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## How do Black Congressional Members Frame the Issue of Gun Violence? An Analysis of Twitter Posts, Speeches, and Press Releases from the 117th Congress

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**How do Black Congressional Members Frame the Issue of  
Gun Violence? An Analysis of Twitter Posts, Speeches, and  
Press Releases from the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress**

By

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## Abstract

Black Americans are disproportionately affected by gun violence. In fact, in 2022 Black Americans were projected to be ten times more likely than White Americans to die by gun homicide.<sup>1</sup> One of the responsibilities of Congress is to represent people within their district by developing and voting on legislation that protects constituents by making their communities safer. It is the responsibility of Congress to address the issue of gun violence because it is an issue that jeopardizes the safety of many American communities, as there are roughly 100,000 victims of gun violence each year.<sup>2</sup> Research has shown that the race of a Congressional member impacts how they frame issues that constituents face in their districts, especially issues that disproportionately affect minority groups. Most scholarship focuses on whether minority Congressional officials are more concerned with minority issues. Through researching Black Congressional members' communication surrounding gun violence, this thesis will fill a gap in the literature by focusing on how Black Congressional members specifically frame the issue of gun violence, an issue that disproportionately affects Black American citizens. This thesis asks the question of how members of the 117th Congress, who identify as Black, frame the issue of gun violence? Using content analysis, this thesis analyzes speeches, press releases, and Twitter posts published by Black members of the 117th Congress. The results of this thesis suggest that Black Congressional members are more likely to frame the issue of gun violence as it pertains to the Black community if they represent an urban district that suffers from gun violence at a higher rate than the national average. This thesis contributes to the literature about how racial identity affects how elected officials frame issues, specifically issues that pose more of a threat to people of color.

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<sup>1</sup> Marissa Edmund, "Gun Violence Disproportionately and Overwhelmingly Hurts Communities of Color," Center for American Progress, June 30, 2022, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/gun-violence-disproportionately-and-overwhelmingly-hurts-communities-of-color/>.

<sup>2</sup> John Gramlich, "What the Data Says about Gun Deaths in the U.S.," Pew Research Center, February 3, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>.

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## *I. Introduction*

In a nation where the right to bear arms is enshrined in the Constitution, the tragic reality is that Black Americans disproportionately suffer from firearm violence. From the streets of urban communities to inner cities, the devastating impact of the gun violence epidemic continues to tear apart vulnerable communities. The issue of gun violence in America is not one that can be ignored, especially in Black communities where the impact is especially devastating. As elected representatives of the people, Congress has a moral and civic responsibility to take action to address this crisis. It is the responsibility of Congress to advocate for their constituents and ensure that their voices are heard, and their needs are met. Congress has the responsibility to represent and advocate for their constituents and address issues that they may face. One way to measure whether members of Congress are addressing their constituents' needs is by examining their press releases, social media statements, and speeches given on the floor of Congress. Talking about the issue of gun violence specifically within Black communities is important because it raises awareness, highlights the issue, and assists in making the issue "salient," which is the first step in the policy-making process. One way that Congress can advocate for their constituents is by introducing and supporting legislation that addresses their concerns and the problems they may face, and another is to talk about the issues that their constituents face.

There is ample scholarship that explores to what extent Congress members of color introduce and co-sign legislation addressing "minority issues." Research on this topic has shown that Congress members of color are more likely to introduce and co-sign legislation addressing issues that disproportionately affect minority communities. A study done by Curtis and Clark in 2013 found that congressional hearings that addressed minority issues were more likely to take

place under the direction of Latine and Black committee and subcommittee chairs.<sup>3</sup> An example of this is the bill “Break the Violence Act,” which was introduced during the 1st session of the 117th Congress by Senator Cory Booker. The “Break the Violence Act” sought to address gun violence in urban communities and specifically focused on legislative solutions to the disproportionate number of Black boys and men affected by gun violence.<sup>4</sup> There is an abundance of scholarship that addresses the extent to which Black representatives introduce and support legislation that addresses Black issues. Although, there is a gap in the literature regarding the extent to which Black members of Congress frame issues that disproportionately affect Black communities.

In Congress, the words spoken and the way an issue is framed can hold immense power. How Congress frames the issue of gun violence can shape public opinion and determine the course of policy. According to the research of political scientists Daniel M. Chong and James N. Druckman, the framing of an issue by Congress can have a significant impact on how the public understands and responds to the issue.<sup>5</sup> The extent to which gun violence is framed can highlight certain aspects while ignoring others, and ultimately has the capacity to make an issue salient. As citizens, we must pay attention to how Congress frames the issue of gun violence, as it disproportionately impacts Black Americans’ lives and communities, and can have a profound impact on the policies created and implemented.

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<sup>3</sup> William Curtis and Walter Clark, “Minority Chairs and Congressional Attention to Minority Issues: The Effect of Descriptive Representation in Positions of Institutional Power,” *Social Science Quarterly* 94, no. 5 (April 1, 2013): 1207–21, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12023>.

<sup>4</sup> Cory Booker, “Break the Cycle of Violence Act,” *Congress.Gov*, June 24, 2021, [https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/booker\\_horsford\\_blunt\\_rochester\\_reintroduce\\_groundbreaking\\_legislation\\_to\\_break\\_the\\_cycle\\_of\\_urban\\_gun\\_violence.pdf](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/booker_horsford_blunt_rochester_reintroduce_groundbreaking_legislation_to_break_the_cycle_of_urban_gun_violence.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, “Framing Theory,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (June 2007): 103–26, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>.

Black members of Congress often represent districts with higher percentages of Black constituents. In fact, research has shown that Black representatives within Congress are not only expected to represent their Black constituents but also “Black America” as a whole.<sup>6</sup> This means that Black members have a closer connection to the needs and concerns of Black communities and are better positioned to represent their interests in Congress. Some scholarship has found that an increase in descriptive representation in Congress for Black constituents, results in an increased amount of substantive representation for Black constituents.<sup>7</sup> This thesis will contribute to the scholarship about how racial identity affects how elected officials frame issues, specifically issues that pose more of a threat to people of color. More specifically, this thesis will serve as an exploration of how members of the 117th Congress, who identify as Black, frame the issue of gun violence. Do they talk about the issue of gun violence as being of particular consequence for Black constituents?

The 117th Congress, which convened at the beginning of 2021, is the most racially diverse Congress in United States history.<sup>8</sup> This is significant because scholars have found that representation within Congress for racial minorities matters for constituents. Ashley Sorenson found that Black, Indigenous, and other people of color are both more trusting of the government and more likely to contact their representative when they share the same race or ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> The 117th Congress, like any other Congress, is responsible for carrying out constituent service and

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<sup>6</sup> Katrina Gamble, “Black Political Representation : An Examination of Legislative Activity within U.S. House Committees,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (August 2007) : 421–47, <https://doi.org/10.3162/036298007781699663>.

<sup>7</sup> Katrina L. Gamble, “Black Voice : Deliberation in the United States Congress,” *Policy* 43, no. 3 (July 2011): 291–312, <https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2011.6>.

<sup>8</sup> Katherine Schaeffer, “Racial, Ethnic Diversity Increases yet Again with the 117th Congress,” Pew Research Center, January 28, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/28/racial-ethnic-diversity-increases-yet-again-with-the-117th-congress/>.

<sup>9</sup> Ashley Sorensen, “Representation Matters: Women & Working-Class Diversity in Congress,” Gender Policy Report, October 19, 2021, <https://genderpolicyreport.umn.edu/working-class-diversity-in-congress/>.

supporting legislation, specifically concerning issues that their constituents face. This thesis fills a gap in the literature by focusing on how Black Congressional members as part of the 117th Congress frame the issue of gun violence, an issue that disproportionately affects Black American citizens. Using content analysis, this thesis analyzes speeches, press releases, and Twitter posts from self-identified Black members of the 117th Congress. The results of this thesis found that Black Congressional members are more likely to frame the issue of gun violence as it pertains to the Black community if they represent an urban district that suffers from gun violence rates higher than the national average.

## *II. Background*

Gun violence in the United States, particularly in urban and Black communities, has a long and complex history. The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence attributes the long history of gun violence in Black communities to the United States' complex web of historical and ongoing discrimination, racial inequality, poverty, lack of opportunities, a criminal justice system that disproportionately affects Black communities, and a lack of investment in community programs and resources.<sup>10</sup>

Redlining, the discriminatory practice of denying or limiting financial services to certain neighborhoods based on the racial or ethnic makeup of its residents, has had a lasting and devastating impact on Black communities.<sup>11</sup> As early as the 1930s, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) established maps that rated neighborhoods based on their perceived risk for mortgage lending, with Black neighborhoods receiving the lowest "risk" rating of "red."<sup>12</sup> This

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<sup>10</sup> "Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence: The Root Causes of Gun Violence Policymakers Must Address the Social and Economic Inequalities That Are the Root Causes of Gun Violence in Impacted Communities of Color," 2020, <https://efsgv.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EFSGV-The-Root-Causes-of-Gun-Violence-March-2020.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York; London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, A Division Of W. W. Norton & Company, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Benns et al., "The Impact of Historical Racism on Modern Gun Violence : Redlining in the City of Louisville, KY," *Injury* 51, no. 10 (October 2020): 2192–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2020.06.042>.

practice, along with discriminatory lending practices, contributed to the systemic denial of mortgage loans to Black families and the concentration of Black residents in neighborhoods with limited access to resources and opportunities. Additionally, redlining has also led to racial segregation, which can exacerbate social and economic disparities and lead to further violence in Black communities. Recent studies have suggested that redlining in historically Black communities has been a potentially significant factor that has led to the concentration of poverty in Black communities, and scholars have asserted that the concentration of poverty in Black communities is a known risk factor for violence.

Mathew Benns et al found a correlation between historically redlined Black neighborhoods on the 1937 map and the prevalence of gun violence in 2020.<sup>13</sup> The study concluded that “red” graded neighborhoods on the 1937 rating map, averaged 5 times more gunshot victims between 2012 and 2018 in comparison to historically “green” rated neighborhoods. Additionally, the gunshot victims within the “red” graded neighborhoods were overwhelmingly African American, with Black Americans making up 74.9% of all gunshot victims within the HOLC “red” graded areas of Louisville, Kentucky between 2012 and 2018.<sup>14</sup> A separate study incorporating the use of spatial analysis to evaluate the relationship between urban firearm violence and racialized housing discrimination was conducted in Philadelphia by Jacoby et. al captured that “red” zone areas had a higher concentration of firearm violence as well.<sup>15</sup> This study found that within the 19.8% of land in Philadelphia that was categorized as

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew Benns et al., “The Impact of Historical Racism on Modern Gun Violence : Redlining in the City of Louisville, KY,” *Injury* 51, no. 10 (October 2020): 2192–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2020.06.042>.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Benns et al., “The Impact of Historical Racism on Modern Gun Violence : Redlining in the City of Louisville, KY,” *Injury* 51, no. 10 (October 2020): 2192–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.injury.2020.06.042>.

<sup>15</sup> Sara F. Jacoby et al., “The Enduring Impact of Historical and Structural Racism on Urban Violence in Philadelphia,” *Social Science & Medicine* 199 (February 1, 2018): 87–95, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.05.038>.

“red,” firearm violence was experienced at a 13 times higher rate than areas categorized as a “green” zone.<sup>16</sup> Similarly to the study conducted by Mathew Benns et al., the “red” zone areas in Philadelphia not only suffered from higher rates of gun violence but also consisted of primarily African American individuals. These studies conducted in Philadelphia and Kentucky, suggest that historical redlining that began in 1937, has perpetuated gun violence that disproportionately affects African Americans.

### *III. Literature Review*

When there are people elected to office who are from a marginalized group, some literature supports that those members will pursue legislation that addresses concerns, problems and issues that primarily affect a marginalized group. This literature review examines scholarship from the areas of gun violence trends in Black communities, and Congressional representation, more specifically, literature regarding how elected officials from marginalized groups provide substantive representation to constituents that share descriptive traits with them. Lastly, this literature review will examine literature concerning Black descriptive representation in Congress and its subsequent effect on substantive representation for Black constituents.

Literature concerned with gun violence in Black communities has largely asserted that Black individuals disproportionately suffer from gun violence in comparison to their White counterparts. Opara et. al found in their study that urban Black and Latine youth are disproportionately exposed to community violence, specifically gun violence.<sup>17</sup> Friedman et. al

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<sup>16</sup> Sara F. Jacoby et al., “The Enduring Impact of Historical and Structural Racism on Urban Violence in Philadelphia,” *Social Science & Medicine* 199 (February 1, 2018): 87–95, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.05.038>.

<sup>17</sup> Ljeoma Opara et al., “‘Bullets Have No Names’ : A Qualitative Exploration of Community Trauma among Black and Latinx Youth,” *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 29, no. 8 (June 27, 2020): 2117–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-020-01764-8>.

found within their study that economically marginalized and segregated areas in New York are amongst the most affected populations affected by gun violence.<sup>18</sup> Larsen et. al research asserted that through their findings that in the Southeast squadron of Syracuse, “Census block groups with more rental units, more vacant housing, and higher African- American and Hispanic populations had higher numbers of shots fired.”<sup>19</sup> Research done in Larsen et. al’s study also found that gunshot injury is the leading cause of premature death for Black individuals in Syracuse.<sup>20</sup> Clark found that Black children die as a result of firearm violence, at a national rate that is four times higher than White children.<sup>21</sup> While it is widely asserted by literature that gun violence is a pervasive issue specifically in Black communities, there is some scholarly debate on whether or not the presence of descriptive representation in Congress increases the amount of substantive representation for Black constituents as it pertains to gun violence.

Descriptive representation refers to the extent to which the demographic characteristics of lawmakers reflect those of the larger population. Additionally, it is a form of representation that is concerned with the representation of groups rather than individual interests. Descriptive representation is often used as a measure of diversity and inclusivity throughout the political system. Moreover, substantive representation is a form of representation that involves actively advocating for the policy positions and priorities of one's constituents. There is widespread scholarly debate about if Black citizens value descriptive representation, even in the absence of

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Friedman et al., “Structural Vulnerability to Narcotics-Driven Firearm Violence : An Ethnographic and Epidemiological Study of Philadelphia’s Puerto Rican Inner-City,” ed. Cecilia Benoit, *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 11 (November 21, 2019) : e0225376, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0225376>.

<sup>19</sup> David Larsen et al., “Spatio-Temporal Patterns of Gun Violence in Syracuse, New York 2009-2015,” *PLoS ONE* 12(3) (April 20, 2017): Page 2, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0173001>.

<sup>20</sup> David Larsen et al., “Spatio-Temporal Patterns of Gun Violence in Syracuse, New York 2009-2015,” *PLoS ONE* 12(3) (April 20, 2017): pg.2, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0173001>.

<sup>21</sup> LaToya Baldwin Clark, “Barbed Wire Fences: The Structural Violence of Education Law,” *University of Chicago Law Review* 89, no. 2 (March 1, 2022): 499–523, <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=2dc17def-57d7-44ea-880f-1967b3c23dec%40redis>.

substantive representation. This literature review examines the existing literature contributing to this debate.

Research has asserted that descriptive representation in Congress is important because it helps ensure that the perspectives and needs of all members of a community are considered when making decisions that affect that community.<sup>22</sup> When people from diverse backgrounds are represented in government, policies are more likely to be inclusive and to address the needs of all members of society. Additionally, having a diverse group of elected officials can increase public trust and participation in government, as well as promote accountability and transparency.

Lowande et. al asserts that Congress members who are part of marginalized groups are more likely to work and follow through with policy implementation on behalf of constituents that share identities with their Congressional members.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Lowande et. al contributes to the growing literature that legislators with “shared experiences” with their constituents can better represent them because they are able to utilize their own experiences to communicate directly with the federal government, on behalf of the marginalized groups they are a part of.<sup>24</sup> Lowande et. al provides supports the importance of descriptive representation for women, racial minorities, and veteran groups. Bowen and Clark also found that race and ethnicity play a critical role in the strength of the constituent-legislator relationship in Congress, especially for Black individuals and Latines.<sup>25</sup> Otsfeld found that there is a relationship between descriptive

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<sup>22</sup> Daniel C. Bowen and Christopher J. Clark, “Revisiting Descriptive Representation in Congress,” *Political Research Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (April 30, 2014): 695–707, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912914531658>.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Lowande, Melinda Ritchie, and Erinn Lauterbach, “Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries,” *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 3 (June 17, 2019): 644–59, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12443>.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Lowande, Melinda Ritchie, and Erinn Lauterbach, “Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries,” *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 3 (June 17, 2019): 644–59, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12443>.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel C. Bowen and Christopher J. Clark, “Revisiting Descriptive Representation in Congress,” *Political Research Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (April 30, 2014): 695–707, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912914531658>.

representation and increased positive feelings toward government when constituents are represented by elected officials who are a part of the same marginalized group.<sup>26</sup> Research conducted in another analyzed the relationship between descriptive representation in the 113th Congress and their findings suggest that racial and ethnic diversity in United States politics is an issue that has negative effects for not only Black constituents but also for all constituents.

While Bowens and Clark contribute to the scholarly conversation on the importance of the presence of a diversity of races and ethnicities in United States politics for all Americans, they also argue, that descriptive representation always matters more for Black Americans than White Americans.<sup>27</sup> The importance of descriptive representation for Black Americans is supported by a study done in 2003 by Katherine Tate, in which the findings indicated that “Blacks are more likely to recall the party and race of their MC if the MC is also Black, and Blacks perceive that Black MCs are better at providing constituency service and allocation responsiveness than non-Black MCs.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, several key studies have contributed to the scholarly conversation on Black Americans’ motivation for prioritizing descriptive representation. Jones suggests that Black Americans perceive greater substantive representation from Black congressional members.<sup>29</sup> In fact, within Jones’s study, his findings suggest Black Americans, regardless of their policy positions perceive greater substantive representation from Black politicians. Additionally, Jones’s study asserted that white constituents also approve of

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<sup>26</sup> Mara C. Ostfeld and Diana C. Mutz, “The Face of American Government: Effects of Racial and Ethnic Firsts on Minority Perceptions of Government Responsiveness,” *Political Behavior* 43, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 423–49, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09664-9>.

<sup>27</sup> Rene R. Rocha et al., “Race and Turnout : Does Descriptive Representation in State Legislatures Increase Minority Voting ?” *Political Research Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (August 25, 2010) : 890–907, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912910376388>.

<sup>28</sup> Katherine Tate, *Black Faces in the Mirror: African Americans and Their Representatives in the U.S. Congress*, JSTOR (Princeton University Press, 2003), 4–6, 9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv36zqdb>.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Edward Jones, “Constituents’ Responses to Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress\*,” *Social Science Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (February 29, 2016): 682–98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12243>.

white elected officials at higher rates. Hibbing and Hayes found that minority constituents, specifically Black and Latine constituents, overwhelmingly think that elected officials who “share” their race, are subsequently better equipped to represent them.<sup>30</sup>

Hibbing and Hayes contributed to the scholarly discussion asking whether citizens value descriptive representation independently of substantive representation when electing elected officials. Hibbing and Hayes found that Black descriptive representation is, indeed, something that is valued by Black constituents independent of substantive representation.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Rosenthal’s research suggests that a racial or ethnic group that has descriptive but not substantive representation decreases their civic engagement, along with their legislator-constituent relationship.<sup>32</sup> Rocca et al. (2008) found that “Attributes such as generation, gender, and education are important agents of socialization and the voting behavior at a higher than substantive representation.”<sup>33</sup> The scholarly debate questioning whether or not marginalized communities value descriptive representation independently of substantive representation stems from different findings across different geographic locations throughout the United States. Casellas and MacBreyer found that in largely gentrified areas within the United States, minority constituents were more likely to value descriptive representation, regardless of one’s policy positions addressing constituent needs.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew Hayes and Matthew V. Hibbing, “The Symbolic Benefits of Descriptive and Substantive Representation,” *Political Behavior* 39, no. 1 (May 13, 2016): 31–50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-016-9345-9>.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew Hayes and Matthew V. Hibbing, “The Symbolic Benefits of Descriptive and Substantive Representation,” *Political Behavior* 39, no. 1 (May 13, 2016): 31–50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-016-9345-9>.

<sup>32</sup> Maoz Rosenthal, Hani Zubida, and David Nachmias, “Voting Locally Abstaining Nationally: Descriptive Representation, Substantive Representation and Minority Voters’ Turnout,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no. 9 (March 2017): 1632–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1295161>.

<sup>33</sup> Michael S. Rocca, Gabriel R. Sanchez, and Joseph Uscinski, “Personal Attributes and Latino Voting Behavior in Congress,” *Social Science Quarterly* 89, no. 2 (June 2008): 392–405, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6237.2008.00538.x>.

<sup>34</sup> Jason Casellas and Markie McBrayer, “From Barrios to Condos: The Effects of Gentrification on Minority Descriptive Representation,” *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 4, no. 1 (December 26, 2018): 216–55, <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2018.32>.

While there is a large debate on how Black constituents value descriptive representation in the absence of substantive representation, scholarship has found that constituencies that consist of large amounts of Black individuals tend to elect more African American Congress members. In the United States, Congressional districts that consist primarily of minority constituents are referred to as majority-minority districts. Grigg's and Katz's findings suggest that the majority-minority district increases the likelihood that a minority representative will be elected.<sup>35</sup> Grigg and Katz's did not find an increase in the election of Black representatives when a district consists of a majority of Black constituents, but their findings do assert that a majority Black constituency is more likely to elect a person of color.<sup>36</sup>

Highton found that African American Congressional members are more likely to be elected from districts with larger African American populations.<sup>37</sup> Similar to Highton's findings, Avery et. al found that when Black constituents turn out to vote, Black officials are more likely to get elected.<sup>38</sup> An example of this is the 2008 electorate, the most diverse electorate in history. In November 2008, for the first time in history, Black women had the highest voter turnout rate, and 95% of Black women voters assisted in electing President Barack Obama.<sup>39</sup> Studies conducted by Avery et. al and Highton contribute to the literature that highlights the importance of descriptive representation for Black voters when they are voting for an elected

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<sup>35</sup> Jonathan N. Katz and Delia Grigg, "Re-Assessing the Impact of Majority-Minority Districts on Congressional Elections," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.998640>.

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan N. Katz and Delia Grigg, "Re-Assessing the Impact of Majority-Minority Districts on Congressional Elections," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.998640>.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Highton, "White Voters and African American Candidates for Congress," *Political Behavior* 26, no. 1 (March 2004): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1023/b:pobe.0000022341.98720.9e>.

<sup>38</sup> Richard J. Cebula and K. Leslie Avery, "The Tiebout Hypothesis in the United States: An Analysis of Black Consumer-Voters, 1970–75," *Public Choice* 41, no. 2 (1983), <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00210364>.

<sup>39</sup> Pew Research Center, "Dissecting the 2008 Electorate: Most Diverse in U.S. History," Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project (Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project, April 30, 2009), <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2009/04/30/dissecting-the-2008-electorate-most-diverse-in-us-history/>.

representative to represent them.

When Black representatives are elected to Congress, scholarship asserts that they are more likely to provide substantive representation to Black constituents. Grose found in his study of Black legislator-constituents relationships that the presence of African-American legislators leads to greater substantive representation for Black constituents in roll-call voting.<sup>40</sup> Using cross-sectional data from the 104th, 105th, and 106th Congresses, Grose found that the Black district population, the presence of a Black legislator, and the party are all significant predictors of a legislator's ideology.<sup>41</sup> Some literature also found that a Black legislator's race is not the only factor that impacts a Black legislator's likeliness to provide substantive representation to Black constituents. In fact, Rocca, Sanchez, and Nikora's results suggested that African American congress members should not be considered a monolithic group with respect to congressional voting.<sup>42</sup> Rocca, Sanchez, and Nikora asserted that Black congressional members were more likely to provide substantive representation to Black constituents through roll call voting if they also identified with the Democratic party and attended a historically Black college. Additionally, this study found that Black members of Congress have become more conservative over time, and subsequently less likely to support "Black issues" when participating in roll-call voting. The findings from this study suggest that this phenomenon could be happening because older cohorts of Black Congressional members fought for major civil rights legislation, and modern cohorts are more concerned with salient issues.

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<sup>40</sup> Christian R. Grose, "Disentangling Constituency and Legislator Effects in Legislative Representation: Black Legislators or Black Districts? \*," *Social Science Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (June 2005): 427–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2005.00311.x>.

<sup>41</sup> Christian R. Grose, "Disentangling Constituency and Legislator Effects in Legislative Representation: Black Legislators or Black Districts? \*," *Social Science Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (June 2005): 427–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2005.00311.x>.

<sup>42</sup> Michael S. Rocca, Gabriel R. Sanchez, and Ron Nikora, "The Role of Personal Attributes in African American Roll-Call Voting Behavior in Congress," *Political Research Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (June 18, 2008): 408–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908319573>.

While scholarship widely suggests that not all Black representatives provide substantive representation to Black representation, research has shown that Black congressional members do act differently than nonminority elected officials.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, Lusane found that Black Congressional members differ from their white counterparts in three major areas, the two relevant to this thesis being that Black Congressional members advance legislative proposals that specifically address Black community concerns, and the other being that Black Congressional members are also more likely to participate in non-legislative activities that are explicitly race related in nature.<sup>44</sup> Lusane found that the non-legislative activities that Black Congressional members participate in include increased utilization of rhetoric that emphasizes African-American political unity, and the condemnation of all bigoted speech.<sup>45</sup> Studies done by Bratton and Haynie and Whitby found that Black lawmakers have sought higher levels of welfare benefits for Black constituents than do other Congressional members.<sup>46</sup>

There has been significant research done by scholars on descriptive and substantive representation in Congress, alongside Congressional representation and its effects. Additionally, Black Congressional members' legislative and non-legislative actions have been studied. Prior studies have acknowledged that Black Congressional members are more likely to frame issues

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Preuhs and Rodney Hero, "A Different Kind of Representation: Black and Latino Descriptive Representation and the Role of Ideological Cuing," *Political Research Quarterly* 64(1) 157–171 (2011): Pages 4,7,13, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912909346739>.

<sup>44</sup> Clarence Lusane, "Unity and Struggle: The Political Behavior of African American Members of Congress," *The Black Scholar* 24, no. 4 (September 1994) : 16–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1994.11413168>.

<sup>45</sup> Clarence Lusane, "Unity and Struggle: The Political Behavior of African American Members of Congress," *The Black Scholar* 24, no. 4 (September 1994) : 16–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.1994.11413168>.

<sup>46</sup> Kenny J. Whitby, *The Color of Representation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1997; Kathleen A. Bratton and Kerry L. Haynie, "Agenda Setting and Legislative Success in State Legislatures: The Effects of Gender and Race." *The Journal of Politics* 61 (3): 658–79. (August 1999)

surrounding welfare<sup>47</sup>, education, and other “Black needs”<sup>48</sup> as they relate to Black Americans. The research within this study is different than prior research done on how Black Congressional members frame issues because this research focuses on how Black Congressional members specifically frame the issue of gun violence. Scholars have asserted that Black Congressional members are more likely to vote in a fashion that is consistent with Black public opinion,<sup>49</sup> although there is a gap in literature regarding how Black Congressional members frame issues that specifically affect the Black community, more specifically the manner in which they address gun violence. Currently, there are limited studies that analyze how Black members of Congress frame the issue of gun violence, especially as it pertains to Black constituents. This thesis will examine the rhetoric of Black Congressional members in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress to analyze if they talk about gun violence, and if they do, do they talk about gun violence in a way that pertains to the Black community.

#### *IV. Theoretical Framework*

Research has shown that Black constituents value descriptive representation alongside legislative and non-legislative substantive representation. Black Congressional members can provide substantive representation to Black constituents by framing issues that Black constituents face in a way that pertains to them. This thesis argues that Congressional members who provide descriptive representation to their constituents should also provide non-legislative and legislative substantive representation for their constituents as well. Additionally, this thesis

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<sup>47</sup> Kenny J. Whitby, *The Color of Representation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1997; Kathleen A. Bratton and Kerry L. Haynie, “Agenda Setting and Legislative Success in State Legislatures: The Effects of Gender and Race.” *The Journal of Politics* 61 (3): 658–79. (August 1999)

<sup>48</sup> Christian R. Grose, “Disentangling Constituency and Legislator Effects in Legislative Representation: Black Legislators or Black Districts?” *Social Science Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (June 2005): 427–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2005.00311.x>.

<sup>49</sup> Stephen Voss, Jeffrey Fine, and James Avery, “Representation When Nobody Is Looking: Constituency Mobilization and Descriptive Representation as Influences on Congressional Voting” *Conference Papers -- Southern Political Science Association.*, 2008.

also argues that substantive representation for Black constituents is especially important when framing the issue of gun violence because Black Americans are disproportionately and overwhelmingly affected by gun violence.<sup>50</sup>

This thesis uses framing theory<sup>51</sup> and the theory of descriptive and substantive representation theory<sup>52</sup> to analyze how Black members of Congress talk about the issue of gun violence. Chong and Druckman explain how the framing of an issue or policy affects public opinion and policy outcomes.<sup>53</sup> How information is framed can shape people's perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs, and ultimately impact the outcomes of political decision-making. Framing theory argues that how people understand and respond to political issues changes when certain aspects of an issue are highlighted and while other aspects are downplayed.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, Chong and Druckman highlight the importance of how political issues are presented and the impact that this can have on making an issue salient. With this logic, the way in which Black Congressional members frame the issue of gun violence has the capacity to make the issue of how gun violence affects the Black community salient and affect whether or not Black constituents perceive substantive representation from their representative.

Descriptive representation theory and substantive representation theory are two distinct approaches to understanding how political representation works and what it means for individuals and groups to be represented. Pitkin first established the theory of descriptive representation in 1967, which refers to the idea that people should be represented in government

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<sup>50</sup> In 2021, Black Americans suffered from gun homicides at 10 times the rate of White Americans.

<sup>51</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (June 2007): 103–26, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>.

<sup>52</sup> Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley : University Of California Press, 1967).

<sup>53</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (June 2007): 103–26, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>.

<sup>54</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (June 2007): 103–26, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>.

and other decision-making bodies by individuals who share their demographic characteristics, such as race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.<sup>55</sup> This theory was later asserted by Dovi in 2006, as she stated, "...descriptive representatives need to be selected based on their relationship to citizens who have been unjustly excluded and marginalized by democratic politics."<sup>56</sup> The theory argues that by having individuals from diverse groups serve as elected officials, the perspectives and experiences of those groups are more likely to be taken into account in policy-making. According to Pitkin substantive representation is concerned with how elected officials represent the interests, and advocate for the issues and policy preferences of their constituents. According to this theory, representation is not just about having individuals from diverse groups serve in government, but also about ensuring that the policies and decisions made by those officials reflect the needs and desires of the people they represent. This requires elected officials to frame issues in a way that engages in ongoing dialogue and communication with their constituents, as well as to be responsive to their needs and concerns.

Scholarship asserts that both descriptive and substantive representation is important for ensuring that Black individuals and groups are adequately represented in the political process. While descriptive representation can help to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, substantive representation is necessary to ensure that those perspectives are translated into Congressional members being reactive and proactive to the needs of their constituencies. Gun violence is a major issue in the United States that Black constituents face at overwhelmingly disproportionate rates. If Black Congressional members frame the issue of gun violence as being

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<sup>55</sup> Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley : the University Of California Press, 1967).

<sup>56</sup> Suzanne Dovi, "Political Representation (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) 14," Stanford.edu, 2006, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-representation/>.

a particular threat to the Black community, then substantive representation will take place alongside the descriptive representation which is already present.

#### *V. Methodology and Data Collection*

This thesis uses content analysis to analyze speeches given on the House floor, Twitter posts, and press releases addressing gun violence published by Black Congressional members who were a part of the 117th Congress, which convened on January 3, 2021, and ended on January 3, 2023. Content analysis is an appropriate methodology to use because this thesis analyzes textual data to determine the presence and frequency of how Black Congressional members frame the issue of gun violence as it pertains to Black constituents. As stated in *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, Krippendorff establishes that “Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contents of their use.”<sup>57</sup> Content analysis is an appropriate methodology to use for this thesis because I am analyzing rhetoric and it provides a systematic and objective way to examine the language used by politicians in their speeches, Twitter posts and press releases.

There were fifty-eight Black Americans in the 117th Congress. Some of these members have been in Congress for many years. This thesis looked at the rhetoric of these members for only the duration of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, which was in session from January 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2021 to January 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2023. This thesis coded all twenty-one speeches given on the House floor that mentioned gun violence by Black Congressional members during the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. Additionally, this thesis coded 231 press releases and 194 Twitter posts from Black

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<sup>57</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1980), 18.

Congressional members from January 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2021 to January 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2023. The Congressional members included as a part of this study include every self-identified Black member that was a part of the 117th Congress (Appendix B). In this sample, fifty-six of the Congressional members are Democrats, and only two, Byron Donalds of Florida and Burgess Owens of Utah are Republicans.

Since some of the Congressional members included in this study do not have Twitter accounts or did not use their Twitter accounts frequently during the 117th Congress, this thesis analyzed a different amount of Twitter posts for each of the fifty-eight Congressional members.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, due to the varying number of speeches given by the Congressional members this thesis analyzes a different number of speeches for each of the fifty-eight members. Similar to the varying amount of Twitter posts and speeches analyzed for each Congressional member as a part of this study, there is also a different amount of press releases that were coded for each Congressional member because members issue press releases at different rates and about different topics.

This thesis coded Congressional members' Twitter posts, speeches, and press releases to see if Black Congressional members were talking about gun violence, and if they were, did they talk about the issue of gun violence as being of particular consequence for Black constituents? The Twitter posts were collected directly from the official Twitter pages of the Congressional members that were a part of this study unless they did not have a Twitter account. This thesis specifically analyzes Twitter posts from Congressional members, instead of posts from Instagram and Facebook because Congress members use Twitter to engage with their constituents directly through text. Unlike Twitter, social media platforms such as Facebook and

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<sup>58</sup> Representatives David Scott of Florida, the late Alcee Hastings of Florida, and the late David McEachin of Virginia did not have Twitter accounts while serving in the 117th Congress.

Instagram use graphics and pictures and less text. There is more rhetorical content to analyze on Twitter.

The press releases analyzed in this thesis were drawn from the current official versions of the websites of the Congressional members. The speeches were collected from the digitally accessible Library of Congress, which keeps an archive of all speeches delivered on the House floor. The keywords searched for were Black, African American, marginalized, firearm violence, gun violence, gun death, and firearm death. Lastly, this thesis collected speeches given on the House floor by Black Congressional members of Congress when the 117th Congress was in session. I was the sole coder for the project and therefore, there was no intercoder reliability. The categories on the Code Sheet (see Appendix A) were created to find if Black Congressional in the 117th Congress were talking about gun violence, and if they were, were they speaking about it as it pertains to Black Americans.

The code sheet starts by identifying the member of Congress, the district they represent, tier party affiliation, some gun violence statistics in their district<sup>59</sup>, and the type of communication that is being coded (House floor speech, Twitter post, or press release). The next section for each mode of communication focused on the total number of sentences devoted to gun violence, the total number of sentences devoted to Black individuals affected by gun violence, the total number of sentences devoted to non-legislative solutions to gun violence, the number of sentences devoted to legislative solutions to gun violence or “future” policies, and the number of sentences devoted to causes that perpetuate the issue of gun violence. I coded using these categories, to analyze if members speak about gun violence, if members speak about gun

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<sup>59</sup> The gun violence statistics included on the code sheet are categorized by race, and outline how many gun related deaths and injuries occurred in 2021 and 2022 while the 117th Congress was in session.

violence concerning the black community, and lastly if members speak differently about gun violence in their different forms of communication.

## *VI. Findings and Analysis*

This thesis examined if Black congressional members of the 117th Congress framed the issue of gun violence as pertaining specifically to the Black community. Within the 117th Congress, there were 59 Black Congressional representatives, but this thesis only analyzed communications from 57 of those 59 representatives.<sup>60</sup> The data set for this thesis included roughly the same number of men (30) and women (27), with a majority of the Congressional members being older than 40 (See Table 4). This thesis coded all 21 speeches given on the House floor about gun violence by Black representatives during the 117th Congress, 231 press releases, and 194 Twitter posts (See Table 1). The results of this thesis suggest two major findings. First, Black Congressional members are more likely to frame the issue of gun violence as it pertains to the Black community if they represent an urban district that suffers from higher rates of violence. Second, Black Congressional members that assume leadership positions in the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) have been directly impacted by a gun incident and frame the issue of gun violence as a Black issue at higher rates than Black Congressional members that are not a part of the Black Congressional Caucus.

### **I. Urban and Suburban Districts**

Of the Black Congressional members included in this study, 33 of the representatives represent urban districts, and 24 of the members represent suburban districts. For this study, a Congressional district was classified as urban if the population density within the district consisted of more than 1,000 people per square mile, and suburban districts were classified as

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<sup>60</sup> This thesis does not include data from Representative Alcee Hastings of Florida and Representative Donald McEachin of Virginia, who both passed away, and their websites and twitter pages were subsequently archived.

districts that consisted of less than 1,000 people per square mile. The results of this thesis suggest that Black Congressional members are more likely to frame the issue of gun violence, as it pertains to the Black community, if they represent an urban district. This study found that 76.54% of Black Congressional members representing urban districts talked about gun violence as it specifically pertains to the Black community, whereas, solely 23.5% of Black Congressional members that represent suburban districts framed gun violence as an issue specifically targeting the Black community (See Table 2). Additionally, the findings in this study indicated that 30.1% of Black Congressional members representing urban districts did not talk about gun violence as it specifically pertains to the Black community, whereas, 70.89% of Black Congressional members that represent suburban districts did not frame gun violence as an issue specifically targeting the Black community (See Table 2). This data suggests that Black Congressional members representing suburban districts do talk about gun violence as it pertains to the Black community, but at a much lower rate than representatives representing urban districts. Most of the urban districts included within this study are majority-minority districts. The findings of this thesis support Congressional representation literature because scholars have found that shared experiences and identities between constituents and Congressional members increase the prevalence of substantive representation.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, this thesis found that representatives that represent an urban district that also suffers from particularly high rates of gun violence are even more likely to frame the issue of gun violence as it pertains to the Black community in comparison to representatives that solely represent urban districts that do not suffer from

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<sup>61</sup> Kenneth Lowande, Melinda Ritchie, and Erinn Lauterbach, “Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries,” *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 3 (June 17, 2019): 644–59, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12443>.

particularly high rates of gun violence.<sup>62</sup> In fact, within this study, 81.3% of Black congressional members that represented an urban district that also suffered from high levels of gun violence, framed gun violence as an issue for Black individuals.

A particularly verbose Congressional representative is Representative Barbara Lee. Representative Lee is a Democrat that represents California's 13th Congressional district. California's 13th congressional district is an urban district located in the northern part of Alameda County, encompassing the cities of Oakland, Piedmont, Alameda, Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville, and San Leandro. The 13th congressional district is one of the most diverse in the country, with a majority-minority population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the district is 34% White, 28% African American, 21% Asian, and 13% Hispanic or Latine.<sup>63</sup> While the district is home to diverse communities and thriving urban centers, it is also marked by high rates of gun violence that have had devastating impacts on families and neighborhoods. According to data from the Oakland Police Department, there were 102 firearm homicides in the city in 2021, a 36% increase from the year 2020.<sup>64</sup> Of the three press releases, three speeches on the House floor, and six Twitter posts coded that referenced gun violence, Lee framed gun violence as it relates to Black individuals 89.32% of the time. When Representative Lee talked about gun violence, she framed it in a way pertaining to the Black community most of the time, this finding supports scholarship that found that when Black representatives are elected to Congress, they are

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<sup>62</sup> For the purpose of this study congressional districts were considered to have particularly high rates of gun violence if the district has a higher rate of gun violence than the national average gun death rate which was 10.6 per 100,000 people in 2021.

<sup>63</sup> "Congressional District 13, ca | Data USA," datausa.io, n.d., <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/congressional-district-13-ca>.

<sup>64</sup> Oakland Police Department, Crime Analysis Unit, "UCR Crime State, City Wide," December 1, 2021, <https://cityofOakland2.app.box.com/s/0ol2ik52d1atan2sl5hovon3hs1szn04/file/890965682283>.

more likely to provide substantive representation to Black constituents.<sup>65</sup> An example of how Representative Lee framed the issue of gun violence is showcased in a press release published on March 21st, 2021, titled Congresswoman Lee welcomes Oakland students to #MARCHFOROURLIVES. In the press release, Representative Lee stated, “Tragic mass shootings galvanize attention on the gun control debate, but we cannot forget the reality of daily gun violence in Black and Brown communities. If we are serious about ending this senseless epidemic, we must address all forms of gun violence.”<sup>66</sup> This quote from Representative Lee shows that she is providing pro-active substantive representation to her constituents, through highlighting an issue that majority of her constituents face daily.

Congressional Representative Jamaal Bowman is another example of a Congressional member within the sample, who represents an urban district that also suffers from particularly high rates of gun violence. During the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, Bowman was the Congressional representative for New York’s 16th Congressional district. The 16th Congressional District of New York is primarily located in the southern part of Westchester County and includes parts of the Bronx. It is largely considered an urban district, although there are some suburban areas within it. According to a report by the New York City Council, the 16th congressional district had the second-highest number of shooting incidents among all districts in the city in 2021, with a total of 159 shooting incidents.<sup>67</sup> This accounted for nearly 10% of all shooting incidents in New York City.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Christian R. Grose, “Disentangling Constituency and Legislator Effects in Legislative Representation: Black Legislators or Black Districts? \*,” *Social Science Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (June 2005): 427–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2005.00311.x>.

<sup>66</sup> Barbara Lee, “Congresswoman Lee Welcomes Oakland Students to #MARCHFOROURLIVES.,” March 21, 2021, <https://lee.house.gov>.

<sup>67</sup> “Congressional District Data | Gun Violence Archive,” [www.gunviolencearchive.org](http://www.gunviolencearchive.org), accessed February 16, 2023, an <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/congress/pa/07>.

<sup>68</sup> “Congressional District Data | Gun Violence Archive,” [www.gunviolencearchive.org](http://www.gunviolencearchive.org), accessed February 16, 2023, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/congress/pa/07>.

In the one House floor speech he gave, 11 press releases, and nine Twitter posts, Representative Bowman spoke about gun violence as it relates to the Black community 94.32% of the time. Representative Bowman utilized press releases to speak about gun violence affecting Black communities at a particularly high level. Additionally, 10 out of 11 of the press releases coded for Bowman framed gun violence as a “Black” issue. In a press release titled *Statement from Jamaal Bowman Regarding the 6-year-old Boy Shot in Yonkers* published on September 13, 2021, Bowman stated, “The violence inflicted on this child was the extension of a cycle of violence that has, unfortunately, carried on for far too long. And that cycle is the result of policy choices that have neglected Black and brown communities. We need to invest in your youth and provide them with ample resources to break that cycle and realize their potential.”<sup>69</sup> This quote from Jamaal Bowman was given as a response to an incident where gunfire between two teenage boys, resulted in the death of a 6-year-old boy within Bowman’s district. Additionally, this quote serves as an example of a reactive response to a gun violence incident that involved a Black community member. Of the 10 press releases coded for Jamaal Brown that addressed gun violence in Black communities, seven of them were in response to an event where a Black community member died because of gun violence. This data suggests that Bowman was more inclined to frame gun violence as an issue that directly targets the Black community, after a gun violence incident has taken place in his district. Furthermore, due to the disproportionately high gun incident rates within Bowman’s district, there are more gun violence incident rates to respond to, in comparison to the national average.

Another member who framed the issue of gun violence as a Black issue at an especially high rate was Representative Robin Kelly, who served as the congressional representative for

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<sup>69</sup> Jamaal Bowman, “Statement from Jamaal Bowman Regarding the 6-Year-Old Boy Shot in Yonkers,” September 13, 2021.

Illinois's Second Congressional district. The racial makeup of the district is diverse, with approximately 46% of the population identifying as Black or African American, 33% as White, 13% as Hispanic or Latino, and 7% as Asian.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, the district is composed mostly of urban areas, and it includes parts of notable urban areas like Chicago Heights and Dolton. According to data from the *Chicago Tribune*, there were 63 shooting incidents in Chicago Heights in 2021, which resulted in 17 deaths and 55 injuries.<sup>71</sup> Of the two speeches given on the House floor, eight press releases, and twelve Twitter posts published by Representative Robin Kelly and analyzed in this thesis, 76.34% of these communications framed gun violence or gun violence solutions as they pertain to the Black community. For example, in a press release published on June 24, 2022, Representative Kelly advocated for the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act,<sup>72</sup> citing that its passage would have a life-saving impact specifically on the Black and Brown community within Chicago, when she stated, "More than 70 people were shot in Chicago this weekend including 10 fatalities. These ongoing occurrences have to stop. I thank everyone who is involved in making our communities safe as they work to pass this legislation for not only this bill but committing their lives toward healing Black and Brown communities and making it safe for us to live."<sup>73</sup> The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is a piece of legislation designed to mitigate gun violence within every single American community, regardless of its racial composition. Although, Representative Kelly, only spoke about the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act in a capacity that pertains to Black and Brown communities.

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<sup>70</sup> "Illinois' 2nd Congressional District," Ballotpedia, 2021, [https://ballotpedia.org/Illinois%27\\_2nd\\_Congressional\\_District](https://ballotpedia.org/Illinois%27_2nd_Congressional_District).

<sup>71</sup> Annie Sweeney, "Chicago Homicides in 2021," *Chicago Tribune*, January 3, 2022, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-chicago-homicides-data-tracker-20220426-iedehzuq5jdofbhwt3v2w6cjoy-story.html>.

<sup>72</sup> The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is United States federal law passed during the 117th United States Congress. The act provides legislation to enhance initiatives that will promote safer.

<sup>73</sup> Robin Kelly, "The Passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act," July 24, 2022.

The aforementioned representatives serve as prominent examples of Black Congressional members who are more likely to frame the issue of gun violence as it directly pertains to Black communities if they represent an urban district that also suffers from higher rates of violence. The results of this thesis also found some outliers. Furthermore, the data collected by this study suggests that within the 117th Congress, there were three Black Congressional members that framed the issue of gun violence as pertaining to the Black community at particularly high levels, even though they represented majority suburban districts that have lower gun violence rates than the national average. These members are Lauren Underwood of Illinois's 14th Congressional district, Shontel Brown who served as the U.S. Representative for Ohio's 11th Congressional district, and Lucy McBath of Georgia's 5th Congressional district. On average, when speaking about gun violence, Lauren Underwood spoke about the issue as it pertains to the Black community 71.92% of the time and Shontel Brown spoke about the issue as it pertains to the Black community 76.41% of the time. Additionally, within this study, Lauren Underwood and Lucy McBath were two of the nine representatives that made a speech on the House Floor that addressed gun violence as an issue directly impacting the Black community.

## **II. Congressional Black Caucus**

The results of this thesis suggest that Black Congressional representatives who assume leadership positions in the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) are more likely to frame the issue of gun violence as it pertains to Black constituents, in comparison to Black congressional members who are not a part of the CBC's leadership. One of the responsibilities of the CBC is for the caucus to use its platform to speak out on issues that disproportionately affect Black Americans. Of the 57 Black Congressional members analyzed as a part of this study, 4 of the representatives assumed leadership roles in the Congressional Black Caucus during the 117<sup>th</sup>

Congress. These representatives are Representative Steven Horsford, CBC Chair, Representative Yvette Clark, CBC Vice-Chair, Representative Lucy McBath, CBC Secretary, and Representative Marilyn Strickland, CBC Whip. On average, these four Black congressional framed the issue of gun violence as it pertains to the Black community 90.91% of the time. This finding supports prior scholarship that found that Black committee chairs are more likely to sponsor legislation addressing “Black” issues in comparison to Black Congressional members that do not assume chair positions.<sup>74</sup>

Chair of the CBC, Representative Steven Horsford is a member of the United States House of Representatives from Nevada's 4th Congressional district. One of the key reasons why Representative Horsford is so committed to this issue is because of his personal experience with gun violence. In 2015, his nephew was shot and killed in Las Vegas. This tragedy had a profound impact on Horsford, and subsequently strengthened his resolve to do something to prevent other families, specifically Black families from suffering the same kind of loss. In the years since his nephew's death, Horsford has become a leading voice in the fight against gun violence, both in his home state of Nevada and at the national level. Additionally, when Horsford was 19 years old, his father was fatally shot and killed at work by another black man, attempting to rob the store his father worked at. Moreover, of the one speech, 25 press releases, and 13 Twitter posts analyzed from Horsford, the Congressional representative framed the issue of gun violence as an issue specifically targeting the Black community 94.37% of the time. This finding supports Lowande et. al's research that legislators with “shared experiences” with their constituents can better represent them because they are able to utilize their own experiences to communicate

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<sup>74</sup> Walter Clark Wilson and William Curtis Ellis, “Surrogates beyond Borders: Black Members of the United States Congress and the Representation of African Interests on the Congressional Foreign-Policy Agenda,” *Policy* 46, no. 2 (April 2014): 255–73, <https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2014.3>.

directly with the federal government, on behalf of the marginalized groups they are a part of.<sup>75</sup> An example of how Horsford framed the issue of gun violence comes from a press release he published on September 22, 2022 titled *House Passes Horsford's Break the Cycle of Violence Act* where he states, “In fact, Black men and boys, who make up just 6 percent of the U.S. population, account for 63 percent of all homicide victims. This violence disproportionately impacts young people of color. From 2015 to 2019, Black children and teens were 14 times as likely to be shot to death as their White peers.”<sup>76</sup> This press release addresses the Break the Cycle of Violence Act,<sup>77</sup> which was introduced by Representative Horsford, Representative Lucy McBath, and Representative Moore on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

CBC Secretary, Lucy McBath, represents Georgia’s 5th Congressional district. Before entering politics, McBath worked as a flight attendant, a Delta Air Lines customer service representative, and a spokesperson for Everytown for Gun Safety, a nonprofit organization advocating for gun control measures. McBath has a personal connection to gun violence: in 2012, her 17-year-old son, Jordan Davis, was shot and killed in Jacksonville, Florida, by a man who objected to the loud music her son, Davis, and his friends were playing in their car. McBath became an outspoken advocate for gun control in the aftermath of her son's death and testified before Congress on the issue, specifically how Black men are at more risk of dying from gun violence. She has also been involved in organizations such as Moms Demand Action and

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<sup>75</sup> Kenneth Lowande, Melinda Ritchie, and Erinn Lauterbach, “Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries,” *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 3 (June 17, 2019): 644–59, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12443>.

<sup>76</sup> Steven Horsford, “House Passes Horsford’s Break the Cycle of Violence Act,” September 22, 2022.

<sup>77</sup> The Break the Cycle of Violence Act (H.R. 3529) is a bill introduced in the United States House of Representatives in 2021. The bill aims to provide funding for community-based violence prevention programs and initiatives to address the root causes of gun violence. The bill proposes allocating \$5 billion over eight years to the Department of Health and Human Services to establish and fund community-based violence prevention programs. These programs would focus on addressing the underlying causes of violence, such as poverty, lack of access to education and job opportunities, and systemic racism.

Everytown for Gun Safety, advocating for stricter gun laws and background checks. Of the 2 speeches, 22 press releases, and 16 Twitter posts published by Lucy McBath surrounding gun violence, 93.65% frame gun violence as an issue Black Americans, specifically Black men face. An example of how McBath frames the issue of gun violence can be seen in a press release she published on September 23, 2022, titled *House passes McBath Bill to Provide Community Intervention Program and Stop Violence* where she states, “Nationwide, 75 percent of all homicides are committed with a gun. In studies of some urban hospitals, researchers have found that up to 45 percent of patients treated for injuries like gunshots were violently reinjured within five years, disproportionately young people of color.”<sup>78</sup> Additionally, McBath represents a district that is 85.6% white and does not suffer from high levels of gun violence. Moreover, McBath often releases press releases on Black gun violence victims and highlights victims that were not a part of her district. An example of this is on November 23, 2021, when McBath published a press release commemorating a gun violence victim from Oregon she stated, “Every year, I spend the week of Thanksgiving celebrating and commemorating the life of my son. And eight years after Jordan was killed for playing 'loud music,' we are still dealing with the same hatred, the same gun violence that tears families apart – families that disproportionately live in communities of color. My heart aches for Aidan and his family during what I know is an incredibly painful time. As a nation, we must do better, it is past time for our leaders to work together and do all they can to end gun violence and help save American lives.”<sup>79</sup> This quote showcases that Lucy McBath provides substantive representation for issues that Black Americans face, not just issues that her Black constituents may face.

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<sup>78</sup> Lucy McBath, “House Passes McBath Bill to Provide Community Intervention Program and Stop Violence,” September 23, 2022, <https://mcbath.house.gov>.

<sup>79</sup> Lucy McBath, “Remembering Aiden,” September 23, 2021, <https://mcbath.house.gov/search?filter=0&q=Aiden>.

### III. Other observations and findings

The data collected and analyzed for this thesis suggest that there is a partisan difference in the way in which Black Republican congressional members frame gun violence in comparison to the way in which Democratic Black congressional members frame gun violence.<sup>80</sup> The two Republicans included in this study, the Honorable Byron Donalds of Florida and the Honorable Burgess Owens of Ohio, both had zero press releases, zero speeches on the House floor, and zero Twitter posts addressing gun violence. The only mention of guns by Byron Donalds is in a press release where he states, “I proudly stood against Republican leadership in the Florida Legislature when they infringed upon our rights as Americans and passed gun control into state law. That vote, and others, have earned me the NRA's endorsement. In Congress, you can expect me to defend your Constitutional rights, no matter the cost. Shall not be infringed, means Shall not be infringed!”<sup>81</sup> The lack of mention of gun violence by either of the representatives could be indicative of a lack of substantive representation that they provide to their constituents, as both districts Byron Donalds and Burgess Owens represent congressional districts that have gun violence rates higher than the national average. This finding supports research that found a Black legislator’s race is not the only factor that impacts a Black legislator’s likeliness to provide substantive representation to Black constituents. In fact, Rocca, Sanchez, and Nikora’s results suggested that African American Congress members should not be considered a monolithic group with respect to congressional voting.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> There were only two Black republican congressional members a part of the 117th Congress, and of course in theory there would need to be more Republicans elected to be able to study partisan differences.

<sup>81</sup> Byron Donalds, “Second Amendment,” October 13, 2021, [https://www.byrondonalds.com/2nd\\_amendment](https://www.byrondonalds.com/2nd_amendment).

<sup>82</sup> Michael S. Rocca, Gabriel R. Sanchez, and Ron Nikora, “The Role of Personal Attributes in African American Roll-Call Voting Behavior in Congress,” *Political Research Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (June 18, 2008): 408–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908319573>.

Additionally, the data collected as a part of this thesis found that when Black congressional members framed gun violence as an issue for the Black community, it was done on Twitter 71% of the time, in House floor speeches 42% of the time, and in press releases 56% of the time (See Table 5). This data suggests that Black congressional members are more likely to frame the issue of gun violence as it pertains to the Black community on Twitter in comparison to press releases and House floor speeches. This could be because on Twitter, congressional members have an opportunity to directly speak to those who follow them. Furthermore, the tweets analyzed that were by Black congressional members that framed gun violence as a “Black issue,” were mostly in response to a gun incident that had taken place. An example of this is when Representative Kweisi Mfume of Maryland’s 2nd Congressional district tweeted on May 18, 2022, “My prayers go out to all who were affected by the horrific shootings that occurred this past weekend across the country. This evening, I will vote in favor of the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. This bill supports federal law enforcement and investigative agencies in a combined effort to combat domestic terrorism and other domestic threats in our country, including threats stemming from white supremacist and neo-Nazi beliefs.”<sup>83</sup> This is an example of the responsive nature<sup>84</sup> of the majority (81.76%) of Twitter posts published by Black congressional members that address gun violence.

## *VII. Conclusion*

Congressional members hold the dual responsibility of being responsive to what constituents want, but they also are responsible for passing laws that sometimes may conflict with what their constituents want. Upon being elected by their constituents, members of

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<sup>83</sup> Kweisi MFume, “Support of Preventing Domestic Terrorism,” Twitter, May 18, 2022.

<sup>84</sup> For the purpose of this this thesis, responsive nature when coding was categorized as a Congressional member addressing the issue of gun violence after a gun violence incident had taken place.

Congress are expected to act in the best interests of those they represent. Members of Congress can provide representation to their constituents through addressing constituents' concerns and needs, and advocating for constituent's interests within their communication by framing issues as they pertain to many of their constituents. Furthermore, descriptive representation in Congress is vital as well because it ensures that the diversity of the American population is reflected in its legislative body, true representation within Congress is dependent on the presence of both descriptive and substantive representation. Elected officials must not only look like their constituents, but also understand and advocate for their priorities and the issues that they face.

This thesis found that only some groups of Black Congressional members provide substantive representation to their constituents, as it pertains to supporting legislation that addresses gun violence. The results of this thesis found that Black Congressional members who represent urban districts that also suffer from higher rates of gun violence spoke about gun violence as it pertains to Black constituents, at a higher rate than Black Congressional members that represent suburban areas that do not suffer from gun violence rates higher than the national average. Additionally, the data collected for this thesis also indicated that Black Congressional members that assume leadership roles on the Congressional Black Caucus, frame the issue of gun violence as it pertains to the Black community at a higher rate than Black Congressional members that do not assume leadership positions on the Congressional Black Caucus.

There were several limitations to this study. The first being that the sample set used of for this study was small, and only included one Congress and one ethnic group: Black members in the 117th Congress. This thesis did not collect data from Black Congressional members that served in the Senate because there were only three Black Senate members while the 117th

Congress was in session.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, within the sample set used for this thesis, there was a disproportionate amount of Black Congressional members who were Democrats (57), in comparison to Black Congressional members that were Republicans (2). The lack of Republicans among the Black congressional members in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress inhibits this study from finding partisan differences. Apart from the small sample set of this study, the results of this thesis were also limited because I was the sole coder for the data collected.

Future research that encompasses the way in which Congressional members frame issues that specifically target marginalized groups should utilize a larger sample set of Congressional members by examining more than one Congress. There has been some literature that has asserted that Black Congressional members are more likely to frame welfare distribution as it pertains to the Black community,<sup>86</sup> but future research should also aim to address to what extent Black Congressional members frame all issues that disproportionately affect the Black community in a way that calls out this. Other issues to study could include maternal mortality, income inequality, police brutality, and education achievement gaps. Additionally, future research should compare how Black members of Congress frame these issues in comparison to their non-Black counterparts, especially those who represent districts with primarily Black constituencies.

Representative government has been put in place precisely to address the issues that constituents face. When constituents cast their ballots for their elected officials, they are entrusting them with the responsibility of advocating for the issues they face. Whether it's fighting for better education, improved healthcare, or gun-control, representative government is intended to be a catalyst for change, designed to address the issues that impact constituent's lives

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<sup>85</sup> Jennifer E. Manning, "Membership of the 117 Th Congress: A Profile," September 30, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46705>.

<sup>86</sup> Kenny J Whitby, *The Color of Representation: Congressional Behavior and Black Interests* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

daily. Undeniably, within this country there are communities that disproportionately suffer from certain issues. Through Congressional representation, advocacy and communication, Congressional members have the capacity to make these issues salient, and when issues are salient, they are more likely to be addressed. Additionally, the way in which Congressional members frame an issue matter because it has ability to influence how the public, fellow members of Congress, constituents, those involved within the policy making process and even the President think about issues, especially those that disproportionately target groups at the margins.

Table 1: Number of Analyzed Speeches, Press Releases, and Twitter Posts for Each Congressional Member

<b>Member of Congress</b>	<b># of Speeches</b>	<b># of Press Releases</b>	<b># of Twitter Posts</b>
Maxine Waters (D)	2	2	3
Sanford Bishop (D)	0	2	1
Jim Clyburn (D)	0	2	2
Eddie Bernice Johnson (D)	2	0	2
Bobby Rush (D)	0	1	8
Bobby Scott (D)	0	2	0
Bennie Thompson (D)	0	1	1
Sheila Jackson Lee (D)	5	3	3
Danny Davis (D)	0	0	2
Gregory Meeks (D)	0	2	3
Barbara Lee (D)	3	3	6
David Scott (D)	3	0	0
Emmanuel Cleaver (D)	0	5	1
Al Green (D)	0	1	0
Gwen Moore (D)	1	7	12
Yvette Clark (D)	0	4	2
Hank Johnson (D)	0	1	0
Andre Carson (D)	0	2	3
Karen Bass (D)	0	4	11
Cedric Richmond (D)	0	2	0

Terri Sewel (D)	0	7	2
Frederica Wilson (D)	0	5	2
Donald Payne Jr. (D)	0	2	5
Joyce Beatty (D)	0	17	5
Hakeem Jeffries (D)	2	6	7
Marc Veasey (D)	0	3	0
Robin Kelly (D)	2	8	12
Alma Adams (D)	0	4	0
Bonnie Watson Coleman (D)	1	5	0
Brenda Lawrence (D)	0	0	1
Stacey Plaskett (D)	1	2	1
Dwight Evans (D)	0	0	1
Anthony Brown (D)	0	0	0
Joe Neguse (D)	0	12	4
Jahana Hays (D)	0	4	1
Lucy McBath (D)	2	22	16
Lauren Underwood (D)	1	6	12
Ayanna Pressley (D)	0	4	2
Ilhan Omar (D)	1	4	6
Steven Horsford (D)	1	25	13

Antonio Delgado (D)	0	0	2
Colin Allred (D)	0	5	1
Kweisi Mfume (D)	0	3	2
Byron Donalds (R)	0	0	0
Cori Bush (D)	0	4	12
Ritchie Torres (D)	0	2	2
Jamaal Bowman (D)	1	11	9
Mondaire Jones (D)	0	2	3
Burgess Owens (R)	0	0	0
Marilyn Strickland (D)	0	6	1
Nikema Williams (D)	0	6	7
Shontel Brown (D)	0	9	3

Table 2: Number of Members from Urban or Suburban Districts that Frame Gun Violence as it Pertains to the Black Community

### Number of Members from Urban or Suburban Districts that Frame Gun Violence as it Pertains to the Black Community

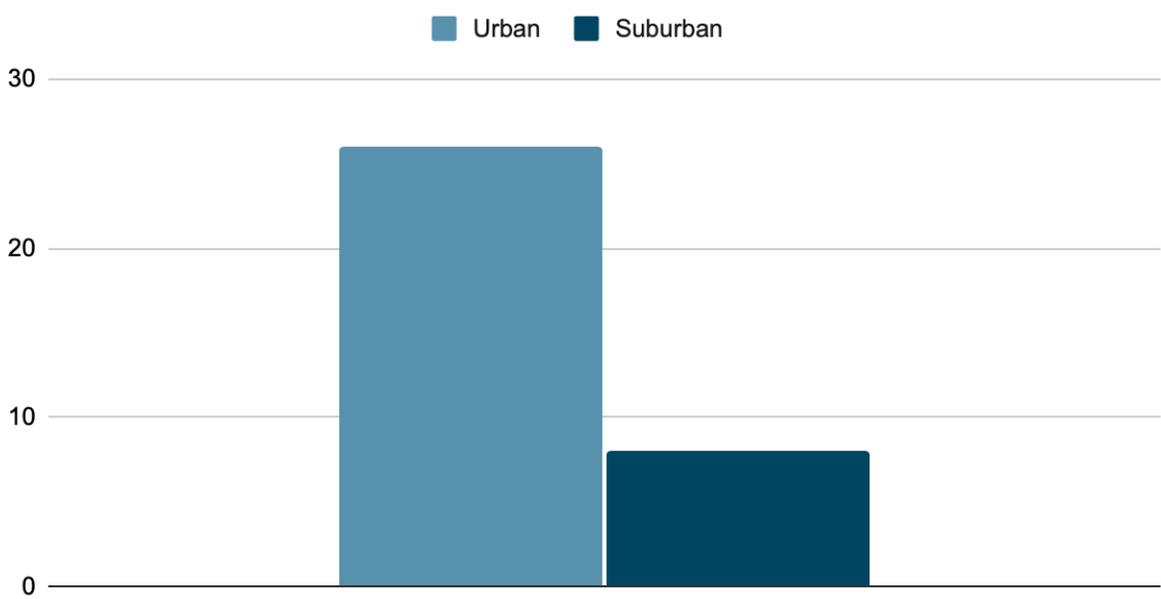


Table 3: Number of Members from Urban or Suburban Districts that do not Frame Gun violence as it Pertains to the Black Community

### Number of Members from Urban or Suburban Districts that do not Frame Gun Violence as it Pertains to the Black Community

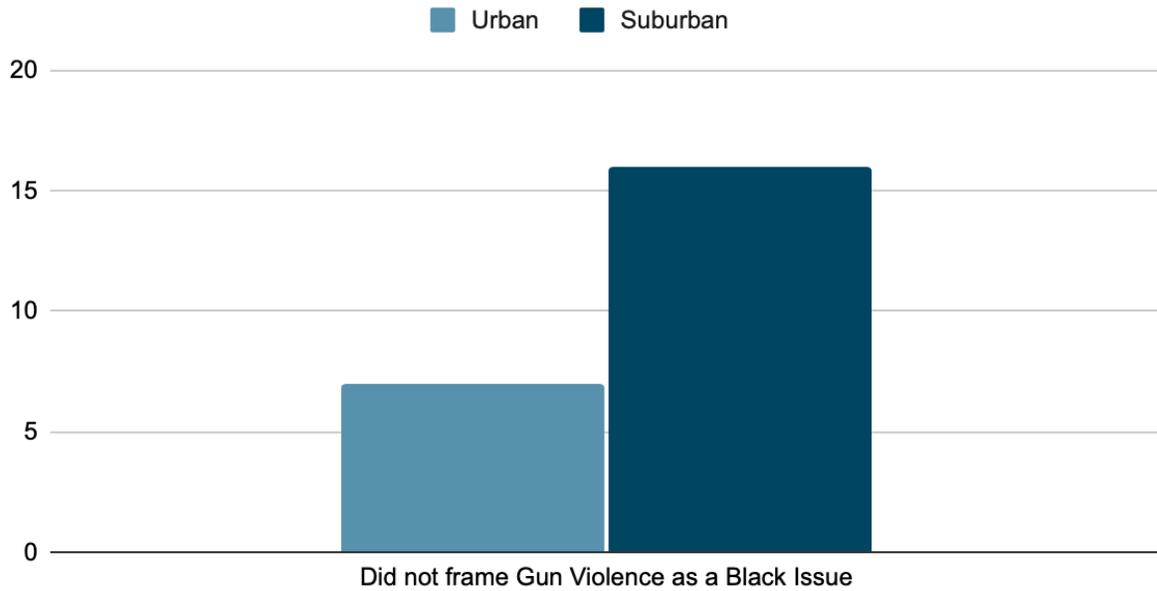


Table 4: Demographics of Black Representatives in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress

	Black Representatives in the 117th Congress
# of Men	30
# of Women	27
# of Democrats	55
# of Republicans	2
# of Urban Districts	33
# of Suburban Districts	24
# of Members over 50	40
# of Members under 50	17
Years in Congress < 10	9
Years in Congress > 10	48

Table 5

	<b># of Each Mode of Communication Coded</b>	<b>Talked about gun violence as pertaining to Black constituents</b>
<b>Twitter</b>	194	36% (71)
<b>Floor Speeches</b>	21	42% (9)
<b>Press Releases</b>	231	53.6% (124)

**Appendix A****Code Sheet**

**Type of Communication** (circle one): House Floor Speech, Twitter Post, Press Release

**Member of Congress:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Party affiliation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**District that Member of Congress represents:** \_\_\_\_\_

**District Gun Violence Statistics:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Twitter**

Twitter Post: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Post: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Twitter post: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Sentences devoted to gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to Black individuals affected by gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to solutions to gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to statements of “future” policies:

Number of Sentences devoted to issues/ causes perpetuating gun violence:

**Press Release**

Title of Press Release: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Press Release: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of sentences: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Sentences devoted to gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to black individuals affected by gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to solutions to gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to “change”:

Number of Sentences devoted to statements of “future” policies:

Issues/ causes perpetuating gun violence:

**Speech:**

Title of Speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of sentences: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Sentences devoted to gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to black individuals affected by gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to solutions to gun violence:

Number of Sentences devoted to “change”:

Number of Sentences devoted to statements of “future” policies:

Issues/ causes perpetuating gun violence:

Notes:

## Appendix B

Seniority	Member	Party & State	Start of Service
1.	Kweisi MFume	(D), MD	01-03-1987* 05-05-2020
2.	Eleanor Holmes-Norton (delegate)	(D), DC	01-03-1991
3.	Maxine Waters	(D), CA	01-03-1991
4.	Sanford Bishop	(D), GA	01-03-1993
5.	Jim Clyburn	(D), SC	01-03-1993
6.	Eddie Bernice Johnson	(D), TX	01-03-1993
7.	Bobby Rush	(D), IL	01-03-1993
8.	Bobby Scott	(D), VA	01-03-1993
9.	Bennie Thompson	(D), MS	04-13-1993
10.	Sheila Jackson Lee	(D), TX	01-03-1995
11.	Danny Davis	(D), IL	01-03-1997
12.	Gregory Meeks	(D), NY	02-03-1998
13.	Barbara Lee	(D), CA	04-07-1998
14.	David Scott	(D), GA	01-03-2003
15.	Eva Clayton	(D), NC	07-20-2004
16.	Emanuel Cleaver	(D), MO	01-03-2005

17.	Al Green	(D), TX	01-03-2005
18.	Gwen Moore	(D), WI	01-03-2005
19.	Yvette Clarke	(D), NY	01-04-2007
20.	Hank Johnson	(D), GA	01-04-2007
21.	Andre Carson	(D), IN	03-13-2008
22.	Karen Bass	(D), CA	01-05-2011
23.	Cedric Richmond	(D), LA	01-05-2011
24.	Terri Sewell	(D), AL	01-05-2011
25.	Frederica Wilson	(D), FL	01-05-2011
26.	Donald Payne, Jr.	(D), NJ	11-15-2012
27.	Joyce Beatty	(D), OH	01-03-2013
28.	Hakeem Jeffries	(D), NY	01-03-2013
29.	Marc Veasey	(D), TX	01-03-2013
30.	Robin Kelly	(D), IL	04-11-2013
31.	Alma Adams	(D), NC	11-12-2014
32.	Bonnie Watson Coleman	(D), NJ	01-06-2015
33.	Brenda Lawrence	(D), MI	01-06-2015
34.	Stacey Plaskett (delegate)	(D), VI	01-06-2015
35.	Dwight Evans	(D), PA	11-14-2016
36.	A. Donald McEachin	(D), VA	01-03-2017

37.	Anthony Brown	(D), MD	01-03-2017
38.	Val Demings	(D), FL	01-03-2017
39.	Al Lawson	(D), FL	01-03-2017
40.	Lisa Blunt Rochester	(D), DE	01-03-2017
41.	Joe Neguse	(D), CO	01-03-2019
42.	Jahana Hayes	(D), CT	01-03-2019
43.	Lucy McBath	(D), GA	01-03-2019
44.	Lauren Underwood	(D), IL	01-03-2019
45.	Ayanna Pressley	(D), MA	01-03-2019
46.	Ilhan Omar	(D), MI	01-03-2019
47.	Steven Horsford	(D), NV	01-03-2019
48.	Antonio Delgado	(D), NY	01-03-2019
49.	Colin Allred	(D), TX	01-03-2019
51.	Byron Donalds	(R), FL	01-03-2021
52.	Cori Bush	(D), MO	01-03-2021
53.	Ritchie Torres	(D), NY	01-03-2021
54.	Jamaal Bowman	(D), NY	01-03-2021
55.	Mondaire Jones	(D), NY	01-03-2021
56.	Burgess Owens	(R), UT	01-03-2021
57.	Marilyn Strickland	(D), WA	01-03-2021

58.	Nikema Williams	(D), GA	01-03-2021
59.	Shontel Brown	(D), OH	11-04-2021
Total Black Americans: 57 Democrats: 55 Republicans: 2			

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