



Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, and Political Opportunities: Understanding Social Movement Expansion through Political Process Theory

Daniel Turillo

Abstract

In the summer of 2020, while mired in the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States experienced an unprecedentedly massive wave of protests led by the Black Lives Matter movement. Given the novelty of this upswell and the lack of a clear precedent thereof, there does not yet exist much scholarly analysis into why and how this movement expanded as significantly as it did or what developmental routes it may take in the future. My research seeks to remedy this gap by employing the political process theory of social movement activity to interpret how the COVID-19 pandemic increased opportunities for insurgent activity, how Black Lives Matter was in a prime position to take advantage of those opportunities, and how the movement can and should approach its future development to retain the support and leverage it accumulated during the 2020 protests. Through informal qualitative analysis rooted in the political process model, I suggest that COVID-19 led to greater public recognition of institutional maladies in the United States, which Black Lives Matter was able to channel toward protest activity thanks to the low-cost, high-reward membership system inherent in its non-hierarchical structure and tactful use of social media. I then briefly consider different developmental paths that Black Lives Matter may take and assert that carefully implemented attempts at formalization will allow the movement to retain its organizing potential regardless of any volatile external opportunities.

Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, and Political Opportunities

Understanding Social Movement Expansion through Political Process Theory

Introduction

On May 25th, 2020, a Black man in Minneapolis, Minnesota, named George Floyd, was killed by police officer Derek Chauvin, who knelt on his neck for eight minutes after arresting him for allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill (Ankel, 2020). In the coming days, protests erupted across the United States under the unifying cry of “Black Lives Matter” (“BLM”), an umbrella term for the 21st-century movement of interconnected local and national groups organizing against police brutality and for racial justice for Black Americans more generally (Ransby, 2018, p.23). These protests reached an unprecedented scale, spanning 15 to 26 million participants in over 2,400 locations nationwide through the summer and fall of 2020 (Buchanan et al., 2020; Kishi & Jones, 2020). At the same time, the United States was reeling from the unprecedented economic and social fallout of the novel coronavirus (referred to hereafter as COVID or COVID-19), which disrupted Americans’ social patterns and put incredible strain on the livelihoods of vulnerable populations (Gould and Wilson, 2020). In this paper, I seek to postulate the likely impact of the COVID pandemic on Americans’ motivations to partake in public demonstrations prior to the general elections of November 3rd, 2020, as well as how BLM was able to capitalize on these COVID-induced changes and how it may be able to retain its relevance in the political space going forward. To do so, I rely on the sociological political process theory (PPT) to provide a conceptually grounded and widely utilized model for interpretation. Through PPT, I argue that COVID—particularly the political, economic, and social effects associated with it—exacerbated existing racial tensions, institutional deficiencies, and systemic inequities and made their existence more widely salient. This led to a heretofore unseen level of engagement with, interest in, and support for the broader BLM movement, which itself was able to easily absorb and organize so many new members thanks to its emphasis on localized activism and digital communications. Afterward, I briefly explore BLM’s options for development past the fall of 2020, arguing that its continued success rests upon the strengthening of its coordinating mechanisms.

Literature Review

To analyze both the internal and external factors surrounding the George Floyd protests, I turn to the well-studied and highly exhaustive PPT model, which seeks to explain social movement activity by emphasizing dynamic conditions in the political environment, or “opportunities,” that impact social movement organizations’ ability to channel public aggravation toward their political goals. By explaining both the individual and collective issues that influence protest activity, PPT serves as an excellent framework for understanding the various factors underlying the 2020 BLM protests and supplies a complete and unified interpretation of the interactions among these different phenomena.

Modern applications of PPT build primarily upon the work of Tilly (1978), whose broad, descriptive approach to the conceptualization of protest activity posits that collective action is rooted in three factors: interest, organization, and opportunity. Interest refers to the perception of

benefits from participation for both existing group members and potential entrants and is thus affected by the expected outcomes of action and the cost associated with action itself. Organization, the measure of a group's internal ability to act on its interests, is contingent upon that group's capacity to unify and effectively mobilize its base, which itself depends on the group's access to relevant resources (namely manpower and communication networks) and its aptness for utilizing them maximally. Finally, opportunity explains a group's relationship to the outside world and how environmental changes can impede or provide chances for collective action. It is affected by the group's relative power in the political landscape, attempts to repress movement activity by outside groups, and outside actors' acceptance of (or resistance to) the group's aims. As such loose conceptual descriptors, these factors are all naturally interdependent; for instance, a favorable opportunity change will increase a group's organizational efficacy, raising the benefits of participation, which in turn provides the group with more resources to further increase its organizational capacity, thereby expanding opportunities for growth and success.

Perhaps the most influential and useful extension of this model comes from McAdam (1982), whose analysis of the US Civil Rights Movement introduces political opportunities, indigenous organizational strength, and cognitive liberation to more aptly apply Tilly's conceptualization to the real world. Political opportunity, as a more specific formulation of Tilly's opportunity factor, involves any changes to the power dynamic between an organization and its political target which alter the movement's bargaining power and the costs of outside repression. It centers on four factors: the openness of the political system to change, the stability of elite views underlying this system, the presence of elite movement allies (or lack thereof), and the state's ability and willingness to engage in repression (McAdam et al., 1996). Next, indigenous organizational strength explains Tilly's concepts of organization and mobilization by describing more specifically how existing movement organizations may capitalize upon opportunity changes by coordinating action, welcoming, and connecting participants, raising member incentives, and establishing a clear recognition of central leadership. McAdam and his fellow PPT theorists have since updated this factor to recognize the importance of mobilizing structures, the informal networks (such as social circles) through which people come to associate themselves with movement groups. Finally, cognitive liberation refers to the process by which the populace recognizes improved opportunities and immediately acts on its interests through protest activity. It is often facilitated through framing, where movement organizations define their grievances, suggest solutions to them, and attempt to make these diagnoses and prognoses publicly salient. As extensions of the Tillian model, these factors are inherently interwoven as well, with favorable changes to any of them increasing opportunities for collective action. Thus, where Tilly provides the foundational determinants of collective action, McAdam and his contemporaries present tools to make sense of the specific processes by which they change, allowing for practical applications of PPT.

As a method for exploring the broad motivations behind social movement development, PPT enables an operable and comprehensive examination of the opportunity changes brought about by COVID and BLM's recognition and utilization thereof. With this conceptual groundwork in place, I can now begin to synthesize these theories with my particular case, which—until now—has not yet been given a thorough, academically grounded examination within this model.

Method

For this study, I follow the tradition of PPT scholars by relying on simple descriptive analysis that views the events of 2020 through the broad opportunity factors delineated above. To do so, I compile data from a variety of journalists, researchers, scholars, and activists to interpret COVID-19's impact on the American populace, BLM's political tactics, and the interactions between these opportunity changes and movement activity, positing how this information explains the magnitude of the 2020 protests and what this implies for the future of the movement.

COVID-19 and the Emergence of Opportunities

Background

Any discussion of political developments in 2020 would be incomplete without considering the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, when it began to spread rapidly across the country and spur drastic public health measures, COVID has undeniably put significant strain on both public and private institutions and forced major lifestyle changes for most Americans (Norwood, 2020). Because of COVID's unique pervasiveness, selecting it as my primary subject of inference lets me establish workable temporal and thematic limitations, avoiding the unwieldiness that can characterize PPT examinations without sacrificing my ability to deeply scrutinize recent changes in American society. In the following section, I do just that by asserting how COVID created protest opportunities by worsening institutional racism, exposing societal deficiencies, and making these issues unavoidable for Americans during the period from March 2020 to November 2020. Though COVID is of course not the only driver of change in recent American history, its incredible sociopolitical pervasiveness makes it a reliable basis for inference.

COVID-19, Failing Institutions, and Protest Motivations

Most basically, COVID exposed several shortcomings in America's legal, social, economic, and administrative institutions, negatively impacting the American people and increasing their inherent interest in taking action for systemic reform. Between alarming death tolls, prolonged shutdowns, a devastating economic downturn, and the lack of a clear end in sight for any of these issues, Americans felt the failure of the established order firsthand, undeniably undermining the fortitude of the political system and encouraging reflection thereupon.

Firstly, COVID demonstrated how ill-equipped America's public health system was to deal with any major shocks. For instance, despite repeated internal and external warnings throughout late 2019 and early 2020, Executive Branch officials failed to properly prepare for the impending pandemic, with multiple reports emerging of disunity and in-fighting among top officials over the severity of the virus and the steps needed to control it (Rutledge, 2020). As the virus became an increasingly unavoidable issue, the federal government did eventually partially restrict travel

to and from China long after COVID's imminent spread there had been made known but still permitted travel between the US and Europe—where the virus had also begun to spread rapidly—to remain largely uninhibited until mid-March, by which point COVID had already made its way across the US (Rutledge, 2020). Even then, the government adamantly stuck by a provenly lackluster testing system, which necessitated the severe restriction of tests nationwide and thus profoundly hampered the mitigation of the virus at a critical point in its spread (Leonhardt & Leatherby, 2020). This ill-preparedness was further compounded by the near depletion of America's stockpile of protective equipment as early as April 2020, when cases were still far from their peak (Mirnoff, 2020).

Still, the Trump administration continued to downplay the severity of the virus, failing to work with states to impose and enforce the restrictions needed to control it (Rutledge, 2020). In a manner emblematic of the governmental disunity over the virus, the administration repeatedly rallied against personal mask usage despite its ardent endorsement by public health officials, sending unclear signals about COVID mitigation to the public (Leonhardt & Leatherby, 2020). Furthermore, fighting over official public health guidelines led to premature (per many public health officials, at least) relaxations of social distancing measures in many states, arguably prolonging the pandemic and its economic fallout for months (Chuck, 2020). Despite this, the federal government failed to provide adequate relief in its first COVID-related aid package or swiftly pass a second stimulus bill once that aid quickly ran dry (Enda et al., 2020; Zurcher, 2020). Meanwhile, the citizenry was made to contend firsthand with the devastation of the pandemic, with US deaths from it topping 100,000 and total infections surpassing 1.7 million by the end of May 2020 ("Coronavirus disease," 2020). These policy failures showed not only the American government's inability to decisively fight public health hazards and their consequences, but also its seeming unwillingness to do so.

The severe economic fallout from COVID-related private sector restrictions also exposed the fragility and unreliability of America's financial system. The stay-at-home orders issued in March and April 2020 drastically diminished economic activity, forcing businesses in the travel, food service, retail, and hospitality sectors to cease operations and instate hiring freezes and layoffs, which soon spread to other sectors as general economic activity stalled nationwide (Martin et al., 2020). As a result, a staggering 14 million Americans became unemployed between February and May 2020, signaling the unprecedented magnitude of this crisis (Kochhar, 2020).

And without question, these issues were incredibly personally pervasive. Stringent public health measures had profound effects on Americans' social patterns, severely limiting most people's mobility and opportunities for interpersonal activities and thus forcing them to spend much more time indoors. For one, the virus led to a doubling of the percentage of Americans working from home between mid-March and early April, cutting down on commutes and making many more workers dependent on the internet for communication (Kochhar, 2020). And given widespread shutdowns of businesses in the recreational sector and governmental encouragement to avoid social situations, Americans were largely left homebound even outside of work ("Social Distancing," 2020). At the same time, high unemployment and an abysmal labor force participation rate—a signal of the difficulty of finding work in such terrible market conditions—left many struggling Americans without any true escape from their plight (Kochhar, 2020).

But even if COVID provided more favorable opportunities for insurgent action, it was still necessary for Americans to collectively process the social problems highlighted by COVID, recognize the dynamic opportunities inherent therein, and interpret them such that they came to see public demonstrations as a necessary next step for addressing them. Having so much more time, so much less to do with it, and a stronger need to stay informed on the rapidly changing crisis, many turned to media consumption, with newspaper readership and social media usage soaring in the spring of 2020 (Koeze & Popper, 2020; Feuls et al., 2014). These changes in Americans' media consumption habits naturally predict an increased aggregate awareness of and engagement with political issues, in turn making political participation more likely (Hayes & Lawless, 2015). Likewise, Burden and Wichowsky (2014) show that economic hardship encourages—rather than hinders—political participation as discontent with one's economic circumstances drives them to push for political change. COVID's social effects were practically inescapable for most Americans— they were made to live every day with the effects of the pandemic on their work patterns, social interactions, consumption habits, and health, motivating a greater belief in the need for major change. Indeed, McAdam (1982) asserts that for changing opportunity structures to facilitate group action, actors must “experience shifting political conditions on a day-to-day basis as a set of ‘meaningful events’ communicating much about their prospects for successful collective action” (p. 48). And assuming that the public ramifications of COVID were being extensively covered in the news and on social media, it is very likely that an increasingly tuned-in public would have become considerably more aware of these issues, priming them for absorption into a social movement seeking to address them. One can easily connect the increased salience associated with the COVID pandemic to McAdam's concept of cognitive liberation, as greater media consumption and a heightened awareness of COVID-related social issues would naturally make the populace more receptive to any social movement organization's contextual framing of these problems, improving mobilizing structures and thus fostering greater organizational strength for that group. It should thus be expected that the hardships brought about by COVID stimulated general political interest and involvement, granting social movement organizations like BLM more mobilizing resources to call upon.

As such, per PPT, the populace would have gained a far greater interest in protest action heading into the summer of 2020. As I have covered, Americans came to see firsthand how their government's failure to mitigate the effects of COVID jeopardized their livelihoods, easily increasing the perceived benefits of demonstrating for change. The most basic tenets of American democracy showed themselves to be unreliable, with Congress failing to amply protect Americans from the fallout of the virus, states and the federal government fighting amongst themselves instead of launching a swift and coordinated response, and 2020 primary elections proving disastrous, likely encouraging many to perceive the need to turn to nontraditional forms of political activity (Wines, 2020). Americans had no reason to expect salvation in existing mechanisms; even amid these unprecedented challenges, no comprehensive solutions arose from the government. This institutional breakdown would naturally make the state more vulnerable to public unrest and increase opportunities for demonstrations. McAdam (1982) writes that “[g]eneralized political instability,” like that which occurred under COVID, “destroys any semblance of a political status quo, thus encouraging collective action” by presenting the population with a clear opportunity to effectively rally for change (p. 42). Having been made to face such incredible challenges, the populace saw its bargaining power vis-à-vis the government

increase, attaining greater leverage to call for reform. This was further compounded by the collective nature of the pandemic fallout; regardless of any disagreement over how the government should have addressed the virus, it was clear that its response failed all Americans, creating near-universal discontent that could—and soon would—be channeled through any unifying frame. With the public primed for insurgent action, all it would take was for a movement—especially one with an even more pronounced interest in the problems caused by COVID—to step up and rally the public.

The Disproportionate Racial Effects of COVID-19

As COVID swept across the US, it became increasingly clear that it was disproportionately affecting the Black community, exacerbating and laying bare longstanding systematic issues. As Gould and Wilson (2020) describe, Black populations face far worse socioeconomic conditions, deepening the effects of the pandemic and its related lockdown policies on their livelihoods. For example, racial minorities are greatly overrepresented in the frontline industries that continued regular operations during the early months of COVID, increasing their exposure to the virus. Black Americans also overwhelmingly experience many preexisting health conditions—like asthma, diabetes, and hypertension—that compound their vulnerability to COVID and are still much less likely to be insured than white workers, complicating their ability to get treatment. Furthermore, Black workers faced far greater unemployment rates when the pandemic arrived but typically have less in savings and income to rely upon in times of economic hardship like this. Black households are also more likely to be headed by single parents, forcing many to choose between childcare and employment, and these households are much less likely to have a computer or reliable internet access, impeding education, the consumption of important COVID-related information, and communication about employment and relief opportunities. With so many systematic disadvantages against them, Black Americans faced disproportionate COVID deaths and felt its broader impact even more strongly than the general population (“Racial Data,” 2020).

COVID also stoked more severe racial tensions across the US. For instance, mandatory mask usage demonstrably contributed to greater racial profiling by law enforcement (Christiani et al., 2020). Tensions with police also extended to the enforcement of COVID-related social distancing orders, with Black Americans facing far higher arrests while majority-white lockdown protesters flagrantly and often uninterruptedly rallied against these same provisions (Kaplan & Hardy, 2020). Moreover, the early days of the pandemic saw many viral killings of Black Americans, including Ahmaud Aubery, who was killed on February 23rd while jogging in a Georgia neighborhood, and Breonna Taylor, who was shot by police officers while sleeping in her Louisville home on March 13th (Bynum & Balsamo, 2020; Opper et al., 2020). Information surrounding the two killings was widely circulated in the following weeks, making these issues highly salient in the early months of 2020 and bringing BLM and its ideals back to the fore.

Under PPT, it is clear how these issues could motivate collective action. Using Tilly’s framework, Black Americans naturally saw their interest in protesting increase, as remaining under the established order had proven to be incredibly dangerous. And as the pandemic raged on, the perceived urgency of addressing these issues likely further promoted cognitive liberation, especially as organizations invested in the prosperity of the Black population (like BLM) sought

to convey the immediacy of these COVID-related threats. Black citizens were made to face even harsher conditions in all avenues of life during the pandemic, and without a reliable government response, anti-racist organizations would—and did, as I will soon cover—naturally promote insurgency. The pandemic demonstrated just how ill-equipped the United States is to support its disadvantaged populations, driving greater interest in systemic change among aggrieved peoples and those sympathetic to their plight. And though not all Americans experienced the same difficulties that Black citizens faced or felt them with the same intensity, the institutional roots of these issues were all recognizably the same; the Black experience during COVID-19 was just a far more pronounced and easily identifiable aspect of the nation's suffering, allowing public grievances to be channeled through social justice advocacy. Perhaps more than ever, Americans could draw a clear line between institutional practices and immense suffering among the population, leaving the door open for a movement seeking to right these wrongs.

Evolving Opportunities and the Role of Black Lives Matter

Influence and Development of Black Lives Matter

While it is clear how Black Americans—in response to their disproportionate suffering during COVID—would rally around a popular national group that advocates on their behalf like BLM, it is also necessary to demonstrate how the general public's dissatisfaction with the status quo led to such a remarkable widening of BLM's demographic base. As an amalgamated network of local advocacy groups with no central authority and an intersectional focus, BLM made this incredibly easy for potential insurgents, seizing on the conditions created by COVID to provide the citizenry with an outlet for its discontent.

In its fight for systemic remedies to institutional racism, BLM has operated less as a formal political body than as a decentralized ideological movement. It came to fruition in 2013 following the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Black teenager Trayvon Martin, which sparked widespread use of the hashtag #blacklivesmatter across many social media platforms (Day, 2015). The slogan became a central rallying cry for subsequent protests against unjust killings of Black Americans as highly autonomous chapters sprouted up across the United States, organizing around the protection and empowerment of Black communities (Day, 2015).

Though the movement has its unofficial nuclei in the Black Lives Matter Global Network (or BLMGN, which helps develop local BLM chapters) and the Movement for Black Lives (or M4BL, which acts as a representative coalition of all groups that organize for the ideals of BLM), both serve more as coordinators than hierarchical oversight bodies (Barrón-López, 2020). For instance, so long as they share the movement's general desire to rally against police brutality and other systemic threats to Black Americans' livelihoods, groups under BLMGN “are given a great deal of autonomy and freedom to define their priorities, their campaigns, and even their membership,” with no strict leadership structure to constrain them (Ransby 2018, p. 98). This openness has allowed BLM to embrace intersectional advocacy as well, incorporating economic reforms, gender identity recognition, transgender rights, and sexual violence prevention into its work while still retaining its focus on police brutality, widening its reach and cementing its

centrality in the broader progressive movement (Ransby 2018). Accordingly, BLM's collection of formal and informal organizations is primarily built around independent local networks, none of which are completely bounded in their political aims or organizing tactics but which still coalesce around a baseline shared interest in progressive racial policy reform.

Thanks to BLM's reticulate composition, it can maintain a national presence while continuing to focus on local efforts, which keeps organizational leaders close to rank-and-file membership and ensures that group activities have immediate relevance to organizers and their communities (Mannarini & Fedi, 2011). By preventing members from losing any sense of personal obligation to the movement, the benefits of participation and costs of departure are both amplified. This localization also increases the cost of repression by making it difficult for oppositional actors to disrupt organizational activities; without a singular group or communication platform to direct repression toward, any attempts to quell the movement's activities are unlikely to do much more than impede one small organizational subunit, whose members can then fall back upon BLM's strong national network to coordinate future activity (Gerlach, 1999). Thus, even without a powerful central body to manage the movement's actions, BLM has been able to establish itself as a key player in national politics.

In fact, BLM has circumvented the massive resource expenditure and coordination costs required to run stratified organizations by relying on social media for communication, tapping into a uniquely democratic and accessible mobilizing structure. First of all, this enables it to swiftly and effectively frame the responses surrounding instances of police brutality, allowing its affiliate organizations to almost instantaneously pioneer dialogue around these issues, take charge in organizing demonstrations, plan nationwide events, and discuss tactical concerns in real time. BLM utilizes these platforms to loop in outsiders as well; #blacklivesmatter has become a staple of the public reaction to unjust police killings, acting as a viral signal that quickly alerts social media users to these events and allows them to engage with others immediately, thereby helping BLM to activate the populace without having to expend many resources. Unbounded by geography or communication costs, social media naturally gives BLM access to millions of potential supporters and grants these potential supporters unfettered access to the movement as well. When engaging with the movement is as simple as gathering information from social media sites, the cost of membership is infinitesimal, giving BLM remarkable indigenous organizational strength. And with social media as their entry point, these users also have greater narrative agency in their interactions with the movement, which creates a sense of purpose and shared identity and raises their commitment to it (Mannarini & Fedi, 2011). This uniquely flexible mobilizing structure lets participants easily reach their informal communication networks to promote the diffusion of information about the movement and opportunities for participation to a wider audience, raising BLM's presence in the public consciousness and accelerating its expansion without cost (McAdam, 1982). Such personalized engagement enables BLM to quickly mobilize sympathizers by instantly giving them something to rally around when viral incidents arise. Thus, even as activities remain grounded with local groups, the movement has been able to diffuse and scale tremendously.

COVID and George Floyd as Protest Triggers

This flexibility and high accessibility laid the perfect groundwork for even more pronounced expansion in 2020, when COVID brought about a monumental shift in social dynamics. Where more traditionally structured organizations may have been impeded by the pandemic's disruption of normal social activity, BLM had developed a digital infrastructure, loose organizational framework, and ideological foundation optimally suited to collectivize the pent-up frustrations stemming from COVID. The virus laid bare the country's systemic weaknesses and made those issues inescapable for the populace, stimulating nearly universal discontent with the status quo, and the interconnected nature of the issues facing the country made interest in securing any sort of institutional reform tremendous. And with the disproportionate plight of Black Americans so indicative of COVID's multifaceted devastation, BLM was able to capitalize on Americans' anxieties through its social media savvy and message of intersectional institutional change. Indeed, BLM-affiliated organizations worked to explicitly frame the broader challenges of COVID within the context of their movement, releasing policy plans that made the racial effects of the pandemic more salient among existing and potential members in hopes of priming their audiences for collective action ("COVID," 2020).

BLM found its first major opportunity for COVID-era expansion in the rise of mutual aid networks, several of which sprouted up across the country to provide necessary services to vulnerable communities in the early weeks of the pandemic (Domínguez et al., 2020). These organizations, by providing essential help to underserved communities, closely mirrored the work that many local BLM affiliates had been doing for years, and BLM's networking groups accordingly directed their energies toward serving as an online focal point for mutual aid coordination, widening the movement's reach and establishing it as a central provider of community relief (*Mutual Aid*, 2020). This created what Meyer and Whittier (1994) term social movement spillover, whereby movements and networks with some ideological crossovers combine their resources; by publicizing and coordinating these independent networks' efforts, BLM was actively looping others into its central mission of supporting underprivileged communities. Considering the intrinsic ideological and programmatic crossover between these networks and BLM-affiliated groups, many mutual aid volunteers surely picked up on its highly emphasized framing of the pandemic as an impetus for protest action, especially having already bypassed the government to take the welfare of suffering Americans into their own hands.

All the while, racial tensions were continuing to bubble. As Americans were coming to grapple with the government's failure to contain COVID, the aforementioned killings of Ahmaud Aubrey and Breonna Taylor served as prevalent reminders of the Black community's disproportionate suffering under the status quo, keeping the contentious relationship between the government and the Black community fresh in the public consciousness in the early weeks of the pandemic. Then came the news—and the gruesome videos—of the killing of George Floyd. The incident garnered global attention almost immediately, with race- and BLM-related videos, including the recordings of the killing, being viewed over 1.4 billion times between May 25th and June 5th (Blake, 2020). Over this same period, protests swept across the country, dwarfing past movements in size, scope, and longevity (Buchanan et al., 2020). In addition to reaching corners of the US previously untouched by BLM, these demonstrations were far more diverse than the BLM protests of the past; many protests were actually majority white, indicating a more

widespread acknowledgment of the legitimacy of BLM's concerns and opportunities for intersectional antiestablishment action (Fisher, 2020).

With BLM at the helm, the rallying cry made in the aftermath of George Floyd's death gave advocates and interested actors with any inclination for progressive reform the impetus to collectively organize for profound societal change. By this point, some states had also begun to lift COVID restrictions, signaling to the public that leaving one's home was finally permissible, and many people were likely itching to expend pent-up social energy from over two months of self-quarantine, decreasing the perceived costs of protesting (Chuck, 2020). The decision to participate in the George Floyd protests was not seen as a trade-off between public safety and social justice attainment, but rather a chance to achieve both, justifying such a remarkable outpouring of support. In BLM, Americans thus found an exemplarily accessible organizational and ideological rallying point to consolidate their energy.

Protest Responses and Proliferation

Unsurprisingly, BLM's antiestablishment demonstrations did not go unchallenged by law enforcement. Despite being mostly peaceful, the media and the federal government characterized many protests as riotous, leading to the deployment of federal agents to crack down on demonstrators at far greater rates and with far greater use of force than in years past (Kishi & Jones, 2020). These violent public responses escalated through the summer, coinciding with riotous behavior in closely watched sites like Portland, Oregon (Kishi & Jones, 2020). Many marches were also met with counterdemonstrators seeking to intimidate protesters and encourage police crackdowns by provoking violence (Kishi & Jones, 2020). Under PPT, we would typically expect such forceful displays outside repression to quell protests by raising the cost of action for participants—who now had to fear being assaulted or arrested—and undermining the movement's willingness to deploy its resources in such an unfriendly environment (Tilly, 1978). But BLM had no issue maintaining its leverage in the face of these challenges; as a non-hierarchical organization, BLM has no one central person or body to be targeted. Instead, the movement localized its resistance, undermining repressors by using its digital presence to hold law enforcement accountable, quickly escalate protests when respondents stepped over the line, and expose counter-protesters infiltrating the movement, making retaliatory action more difficult (Christensen & Garfias, 2018; Kim, 2020). Furthermore, it is well documented that Black protesters are more likely to be targeted than whites, so with its newly majority-white organizing corps, BLM could physically shield its most vulnerable organizers from targeted violence and decrease the relative burden of repression (Davenport et al., 2011; Eadens, 2020). At the same time, BLM's heightened mainstream support in the wake of the George Floyd killing also raised the likelihood of outside backlash to repressive efforts (Parker et al., 2020). These impediments limited the range of acceptable repressive tactics that both the police and outside insurgents could employ, making for a response that—while undeniably violent—was not able to impede BLM or turn away most of its organizers. Instead, following Gerlach and Hine's (1970) conjecture, relatively weak repressive efforts emboldened the movement by collectivizing the experience thereof among organizers—a phenomenon only intensified by social media—thereby increasing their commitment to collective action. After all, BLM frames protest activity around police reform, so repressive actions by law enforcement would naturally raise protest interest by

conveying the urgency of resistance to government efforts, compounding upon months of COVID-induced disillusionment with the status quo.

Furthermore, despite the movement's increasingly explicit calls to upend the present state of affairs, elites generally expressed more favorable attitudes toward BLM and its sentiments, as indicated by a number of policy changes and proposals early in the protest surge ("The Time Has Come," 2020). These changes—including the updating of Derek Chauvin's third-degree murder charge to second-degree murder, the planned disbanding of the Minneapolis Police Department, the banning of chokeholds in many states, and a widespread racial reckoning in the private sector—signaled to BLM protesters that their ideas had gained mainstream appeal, encouraging them to continue to leverage their stronger bargaining position and giving them even more protection against repressors (Ankel, 2020). These policies were not so substantive as to warrant an end to the movement, but they still signaled a tenable potential for progress. For example, the swift passage of the Justice in Policing Act—a comprehensive center-left police reform bill—in the House of Representatives was monumental, but the bill's subsequent stagnation and its incongruity with BLM leaders' goal of defunding the police gave participants reason to continue to push the government, which had already afforded them unprecedented leeway ("US House," 2020). Such favorable changes indicated BLM's growing power and a sudden (if incomplete) shift in elite views toward the movement, and this positive environmental change greatly increased the possible benefits of (and motivations for) protesting.

BLM's improved opportunity structure came not only from this more generalized elite support but also from the sharp cleavage in elite opinion that naturally accompanied it. As McAdam (1982) writes, "reform movements are aided... by their ability to exploit existing divisions among the elite," as doing so places the movement's signature issues at the center of political discourse and thus forces elite groups to confront said issues directly and immediately, which is just what happened in the summer of 2020 (p. 58). Since it is so bent on drastic reform, BLM is unlikely to ever attain unanimous elite support for its goals, but by projecting its issues on the national political stage and having those goals tied more closely to one major political party's platform, it was able to intensify debate and facilitate change. Between America's two primary parties, BLM's progressive ideology aligns more closely with that of the left-leaning Democrats, who—whether as an attempt to curry favor with black or progressive voters ahead of the 2020 elections, respond to direct pressure from BLM, deliver significant policy accomplishments after months of inadequate pandemic relief, or something else entirely—quite explicitly aligned themselves with BLM by directly declaring as much and taking the lead on many police reform policies (Ankel, 2020; Linskey, 2020; Parker et al., 2020). Meanwhile, elected Republicans overwhelmingly decried BLM, labeling the movement and its policy goals as destructive and extremist (Barrón-López & Thompson, 2020; "US House," 2020). This fundamental division amplified and accelerated the deliberation of racial justice in the political arena, and with voter engagement likely at the front of many Democratic organizers' minds in the leadup to the 2020 elections, the party found a perfect opening to entice an energized populace and distinguish itself from the Republicans by spearheading BLM-related legislation, putting resources and action behind the policies outlined above ("US House," 2020).

And even as these policies were being battled out, a string of other high-profile events encouraged continued protests through the fall of 2020. While protests did generally dwindle in

the weeks and months after George Floyd's death, this continually favorable protest environment allowed BLM to maintain its local and national relevance (Kishi & Jones, 2020). First and foremost, the pandemic—judging by infections and death counts—worsened as the summer wore on, keeping the government's failure to protect its citizens and the perceived urgency of delivering progress for endangered communities salient (Sanchez, 2020). Additionally, many subsequent instances of police brutality, including the August shooting of Jacob Blake and the October killings of Jonathan Price and Marcellis Stinnette, prompted a continued national cognizance of the unresolved nature of the issue and spurred local protest resurgences in many US cities (Ailworth et al., 2020; Karma, 2020; McCullough, 2020). Developments in past high-profile cases also inflamed activists, most notably with the lack of charges in the killing of Breonna Taylor, by signaling ongoing institutional failure (Oppel et al., 2020). The sense of efficacy and importance that accompanied its summer protests and ensuing policy wins kept BLM's mobilizing potential high through 2020, especially as successive tragedies reminded activists of the need to continue demonstrating and the achievable political benefits of doing so. Even without the same level of public attention that George Floyd's death provided, BLM had made it clear that its organizing potential had not been lost, helping it maintain a primary place in the political discourse through the rest of the year.

The Future of Black Lives Matter

Going forward, BLM will surely face immense challenges as it tries to retain its larger coalition and secure major policy victories under unpredictable opportunity structures. It took a global pandemic and a series of horrific police killings just for the movement to secure a handful of mostly local political victories, so it cannot expect to achieve full Black liberation without even greater organizational strength and indigenous support. After all, despite their considerable longevity, BLM-related protests very quickly became smaller and less frequent after their June spike, and support for the movement among white Americans concurrently dropped (Kishi & Jones, 2020; Tesler, 2020). Even as the pandemic and killings of Black Americans persisted, non-core protesters evidently lost some interest in collective action, threatening to break up the coalition that had allowed such massive protests. So, anticipating future environmental changes, what can BLM do to secure its primacy in American politics? Luckily, PPT can shed light on BLM's future developmental options and the ramifications thereof.

Tarrow (2011), in describing the cycle of protests that accompanies opportunity expansion, writes that periods of heightened contention, such as that which BLM saw in 2020, eventually lead to participant exhaustion, especially among those on the periphery of the movement whose commitment to or sense of identity within it is weaker. The drop in white support for BLM and lower protest turnout indicates that this process has already begun. From there, a movement has two main options to secure its relevance and revitalize its supporters; it can either seek to reenergize its base (and distance itself from mainstream supporters) through radicalization or embed itself into conventional politics (likely at the expense of its ideological sanctity) through institutionalization. In the past, BLM certainly leaned further into the radical side, maintaining considerable distance from traditional political advocacy through its localized structure and leftist views, but its newfound mainstream appeal—and the impending contraction thereof—necessitate recalculations. As BLM seeks to minimize its losses and forge a new way forward, it must consider this tradeoff between broader appeal and ardent antiestablishmentarianism, putting

into question its progressive ideals and decentralized structure through careful institutionalization.

To say nothing of BLM's ideological considerations, it seems greater internal cohesion will be necessary for optimal resource mobilization. According to McAdam (1982), after a protest swell, "insurgents must be able to create a more enduring organizational structure to sustain insurgency... [and] assume the centralized direction of the movement," as existing organizations are incapable of maintaining such a burgeoning wealth of supporters and resources (p. 54). The low barriers to entry and highly localized structure that characterize BLM made it easy for new participants to join, but it has also made lasting commitment difficult; without a more rigid or integrated organizational set-up, members can float in and out freely, and leaders have no way to definitively coordinate policy efforts. Thus, BLM must preserve its ease of entry while also establishing incentives to keep members active through structural formalization (Staggenborg, 1999). In the past, BLM has expressed hesitance to professionalize, as doing so could strip local groups of their autonomy and leave the movement at the whims of power-hungry leaders (Barrón-López, 2020). However, carefully implemented formalization could make the movement more politically efficacious without sacrificing reticulation. Firstly, it would allow BLM to designate official liaisons to bargain with policy leaders, consequently homogenizing communications and establishing recognizable central leadership to improve organizational strength. This also may give the movement a singular depository for funds, which could help BLM to more strategically disburse resources to chapters in need and bring on more staff to assist with coordination and the countering of repressors. Additionally, centralization would make BLM's leadership more internally and externally recognizable, encouraging continued local activity and homogenized public relations. With a formal structure in place, the movement can continue to operate even when collective action stagnates and more effectively resuscitate organizational activity instead of relying on popular energy alone. In this scenario, movement professionals would be focused on organizational maintenance and growth, propping up local chapters to make sure they can sustain intimate connections with target audiences and focus on long-term engagement rather than resource collection.

Just as importantly, this could enable BLM to supplement its protest efforts by drawing the movement further into institutional spheres through electoral lobbying and campaigning. This would make its success less reliant on environmental dynamics and stabilize public relations by giving the movement stricter control over direct action tactics. For instance, central movement authorities could more decisively condemn any purportedly riotous protest behavior or fringe groups they deem unrepresentative of the movement, undermining repressors. Additionally, institutional political activity, especially with more coordinated efforts to back it up, should be more effective on legislators, and its greater success could further motivate potential actors by framing participation as worthwhile, thus compounding BLM's bargaining power. This heightened mainstream support, in combination with efforts to ensure the preservation of local autonomy, would ideally minimize the danger of repression that follows centralization (Gerlach, 1999).

Moreover, BLM must be careful not to lose the support of newer allies or alienate its core members as it navigates opportunity changes. If it neglects the expanded role of its new supporters, it could engender factionalism and severely restrict its future organizational

wherewithal. This could lead to what Miller (1999) calls encapsulation, by which a movement's leadership becomes so internally cohesive that its ideals are completely unintelligible to outsiders. Moving away from members' ideological center, which certainly became less extreme with the entrance of so many new supporters in 2020, would then reverse the coalition-building BLM has achieved. On the other hand, BLM could also embed itself too deeply within the mainstream, which could lead to its co-optation by establishment allies (McAdam, 1999). Such a problem could arise if BLM becomes overly dependent on outside resources or bows to a perceived threat of encapsulation among 2020 entrants, who may then seek to leverage their sheer dominance in number to call for changes to BLM's goals and structure. Co-optation would lead BLM to neglect the whims of longstanding local groups and members, lowering incentives for participation among core organizers and severely weakening the movement's organizational capacity. Despite the influx of outside support, BLM's capabilities still rest upon its connection to core local organizations, so even as its leaders take the necessary steps toward consolidation, they must continue to prioritize these chapters and maintain a comfortable distance from the institutional allies—like the Democrats—that boosted the movement in 2020, to which they risk losing control over messaging and policy aims.

So far, BLM seems to have already taken many of these ideas into consideration, partly overcoming its reluctance to institutionalize in a way that is helping it to avoid co-optation. For one, many BLM affiliates have amassed millions of dollars in financial contributions, which the movement has used primarily to build its organizational strength, expand community engagement efforts, and support electoral candidates sympathetic to its cause ("Black Lives Matter network," 2020). King (2020), writing on BLM's election-related activities, corroborates this, reporting that BLM even began actively soliciting funds, launching its own political action committee in October 2020 to build a more formal infrastructure for lobbying and on-the-ground action. And despite the longstanding tension between the two groups, BLM leaders spent much of the latter part of 2020 funneling their legislative efforts through the Democratic Party, pressuring Democratic officials to follow through on their professed support for the movement by demonstrating BLM's perceived integrality to their 2020 electoral successes, as the movement registered around 2 million new Democratic voters. BLM even saw one of its leading activists, Cori Bush, be elected to Congress, giving it far greater institutional access. Similarly, other BLM leaders began directly exerting pressure on the Biden team upon his presidential victory, indicating a deliberate shift toward more formal tactics.

And yet, the movement seems to be doing so without significantly tempering its goals, instead working to push agreeable elites to adopt them. This path forward seems highly promising, as it allows BLM to develop its institutional infrastructure without overly consolidating power and still enables it to curry favor with elite partners in a way that should satisfy both newer moderates and more radical core members. BLM's dramatic expansion in 2020 undoubtedly provided it with greater leverage, resources, and popular support, and now the challenge is for BLM's leaders to find success in this expanded coalition without compromising its goals, stability, or closeness to its base along the way. By continuing to selectively grow its internal capacity and work tangentially to—but not entirely within—the political system, the movement should be able to do just that.

Conclusion

When interpreted through PPT, the explanations for such unprecedented public demonstrations following the killing of George Floyd are readily apparent. COVID's devastating effects increased public interest in insurgency by unavoidably impacting Americans' everyday lives and awakening them to how the root causes of those issues overlap with wider systematic inadequacies, cognitively priming a much wider swath of the population for collective action. BLM helped to channel this mobilizing potential through its strong social media presence, where it framed the pandemic as an opportunity for action to an increasingly digitally engaged public by explicitly drawing the connections between institutional racism and COVID-related systematic failures. The movement also smartly utilized its reticulated network of independent organizations to maintain and strengthen ties with communities, tapping into Americans' increased awareness of intersectional institutional issues and interest in addressing them by connecting them—or allowing them to connect themselves—with opportunities for engagement. And after George Floyd's death brought the movement back to the fore, BLM continually leveraged favorable changes in the political landscape to increase the cost of external repression and maintain commitment among its organizing corps, ensuring that its opportunities for growth in these unique circumstances were not wasted. Now, as the movement looks to achieve even larger policy victories, it must embrace its potential as a mainstream political force and develop a sturdier infrastructure without losing sight of its original aims or localized focus.

Future research should aim to establish causality with the trends described in the early sections of this paper and address any misapplications or shortcomings of the PPT model within this study. Additionally, BLM's unique organizational structure certainly complicates any attempts to study it through conventional frames, so more nuanced or focused approaches are necessary. Finally, as this paper is being written in the midst of the movement which it describes, it will certainly require updates that reflect subsequent dynamics in BLM's activity and changes in the political environment after November 3rd, 2020.

References

- Ailworth, E., Wernau, J., & Otani, A. (2020, August 27). Wisconsin Identifies Officer Who Shot Jacob Blake. *The Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/two-dead-in-kenosha-shooting-police-say-11598436656>.
- Ankel, S. (2020, June 24). 30 days that shook America: Since the death of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter movement has already changed the country. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/13-concrete-changes-sparked-by-george-floyd-protests-so-far-2020-6>.
- Barrón-López, L. (2020, July 22). Why the Black Lives Matter movement doesn't want a singular leader. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/22/black-lives-matter-movement-leader-377369>.
- Barrón-López, L., & Thompson, A. (2020, August 10). Facing bleak November, Republicans look to stoke BLM backlash. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/08/10/elections-republicans-black-lives-matterbacklash-389906>.
- Black Lives Matter network to spend \$12M US to fight institutionalized racism. CBCNews. (2020, June 17). <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/black-lives-matter-network-grant-fund-1.5616065>.
- Blake, S. (2020, June 15). Why The George Floyd Protests Feel Different - Lots and Lots of Mobile Video. *dot.LA*. <https://dot.la/george-floyd-video-2646171522.html>
- Buchanan, L., Bui, Q., & Patel, J. K. (2020, July 3). Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>.
- Burden, B. C., & Wichowsky, A. (2014). Economic Discontent as a Mobilizer: Unemployment and Voter Turnout. *The Journal of Politics*, 76(4), 887–898.
- Bynum, R., & Balsamo, M. (2020, May 7). Georgia family demands arrests 2 months after son shot dead. *AP News*. <https://apnews.com/article/994021a3502194b552385d925207eae9>.
- Christensen, D., & Garfias, F. (2018). Can You Hear Me Now? How Communication Technology Affects Protest and Repression. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 13(1), 89–117.
- Christiani, L., Clark, C. J., Greene, S., Hetherington, M. J., & Wager, E. (2020, June 29). Masks and Racial Stereotypes in a Pandemic: The Case for Surgical Masks. Available at SSRN. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3636540.

- Chuck, E. (2020, May 22). CDC quietly releases detailed plan for reopening America. *NBCNews.com*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/cdc-quietly-releases-detailed-plan-reopening-america-n1211316>.
- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Situation Report – 132. *World Health Organization*. (2020, May 31). https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200531-covid-19-sitrep-132.pdf?sfvrsn=d9c2eaef_2.
- COVID 19 – Policy Platform. *M4BL*. (2020). https://m4bl.org/covid-19-platform/?fbclid=IwAR3EhgXUkl9BnuavR_W35e2qy0O31NvmVPwcCivg1XjHG5UzlylZ67jRfvM.
- Davenport, C., Soule, S. A., & Armstrong, D. A. (2011). Protesting While Black? *American Sociological Review*, 76(1), 152–178.
- Day, E. (2015, July 19). #BlackLivesMatter: the birth of a new civil rights movement. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/19/blacklivesmatter-birth-civil-rights-movement>.
- Domínguez, D. G., García, D., Martínez, D. A., & Hernandez-Arriaga, B. (2020). Leveraging the Power of Mutual Aid, Coalitions, Leadership, and Advocacy During COVID-19. *American Psychological Association*. <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2020-45461-001.html>.
- Eadens, S. (2020, May 29). Viral photo shows line of white people between police, black protesters at Thursday rally. *Louisville Courier Journal*. <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2020/05/29/breonna-taylor-photo-white-women-between-police-black-protesters/5286416002/>.
- Enda, G., Gale, W. G., & Haldeman, C. (2020, March 27). Careful or careless? Perspectives on the CARES Act. *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/03/27/careful-or-careless-perspectives-on-the-cares-act/>.
- Feuls, M., Fieseler, C., Meckel, M., & Suphan, A. (2014). Being unemployed in the age of social media. *New Media & Society*, 18(6), 944–965.
- Fisher, D. R. (2020, July 8). The diversity of the recent Black Lives Matter protests is a good sign for racial equity. *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/07/08/the-diversity-of-the-recent-black-lives-matter-protests-is-a-good-sign-for-racial-equity/>.
- Gerlach, L. P. (1999). Environmental Activism and Opponents. In J. Freeman & V. Johnson (Eds.), *Waves of protest: social movements since the sixties* (pp. 85–97). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gerlach, L. P., & Hine, V. H. (1970). *People, power, change: movements of social transformation*. Bobbs-Merrill.

- Gould, E., & Wilson, V. (2020, June 1). Black workers face two of the most lethal preexisting conditions for coronavirus-racism and economic inequality. *Economic Policy Institute*. <https://www.epi.org/publication/black-workers-covid/>.
- Hayes, D., & Lawless, J. L. (2015, April 1). As Local News Goes, So Goes Citizen Engagement: Media, Knowledge, and Participation in US House Elections. *The Journal of Politics*, 77(2), 447-462.
- Kaplan, J., & Hardy, B. (2020, May 8). Early Data Shows Black People Are Being Disproportionally Arrested for Social Distancing Violations. *ProPublica*. <https://www.propublica.org/article/in-some-of-ohios-most-populous-areas-black-people-were-at-least-4-times-as-likely-to-be-charged-with-stay-at-home-violations-as-whites>.
- Karma, R. (2020, October 24). The police shooting of Marcellis Stinnette and Tafara Williams, an unarmed Black couple, explained. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2020/10/24/21531740/fbi-doj-investigation-waukegan-illinois-chicago-police-killing-jacob-blake>.
- Kim, C. (2020, June 6). Viral videos of police violence are leading to disciplinary action. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/6/21282412/protests-viral-videos-police-violence-disciplinary-action-suspension-firing>.
- King, M. (2020, November 19). Inside Black Lives Matter's push for power. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/11/17/black-lives-matters-push-power-436916>.
- Kishi, R., & Jones, S. (2020, October 19). Demonstrations & Political Violence in America: New Data for Summer 2020. *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project*. <https://acleddata.com/2020/09/03/demonstrations-political-violence-in-america-new-data-for-summer-2020/>.
- Kochhar, R. (2020, August 26). Unemployment rose higher in three months of COVID-19 than it did in two years of the Great Recession. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/11/unemployment-rose-higher-in-three-months-of-covid-19-than-it-did-in-two-years-of-the-great-recession/>.
- Koeze, E., & Popper, N. (2020, April 7). The Virus Changed the Way We Internet. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/07/technology/coronavirus-internet-use.html>.
- Leonhardt, D., & Leatherby, L. (2020, August 6). The Unique U.S. Failure to Control the Virus. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/us/coronavirus-us.html>.
- Linskey, A. (2020, August 18). Democratic convention embraces Black Lives Matter. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/democratic-convention-embraces-black-lives-matter/2020/08/18/f1de2ce8-e0f7-11ea-b69b-64f7b0477ed4_story.html.

- Mannarini, T., & Fedi, A. (2011). Persisting or Withdrawing? An Insight into the Psychosocial Processes Underlying Sustained Engagement. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 22(4), 300–315.
- Martin, A., Markhvida, M., Hallegatte, S., & Walsh, B. (2020). Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 on Household Consumption and Poverty. *Economics of Disasters and Climate Change*. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41885-020-00070-3>.
- McAdam, D. (1982). *Political process and the development of black insurgency: 1930-1970*. University of Chicago Press.
- McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1996). *Comparative perspectives on social movements: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*. Cambridge University Press.
- McCullough, J. (2020, October 6). Texas police officer arrested on suspicion of murder in fatal shooting of Jonathan Price. The Texas Tribune. <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/10/06/jonathan-price-texas-police-killing/>.
- Meyer, D. S., & Whittier, N. (1994). Social Movement Spillover. *Social Problems*, 41(2), 277–298.
- Miller, F. D. (1999). The End of SDS and the Emergence of the Weatherman: Demise through Success. In J. Freeman & V. Johnson (Eds.), *Waves of protest: social movements since the sixties* (pp. 303–324). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Miroff, N. (2020, April 2). Protective gear in national stockpile is nearly depleted, DHS officials say. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-protective-gear-stockpile-depleted/2020/04/01/44d6592a-741f-11ea-ae50-7148009252e3_story.html.
- Mutual Aid Resources. *M4BL*. (2020). <https://m4bl.org/mutual-aid/>.
- Norwood, C. (2020, April 3). Most states have issued stay-at-home orders, but enforcement varies widely. *PBS*. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/most-states-have-issued-stay-at-home-orders-but-enforcement-varies-widely>.
- Oppel, R. A., Taylor, D. B., & Bogel-Burroughs, N. (2020, May 30). What to Know About Breonna Taylor's Death. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/breonna-taylor-police.html>.
- Parker, K., Horowitz, J. M., & Anderson, M. (2020, August 20). *Majorities Across Racial, Ethnic Groups Express Support for the Black Lives Matter Movement*. Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/06/12/amid-protests-majorities-across-racial-and-ethnic-groups-express-support-for-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>.

- Racial Data Dashboard*. The COVID Tracking Project. (2020).
<https://covidtracking.com/race/dashboard>.
- Ransby, B. (2018). *Making all Black lives matter: reimagining freedom in the twenty-first century*. University of California Press.
- Rutledge, P. E. (2020). Trump, COVID-19, and the War on Expertise. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 50(6-7), 505–511.
- Sanchez, R. (2020, July 9). Americans made 'tremendous sacrifices.' The great reopening of the pandemic summer still got derailed. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/09/us/us-coronavirus-summer-reopening/index.html>.
- Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. (2020). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>.
- Staggenborg, S. (1999). The Pro-Choice Movement. In J. Freeman & V. Johnson (Eds.), *Waves of protest: social movements since the sixties* (pp. 99–134). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Tarrow, S. G. (2011). *Power in movement social movements and contentious politics* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Tesler, M. (2020, August 19). Support For Black Lives Matter Surged During Protests, But Is Waning Among White Americans. *FiveThirtyEight*. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/support-for-black-lives-matter-surged-during-protests-but-is-waning-among-white-americans/>.
- Tilly, C. (1978). *From mobilization to revolution*. McGraw-Hill.
- The Time Has Come to Defund the Police. *M4BL*. (2020). <https://m4bl.org/defund-the-police/>.
- US House passes 'George Floyd' police reform bill. *BBC News*. (2020, June 26).
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53188189>.
- Wines, M. (2020, June 27). From 47 Primaries, 4 Warning Signs About the 2020 Vote. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/27/us/2020-primary-election-voting.html>.
- Yang, G. (2016, August 11). Narrative Agency in Hashtag Activism: The Case of #BlackLivesMatter. *Media and Communication*. <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication/article/view/692>.
- Zurcher, A. (2020, October 7). Trump ends Covid budget stimulus relief talks. *BBC News*.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54443057>.