



EXAMINING THE STRATEGIES OF FORMATION AND ACTION AMONG SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: A COMPARISON OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND BLACK LIVES MATTER

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Introduction

How does Black Lives Matter hold up as a social movement?

Does it follow traditional criteria?

- Comparing two well-known movements.
 - The African-American Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968)
 - The Black Lives Matter Movement (2009-present)
- They have often been compared.
- Examining the accuracy of that comparison.



Historical Context of BLM

- Founded by three black women; began as a hashtag on Twitter
- First started after the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012
- Really took off after the police-involved shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014
 - Coalesced into a movement at this point
 - BLM has become one of the most controversial movements in recent history
 - Often cited as violent or unnecessary by outside forces/public



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Please Note

- 1. Black Lives Matter is NOT a violent movement.**
- 2. Violence occurs due to a VERY small percentage of movement participants and,**
- 3. Violent riots/protestors have been denounced by prominent movement members – multiple times.**

BLM Co-Founders

- **Opal Tometi**
 - Nigerian-American writer
 - Strategist
 - Community organizer
- **Patrisse Cullors**
 - NAACP History Maker
 - Artist
 - Fulbright Scholar
- **Alicia Garza**
 - Special Projects Director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance
 - Public speaker
 - Community organizer



Reviewing the Literature

- Social movements have been studied for decades
 - Both nationally and internationally
- Big names in the field include:
 - Jasper and Polletta
 - McCarthy and Zald
 - Morris and Staagenborg
- They have attempted to fill in various gaps in how influential factors are all connected.

Methodology

- Devised four criteria for examining social movements
 - Identification of Goals
 - Strategies of Communication and Mobilization
 - Leadership
 - Collective Identity

Previous Research

- Goals act as both short-term reinforcement of commitment and identity, and as the "*raison d'être*" or the pinnacle reason for existence. (*Curtis and Zurcher, 1974*)
- Movements are groups of people who share grievances, who then communicate, coordinate, and mobilize together. (*McCarthy and Zald, 1973*)
- Leadership is greatly beneficial due to the position of power and ability to direct member energies. (*Morris and Staagenborg, 2004*)
- Collective identity forms loyalty, commitment, and community which sustains momentum. (*Polletta and Jasper, 2001*)

Why?

- Relevant to both movements
- Strike the core pillars of movement behavior
- Provide the clearest picture
- All criteria intersect
 - Often cannot have one without another

Results

Criteria	Black Lives Matter	Civil Rights Movement
Identification of Goals	End police-involved shootings	End institutional/legal segregation
Communication/ Mobilization	Widespread protest, sit-ins, social media usage, etc.	Protest, sit-ins, legal activism, etc.
Leadership	Have directly opposed traditional leadership	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Bayard Rustin, Rosa Parks, etc.
Collective Identity	Police-involved shootings/unsatisfactory verdicts leading to a continued sense of dehumanization.	Racial violence, segregation, Jim Crow, etc.

Conclusions

- When examining, we face “traditional” and “new age” styles between these two notable movements.
 - CRM is often exemplified as “legitimate”
 - BLM struggles with public legitimacy
- CRM is more of a “movement” in a traditional sense
- BLM and other movements can cement success in various ways.

Future Research

- How will movements continue to evolve?
- Will Black Lives Matter find success in dismantling the concept of “respectability politics”?
- Will Black Lives Matter succeed in creating institutional change and/or cultural change? Have they already?
- To that note, what will determine future movement success?