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THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY: BLACK LIVES MATTER, SUCCESS, & SOCIAL MEDIA

Metyia K. Phillips

University of San Francisco, mkphillips@dons.usfca.edu

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**THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY: BLACK LIVES MATTER,
SUCCESS, & SOCIAL MEDIA**

The University of San Francisco

**An honors thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the distinction of Honors in the Politics**

Department in the College of Arts and Science

Metyia Kyndall Phillips

December 2022

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INTRODUCTION & PERSONAL NOTE

This thesis strives to assess how social media has impacted the success of the Black Lives Matter movement. By conducting a survey between September 30th, 2022 - October 12th, 2022, respondents were asked questions to gauge their attitudes about the Black Lives Matter movement, social media usage, and the success of the movement. The results of the survey (n=571) in conjunction with a 2016 Pew Research Center survey (n=2,144) were used to evaluate how social media has impacted the success of the Black Lives Matter movement. The survey was taken by a nonrandom group of respondents because I distributed the survey through my personal social media. The survey indicated that while social media has helped the Black Lives Movement with its success, it does limit the movement in other areas.

As a Black woman, this thesis and case study is very personal to me. I am someone with a personal stake and interest in the movement. I was intrigued by the role of social media and the success of the Black Lives Matter movement. Prior to Black Lives Matter, solely the Arab Spring and Occupy Movement leveraged social media in order to help create social change. Unlike the two aforementioned movements, the Black Lives Matter movement originated on social media and took off from there. There's an area of undiscovered scholarship about the use of social media and its impacts on the success of a social movement. While I support the movement, it is possible to put those biases aside and use this thesis to shed light on the role of social media in this area. This research is important to me and to the field of social movements.

THE EVOLUTION OF A MOVEMENT

Black people have a long and tenuous history within America. We have struggled for equality in America since the first slave ship docked in Jamestown, Virginia. After centuries of slavery, the 13th amendment was passed in 1865, effectively eradicating slavery. This led to the start of the Jim Crow era. The Jim Crow era brought the idea of separate but equal segregation to the forefront of American society. The initial creation of police departments was the “slave patrols” started to capture runaway slaves. After the eradication of slavery, the police came more similar to what we know them today. During the Jim Crow era is when the first instances of police brutality against Black people were recorded. Police were complicit with rampant lynchings in the South and had the right to beat Black people for simple things such as looking at a white person the wrong way.

In response to the injustices, Black people continued their effort to fight for their rights, which emerged in the Civil Rights Era. The Civil Rights era brought about the Civil Rights movement, which was the first social movement in support of Black liberation and equality. Although the Civil Rights era culminated with the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, it did not stop police brutality.

There have been countless incidents, recorded by the media showing instances of police brutality since the Civil Rights movement. After the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012, the Black Lives Matter movement was started two years later by 3 queer Black women by using the #BlackLivesMatter on Facebook and Twitter. The movement has had two major surges since its creation in 2014. The first surge happened in 2014 after the deaths of Micheal Brown and Eric Garner. The second surge happened in 2020 after the death of George Floyd, which caused the

movement to get global notoriety and traction. The movement today is a global phenomenon and widely known around the world. While the notoriety the movement has is great, the Black community still faces counts of police every day. This social movement is important because it's not just a social movement, it's a human rights movement. Black Lives Matter is fighting for the right of Black people to exist without fear of retaliation and persecution for the color of their skin. 10 years later, the movement should not still exist. Black people's right to life is still up for debate and it should not be. This thesis is meant to bring awareness to the Black Lives Matter movement, discuss the role of social media in the movement, evaluate the success of the movement in conjunction with social media use, and lastly identify ways in which the movement could be more successful.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORIGINS & FORMATION

Social scientists have spent considerable time researching and writing about the origins and formation of social movements. Before the 1960s, social movements were seen as a product of collective identity, and similar people came together for a cause. After the Civil Rights movements and Anti-Vietnam protests, in the 60s-70s, a new theory for social movements came about: resource mobilization(RM). Resource mobilization maintains that individuals come together for the benefits that come from being in the movement. They also are known as rational actors. There is also the issue of free-riders which are people who are a part of the movement but are not participating in the movement. These are people who look at posts about the movement but do not like or share them. For example, people who posted a square on #BlackoutTuesday¹,

¹ Coscarelli, J. (2020, June 2). *#blackouttuesday: A music industry protest becomes a social media moment*. The New York Times. Retrieved November 24, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/arts/music/what-blackout-tuesday.html>

but did nothing else to support the movement. They are considered to be “a part” of the movement, but they do nothing to publicize the movement or improve progress. RM theory may offer a relatively simple explanation of motivation, it downplays the role of grievances, having a marginalized ideology, undermining organization, focusing on the macro level, not focusing on collective action, and glossing over diversity. While there are many problems with this theory, resource mobilization is important and valid, but it’s not the only piece of a social movement picture(Buechler, 1993).

While RM helps explain one reason why social movements arise, it still leaves out the issues of personal stake and investment in a social movement. Many theorists believe that there is more to social movements than resource mobilization and collective action. Morris argues that something is missing from the original resource mobilization and collective action theories. It has to do with the independence and agency of individuals. Not related to the rational actor's theory, this is related to the identity of individuals that decide to interact with social movements. People are either culturally or emotionally related to social movements which are why they choose to participate in them and become a part of them. This perspective offers insight into my study because BLM is culturally relevant and people are deeply emotionally invested. It’s not only an emotional topic, but it’s also about their lives and the value of their lives. It is their personal stake in the matter which helps explain why people are pushed to join the movement (Morris, 2000).

In the twenty-first century, social movements can become a worldwide phenomenon, particularly with the rise of social media. Social movements emerge as a function of opportunity structures and mobilizing structures. In this case, social media serves as the mobilizing structure

and opportunity structures are things that need to change in a society such as the race relations in America in regards to BLM. This article focuses on those grievances alone are not enough for a social movement to start. Social media helps overcome the collective action problem as defined in Macur Olson's book² *The Logic of Collective Action* provides a mobilizing structure to help ordinary citizens connect. Social media helps pull everything together, but a simple grievance is not enough to cause a mass social movement. The conditions of the country, mobilization and a desire for change have to be present (Lopes, 2014).

In fact, in the 21st century, it has become nearly impossible to have a social movement without using social media as a way to unite and gather people together. Mundt's research article discussed social movements "scaling up" through social media which is "the potential role of social media in helping movements expand and/or strengthen themselves internally". Mundt used BLM as a case study between January - April 2017 while pulling a database of BLM social media on Twitter and Facebook. They also conducted 11 interviews. Their research found that social media helped BLM build connections, mobilize participants and tangible resources, build coalitions, and amplify alternative narratives. There were also negatives such as increased visibility, not being able to control how people react, and not exactly knowing who was a part of the movement. Social media is important to a lot of social movements and their success, but it's integral to the Black Lives Matter Movement (Mundt et al., 2018).

FROM THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT TO BLACK LIVES MATTER

Both the BLM without the Civil Rights Movement have similar goals, which are to " put

² OLSON, M. (1971). Introduction. In *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Second Printing with a New Preface and Appendix (pp. 1–4). Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvj3ts.4>

an end to racism and its various functions, and an affirmative policy that acknowledges the U.S.'s multicultural constituency". Both movements also disrupted the sociopolitical climate with the creation of Black transportation systems following the Montgomery Bus Boycotts and following the summer of 2020 the push to only support Black-owned businesses. Strickland observes that the Civil Rights Movement used the power of the Black Church and word of mouth to mobilize, whereas the Black Lives Matter Movement now has a strong emphasis on social media use in conjunction with the Black Church and word of mouth. While both movements have similarities and differences, BLM is a continuation of the Civil Rights Movement, and Black people are still fighting for the same justice they were 50 years ago (Christopher Strickland, 2022).

Similarly to the Civil Rights Movement, BLM has roots within the Black church and Black culture itself. While the Black church was the backbone of the Civil Rights Movement and is one of the key institutions of the Black community, those origins come with their own problems. The church is very patriarchal and leaves out women, children, and all groups that are not straight men. As a result, BLM was started by Black women who identify as queer, which was a big step for a social movement. Although the initial leadership of the movement was diverse, much of the focus of the movement remained on Black men and police brutality while Black women faced the same thing. As a result, the #SayHerName hashtag became popular to use when a Black woman faced police brutality because it emphasizes the intersectionality that Black women hold as a double minority, as both a Black person and a woman. It is worth noting that #SayHerName is nowhere near as popular as #BlackLivesMatter which indicates the strides that still need to happen within the movement and the Black community(Fluker, 2022).

Nummi refers to Black Lives Matter as a form of innovative Black resistance with an emphasis on its use of social media, the emphasis on the Black perspective, and its focus on Black women and Black people from the LGBTQ+ community. Racism in this country is rooted in a pro-white subframe. BLM is based on a unique Black counter-frame that includes a “critique of white oppression, a vigorous countering of negative framing of African Americans, a positive assertion of the full humanity of African Americans, a clear assertion of the Americanness of African Americans, and a strong accent on liberty, justice, and equality for all.”

The #BLM movement has three important organizing aspects: (1) local chapter-based, member-led organizations, (2) a distinctive #BLM hashtag and impactful online social movement, and (3) a larger black movement with national organizing and training programs. BLM currently has the support of ‘Black Twitter’ which has contributed to its being so successful. It’s also currently decentralized which promotes unity and equality within the movement. There is still the issue of ‘slacktivism. Social media such as Twitter is used as a new source, a way to mobilize and collectivize, a place to share thoughts, and a place to spread knowledge. Despite all of this and the relative success of BLM, a substantive piece of legislation regarding police brutality has yet to be passed(Nummi et al., 2019).

After the summer of 2020, youth (12-18 years old) became very involved in BLM and protests due to the death of George Floyd. Previously, youth within that age range was active in the movement, but there was a large increase in participation. Sixty-six percent of the youth surveyed interacted with the movement through social media, furthermore, they reported positive emotions associated with their interactions. There were only reports of negative emotions associated with the movement when they ran into negative media portrayal and violence at

in-person protests. Overall they reported positive emotions, most of which came from social media usage. Social media is a large part of the BLM movement and a lot of where the engagement of the movement comes from (Baskin-Sommers et al., 2021)

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BLACK LIVES MATTER

Positive Effects

Although BLM is prominent on social media, Twitter is the main form of social media that the movement uses. Ince's article tracked how Twitter users interacted with #BLM and co-current hashtags on Twitter. This was one of the first research papers of its kind because no one had ever looked into the link between a social movement and social media, specifically BLM. BLM went viral in 2015 but was a part of national discourse in 2014. Micheal Brown's shooting and George Zimmerman's acquittal caused more interaction with the hashtag, but the death of Micheal Brown caused a lot more interaction with the hashtag. When Darren Wilson was not indicted this caused the largest surge in the use of the hashtag. Cox hypothesizes this is because Ferguson became a ground zero for activism whereas Florida did not so this increased the use of the hashtag. Although they tracked the number of times the hashtag was used, they couldn't see if it was positive or negative and they couldn't track location. Social media increased distributed framing for BLM "a broad audience to alter and manipulate the movement's construction of meaning and counter-movements also increased as the movement gained more prominence (Ince et al., 2017).

As the movement gained more traction through social media use, especially Twitter, Black Lives Matter was met with the All Lives Matter sentiment. Social media adds a generally greater accessibility to social movements than before but there are still some barriers. There is

also the pro and con that social media does not belong to one state or country, it's universal so there's no way to control who's involved with the dialogue. After looking at 100 tweets, it's shown that all lives matter participants oversimplified the movement because they don't have the racial contract, which is usually missing within countermovements. When #BLM was used in terms of mobilization and organizing there was less pushback from ALM(Carney, 2016).

While Twitter is essential to BLM this article discussed different ways that rhetorical functions were used on Twitter to develop BLM. What's different about this source is that it was already agreed upon that social media has helped the development of the BLM movement. There was no contention around the issue, just the acknowledgment that countermovements did become prominent after 2015, but this is only because BLM started to become more popular. The movement does three very important rhetorical actions through Twitter, talking about issues that the movement represents, movement opponents, and movement advocates. The rhetorical strategies promote disadvantaged group members at the forefront and movement endorsing actions, also known as collective mobilization(Wilkins et al., 2019)

Some people just think of Twitter as a way to collectivize and mobilize, it can also be used as a news source, especially in the case of BLM. Cox analyzed social media as an informational news source for BLM through a case study of millennial students in DMV schools in 2016. It was found to be true that most people within the study do consider social media to be a main source of information for BLM. There were also some limiting factors to this study such as the fact that it was based on less than 100 people. Also, that social media itself is biased because of algorithms that try to recreate and perpetuate the consistent same kinds of content. Furthermore, social media is not always reliable as an informational source because you can't

control what's on there and what's said. For example, most people thought that BLM was a response to police brutality, which it was, but they were unaware of its origins and who created it. Overall, social media is an informational source for BLM, but its reliability and validity need to be taken into account (Cox, 2017).

Existing research has shown that negative attitudes toward a social movement within the news do lessen overall for a movement, but no one had specifically looked into social media engagement and media coverage until Mourão and Brown. After surveying people in 2019 and having them read 3 articles, 1 about BLM they measured their social media engagement. It was found that if someone is a supporter of a movement and they use social media for news and content, the framing of an issue doesn't matter. Pictures do have a slight effect on whether people share them or not, but if there's an interest and commitment to an issue, media framing doesn't affect social media engagement (Mourão & Brown, 2022).

Despite the fact that Black Lives Matter is often portrayed as negative and angry, there have been considerable displays of hope and optimism. BLM is portrayed a lot as an angry and violent movement, which is true to an extent. The movement is about basic human rights and not being killed because of your race, so a certain amount of anger is expected. But, you cannot sustain a social movement with just anger, there has to be hope and optimism that you can create change. The movement has been used to characterize Black people as violent and irrational, which is upholding the progress of the movement. Overall positive emotions were always present in tweets about BLM but went down when catastrophic events happened. Such as only around 5% of tweets held positive emotions when George Floyd was murdered, but over 40% expressed anger. Inversely, over 40% of tweets expressed positive emotions during the in-person protests

for George Floyd and only 20% of tweets expressed anger. The media portrays BLM protests as angry and violent but within this study, it's been shown that it's one of the most positive experiences for Black people (Cheung-Blunden et al., 2022).

While many social movements are based on social media and are very active. BLM is different in a multitude of ways. One of the starkest ones is what the movement does on social media. After an analysis of over 1000 tweets over three years, these three distinctive themes were found.

- “The movement critiques oppressive institutions and systemic racism”
- “Denounces white supremacy and redefining demeaning racial narratives”
- “Calls out racist attitudes and commending people who oppose such behavior”

The movement was also started by three Black queer women as a way to make it known to Black people that their voices do matter and so do their lives. This movement started a revolution in the Black community and across the world, causing a new collectivizing effort on social media, especially Twitter which led to direct criticism and a call for change in the treatment of Black people. This has also caused a lot of collectivizing efforts and more importantly solidarity, giving Black people who may not physically be located near the community the feeling of community while also having access to the community (Nartey, 2022).

Negative Effects

Social media has been very helpful for the BLM movement, but it also can hurt the movement. Pradhana & Tania's article talks about the hyperreality of BLM and how social media can help and hinder the social movement, specifically Twitter³. Social media has done a lot for BLM and has helped with collective action, coalition building, and resource mobilization for the movement. There have also been some negative effects such as misinformation around the movement, because, on social media, it is not possible to control who is participating. There are people that only post about the movement and do nothing else, and often, the intentions and messages of the movement get misinterpreted. For example, certain news sources always talk about violence and the negative impacts of protests, but they are usually taken out of context and have the effect of undermining the movement. Yes, social media has helped the movement gain traction, but it's also helped contribute to the hyperreality of the movements that has skewed the moment. The hyperreality of the movement is the social media sphere in which the movement exists. Within this hyperreality, there is misinformation about the movement, countermovements, collective participation, and organizing that all exist within the same space. This conflicting information all exists within the same place, which contributes to skewing the movement and impeding progress. There's also the issue of 'slacktivism', people just posting online, but not doing anything else to help the movement grow, which is similar to the free-rider issue(Pradhana & Tania, 2021).

Echoing this sentiment that social media can hurt, there's a lot of misinformation that leads to social noise. Misinformation is defined as, "when inaccurate information is spread either intentionally or unintentionally". Social noise is defined as, "The influence of a user's

³ This article was not written by Americans, which is something important to note because they don't have the context, which also means they don't have the bias associated with the idea of race and being American.

personal and relational characteristics on information received through social media that might confuse, distort or even modify the original message”. Social noise is also affected by social pressure and wanting to appear a certain way on social media, so sometimes people purposely spread wrong information or don’t correct it so they’re perceived positively. After looking at over 104,000 tweets the research found that 76% percent of the tweets were subjective meaning that they could be informative and were more subject to social noise, whereas 23% of the tweets were facts that could not be distorted. It was also discovered that 42% of the tweets had a positive connotation, 29% were neutral, and 28% were negative showing that even in the midst of misinformation and social noise the movement is wholly positive. Social media, then, can also serve as a major downside to the movement because of its ability to distort the information and undermine the movement(Pampapura Madali et al., 2022).

Gaps In The Literature & Research Rationale

The use of social media in conjunction with social movements is still fairly new. While more research about Black Lives Matter and the use of social media is being published, none of it talks specifically about the use of social media and how that has impacted the success of the movement. Furthermore, most of the existing social media research focuses on just a single platform, Twitter. According to Carey (2016), the use of social media has spread a lot of awareness about Black Lives Matter but has also started counter-movements such as All Lives Matter. There was no further research about his impact on the success of the movement. There were a few articles about the negative effects of the movement by Pradhana & Tania (2021) and Pampapura Madali et al (2022), but there also was no deeper discussion about how this affects

the success of the movement itself. There is a lot of research on how social media is used, and how people interact with social media. But there is no research that directly connects these actions to the success of the movement.

Therefore, the literature review establishes the basis of this research paper but also articulates the need for additional research that connects the use of social media to the success of the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement is one of the first movements that completely started on social media and that still relied on social media 10 years later. Black Lives Matter is an excellent example of a social movement that should be used in a case study to evaluate the effects of social media on the success of a social movement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research leads me to become curious about the impacts of social media on the success of the Black Lives Matter Movement. This project, therefore, asks ‘How has social media affected the success of the Black Lives Matter Movement? To measure how social media has impacted the success of the Black Lives Matter Movement, I conducted a survey. The survey questions measure how people engage with the Black Lives Matter Movement, which social media platform they use, and their general attitudes about the movement. Some questions from a previous study done by the Pew Research Center. The study was completed in 2016, entitled “How Americans View The Black Lives Matter Movement”. Table 1 summarizes the questions used in the survey instrument which included both questions about BLM, as well as basic demographic questions.

Survey Data Questions

Table 1: Survey Questions

Question	Answer Choices
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1. From what you've heard, do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the Black Lives Matter movement? *	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Support 2. Somewhat Support 3. Somewhat Oppose 4. Strongly Oppose
2. How well, if at all, do you feel you understand the goals of the Black Lives Matter movement – would you say very well, fairly well, not too well, or not at all well? *	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very Well 2. Fairly Well 3. Not Too Well 4. Not At All Well
3. How do you interact with Black Lives Matter?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Media 2. In-Person Events 3. Other 4. None Of The Above
4. Which social media platform do you use the most to participate in the Black Lives Matter Movement?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Twitter 2. Instagram 3. TikTok 4. Snapchat 5. Facebook 6. Other
5. Do you get your Information about Black Lives Matter from social media?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. Maybe 3. No
6. Do you participate in the Black Lives Matter movement outside of social media interaction?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. Maybe 3. No
7. Is your engagement with Black Lives Matter generally positive, neutral, or negative?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive 2. Neutral 3. Negative
8. Does media coverage affect how you interact with the movement on social media?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. Maybe 3. No
9. Regardless of how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement...In the long run, how effective do you think it will be in helping blacks achieve equality in this country — very effective, somewhat effective, not too effective, or not at all effective? *	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very Effective 2. Somewhat Effective 3. Not Too Effective 4. Not At All Effective
10. On a scale of 1-10, do you consider the Black Lives Matter Movement successful?	Rated by a 1-10 Sliding Scale

The Questions with an asterisk at the end (Questions 1, 2, and 9) from the survey data section were also used in the Pew Research Center Survey and will be used as a basis for comparison from 2016 to 2022.

Demographic Data Questions

Category	Answer Choices
Race	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. American Indian or Alaska Native 2. Asian 3. Black or African American 4. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 5. White 6. Other
Ethnicity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hispanic or Latino 2. Non-Hispanic or Latino
Gender	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Female 2. Male 3. Non-Binary 4. Transgender 5. Other 6. Prefer Not To Say
Age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 18-24 2. 25-34 3. 35-44 4. 45-54 5. 55-64 6. 76-74 7. 75+
Geographic Location	Fill in the blank, city and state
Country of Origin	Fill in the blank
Political Affiliation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Democrat 2. Republican 3. Independent 4. Prefer Not To Say 5. Other

Pew Research Demographics

I created the survey on Qualtrics and it was distributed through my social media, various newsletters, participants' social media, and word of mouth. Everyone who took the survey was

encouraged to distribute it. No identifying information was collected through this survey such as names, so the responses are completely anonymous. The survey was not bound geographically since it was distributed through social media, but it was bound by a time period. The survey opened on September 6th, 2022, and closed exactly two weeks later on October 13th, 2022. The idea of success will be measured by the standards for success in social movements agreed upon by most political scientists as articulated by Buchler. Those are

1. Participants have a general knowledge of the origins and goals of the movement.
2. Collective participation and mobilization of participants are a part of the movement.
3. A tangible change was created by the movement.

Mapping The Survey Question To The Lines Of Inquiry

Question	What It Measures
Question 1	Support for Black Lives Matter
Question 2	Black Lives Matter Goals <i>Social Movement Criteria 1: Participants have a general knowledge of the origins and goals of the movement.</i>
Question 3	Interaction with Black Lives Matter <i>Social Movement Criteria 2: Collective participation and mobilization of participants are a part of the movement.</i>
Question 4	Social media as a news source
Question 5	Most used social media platform
Question 6	Slacktivism
Question 7	Black Lives Matter engagement attitudes

Question 8	Media coverage and Black Lives Matter interaction
Question 9	Black Lives Matter Effectiveness <i>Social Movement Criteria 3: A tangible change was created by the movement</i>
Question 10	Black Lives Matter Success

RESEARCH & FINDINGS

Hypothesis

At the start of the project, I expected to find that overall social media has helped the Black Lives Matter movement be successful. Most survey respondents will probably report not knowing the goals and origins of the movement, with less than 50% knowing the goals and origins of the movement. Social media will help members of the movement participate in the movement and collectivize, but it will also have negative effects. Overall, most impressions from respondents will suggest that social media has helped make the Black Lives Matter movement successful. There will be “slacktivism” within the movement, people who participate in the movement on social media but not outside of social media. At least 50% of the respondents will be slacktivists. A tangible change has not been created by the movement which is why the movement is generally successful to an extent, but not as successful as it could be. But overall, social media has greatly contributed to the level of success that the Black Lives Matter movement has achieved. Overall the success of the Black Lives Matter movement will be around 60%.

Limitations

While using a survey does eradicate geographic research barriers, it also presents its own set of problems. The survey was distributed on social media and through word of mouth so most of the respondents are like-minded people, which is why there is less variation within the results.

There is not a lot of representation among the respondents, so the results of the survey are not fully representative of the general populace. Lastly, there is a sense of difficulty in discerning whether individuals can assess the impact and success of the Black Lives Matter movement just based on 10 questions.

Therefore there is a need for research connecting social media use with the success of the Black Lives Movement. This movement has become a global phenomenon with chapters in over 20 countries around the world. As one of the first social movements to start on social media, which is still integral to the movement 10 years later, Black Lives Matter is a great case study about how social media can impact the success of a social movement.

Pew Research Demographics

Total Respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,144
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black: 29% • White: 51% • Hispanic: 11%

Survey Demographics

Total Respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 571
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black: 33% • White: 36% • Asian: 17% • Other 12% • American Indian or Alaska Native: 1% • Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 1%
Ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hispanic or Latino: 24% • Non-Hispanic or Latino: 76%
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18-24: 79% • 25-34: 4%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 35-44: 7% ● 45-54: 5% ● 55-64: 3% ● 65-74: 2% ● 75+: 0%
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Female: 78% ● Male: 17% ● Non-Binary: 4% ● Transgender: 1%
Political Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Democrat: 63% ● Republican: 3% ● Independent: 14% ● Other: 9% ● Prefer Not To Say: 12%

Survey Findings

Question 1 - Support for Black Lives Matter

An overwhelming 82% of all respondents said they strongly support BLM whereas in 2016 in the Pew Research survey only 33% of respondents reported strongly supported BLM. In comparison, only 1% of respondents strongly opposed BLM compared to 13% in 2016. By race, white people have the highest percentage of strongly supporting BLM at 90% as opposed to 16% in 2016. Shockingly, Black people have the highest percentage of respondents that strongly oppose the movement at 2%. Compared to 2016 when 5% of Black people strongly opposed the movement and 22% of white people strongly opposed the movement. Ethnicity and gender trends matched the overall trends. In regards to age groups between the ages of 35-64 have the lowest percentages of respondents who strongly support BLM at 58-63%, with 18-42% of respondents in that age group of them deciding to go with the “somewhat support” option. Lastly, all political parties except for Republicans strongly supported the movement by at least 72%, whereas only 42% of

republicans strongly supported the movement. Adversely 17% of Republicans strongly opposed the movement and no other political party did.

The results for this question were very interesting, I hypothesize this has a lot to do with how the survey was shared. The survey was shared through my social media and with other people on social media who are like-minded. Resulting in a pool of people who are generally politically passionate, and have a sense of duty to support the movement. Within the Black community, there is a sense of not fully supporting the movement because it has not resulted in tangible change. This is why there were more “strongly supported” respondents that were white identifying. Respondents within the 35-64 age group have lived longer and experienced more life than the 18-34 age group which explains why they are a little less supportive of the movement. In their lifetime they have not seen a major change from the movement, so it would cause them to somewhat support the movement, not strongly support it. In general, the Black Lives Matter movement is usually supported by Democrats and Republicans, so it makes sense that out of all the political parties, Republicans strongly opposed the movement the most.

Question 2 - Black Lives Matter Goals

Overall 59% of respondents reported understanding the goals of BLM fairly well, 33% understand the goals very well, and 8% understand them not too well. In comparison, in 2016, 38% of respondents reported understanding the goals fairly well, 26% understood the goals very well, 27% understood the goals not too well, and 8% understood the goals not well at all. Black people and American Indian/Alaska Native respondents reported understanding the goals of the movement the best with 45% and

50% understanding the goals very well. This is higher relative to the Pew 2016 survey where 42% of Black respondents reported understanding the goals of the movement very well. On the other hand, respondents that identify as Asian and “Other” reported not at all understanding the goals of the movement at 1% and 2% respectively. These percentages were not significant enough to affect the overall responses, but they do indicate a sharp difference across race. Ethnicity data generally followed the overall data. 0% of transgender respondents reported understanding the goals of the movement very well, most went with fairly well at 67%. Ages 65-74 understood the goals of the movement best with 50% understanding the goals of the movement very well, in contrast, 23% of the 35-44 age group reported understanding the goals of the movement very well. Among all political groups, the majority of respondents reported understanding the goals of the movement fairly well between 50-67%.

After the death of George Floyd in 2020⁴, there was another surge in the Black Lives Matter movement, which created more awareness about the movement and its goals. This increased attention could explain much of the increase in respondents that understand the goals of BLM from 2016 to 2022. Black people, Latinx individuals, and American Indian/Indigenous people have been some of the most prominent groups in the BLM movement, which is why these groups have the best understanding of the goals of the movement. Individuals aged 65-74, because respondents in this age group lived through and possibly participated in the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter movement are very closely aligned with similar

⁴ The global impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter protests shaped movements around the world. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/>

goals. Furthermore, the movement is currently predominantly targeted at 18-34-year-olds which explains why 35-44-year-olds reported understanding the goals of the movement very well the least.

Question 3 - Interaction with Black Lives Matter

In general, 68% of respondents reported predominantly interacting with the movement through social media. 12% usually interact through in-person events, 7% interact through other avenues, and 13% don't participate in any of the above. All races except for Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders reported that 68-83% of respondents primarily interact with the movements through social media. 68% of Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders reported not participating in any of the choices, and the other 33% participate through in-person events. Data in the ethnicity subcategory generally matched the overall data. Female and Non-Binary identifying individuals are the most present on social media at 72% and 67%. On the other hand, Male and transgender-identifying individuals have the highest percentage of in-person attendance at 20% and 33%. 25-34-year-olds have the highest social media presence at 74% and 18-24-year-olds are the most present at in-person events at 15%. Democrats overwhelmingly have the strongest social media presence at 74% with those who prefer not to say their political affiliation at 60%. Independent and "Other" politically affiliated individuals have the highest in-person attendance at 17% and 18%.

As expressed by Mudnt (2016), Social media is integral to the Black Lives Matter movement and has helped the movement grow. Overall most people used social media to interact with the movement. Every race except Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders

predominantly uses social media, but this makes sense because most Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders are not connected to the “mainland” or the continental U.S. Moreover, there usually is not a strong wifi connection so social media cannot be their only way of interacting with the movement. In regards to in-person events, males and transgender have a higher attendance because there is always the worry of safety that female and nonbinary individuals have to worry about that may not be as prominent as males and transgender individuals.

Question 4 - Social Media As A News source

At 87%, a majority of respondents use social media as a news source for information about BLM. Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders use social media as a news source the least at 33%, but this group of respondents generally does not use social media in regard to the movement. With consideration of ethnicity and gender, the data for both subcategories matched the overall data. Ages 55-64 use social media the least as a form of information about the movement at 45% and Republicans have the lowest use out of all political parties at 67%.

More respondents use social media as a news source for Black Lives Matter than respondents who use social media as their predominant way of interacting with the movement. Once again, Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders use social media as a news source the least. But as aforementioned this has a lot to do with their geographic location and their access to the internet overall social media use. While social media is open to people of all ages, usually younger generations are the people that use it the most. Respondents in the age group 55-64 probably refer to the news or other news sources

such as newspapers to get information about the movement. Republicans use social media the least to learn about the movement, but that makes sense because Republicans support the Black Lives Matter movement the least out of all the surveyed political parties.

Question 5 - Most Used Social Media Platform

Across the board, the most used social media platforms were Instagram at 51%, Twitter at 20%, and Tik Tok at 14%. In most subcategories (race, ethnicity, gender, age, and political affiliation) Instagram was the most used social media platform with Twitter and Tik Tok coming next respectively. In the 35-44 age range, Facebook is the most used platform at 46% despite Facebook not being in the overall top 3. Even though Twitter is not the most widely used social media platform in the sources I used for my background research, in the survey 18-24-year-olds use Twitter the most at 25%. Republicans and “Other” politically affiliated respondents utilize Twitter the most at 24% and 26%.

This is surprising in comparison to my prior research which all focused on Twitter and its use in the BLM movement. According to my research, Instagram is the most used social media by respondents. Facebook was at its height in the early 2000s and targeted at teenagers and people in their early 20s⁵. At the time, people in the 35-44 age range were teenagers and in their early 20s which is why it's their most used social media platform. Even though Twitter was not the most widely used social media platform overall, 18-24-year-olds used it the most which makes sense because Twitter is targeted at teenagers and people in their early 20s similar to Facebook in the early 2000s.

⁵ Bellis, M. (2020, February 06). The History of Facebook and How It Was Invented. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/who-invented-facebook-1991791>

Republicans tend to use Twitter more than other political parties because it's not as censored as Instagram and major Republican figures such as Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell are active on the social media platform⁶

Question 6 - Slacktivism

When it comes to participating in the BLM movement outside of social media, 51% of all respondents do and 49% do not. Most of the various races mirror these statistics except American Indian or Alaska Native respondents and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander respondents. In the former group, 83% participated in the movement outside of social media, and in the latter group, only 33% of respondents participated in the movement outside of social media. Ethnicity and gender trends are the most aligned with the overall trends. The largest discrepancies in age are between the 35-44-year-olds and the 55-64-year-olds. 23% of 33-44-year-olds participate in the movement outside of social media. Similarly, 18% of 55-64-year-olds participate in the movement outside of social media. Unsurprisingly, Republican respondents had the largest difference in responses to this question. Only 8% of Republicans participate in BLM outside of the movement and 92% do not.

As Pradhana and Tania argued, there's an issue of slacktivism in social movements that are predominantly on social media, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. From the survey, it's shown that around half of individuals are engaged in the movement and the other half only participate on social media, but this could just be unique to the sample within the survey. Many American Indians or Alaska Natives

⁶Frum, D. (2022, November 03). Why I Logged Off Twitter. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/11/elon-musk-twitter-takeover-changes/671980/>

participate in the movement outside of social media, but American Indians and Indigenous individuals are very involved in the movement. As opposed to Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander respondents who don't usually participate in the movement outside of social media. This is also due to geographic location because most of the in-person events happen in major cities that Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander respondents are usually not close to.

Question 7 - Black Lives Matter Engagement Attitudes,

For the most part, interactions with BLM have been positive. Seventy-five percent of total respondents said their interactions with BLM are generally positive, 24% said they're neutral, and 1% said they're negative. For the most part, all the data across all the subcategories mirrored these numbers with a slight deviation. The biggest differences came in the 55-64 age range and among Republicans. 55-64-year-olds responded that 45% of their engagement is positive, 45% is neutral, and 9% is negative. Even more drastically, Republicans reported 42% positive experiences, which is surprising but once again this may just be isolated to the sample of respondents who took the survey. Thirteen percent of respondents answered neutral, and 25% said negative.

There is a large stigma around the Black Lives Matter movement being negative and not having any positive impact or experiences. An overwhelming majority of respondents said that their experiences were positive and unlike most of the questions, there were few differences within the subcategories. Among 55-64-year-olds they reported less positive engagement and more neutral engagement, I hypothesize that this is because they have not seen much change in the movement so they have no positive or

negative interactions with the movement. Republicans are generally more opposed to the movement than other political parties, so it makes sense that they had the largest percentage of negative engagement with the movement.

Question 8 - Media Coverage & Black Lives Matter Interaction

When it comes to media coverage affecting engagement with the movement, the responses were pretty mixed. 34% of respondents answered yes media coverage does affect their coverage of the movement, 33% said maybe, and 33% said no. Within the subcategories, the answers are also mixed. For example, in terms of race, 28% of Black people said yes, 23% said maybe, and 49% said no. Whereas 33% of Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders said maybe and the other 67% said no. There were no major differences in the ethnicity subcategory. Overall most genders mirrored the general consensus except for transgender-identified respondents, 33% answered yes and 67% answered maybe. In terms of age, only the 55-64 age range didn't match the overall responses. 27% of 55-64-year-olds responded yes and the other 73% said no. Every political affiliation also generally followed the overall results.

Media coverage of Black Lives Matter is usually very positive or very negative, especially after in-person events. Depending on the person, media coverage may or may not affect the way they interact with the movement. For example, 49% of Black people said no the media coverage does not affect the way they interact with the movement. This is because Black people have a very personal and emotional investment in the movement, so it takes more than negative media coverage to discourage them from interacting with the movement. As another minority group, no Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific

Islanders said yes. There is multicultural solidarity and support within the Black Lives Matter movement, which increases the reach of the movement. 55-64-year-olds also took a more definite stance, saying no media coverage does not stop them from interacting with the movement. This age group predominantly interacts with the movement through social media, and other means, so media coverage would not affect the way they interact with the movement because they are usually not present at in-person events.

Question 9 - Black Lives Matter Effectiveness

When asked if they view BLM as effective, 26% of respondents said very effective, 62% said somewhat effective, 9% said not too effective at all, and 3% said not at all effective. In 2016, the results were also similar with 16% of respondents saying very effective, 44% reporting somewhat effective, 19% said not too effective, 17% said not at all effective, and 3% refused to respond. There has been a decrease among Black people in the very effective category in 2016, 25% of Black people said the movement was very effective in 2016 as opposed to 16% in 2022. The responses within the race category most of the data matched the overall data except the results from American Indians or Alaska Natives were 100% somewhat effective. The data results by ethnicity, mirror the overall results. In terms of gender, non-binary identified 55% of respondents believe the movement is very effective and 44% believe it's somewhat effective. Overall believing the movement to be effective. Transgender and "Other" identified individuals were generally split between somewhat effective and not too effective. Transgender respondents reported 67% somewhat effective and 33% not too effective and "Other"

respondents imported 50% somewhat effective and 50% not too effective. There was an interesting phenomenon within the age subcategory, the older the respondent, the less they thought the movement was very effective. 30% of respondents ages 18-24 believe the movement is very effective as opposed to 13% of respondents ages 65-74 who believe the movement is very effective. The political party trends still follow the overall trends.

The idea of the effectiveness of Black Lives Matter is a precarious subject. Although the movement has been revolutionary and a form of innovative Black resistance, the movement has not created many tangible changes. There is still police brutality and 9 years later people are still protesting in the streets to amplify the importance of Black Lives. The 2022 survey data shows that most respondents think the movement has been somewhat effective. The number of Black people that believe the movement is very effective has decreased because there have been no tangible changes and Black people are still being murdered such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Non-Binary individuals have a net belief that the movement is effective to some extent, showing the hope and faith that some people still have in the movement's effectiveness. Everyone else falls in the middle, between *somewhat effective* and *not too effective*. The lack of a perceived impact probably arises from the fact that there has been enough change made by the movement, so it can't be considered to be completely effective. As the respondents got older, the less they reported believing the movement was very effective and somewhat effective. As already discussed, those in the older age group 65+ lived through the Civil Rights movement which has similar goals to Black Lives Movement. They have seen no progress, with police brutality happening throughout their

lifetime and therefore they do see the movement having much of an impact. Respondents aged 35-64 have also experienced various social movements and iterations of police brutality and violence against Black people, so they also have less faith in the effectiveness of the movement, but more faith than those aged 65+.

Question 10 - Black Lives Matter Success

When asked on a scale from 1-10, how successful the BLM is, the average answer from respondents was 6.74. The average for Black-identified respondents was low at 6.53, but the average for American Indian or Alaska Native respondents was higher than the average at 7.50. Similarly, Hispanic or Latino-identified respondents had an average of score 7.15 for the successfulness of the movement. Half of the genders had a score higher than the overall score and the other half was slightly lower. There was only one age range that was lower than the average success scores. 35-44-year-olds had a drastically low average score of 5.62. As expected all political parties except for Republicans and Independents had a score lower than the average. With Republicans at 4.91 and Independents at 6.42.

The idea of success is relative, however, and different people have different definitions of success. Despite the relative nature of the question, most of the responses cluster around giving the movement 6 out of 10 or a 7 out of 10. In comparison to other races, Black-identified respondents did score success lower than other races. That may be because the movement is more personal to Black people and there has not been a lot of change caused by the movement. To other minority groups, the movement may seem more successful because of the media attention and notoriety the movement has received.

Among genders, female-identified respondents thought the movement was more successful than male-identified respondents. I hypothesize this is due to the fact that most instances of police brutality that are publicized are against Black men, so they see the movement as less successful. In general 34-44-year-olds have seen the movement as less effective and are less supportive of the movement, as a result, they see the movement as less successful than other age ranges. Lastly, the Black Lives Matter movement is generally opposed by Republicans and Independents tend to be split, so they both see the movement as the least successful out of all political parties.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In comparison to the three criteria for success within a social movement as articulated by Buecheler (2016) and the responses from the survey, the Black Lives Matter movement is generally successful. The criteria were:

1. Participants have a general knowledge of the origins and goals of the movement.
 - a. For the first criterion, measured by question 2, 92% of all respondents reported understanding the origins of the goals of the movement somewhat well or mostly well. As a result, 92% of respondents reported understanding the goals and origins of the Black Lives Matter movement. This is a greater percentage than I hypothesized. I estimated around 50% of respondents would understand the goals and origins of the movement.

2. Collective participation and mobilization of participants are a part of the movement.
 - a. The second criterion was measured by question 3 in the survey.

Collective participation and mobilization can take place online or in person. Overall, 68% of respondents reported predominantly interacting with the movement through social media. 12% usually interact through in-person events, and 7% interact through other avenues. Resulting in a net 87% of respondents, collectively participating and mobilizing in the movement. This is also another significant percentage. I estimated around 75% of respondents would collectively participate and mobilize for the Black Lives Matter movement.
3. A tangible change was created by the movement.
 - a. The third criterion was measured by question 9. Change is a relative word and means different things to different people. As a result, this criterion was measured by choice ranging from very effective to not at all effective. When asked if they view BLM as effective, 26% of respondents said very effectively, and 62% said somewhat effective. As a result, a net percentage of 88 respondents believe the movement is effective to some extent. This is another significant figure, I hypothesized this percentage would also be around 50%.

Assuming that all agreed criteria are weighed equally, the average number from all three is 89%, which indicates overwhelming support. As mentioned before, these findings are from a nonrandom sample and do not claim to be representative of the general population. According to the survey and the questions used to measure the criterion, however, the Black Lives Matter movement has been 89% successful in the opinion of 571 respondents. Even here, the assessment should be qualified as there are the results from question 10, asking how successful they believe the movement to be on a scale from 1-10. The average number for question 10 was 6.74, which is 67%.

Comparing both results together it can be inferred that according to this study, the Black Lives Matter movement is 67-89% successful. This is a significant amount because it's higher than 50%. But it's also 11-33% from being completely successful, indicating that there is still work to be done. In terms of accounting for the role of social media in this success, it plays a large role. 64% of all respondents use social media as their way of predominantly interacting with the movement and 87% of all respondents use social media as a news source to find out more about the Black Lives Matter movement. When these two numbers are averaged, the number is 76%, estimating that social media is 76% responsible for the success of the movement. I hypothesized that social media was responsible for around 60% of the success of the Black Lives Matter movement. I was slightly lower than the percentage, but I was right about the downsides. For example, the survey revealed that there is a lot of slacktivism going on within the movement with nearly half of the respondents not participating in the movement at 49%. There is also an age barrier with social media, the older someone is the less they tend to use it. Lastly,

there are also geographical access problems with social media, Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders consistently used social media the least due to accessibility issues.

Delving deeper into social media, I was most surprised that Twitter was not the most used social media platform among respondents. Within the existing literature (Wilkins et al., 2019) & (Nartey, 2022), Twitter was the most popular and most used social media in terms of the Black Lives Matter movement. Instagram started to become more popular in terms of the Black Lives Matter movement after #BlackoutTuesday which took place in June 2020⁷. #BlackoutTuesday was in honor of the murder of Breonna Taylor and was mainly promoted on Instagram. Everyone used the hashtag to promote Black businesses and resources for the movement. Although this was well intended there was a lot of social noise including #BlackoutTuesday. Many people just posted black screens with the hashtag, which drowned out the resources, petitions, and protest information that were actually useful and posted under the same hashtag. This resulted in a dilution of the message, and a lot of momentum leading to social noise as articulated by Pampapura Madali (2022). Social media has still been very impactful for the movement, but Instagram is starting to surpass Twitter as the predominant social media source for the Black Lives Matter movement. There are more social media platforms being used other than Twitter, and the research should reflect that.

The mainstream media represents Black Lives Matter in a negative light. Much of the coverage expresses the movement as violent and radical, detailing negative

⁷ Coscarelli, J. (2020, June 2). *#blackouttuesday: A music industry protest becomes a social media moment*. The New York Times. Retrieved November 24, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/arts/music/what-blackout-tuesday.html>

experiences within the movement. This prompted me to include a question about interactions with the movement (Question 7). According to the survey, 75% of total respondents said their interactions with BLM are generally positive, 24% said they're neutral, and 1% said they're negative. In the context of this study, the media portrays a false negative narrative about the Black Lives Matter movement, which is something that was articulated by (Carney, 2016). Black Lives Matter is a prominent and in-your-face movement, so there have been some counter-movements such as All Lives Matter, resulting in negative experiences and coverage from the mainstream media.

In realizing how powerful the media is in controlling the narrative about the movement. I wanted to measure whether media coverage affects interaction with the movement (Question 8). The survey revealed that 34% of respondents answered yes media coverage does affect their coverage of the movement, 33% said maybe, and 33% said no. The mixed reviews were expected because the media is so powerful and has a large impact on the way people perceive things. Within the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, the way media coverage affects interaction with the movement is generally split across all three answers. The respondents who responded yes may not be very involved in person, so the media would have greater influence over their perception of the movement. They also may not have strong ties to the movement. Those who answered maybe, are possibly involved with the movement, but the media still has a certain power over their perception of the movement. They also are probably invested in the movement, but only to a certain extent. Respondents who answered no, are probably the most involved with the movement in-person and they also probably have a personal

stake and strong commitment to the movement. Black respondents had the highest percentage of respondents answering no (49%) with the exception of Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders (67% responded no). Overall, while the media may be a powerful force in controlling the narrative of the Black Lives Matter movement, the interactions people have experienced are overwhelmingly positive and those with a strong connection to the movement do not let the media's narrative sway them.

Based on my survey respondents, the BLM movement has been more successful in terms of its impact than I expected to find. Social media has contributed a lot to this success, but it also comes with its own set of problems such as accessibility and slacktivism. There are also general barriers that the movement faces that have nothing to do with social media, such as media portrayal and a general understanding of the movement. While the data within this survey was generally positive, there is still more that the movement can achieve. For example, the Civil Rights Era ended with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. I in no way believe that the passage of legislation will fully eradicate police brutality in the United States of America, but I do believe it would be a great first step and it would also instill hope in members of the movement. There's a reason why the percentage of respondents, especially Black respondents, who strongly supported the Black Lives Matter Movement declined between 2016 and 2022. People need to see a change to feel like they are doing something and they are a part of something bigger than themselves. You can not collectively participate, mobilize, and support a movement for 10 years to see no change. You eventually lose hope. While the Black Lives Matter has been generally successful, especially in spreading awareness

about the movement. More can still be done. Surges do not just need to happen when another major instance of police brutality happens, there always needs to be momentum and support.

Future Research

Further research is essential to understanding the link between social media and the success of social movements, especially in the case of Black Lives Matter. This project is the first exploration but is limited in a few areas. First, my survey was only open for two weeks, if it were open for a month or two there would have been over 1,000 responses. Furthermore, aside from 3 questions from a Pew Research Center Survey, all the questions were created by me, so there was nothing to compare them to. It would add to the research if there were personal interviews with organizers and leaders within the Black Lives Matter movement to get their perspectives on the role of social media in the success of the movement. Lastly, information was collected about which social media platforms were used and if social media was the main avenue used to interact with the movement, but something was missing. No data was collected on what respondents did on social media. Knowing if people posted on social media looked at posts and content, or talked to people about the movement. This information would help pinpoint specifically in what areas social media has helped the Black Lives Movement be more successful. Therefore, any further research should last for a longer period of time, including the experiences of leaders and stakeholders in the movement through interviews, and an in-depth case study about actions on social media pertaining to the movement.

Additions To Current Scholarship

While the research within this study is a start to exploring how social media affects the success of the Black Lives Matter movement, new discoveries were made. In comparison to the prior research. There has been a shift within the most used social media platform. Instagram has surpassed Twitter as the most used social media platform which is due in part to the aforementioned #BlackoutTuesday in 2020. There is also a lot of participation in the movement among older age groups 65 and older with that group understanding the goals and origins of the movement the most. Moreover, there may be a greater understanding of the origins and the goals of the movement than previously thought. Participants have a general understanding of the movement that they are participating in. The survey also revealed that the movement has more positive interactions than negative interactions for the group that responded. This is significant because overall, the movement has negative connotations throughout media coverage. It was also revealed that media coverage does affect the way some people do interact with the movement, this is a revolving feedback circle that causes more “negative” interactions with the movement resulting in the movement having an overall negative connotation. Finally, as a whole, the Black Lives Matter movement is more successful than previously thought. While there has not been a concrete change enacted as a result of the movement, there has been a huge collective consciousness, participation, and mobilization that has arisen since the inception of the movement in 2012.

As stated by Nummi (2019), The Black Lives Matter movement is a revolutionary social movement, there is no other movement like it. While it is heavily influenced by the

Civil Rights movement and has similar social media origins like the Occupy movement and Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter is in its own class. Unlike the Civil Rights movement, the Black Lives Matter movement is a global phenomenon. This level of engagement and advocacy was only achieved through social media. Black Lives Matter is heavily reliant on social media and as this research paper revealed social media is essential to the Black Lives Matter movement's overall success.

The Black Lives Matter movement has been extremely successful in the areas of ensuring participants understand the goals and origins of the movement and also in terms of getting participants to collectivize and mobilize. In a stark difference from the Civil Rights movement, which helped pass multiple pieces of legislation, the Black Lives Matter movement has created no tangible changes. It is in this area where the movement lacks success, which affects the overall success of the movement. While social media is helpful in some ways like getting people to sign petitions, it can only go so far. In order for the Black Lives Movement to create a tangible change, there cannot be such a heavy reliance on social media. There has to be on-the-ground action, legislation, and lobbying. While social media can help with on-the-ground action, legislation, and lobbying, there still has to be an in-person aspect. The Black Lives Matter movement is extremely successful, but there is more work to be done. Once a tangible change is made to reduce police brutality against the Black community in America, the movement will have reached the utmost level of success.

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