saying a slur like the congnitive dissonance is astounding* [Tweet]. Twitter.
8. Greene, G. [@blackcanary21]. (2019, October 15). *I saw Gina Rodriguez trending and at 1ˢᵗ I was confused bc all I saw was peeps hating on her and not what she was getting all the hate for. Turns out this woman was just singing song lyrics. This shows how toxic cancel culture is and how people will find any little thing to tear* [Tweet]. Twitter.
9. [@SenpaiRetro]. (2019, October 22). *Y'all hypocritical as fuck. When Gina Rodriguez said the N word within the context of no hatred, and was just re singing a song. Y'all tried to cancel her. Takashi 69 with basically the same ethnic background did the same shit and spammed the N word. Yall ddnt say shit. Why??* [Tweet]. Twitter.
10. [@KayeVanessa]. (2019, October 15). *#ginarodriguez did nothing wrong, she was just having fun. Cancel culture is so stupid!* [Tweet]. Twitter.
11. [@xPaolaMuniz]. *In honor of Gina Rodriguez, a puertorican woman that's being shitted on for a dumbass reason and being attacked by cancel culture, I would just like to say: nigga* [Tweet]. Twitter.
12. [@AchmatX]. (2020, January 1). *@justinbieber is evidence that cancel culture only applies to women. There are countless videos of Justin using the N word and telling anti Black racist jokes. He deserves the same energy as Camila Cabello and Gina Rodriguez* [Tweet]. Twitter.

13. [@amyrerenese]. (2019, October 15). *I love how negros pick and choose which "non-negros" can say nigga. Y'all wanna cancel Gina Rodriguez but praise Cardi B, J Lo, Fat Joe and every other Latin person y'all like because of their proximity to hip hop.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

14. [@bdbilotta]. (2019, November 8). *Hey y'all listen up: CANCEL CULTURE IS NOT REAL. Gina Rodriguez was 'cancelled' for saying the n word AGAIN and posting it publicly. Backlash, 'cancellations', then nothing...she still gettin that @netflix money. So STOP PRETENDING CANCEL CULTURE IS DANGEROUS* [Tweet]. Twitter.

15. [@coraparasol]. (2019, October 15). *i know cancel culture isn't real bc gina rodriguez dows something racist like every 6 months and is still somehow relevant enough that we have to hear about it* [Tweet]. Twitter.

16. [@szascoloredwig]. (2019, October 15). *Y'all really be complaining about how "cancel culture" is toxic (and it's not even real), meanwhile ppl like gina rodriguez are still gonna have a whole career after publibly being antiBlack numerous times like ok* [Tweet]. Twitter.

17. [@RissaVoices]. (2019, October 19). *What is cancel culture? Why is everyone mad at Gina Rodriguez but no one upset about anything else like…pollution, inequality, housing crises, child labor, school shootings, etc?* [Tweet]. Twitter.

18. [@fons1107]. (2019, October 17). *yall give gina rodriguez so much attention as if your life depends on it when there's a whole genocide happening in syria and yemen that deserves more awareness...there's actual real world problems going on but yall feed into the toxic ass cancel culture* [Tweet]. Twitter.

19. [@5aluteMeImPaige]. (2019, October 16). *I don't care about this Gina Rodriguez thing, everyone is addicted to the thrill of feeling superior from cancel culture.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

20. [@claudiaadayani] (2019, November 3). *cancel culture is a literal plague. I'm not defending Gina Rodriguez by any means but people need to stop with matter-of-fact statements like 'this person is racist' 'this person is anti-black.' It takes more than tone deafness to truly be considered these things.*

21. [@kismetndreams] (2019, October 16). *also, we know cancel culture is counterproductive. cancel a person and suddenly their follower count skyrockets. so what? I'm still call 'em out. Gina Rodriguez and anybody tf else* [Tweet]. Twitter.

22. [@EricTrillman_]. (2019, October, 16). *Gina Rodriguez got like 6 punches on her cancel card by now, 4 more incidents and she gets a free sandwich* [Tweet]. Twitter.

23. [@notcapnamerica]. (2019, October 15). *Gina Rodriguez is canceled –again? Damn, she must love being dragged by Black Twitter.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

24. [@lovealy_t]. (2019, November 8). *The fact that Gina Rodriguez is still getting roles is the reason why I'll never believe in the power of cancel culture* [Tweet]. Twitter.

25. [@isag22]. (2019, October 15). *Can people please stop this stupid cancel culture. Gina Rodriguez is the nicest and least anti black person there is. Go get someone that truly is problematic. It was a song! Mistakes can be made* [Tweet]. Twitter.

Appendix B

Tweets cited from the Chris Harrison dataset

1. [@BrettSVergara]. (2021, February 15). *Hi #TheBachelor friends I won't be tweeting tonight in support of BIPOC viewers who've had an especially exhausting week. While Chris Harrison stepping aside is a step, his ability to unlearn those troubling beliefs can't be unlearned overnight. Therefore, he should be replaced.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

2. [@ksparky13]. (2021, March 4). *Hey @BachelorABC – a canned interview claiming this 'isn't who he is' doesn't fix your Chris Harrison problem. It is past time for him to go. Years of his own words in interviews how he is not fit to remain as host of this show. #FireChrisHarrison* [Tweet]. Twitter.

3. [@TeaAndRoses21]. (2021, February 13). *Chris Harrison CANNOT remain the host of The Bachelor franchise #FireChrisHarrison* [Tweet]. Twitter.

4. [@AngelaLMorabito]. (2021, March 13). *Chris Harrison lost his job because he said a Bachelor contestant might have grown as a person since making a mistake in college. Society is going GREAT, you guys* [Tweet]. Twitter.

5. [@Zigmanfreud]. (2021, March 12). *The demise/replacement of Chris Harrison over a 100% bogus charge of racism may seem trivial, but it is a seminal moment in the institutionalization of Woke/PC insanity, and the total castration of the white male. It is also a very stupid decision ratings-wise. #BachelorNation* [Tweet]. Twitter.

6. [@SophRossss]. (2021, June 8). *Chris Harrison had the easiest job in show business - all he had to do was show up to introduce some rose ceremonies for a few weeks every year and he made $600k PER EPISODE. Yet he couldn't manage to just shut his mouth and not be racist!!! Mans fumbled the bag tremendously!!* [Tweet]. Twitter.

7. [@bryanbehar]. (2021, March 13). *I think Chris Harrison is full of shit. "I made a mistake, I'm an imperfect man." He didn't misspeak. He came into the Rachel Lindsay interview with racist, Fox News, white grievance talking points about "the Woke Police." That isn't a mistake. That's a worldview. #TheBachelor* [Tweet]. Twitter.

8. [@MattWalshBlog]. (2021, June 9). *Chris Harrison's treatment is absurdly unjust and insane on every level, but he apologized and caved to the mob so he isn't worth defending* [Tweet]. Twitter.

9. [@kyleezempel]. (2021, March 5). *Identity politics took over the Chris Harrison debate, and instead of standing up to the mob, 'The Bachelor' host has pathetically folded. @FDRLST* [Tweet]. Twitter.

10. [@La_Lola_Larue]. (2021, March 4). *Chris Harrison should have just told everyone to F*** off... They aren't going to let him back as host and aren't going to 'forgive' him anyway.. Why grovel. Jeez* [Tweet]. Twitter.

11. [@AdamCarolla]. (2021, March 19). *When you apologize to the woke mob you're still going to get canceled anyway. Just look at Piers Morgan vs. Chris Harrison. You might as well just say fuck you and keep your dignity.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

12. [@Bri_Cook]. *Chris Harrison ranting for 13 minutes about cancel culture" and "woke police" to Rachel Lindsay, demanding to know "WHOS IS SHE?" to decide what is*

racist…was disgusting. And telling. He jumped into action to protect a white woman's feelings-- WHILE belittling a black woman. [Tweet]. Twitter.

13. [@StuDoesAmerica]. (2021, March 17). *What's the worst example of cancel culture you can think of? I think the Chris Harrison from the Bachelor story has to be in the running.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

14. [@SchmittNYV]. (2021, March 4). *Watching PC and cancel culture publicly castrate Bachelor host Chris Harrison is one of the most humiliating things I've ever witnessed. What a joke our mainstream culture has become.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

15. [@CassyWearsHeels]. (2021, June 8). *ABC made it official and has kicked Chris Harrison out of the Bachelor franchise. I am withdrawing my application to be on the show. I won't support the leftist media's cancel culture that ruins people's lives.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

16. [@kurzz1010]. (2021, February 11). *I'm here to show some support for Chris Harrison as a long time loyal bachelor fan. The show would never be the same without him. I am so sad and angry at the outlash he has received for speaking openly and honestly. I am tired of cancel culture. People need to be able to speak.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

17. [@atsgaida55]. (2021, March 15). *Worst season ever. There is a huge difference between being uneducated and being racist but obviously no one wants to educate people, only condemn them. Chris Harrison is gone and so am I. It's no longer worth my time- he was the heart and soul of that show.* [Tweet]. Twitter.

18. [@ceceguz0107]. (2021, June 8). *This show is nothing without Chris Harrison. it's okay for others to speak their mind but it's not okay for him to speak his. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions- in the end Matt is still with Rachel, but that's okay bc she apologized and he gaver a second chance. So sad!* [Tweet]. Twitter.

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　　　farmers, laborers, etc. who make this country great and celebrate her values of freedom

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