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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Abstract

In today's tumultuous political landscape, the question of what makes an effective social movement? is often asked. This can be a complicated question to answer as social movements vary greatly across racial, ethnic, economic, and political boundaries. Therefore, I am conducting a case comparison of two widely-known socio-political organizations, the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter. In this comparison I will examine whether or not they truly fit the definition of a social movement, look at the strategies of action that have or could prove successful in enacting long-standing socio-political change, and make recommendations on how movements could continue to evolve. As a case study, I will examine the academic literature and the histories of the movements to show that while both are influential and viable, the Civil Rights Movement proves to be a more definitive example of a "movement" from an academic perspective. Black Lives Matter intentionally detaches itself from traditional movement staples, lending to a more fast-and-loose use of the term. Ultimately, I aim to contribute another voice to the social movement dialogue in order to help further the likelihood of future movement success.

Introduction

To my unending benefit, social movements have been the focus of scholarly research for decades. From communist revolutions, the Gandhian dismantling of British rule in India, the apartheid struggles in South Africa, to of course, the civil rights conflicts here in America, the desire to understand all the inner workings of social movements has challenged scholars from all different fields. Theories on why they form, how they communicate, how they choose their goals, etc., go back and forth depending on the field of expertise of the scholar in question, but for the most part there seems to be a general consensus that for a movement to form, there must be something which a nation's citizenry deems 'worth fighting for'. However, among the fields of study, that tends to be where consensus dies, and the debate rages ever onward; this seems to be especially true when research is attempting to compare and evaluate two different-but-related movements such as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s, and the more modern Black Lives Matter movement.

Literature Review

Existing work on social movements argues that they are multi-faceted and multi-causal in nature. Depending on the type of movement, there are many different factors that can play into formation, mobilization, and success at any given time. In reviewing this existing research, I have developed four criteria which best encompass the varying ways in which a social movement can come to be, whilst also assisting in actually defining what exactly a "social movement" even is. These criteria are: (1) the identification of movement goals, (2) strategies of both communication and mobilization, (3) leadership and (4) the concept of collective identity.

Identification of Goals

Goals are discussed by scholars Curtis and Zurcher wherein they write that "Social movement organizations pursue ends - goals in fact are their *raison d'etre*", their most important reason for existence (Curtis, and Zurcher, 1974). This argues that a movement without unified, distinct goals is no movement at all; and, when examining any potential movements, that goals prove necessary in order for a *social movement* to be explained as such. They continue with their analysis by differentiating between goals that are aimed inward to support and sustain the formation and existence of a movement, or outward to a larger social and/or political system. These two types are classified as either *expressive* or *instrumental* in which "The expressive… manifests a goal-orientation towards satisfying the social and psychological needs of its members through acts of participation. The instrumental organization manifests a goal-orientation of accomplishing some specific task external to the organization" (Curtis, and Zucher, 1974). While both are important, it is the instrumental goal-orientations that truly help define a social movement.

Identifying the goals of a mobilized social group can help determine whether or not it is a *movement* by looking at the what, how, and who of the goals. That is, looking at what or who is affected by the goals of a movement, and how; how can goals be formulated to better address the grievances of a group and to enact social and/or political change in positive, long-lasting ways. This is, according to Sweetman et al., "What can be done to increase social value in the current system?... How is social value to be distributed?... Who is the beneficiary of social change" (Sweetman et al., 2013)? Depending on how these questions are answered, the group is either a cellular conglomeration with the same desires and ideals and does not constitute a movement, or a legitimate mobilization worthy of the title.

A social movement and a collective sense of grievance (*see the discussion of Collective Identity for more*) are two different things. When attempting to try and define a social movement, examining whether or not a collective has come together and begun to make decisions and plan action is a key indicator of the beginnings of a movement. External environmental factors, particularly politics and government, greatly influence the formation of goal-oriented action. A group of people can have the same sort of collective belief, but only when a decision to incite change is reached and the goals of that change begin to be formed does an agreeable entity start to coalesce into a functional system comprised of the individuals committed to its cause. This decision for change is often made based upon perceptions of society, either by one person (who begins to spread it to others) or a group with an established agreement of belief.

Also, by Sweetman, Leach, Spears et al., their discussion of these origins of goals, and the delineation of a movement helps to highlight this further. They help to clarify on the explanation I have posed above, discussing perception of "the system", the government, as integral to the formation of unified goals. They write:

When group members perceive the system as legitimate, they are likely to pursue social change goals that emphasize only the ingroup's responsibility in determining the status quo, as opposed to blaming unfair procedures extrinsic to the ingroup, or the actions of outgroups. Here, social change is seen as dependent on the group's collective efforts within the system. However, when the system is seen as illegitimate, group members may challenge the application of institutional power and its rules (Sweetman et al., 2013).

These "ingroups" are simply those with collectively shared ideas or beliefs, "outgroups" are simply those without. Goals are formed out of perceptions, are communicated through (and by) a social collective, which already possesses a sense of identity and action. If a group is developing goals they wish to institute within a system (or to use by replacing a system), the group is constructing desires for social change, something inherent to the formation of a social movement; these goals can either aim to work with a current system, or rebel and defy one in order to implement a system overhaul. While not exactly "necessary" to any given movement, goals tend to be more helpful when pushing for social or political change. Goals can help formulate a sense of commitment among movement members whilst also fostering a sense of hope, achievement, and/or a "something to work for" attitude among movement subscribers. Ab

Goals, though available to every person and group, are a necessary aspect of driving a movement (truly, putting the 'move' into the name) toward success regardless of whether it actually is, or is not. Not only are goals the 'end game' of the movement, so to speak, but a movement also consists of small-scale goals which serve to maintain the gusto and onus of its members. Goals then, it is safe to say, are the driving force of any credible movement.

Strategies of Communication and Mobilization

Now, secondly, *strategies of communication and mobilization*. Often, when you hear news coverage of some sort of protest, or active coalition within a society, you see examinations of how the group is talking within itself and to the public. Also, there is this word *mobilize* that is often associated with a planned protest or some other form of action. In truth, these two words

are much more important to the definition of a social movement than anticipated. If a collective cannot, or *does not* communicate within itself to help with identification of shared beliefs and desires, to isolate goals, or organize action, it cannot grow into anything more than an assortment of people with shared grievances. It cannot, is not, a social movement. A social movement is created by communication, which often incites mobilization. As Fine, in his essay *Public Narration and Group Culture: Discerning Discourse in Social Movements* writes, "Every social movement organization (and, by extension, the broader social movement as a whole) develops through interaction, and, like all interaction, depends on members' recognition of shared, repeated, and meaningful references that together lead to collective identity" (Fine, 2004). Communication is the basis for any movement formation and it is suggested by research that social movements - regardless of influence - cannot begin or exist without it.

McCarthy and Zald (1973) also have influence in this area, having developed a set of eleven steps that groups generally move along in formation. McCarthy and Zald look at formation as "An analysis of a class, category, or group of individuals who have a common grievance or who are subject to common strains" which, as we have already looked at, is of utmost necessity and must come before anything else. However, what they also stress is "The mere existence of a social category with a common grievance, however, does not determine the birth of a social movement" (McCarthy and Zald, 1973). This, first and foremost, is where communication becomes crucial. Communication, as discussed, helps coalesce ideas, goals, identity, etc., and McCarthy and Zald back this up with the finding that "Communication among members of the group is seen as crucial to later common effort [and] if communication is more or less effective, the group is more likely to take some concerted action to rectify the grievances" (McCarthy and Zald, 1973). This effort toward rectification is, at its core, a *social movement*.

Size of the movement, or level of mobilization (especially in the beginning stages) does not constitute the legitimacy of a movement, only its likelihood of success or societal influence.

On that note, mobilization and the formation of a movement is widely accepted as having member bases that are "embedded in dense social networks" and this embeddedness is crucial to their formation (McVeigh and Smith, 1999). Movements form based largely on their ability to communicate with a support platform, and the supporting community of people cannot adequately come together without it. But once communication *does* occur and the whole thing begins to solidify, mobilization becomes the next step. A key element, then, to that mobilization is the formulation and perpetuation of *movement stories* which often:

> Revolve around such fundamental issues as (1) affronts to the movement actor (horror stories), often promoting active involvement with the movement; (2) collective experiences within the movement (war stories) that speak to the value of the community; and (3) stories that reaffirm the value of the movement in achieving material or personal ends (happy endings) (Fine, 2004).

And these stories do a number of things including making appeals to ethos, creating collective identity, forming a sense of group-obligation, and making incentive action necessary. These are absolutely fundamental to calling something a social movement. Horror stories justify both involvement in formation and participation in movements. War stories are personal accounts of member experiences where "The speaker will recount a 'tough time', but one that had its underlying message that the movement is just and that the participants are moral actors" while happy ending stories provide a 'light at the end of the tunnel type of feeling within members, providing hope, morale boosts, and "reinforcing movement involvement" (Fine, 2004). These tactics of communication help appeal mobilization operations to various audiences, all of which are dependent on the type of movement being developed.

Social movements depend almost entirely on being able to communicate and mobilize a populous. A movement could have all the other steps done correctly, from collective frameworks to goal formation and leadership, but if it is unable to communicate to its supporters, or to mobilize them into creating action, it will not have success. A group intention without action is not a movement, and it remains - again - merely a collective with shared grievances. Hence, communication and mobilization must be included in my definitive criteria; without it, identifying something as a *social movement* could be an inaccurate calculation.

Leadership

Not all social movements have a definite leader or leadership, and some actively oppose them, but looking at whether or not a leader is present in a movement can lend an idea to whether or not it is even viable. And, if it is, presence of leadership may even give us a glimpse at its chances of success. In some research, it is being shown that leadership can, in fact, *define* a social movement. Nepstad and Bob (2005) hit on this in their research when they write that "Leaders play a critical role in collective action, shaping movements in numerous ways. They define goals and advance strategies. They mobilize followers… influence responses to external repression, and their action, rhetoric, and style affect conflict outcomes", while Morris and Staggenborg (2004) also stress this in their findings that "Leaders are critical to social movements: they inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies, frame demands, and influence outcomes". Even groups which are in direct opposition to having or wanting leaders, there is a need - particularly within a young formation - for one or more people to hold positions of power and guidance. These positions are naturally leader-like and require individuals who are willing to organize and instruct a group of their peers; regardless of any desire to be led, a burgeoning movement must follow some sort of path,

generally guided by founders or visionaries within the group. Whether or not these guides consider themselves leaders is one thing, but they fill the role, acting as spokespeople, organizers, mobilizers, sources of inspiration, etc. Someone in a position of power within a group collective is generally handed a considerable amount of respect, as well as trust, necessary when in a leadership role.

Leadership, official or unofficial, within a group or movement is special for a number of reasons. Among them is the fact that, "As the exemplar of the group prototype, leaders possess the legitimacy and influence to use collective frames to identify, interpret, and voice shared grievances to the collective" which, especially as a group is being observed by a public audience, is critical to whether the group ever makes it off the ground (Seyranian and Bligh, 2008). If a young movement presents itself to a governance or audience with a seemingly murky path forward and very little stewardship, its credibility to a general populous (of which they often need the support and acceptance in order to achieve success) will be heavily damaged. Having someone in a leadership position provides that sense of legitimacy and stability that a public looks for when scrutinizing a potential source of socio-political change. Leaders provide a figurehead at which concerns may be levied, suggestions may be posed, or challenges may be issued. Leaders are a source of steadfastness, often wearing many different hats within an organized group and running both on the frontline as well as behind the scenes in order to keep the entire machine functioning.

Like Morris and Staggenborg, I define leader(s) as "... strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate in social movements" but a leader is also a source of hope and pride for the members of a movement (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004). Much like Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. leaders, founders, or those in power become the calling-

cards of a movement. They become the figures others turn to for purpose, hope, or answers. Often, in cases, prominent names within movements become the ones targeted by counter-movements or pushback by government and/or the public. Leaders help sustain a movement's sense of purpose and drive. Seyranian and Bligh (2008) mention this when they write in their research that "Leaders may also raise the salience of group identity and increase identification with the group (Shamir et al., 1998) by stressing the collective through *inclusive language*… while using limited *self-references*… that, when utilized, portray the leader in group terms to prototypicalize themselves and ensure influence" (Seyranian and Bligh, 2008)**.** Leaders aim to rarely differentiate themselves from the main group base in order to maintain that sense of collective identity as well as their ability to movement behavior and outcomes. This could be due largely in part to the fact that "since its [the movement's] ability to mobilize resources and energies for concerted action depends upon the feeling of the membership" the leadership must then be directly involved with, and sensitive to, the needs and desires of the group at large (McCarthy and Zald, 1973). Any member of a movement that holds a position of power is looked to at every turn for what they will offer or instruct the group to do in order to advance their identity and goals. Leaders within a movement help build and maintain it from the ground up, from the inside out. And while there has been much research done on the split that happens between movement and leader when a movement has success, my studies have primarily focused on the actual group-leader interactions.

Leadership within a movement is not a necessity, but always appears, the only difference being whether or not any figure is formally recognized as a 'leader'. Leaders are responsible for any number of things, from the evolution of shared grievances into shared identity, to the sustained existence of the movement itself. They handle both internal group interaction and

external relations, often being placed in the role of spokesperson. When looking at the credibility and legitimacy of a movement, and its chances of success, the presence of an acknowledged and capable leader is often a correlating factor. It is only sensible, then, to take leadership into consideration when examining whether something is a movement. I want to be able to look at a mobilized force and see, if it has a leader or someone in power, if I am able to then be able to better define it as a legitimate and gauge its potential for success.

Collective Identity

Finally, and almost most importantly, the concept of *collective identity.* Polletta and Jasper (2001) define *collective identity* as: "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution" wherein the group is tied together by a sense of inclusion and self-reflection of personal morals and desires from within itself (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Melucci (2004) also finds that "a social movement should be considered as a result rather than a starting point, a fact to be explained rather than evidence" of collective identity (Melucci, 2004). He continues by determining that "Individuals acting collectively 'construct' their action by means of 'organized' investments: they define in cognitive terms the field of possibilities and limits they perceive while at the same time activating their relationships so as to give sense to their 'being together' and to the goals they pursue" meaning that a sense of collective identity is necessary to provide the framework for the birth of a movement (Melucci, 2004). A movement is defined by its ability to coalesce and mobilize a unified force and collective identity lends itself to the formation of a 'loyalty' to the movement or cause. It inherently breeds a sense of commitment, and that loss of loyalty or commitment to an identity is described as "One of the chief cases of movement decline" because "...collective identity stops lining up with the movement" and the movement or group begins to

fail to represent a constructed sense of "us" (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Collective identity is integral to both the formation and dissolution of a social movement. It "refers thus to a network of active relationships between the actors, who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate, and make decisions" and it is "a learning process that leads to the formation and maintenance of a unified empirical actor that we can call a social movement" (Melucci, 2004). Without collective identity, collective action rarely forms.

Fominaya (2001) comments on the process of collective identity in her research by illustrating that "This cognitive framework is not necessarily unified or coherent but is shaped through interaction and comprises different and even contradictory definitions" because collective identity is formed through the communication and cooperation of individual people with individual identities (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). For Fominaya, a group does not need to be in completely unified agreement on any number of things within a movement (e.g. ideology, goals, tactics, etc.) in order to be able to mobilize effectively. The relationships that bind a group or movement together are constantly changing and can conflict with personal identities or beliefs because personal identity and collective identity are separate entities (Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Personal identity may influence a collective one just as a collective identity may change personal beliefs, but the two maintain separate spaces within a movement's actors. Hunt and Benford, however, contradict Fominaya's findings with their research, maintaining that,

> Given the multiplicity of collective identities, the question is not simply is there a correspondence between an individual's personal identity and a collective identity. Rather, which collective identities among a constellation correspond with which personal identities? And how are these identity correspondences negotiated, managed, and experienced? (Hunt and Benford, 2004).
> Collective identity is necessary, but not sufficient, for the formation of social movements.

Without the adaption of shared grievances into a shared identity, all of the other necessary parts of a movement would never fall into place. A collective which communicates and attempts to

mobilize cannot be a movement without a force of thought to mobilize behind. It involves an "*identification with* a collectivity that includes a sense of mutuality and solidarity" behind which a movement forms and grows (Hunt and Benford, 2004). Without collective identity, a movement cannot be a *movement*. This is why, more so than anything else, collective identity has made its way into my criteria. It is the bedrock from which everything else develops into defining and identify what is - and what is *not* - a social movement. But of course, collective identity – as with all of them – is contingent on the at least one of the other three criteria being present. Social movements, just like the individuals they consist of, are complex and constantly changing; these four criteria can be proven to be intricately connected to – and dependent on – each other. So, when examining them, it is often difficult to discern where one may end and another begins; where goals can stand on their own without the foundation of collective identity, or where leadership does not directly affect the strategies of a group's communication and mobilization. Ultimately, this is why these four criteria provide sufficient to examine what is or is not a movement and why it seems logical to develop further research around them.

Analysis

Collective Identity

I have chosen collective identity first (from no particular order) to compare the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter movement for a variety of reasons, however, allow me to first explain how I will be defining *collective identity*. I will be using the definition established by sociologists Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper from Columbia University in New York. They define collective identity as "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is

distinct from personal identities…" (Polletta, 2006). In using this definition, part of my reasoning becomes clear: collective identity is necessary to study the connection between these two movements because it isolates the motivation behind why people come together into a movement in the first place. When a group of people share a similar – potentially identical – vein of thought on social, cultural, and/or political issues, they start to consider the possibility of mobilizing as a unit to create change.

Collective identity, as I have found in my research, is most often not given its own category when studying social motivation. It is usually subcategorized, viewed as a part of something else and not an individually realized application. But collective identity, as well as everything that goes into it such as collective memory (to be discussed a little later), is something much more complex than it is often given credit for.

Too examine a sense of shared struggle or victory, or a common ideology often influenced by the personal mores and folkways we hold dear as individuals, is to study what bonds a group of people under the same banner (Brown, 2016). When looking at the Civil Rights Movement, one of the most – if not *the most* – successful social movements in American history, the literal or metaphorical ties that bound its founders, leaders and fighters together are crucial to understanding it in its entirety.

This continues when studying the Black Lives Matter movement. A movement initially born from a hashtag on social media, it quickly became a banner beneath which people would rally. Online outcry morphed into in-person outreach, and a movement was born. This too created a collective identity; the unique thing, however, came from the addition of collective *memory*. Frankly put, collective memory is a total recollection by people "who experience or have knowledge of past events" (Harris, 2007). I have added this concept into my reasoning due

to the fact that collective memory plays a rather significant part in the internal mobilization of Black Lives Matter. It does this because collective memory allows a group to sympathize, connect to, and feel as though they are a part of a past struggle, such as Black Lives Matter's unavoidable similarity to the Civil Rights Movement at its face. However, it still allows for the present-day group to form their own sense of identity, and to be defined (hopefully) separate from the group from which their collective memory stems. Black movements in America, then, are undoubtedly going to experience this phenomena due to their immediate societal connection back to the greatest black American movement in history.

Collective identity and collective memory are critical to examining these two movements because with them, both are intrinsically connected. Though I will examine how these movements are different late, I feel that to fully explain my research I *must* begin with what connects them; because, when attempting to instigate some sort of shift in social, cultural, or political spheres there must be a reason, and people to fight for it. Collective identity creates a banner beneath which people are willing to stand up for what they believe is right, what is good. Therefore, within the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter movement, collective identity is paramount to their creation and, as we will also examine, their success.

Strategies of Communication and Mobilization

My research has led me to tackle this large and complex aspect of movement formation for two reasons: one, tactics of communication and mobilization between the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter are one sharp difference for them due to their generational separation; and, two, the strategies implemented by a movement directly influence both their mobilization tactics *and* mobilization outcomes. Failure to adequately communicate a movement's reasoning and intentions to both its followers and its audience greatly impacts its

support base and success. Dowd Hall (1988) discusses the Civil Rights Movement's use of race and racial awakening as a political driving force; and, because political influence is an effective method of success for movements I am touching on it here, as racial divide was a major reason for movement involvement and communication with the public.

Dowd Hall (2006) discusses the actions of the Civil Rights Movement, the protests, sit-ins, legislative and court proceedings – all outcomes of their ability to mobilize a collective. But she also emphasizes how those fights and eventual victories struggled to be communicated correctly to the American public by the media following the movement. She writes, "The mass media… made the protests 'one of the greatest news stories of the modern era', but they did so very selectively" and note, she only mentions how the media latched onto the protests (Dowd Hall, 2005). Granted, the acts of peaceful protest were the most polarizing (and arguably, eventually the most successful) portion of work done by the Civil Rights Movement, but it was by no means the only aspect. Much like we are now seeing with the media portrayals of the Black Lives Matter movements, journalists broadcast that which draws the most attention from uninvolved parties.

Therefore, when the majority of a movement's actions, especially when consistently nonviolent, are going largely unreported by the general media, the effectiveness of communicating its intentions to a populous outside of those directly involved becomes hindered. Dowd Hall (2005) continues by illustrating that "Journalists' interest waxed and waned along with the activists' ability to generate charismatic personalities (who were usually men) and telegenic confrontations… [but this] changed abruptly in the mid-1960s with the advent of black power and black uprisings in the urban North" (Dowd Hall, 2005). What was initially a sympathetic-if-one-sided portrayal of the newly birthed movement, became hostile and almost

aggressive once mobilization tactics and more violent forms of social disruption began to break into the scene.

On top of that, mobilization tactics within the Civil Rights Movement began to fracture into variances across the country, largely depending on the intensity of clashes in various regions. Here, Mississippi takes center-stage, and I highlight again a failure of communication. As stated above, the media (and the movement) focused largely on male leaders; the result of pervasive sexism through the 1950s and 60s both in and outside of the media. This meant that even though they were integral to the rallying, mobilization and success, the women of the movement are largely left undiscussed. Adding the role that black women played in the support and mobilization of the movement is important to me, especially because, as Irons (1998) writes, "Faced with nothing but oppressive racism, Black women were more highly motivated to risk bodily harm for freedom" (Irons, 1998). This continues today: Black Lives Matter was founded by three black women and is supported heavily by black women and black mothers within their communities. I find it crucial, then, to examine all sources of rallying behind either movement and to leave out the determination of black women would be an injustice.

I've chosen strategies of communication and mobilization to compare these movements because they are the backbone of them both and, truthfully, important to any movement. For Black Lives Matter, mobilization is key and their ability to communicate with their support base is drastically expanded compared to what the leaders and members of the Civil Rights Movement were working with, thanks to social media. Also, when looking at whether or not these two movements are truly comparable, it is important to mention that Black Lives Matter follows many of the same tactics utilized by the Civil Rights Movement.

Rickford (2016) hits on this when examining the new drive behind Black Lives Matter. It is launching off from the progress made by its forebear; no longer aimed so much at the politics of it, but instead the culture. He writes, "… most Black Lives Matter adherents recognize the inherent shortcomings of appeals to politicians, the courts, and other 'acceptable' channels of redress, and have wholeheartedly embraced the arena of the street" and this is why I believe this criteria topic to be key (Rickford, 2016). As I stated before, they highlight more these movements' differences than their similarities, and inspiration rather than imitation between the two. However, in continuing to discuss these movements' behaviors in protest and communication, it becomes clearer to understand just how connected every aspect of a movement truly is. Take one part of the whole away, and the entire machine begins to falter.

Additionally, I include what I believe is a fitting quote from another prominent black intellectual, Malcolm X. He said, in a speech he gave in December of 1964, "Policies change, and programs change, according to time. But the objective never changes. You might change your method of achieving the objective, but the objective never changes. Our objective is complete freedom, complete justice, complete equality, by any means necessary" (X, 1965). The comparison between these two movements is as plausible as it is implausible; they are as alike as they are dissimilar. Because all these years later, Malcolm X is still correct – though methods have changed, the ultimate goal of Black Lives Matter is just as the Civil Rights Movement's had been: "complete freedom, complete justice, complete equality, by any means necessary".

Perhaps the most famous method of protest used by the Civil Rights Movement was the adoption of nonviolent noncooperation, followed also by civil disobedience. Dr. King and fellow leaders of the movement "had long understood that segregationists would go to any length to maintain their power and control over blacks. Consequently, they believed some changes might

be made if enough people outside the South witnessed the violence blacks had experienced for decades" and so the adoption of passive resistance helped accomplish this idea (Austin, 2016). Because violence, regardless of who was perpetrating it, drew the media and protestors understood that. To this day, some of the images of violence against Civil Rights protestors remain imbedded into our thought processes, able to be seen in the mind's eye. Water hoses, batons, police dogs and riot gear helped depict the institutionalized violence and racism black people in America had been subjected to for decades. Only this time, it was met with higher levels of outrage.

The concept of nonviolent protest is perhaps the most famous of all movement strategies. From of course Dr. King to Mohandas Gandhi, whom Dr. King was inspired by and drew his methods from, nonviolence has been a tool used to construct some of the most effective and widespread movements in history. Used as the backbone for Civil Rights protest, its influence is visible in everything from the Montgomery Bus Boycott, to sit-ins, to the Freedom Ride of 1961. In these cases, violence sprung not initially from involved protestors, but from angry Whites in these areas. Take the Freedom Ride of '61, for example, described as the catalyst for "some of the most dangerous and dramatic episodes of the civil rights movement" it was organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) (*Social Protests,* 2017).

CORE, a civil rights group which followed the philosophies of nonviolence, developed the Freedom Rides as a way for a large number of peaceful protestors to enter commonly violent areas of the South. They experienced very few issues until reaching Alabama, where one bus was surrounded by white supremacists, set aflame, and riders were attacked while they exited and another bus was stopped a while later and boarded by white men who "savagely beat the non-violent freedom riders with sticks and chains" (*Social Protests,* 2017). Like many others, it was

the violence perpetrated against the peaceful protestors by outraged Whites that made media headlines and ultimately helped gain further support for the movement. Over fifty years later, this is a drastically different story. Now, it seems that, particularly with Black Lives Matter, attack against peaceful protestors is seen to a relatively large sector of the public as justified. As victory, instead of villainous. The lines between right and wrong, victim and aggressor, are blurrier than they were have a century ago.

Along the same lines that I have been discussing so far, Black Lives Matter is interested, too, in distancing itself from this part of the Civil Rights Movement. Asserted time and again by its members, Black Lives Matter is *not* the Civil Rights Movement, nor should it be. Aiming to create separate types of change, we have seen violence break out at Black Lives Matter protests across the country. Like in the 60s, this violence is frequently caused by forces and people outside of the protestors themselves; whether it is the overly-militarized police presence at a protest rallying against police violence, or the surge of neo-nationalists forming counter-protests at the rallies, *violence* and *Black Lives Matter* have become synonymous with each other in the minds of parts of the American public. In his dissertation, Wesley Surette is including the works of a fellow scholar and in summation writes:

> …Any other reaction besides non-violence is damaging to the thin veneer of white liberals who are 'supporters' of racial equality. This… is because non-violence allows them to see and support a protest plan that is *lawful* and *respectful* whilst still managing to keep a distance and maintain white elite hegemony (Surette, 2015).

I think that this expectation of nonviolence has and will continue to impact the additional strategies utilized by the Black Lives Matter movement, but I also do not believe that the lack of it will have as great an impact on this movement as it would have the Civil Rights Movement. With the invention and utilization of social media platforms, the increase in youth involvement

(seemingly regardless of race), and the changing social tides, Black Lives Matter seemingly moves more away from Dr. King, and further toward Malcolm X.

All of this must be discussed, because if I am looking at everything else: collective identity which forms the community of a movement; the ways in which a social organization communicates and mobilizes its follower base; the goals which drive the body of the movement, and the leadership styles that command it, I have to also look at how all of these other things are put together to determine the strategies a movement implements.

Identification of Goals

I have looked directly at the things that best form, define, and validate a movement. The four criteria chosen are the aspects I think best do this, and identifying the goals of a social movement is a cornerstone of analyzing and comparing them. Goals are desired or anticipated achievements, and can be political, social and cultural in nature, or a culmination of all three. Political goals aim to enact change within a nation's governmental spheres of influence, and can be local, state, or federal in nature. They aim most often to change legislation, bringing about nation-wide change that is secured through the lawmaking and procedural processes and is more concrete than social or cultural change. Movements aiming in this direction often act through lobbying, political appeal, and legal avenues.

Social and cultural goals aim more to alter the status quo of a society; targeting values, mores and folkways that have often been engrained in the citizenship. Social and cultural atmosphere is long-term belief systems, sometimes even involving religious beliefs, and enacting change here is often difficult. Social/cultural goals can target systemic issues (like we see happening with the birth of Black Lives Matter) not necessarily encompassed within the political

realm. Social/cultural change behaves like a tide, and ebbs and flows as movements begin and end.

The Civil Rights Movements is widely understood to be focused primarily on political goals, the effort to end legal segregation of society and the fight for blacks to have the same Constitutionally-recognized rights as Whites being the main two. The Civil Rights Movement fought many legal battles in order to bring these goals to fruition, and the one I will mention here is the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. The Board of Education* in the 1950s. The ultimate SCOTUS ruling that would end educational segregation in the nation, it was a major turning point for the Civil Rights Movement; a victory, and one that ignited the movement's strive to work even harder. But here is where I began, in my research, to notice how the identification of goals served as a source of separation between the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter.

Beginning with a quote from Korstad (1998), they write "In the 1950s the *Brown* decision legitimated much of the subsequent social struggle, but it remained essentially a dead letter until given political force by a growing protest movement" and this is what I will focus on for a moment (Korstad, 1998). As I have mentioned, the Civil Rights Movement's goals were political, but they often travelled other avenues in order to set precedent, build legitimate credibility, and then relied on social rallying to act as the catalyst. This, is where the two movements once again separate.

As mentioned before, Black Lives Matter intends to directly detach themselves from the more "socially expected" or "accepted" forms of protest: less legal, less politically actionable, less "correct" methods of enacting change because *what* they are trying to change is far away from what the members of the Civil Rights Movement were trying to change. Their goals are

cultural, desiring systemic and public change. Associate Professor of Philosophy Julius Bailey and fellow associate professor David J. Leonard discuss in their essay "Black Lives Matter: Post-Nihilistic Freedom Dreams" that "There is a sense in which Black Lives Matter is a generational response to a civil rights generation focus on educational programs, respectability politics, and diversity quotas as the remedy to persistent institutional racism. It is this generation's statement that black death cannot be eradicated with cultural competency or some diversity quota" (Bailey, 2014). A scholarly conclusion that, while Black Lives Matter is indeed a response to the Civil Rights Movement, it is not as some have assumed. It is not a continuation of the Civil Rights Movement, it is intentionally working with the foundation that was laid by them in order eradicate the beliefs and assumptions their predecessors instilled in the public. Where the Civil Rights Movement and movements similar to it are now seen as the "correct" way to make change, Black Lives Matter is fighting back at that because of the expectation it places upon those wishing to call out and correct grievous injustice.

In their essay on respectability politics (a notion that in order to enact legitimate change, Blacks and other people of color must act in such a manner that is deemed *correct* and *respectable* by white people) professor of law Osagie K. Obssogie and scholar Zachary Newman help continue this by illuminating how, "…we can conceptualize one of the many goals of the Black Lives Matter movement as raising awareness of inequality in general and police brutality in particular as part of an effort to disrupt and eradicate respectability politics" (Obasogie, 2016). What the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement created, with charismatic and classy leaders who defied the stigma of *black* in the eyes of the Whites, is the exact picture Black Lives Matter is trying to destroy. They wish to make it known that every black person has the right to be respected, listen to, and have their lives valued; those rights whom their forefathers fought for,

should not only apply to the black people *white people* deem 'worthy'. Additionally, it could easily be argued that this is a notion, though challenging, that is catching on among black communities and protestors. It is a way to peacefully reinstate their humanity within the general populous – to live, and have an expectation of respect, as their true selves, not any form of imposed sense of self. However, in movements this may be understated. It could be communicated to the members but be subtle in its execution – both conscious and subconscious protest, which makes the study of how groups are dismantling respectability politics an under-explored area of thought. At least until Black Lives Matter, where we see it happening on a much more blatant stage.

Goals for each of these movements directly affect their methods of approach, and the avenues they explore to make change. Every movement has a goal, or something they strive for; it is what helps create a sense of collective identity, and defines the ways in a movement communicates both with itself and the public. As I have attempted to explain, my four criteria of comparison are all interwoven with each other. Each criteria directly impacts another and as I've mentioned, without each other, crucial aspects of a movement and aspects for success are missing. Identifying the desired or accomplished goals of a movement is no different.

Leadership

For the Black Lives Matter movement, the idea of leadership is a major and intentional point of divergence from the Civil Rights Movement. As I briefly discussed in early explanations, Black Lives Matter is purposely acting against the almost 'legendary' forms of protest adopted and made widely acceptable by the Civil Rights Movement. One of those forms of protest is the type of leadership the movement chooses to adopt. Where Civil Rights had Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm as their two most famous figureheads, Black Lives Matter

has intentionally shied away from making a single person the face of their movement. Again, I think this connects back to their idea of breaking away from respectability politics and making it more about the people involved, anyone and everyone who wishes to make a change.

This too, is why I have involved leadership in my research. I cannot talk about the Civil Rights Movement without talking about Dr. King or Malcolm X, and I cannot talk about Black Lives Matter without talking about their distinct *lack* of intentional leadership. I believe this too comes back to goals and communication. For the Civil Rights Movement, ultimately politically driven, having charismatic and genuine leaders at the helm of the movement served to better their view in the eyes of the public (this applying more to Dr. King than the more radical Malcolm X who led the Black Panthers). It almost legitimized the movement, helped coalesce it into an organized entity.

Ginwright (2015) writes – talking about how the hurdles involved when trying to create movement organization within African American communities, "First are the growing class tensions between educated professional and working poor communities. These tensions, while rarely discussed publicly, have fostered different and sometime[s] conflicting views on how to address pressing issues… these issues have made it difficult to close ranks and coalesce around a common agenda" (Ginwright, 2015). This, in my research, is a much larger issue in the era of Black Lives Matter than it ever was with Civil Rights because in the 50s and 60s, Blacks had not yet *won* the legal/social right to desegregated education, communities and the chance to have a career. Now, in this time, the socioeconomic disparities among Black communities are stark. It is a battle that new movements like Black Lives Matter must contend with, and why, to an extent, they shy away from leadership. If their movement is meant for everyone and anyone, aimed at

shifting social understanding, having someone try and helm up the whole thing is improbable. If it is meant to alter community life positively, it should (and to an extent *is*) community-oriented.

Another challenge though, also one Ginwright hits on, is without focused leadership attempting to maintain a single agenda within the Black Lives Matter movement proves difficult. Of course, there are the core goals of the group which all participants know and strive for, but apart from that the separate chapters of the movement – both nationally and globally – vary greatly. This is one issue stemming from the lack of centralized leadership, and adds to my reasoning for why leadership is one of the criteria. Where the Civil Rights Movement had not just Dr. King and Malcolm X but also many other prominent and highly-involved leaders throughout the country that maintained a more focused and singular agenda, Black Lives Matter does not. The Civil Rights Movement even went as far as to train people wishing to participate in protest how to act, how to remain nonviolent, and how to respond to negative public and police reaction. But in the same vein, Black Lives Matter also distances itself from those methods because they too are respectability politics. The leadership force of the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. King specifically, served to strengthen the creation of that respectability idea.

Steven F. Lawson studies the Civil Rights Movement and something he writes about Dr. King helps highlight this. He writes: "Even in the late 1960s, King abandoned neither his commitment to nonviolence and integration nor his core religious ideas and humanistic values. The great strength of King was his ability to adapt old ideals to changing situations" and I think, looking at this, I understand why Black Lives Matter stays away from formal leadership (Lawson, 1991). When White people look at a Black movement, they expect to see something like what the Civil Rights Movement exemplified, or someone like Dr. King, and when they don't the legitimacy of the movement diminishes in their view. But the thing that many White

people don't yet understand is that the Civil Rights Movement is largely romanticized, especially

regarding their leaders. That is not to discredit the outstanding work and accomplishments of the

members of the Civil Rights Movement, but this romanticizing is yet another thing Black Lives

Matter wishes to try and eradicate.

In his Masters dissertation, Surette (2015) writes about this treatment of the Civil Rights

Movement, specifically when it comes to media. He writes:

> Popular portrayals would have the CRM ending, or being accomplished, by the time of the assassination of King…. Much of the radical content, actions, and actors have been sterilized *ad hoc* and made 'safe' for consumption. It is important for the context of the current protests, and how they are being discussed by the media, to realize that in many cases, they are being compared to or measured against a mythical version of the CRM (Surette, 2015).

And I believe that mythical comparison also applies to leadership. In every way, Black Lives

Matter is, as a movement, fighting against decades of 'appropriate' portrayal of what social

uprising and mass-accountability should be. That too, includes the way they wish to organize and

centralize their movement. Distinctly acting against the seemingly 'required' notion of having a

leader is a blatant example of that. For Black Lives Matter, it is one thing to have a spokesperson

work to broadcast your message and another thing entirely to make someone the face of the

movement. The movement itself *is* its own face, and that is wholly intentional on the part of its

founders and members; it portrays a sense of *this is who we are, what we wish to be, take it or

leave it* and it departs sharply from this "safe" version the majority of White public is expecting

to see. The thing about not having one leader is that in doing so, the general public is almost

given no choice but to listen to the organization as a whole, and that is the point.

Discussion

Throughout my analysis, I have made an effort to present my reasoning as to why I have chosen these criteria to compare the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter. In addition, I have attempted to show, with academic research, the usefulness of each of these comparative concepts.

Collective identity is acceptable for comparison because it not only helps explain why movements develop a sense of community consciousness, but also how that sense of consciousness has been able to transcend the generational gap between the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter to continue living on in this younger movement.

Strategies of communication and mobilization fall into this because it they are key to understanding how a movement speaks and motivates not only its body of supporters, but the outside public. Also, in studying this, I have discovered a clear distinction between the message a movement itself is trying to portray, and the message that is being delivered to the masses via the media.

Identification of goals is almost obvious in its necessity; if you don't know or understand why a movement has formed, you will not understand what drives it. With this, it was intriguing to discover how Black Lives Matter intentionally distances itself from the Civil Rights Movement and aims to carve its own path. With goals, they are somehow connected whilst being vastly different; where the Civil Rights Movement accomplished the political, Black Lives Matter is targeting the social aspects that never really changed.

Leadership, too, is important when comparing the two movements because it is the point at which these two most definitively divide. The source of the biggest difference that most

people can point out between the two (though there are definitely others). I have talked about the creation of charismatic and 'respectable' leaders to lead the Civil Rights Movement, and how Black Lives Matter has gone completely away from wanting any sort of unified figurehead spearheading the movement and its objectives. To look at this sharp distinction can be only beneficial to my thesis.

And finally, researching and developing strategies and methods used by these two movements (though I highlighted more so the work of the Civil Rights Movement in order to put into starker contrast the methods of Black Lives Matter) is important for comparison. This is due to the way it emphasizes that even though they are often compared, and even though Black Lives Matter is often titled "The New Civil Rights Movement", they are more distinct and disconnected than people would like to portray. Strategies and methods help highlight that just because a movement is made by and for black people does not mean it is some sort of "New Civil Rights". They each have their place, and they each have their time. These criteria are meant to examine the potential connections between the two and whether or not they are connected, not look at if Black Lives Matter is a reincarnation of the Civil Rights Movement. If I were to do that, it would be an injustice to everything that Black Lives Matter stands and is fighting for.

Hopefully, through this analysis and ultimately my thesis research, I have done justice to the movements I am discussing. From this analysis I will continue to develop my research and argue that yes, these two movements are connected, but not in the way people initially assume them to be. Instead, it requires a critical eye for examining how "traditional" has evolved into a more "new age" approach, and scrutinizing from there how Black Lives Matter ultimately stands up to the pressure.

Conclusions

Ultimately, in examining all of my research, my initial research question of "Does Black Lives Matter follow traditional movement structure and criteria?" has been answered with a resounding: no. Black Lives Matter does not follow the traditional structure which the Civil Rights Movement led more than a generation of American citizens to expect when experiencing the upheaval caused by a social movement. When looking at these two movements, we are faced, again, with "traditional" and "new age" approaches. Black Lives Matter is still struggling to achieve the widespread public legitimacy (that is to say, support) that the Civil Rights Movement garnered toward its mid-to-later years. This is understandable, as Black Lives Matter is still in its infancy, and the Civil Rights Movement struggled in its own infancy as well. A lack of general public support, however, does not diminish the *actual* legitimacy of Black Lives Matter as a movement capable of continuing to succeed in causing social and cultural dissonance, which may ultimately culminate in codified legal and political change. On the other hand, Black Lives Matter very directly does not fit into the traditional protest movement definition that the Civil Rights Movement was responsible for creating. Therefore, in a strictly academic sense, the Civil Rights Movement is more of a "movement" in this traditional sense. How could it not be, if it was the birthplace of what would come to be public expectation of any large-scale social movement? Particularly if, as Black Lives Matter is and the Civil Rights Movement was, the movement is by its very nature a *black movement*?

My research has led me, in due course, to conclude that these two prominent movements cannot – and should not – be compared to one another when examining intent or success. While both pertaining to civil rights issues affecting black and minority communities, Black Lives Matter is not going after the same sorts of goals as the ones the Civil Rights Movement fought

for. Therefore, Black Lives Matter simply cannot implement the same public relations tactics, inter-movement organization strategies, or mobilization schemes as the Civil Rights Movement did. While the very *basics* of the movements may be similar, they are undoubtedly two very different actions aimed at achieving very different results.

(Table 1 about here)

Black Lives Matter cannot have the same types of goals, as the Civil Rights Movement succeeded in ending legal segregation, as well as the oppressive Jim Crow laws that prevented black folks from doing all manner of things, including voting. Instead, Black Lives Matter is much narrower in its desired scope of impact, which is to end unnecessary police-involved shootings of youth of color.

Black Lives Matter cannot utilize the same strategies of change, as the movement is attempting to blatantly defy the much of the public expectations created by the Civil Rights Movement, and to adopt an identical plan of action would nullify that intentional rebellious style.

Black Lives Matter does not want a figurehead at the helm of the movement, becoming the face of the protest. I believe, as the other scholars I have referenced believe, that this is intentional. Intentional because the movement wants to make every black person and person of color you see serve as a reminder of their message. A movement built by people of color, for all people of color, in a way. Where, in addition, every voice is meant to be equally loud.

Finally, of course, Black Lives Matter did not form from the same shared grievances possessed by the members of the Civil Rights Movement. As mentioned, the Civil Rights Movement took care, largely, of the legal grounds of racism; Black Lives Matter is targeting, specifically, the still-prevalent social and cultural institutionalization of it.

       The results of my research provide a clearer picture of the histories and intentions of these prominent social movements, generations apart. It examines how and why social movements form before entering into the specific causes and structures of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the Black Lives Matter movement begun over fifty years later. Ultimately, my research studies the traditional style that the American public has come to expect from an African-American movement, and how Black Lives Matter is intentionally breaking out of that mold.

Appendix

Table 1

Criteria	Black Lives Matter	Civil Rights Movement
Identification of Goals	End police-involved shootings of POC youth.	End institutional/legal segregation and Jim Crow laws.
Strategies of Com/Mob.	Widespread street protest, sit-ins, social media usage, etc.	Street protest, marches, sit-ins, legal activism, etc.
Leadership	Have directly opposed traditional leadership formats; no formal leaders to name.	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Bayard Rustin, Ralph David Abernathy, etc.
Collective Identity	Largely formed from: - Unsatisfactory (acquittals and "Not Guilty") verdicts in police-involved shootings resulting in a continued sense of diminished/unacknowledged humanity among minorities - The rise of #BlackLivesMatter on social media.	Largely formed from: - Legal segregation - High rates of racial violence - Jim Crow discrimination, etc.

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