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**LIKING, SHARING, AND POSTING  
CHANGE: THE IMPACTFUL USE OF  
FACEBOOK IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**  
**An Analysis of Black Lives Matter and  
the Catalan Independence Movement**



Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
Departament de Mitjans, Comunicació i Cultura  
Doctoral Thesis

PhD Candidate: Rachel V. Brown  
Thesis Advisor: Dra. Carme Ferré-Pavia

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Why this Research is Necessary

Over the last decade life has become transformed by the implementation of social media in all of its aspects. People operate in a state of constant connectivity aided by the many social media platforms that they have access to. We have become increasingly interconnected and the world has become smaller because the reach across the distances and seas that would normally separate us has been decreased by the reach that social media possesses. Social activism and social movements have been an element of life that have been transformed significantly by the introduction of social media into their realms. And as the world itself is also evolving through the increasing and rightful significance placed on the voices of the people, as a microphone for the people, social media must also be seen as significant.

Many people around the world are suffering from an onslaught of problems that violate human rights, that affect the earth, that put their lives at risk, and that put the human race at risk. There is a type of sick dichotomy in the world wherein when something happens, you are either affected by it and heavily invested or unaffected by it and generally unaware. As such, everyone is living a separate reality and many people have to suffer in silence. Social movements are important now more than ever because they ensure that the suffering of those who would traditionally be silent is able to be heard loudly and clearly around the world. The introduction of social media has fundamentally assisted with the transference of messages and increase in awareness globally because of its intrinsic nature to serve as a tool for communication. It has not only allowed for the spreading of messages; it has allowed for those who are experiencing these conflicts or passionate about these instances to shape the narrative of what is occurring. It even acts as a space where people who disagree on what is occurring and its effects, can voice their disagreements and participate in civil debates online which further increases understanding between parties.

The “social” aspect of social media has facilitated the interaction, communication, and unification of people all around the world that did not always have the opportunity to do so. It has acted as a bridge between towns, cities, regions, countries and even the invisible

aspects of life that have visible consequences like differences in race, class, political beliefs, and cultures. It has also enabled and empowered users to be able to reach those in power with the ability to make the changes they desperately need. Social media exists as a platform because it provides a platform for its users, who through the varying and increasing attributes of each app, have flexible access to share their stories, feelings, and activism in multiple and the most effective ways with the world.

Indeed, social media has proven to be effective time and time again in increasing awareness, obtaining participation, communication, organization and of course giving users the platform to share their voice. Many individuals and social movements have been able to achieve change through social media activism online. The power that it possesses as a tool is obvious. As such, it needs to be studied much more to facilitate a widescale understanding of how best to use the tools it possesses so that both current and future movements will be able to be as effective as possible.

My personal interest in this topic comes about for a variety of reasons. I am a Black woman living in Barcelona who has consistently participated in the Black Lives Matter movement at least online while being so far away and also has been present in Catalunya during the last rise that occurred with the independence movement. My undergraduate degree focused on communication and I studied social media extensively. While in law school my thesis focused on the impact of social media activism on the law and society. Through my personal experiences with both research and activism, and the fact that my journey led me to be living here in Barcelona at this point in time, the topic of this thesis was almost divinely inevitable.

The choice to study Black Lives Matter as one of the cases for the research was evident to me based on my background and the fact that many of my friends and family have been affected by the issues they fight against. Over the last few months alone between February and June of this year 2020, there have been several high-profile murders of Black men and women in the United States by police officers. Those known in the last five months to be publicly assassinated are #AhmaudArbery, #BreonnaTaylor, #GeorgeFloyd, and #RayshardBrooks who was murdered less than a week before handing in this thesis. They have become four new hashtags added to a list of thousands starting with #TrayvonMartin that have been created ever since hashtags existed.

It should be noted that these are just the murders we know about and/or have seen the video footage of; there are several more people who have been killed but did not have their last moments captured on video. The police in the United States currently shoot and kill over 1,000 people each year and since 2015, they have shot and killed over 5,500 people, with Black people being more likely to be shot and killed than any other race (Berman, Sullivan, Tate, and Jenkins, 2020). The Black Lives Matter movement seeks to put an ending to the frequency with which Black people are killed particularly by the police, and we therefore have a responsibility and duty to help with that mission.

As someone who believes in democracy, to be here in Barcelona and witness the events leading up to the last big fight for independence through the referendum in 2017, it has been a painful experience to see people's fundamental rights being denied. It is my belief that every human being has the right to be heard because democracy should govern the earth, however, through the incidents with the Spanish government we can see that that is not the case in Spain.

The uncanny similarities between the Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence movement have resulted in the personal constant analysis of the two and identification of the elements they have in common. It has been particularly fascinating to note the similarities in the motivation and passion of the respective movement participants. And of course, due to the background and use of social media in addition to the obvious promise that social media holds, it became more apparent that the two needed to be formally studied and compared because through that analysis, some significant conclusions would come to light that could serve as applicable not just to those movements but to most movements. This is due to the fact that if those two movements that are so vastly different in terms of location, participants, and causes, actually have structural elements in common. Chances are that those elements serve as commonalities for all movements regardless of where they are and why they exist.

Another significant appeal of studying social media usage in social movements is how it helps to level the social playing field in terms of access, creation of messages, moulding of narratives, power, and hierarchy. Modern day movements generally do not have one iconic leader and instead rely on the initiative and leadership of multiple individuals within the movements to sustain them. Social media helps with that by providing a space where everyone can express themselves and leaders can be identified through their messages and passion as opposed to external reasons and causes. Within races, cultures

and nationalities that have been traditionally disempowered and silenced, it is a significant and important advancement to finally have the opportunity to be heard.

In an effort to further level the playing field, the objective of this research is to increase understanding of how social media can be used for maximum effectiveness and enable people to communicate, organize, mobilize and increase participation as best as possible regardless of their race, class, gender, or creed because everyone has a story and everyone has a right to be heard. Sometimes just hearing a message can serve as the catalyst for change and as such, it is important that messages be presented by the best people possible with the clearest messages possible through the most suitable modes possible which will therefore bring about the best results possible.

This has in fact been the guiding light and principle of this research; to improve the field of communication and improve communication in general so that awareness, understanding, and dialogue, may increase which will result in an inevitable improvement of life for everyone. Every great change, every great movement, and every great achievement begins with the communication of a vision.

Social media can serve many positive roles, but it can also have a negative impact especially when used incorrectly or for the wrong motives. Part of the traditional perspective of social media usage as negative has been the view of social media activism as slacktivism instead of activism. Social media activism had a bad reputation initially for being used by people who were not passionate about change and lacked the motivation and discipline to make the sacrifices necessary to engage in traditional methods of activism. However, as research increases on how social media usage affects results, how it can be used effectively, and how it can have a negative impact on goals of individuals and movements, people are able to adapt accordingly and change the way they use it as a tool. Through this, they are able to use social media more effectively and evolve with their usage of the tool as the tool itself evolves over time.

With that evolution, more people around the world are gaining constant access to social media which has only increased its power. With the Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence movement, they exist mainly in first world countries where access to social media is constant and as such, their participants and target audiences are constantly connected which has contributed to the respective success of both movements. If people will continue to be as connected as they are (which is quite likely based on the

progression), it is important to understand how the usage of these tools affect us not just for the effectiveness of social movements but in order to protect the people who utilise these tools because like any tool, if it is used correctly, it can be very helpful, but if it is used incorrectly it can be quite dangerous and harmful.

One of the ways it has helped however, along the lines of increased access, is that it has empowered each user to create the change they want to see in the way they want to see it because their usage of the tools helps to shape the movements. It has also provided a way for users to take initiative in activism and within movements through adding their voices, opinions, and desires to the discourse. Movements are now more personalized and inclusive than ever before.

This inclusivity also extends to those with the inability to participate in social movements in person. Many members of society for a multitude of reasons are passionate about the social movements but unable to participate through traditional means of activism. Social media provides a loophole and opportunity for participation by providing the opportunity for activism regardless of location with an equal potential for impact.

As access to social media increases and successful social media activism examples increase from #ArabSpring right down to #BlackLivesMatter and the #CatalanIndependence movement, people have also increasingly used social media as a tool for activism in social movements within every society in the world and have managed to make a needed impact globally.

## **1.2 General Overview of the Research**

It was found during the research process that there has been a lot of research on social media activism in general, but very little research on specific social media tools with the exception of Twitter (Esteves del Valle and Bravo, 2018; Campbell, 2018; Guerrero-Solé, 2017; Taulé et al., 2017; Puig Abril, 2017; Bosco et al., 2016; Balcells and Padró-Solanet, 2016; Bonilla and Rosa, 2015; Ferré Pavia and Perales García, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012; Waseem, 2016; Carney, 2016; Yang, C. 2016; Ince, Rojas, and Davis, 2017). Facebook, which has been used widely by most movements has been significantly under-studied. Due to the multipurpose nature of the platform, it is difficult to understand it as a whole but the time and effort it would take to understand it would be worth it because of how

useful that insight would be to social movements. Facebook as a communicative tool serves many purposes particularly for activism. It aids in communication between movements and participants, the participants themselves, and also communication with the antagonists of the movements. It also helps in the shaping of identity of individuals and movements because they are able to craft the way they present themselves online. Additionally, it has been useful for organizing the in-person participation and ensuring clear plans of action for participants. With the recent addition of polls and fundraising options, movements can also use it for online activism beyond the initial posting, sharing, and liking that took place, which has proven to make using it more beneficial. In fact, all activity online in support of a social movement has proven to be helpful thus far and as such it should be studied and used carefully.

The Black Lives Matter movement is moving towards increased intentionality of the inclusion of social media within activism for the movement because it is being used on behalf of the movement regardless and it might as well be used as well as it has the potential to be. As a movement which in fact began online this makes sense and will certainly prove to be beneficial in the future because most of the movement's success thus far has been at least in part due to the role that social media, and Facebook in particular has played within it. For the Catalan Independence movement, the same can be said in spite of the popularity of Twitter for movement users. Facebook has played a very important role in the very structure and existence of the movement today.

This thesis, through an analysis of Google Trends for both movements, will look at the levels of participation over time in an attempt to determine consistency or lack thereof in the movements which has been proven to contribute to the success or failure of social movements. It will also use Google Trends to determine the prominence of certain terms within the movement. The research uses surveys in order to evaluate the perception of movement participants of their involvement in their respective movements as well as how successful they believe the movement has been. Additional valuable questions asked of the participants were regarding what contributes to decreases in their participation, how the movements could be more effective, and possibly most significantly, the reasons behind their participation.

Additionally, this PhD research looks at the legal changes occurring as a result of the movement which are concrete evidence of the success or failure of social movements targeting legal change. The research also uses interviews by prominent activists and



lawyers to shape the context of social media activism as well as the history of the movements as a whole. Each research tool used has provided a unique contribution to the research and together they have made it much more well-rounded and comprehensive from every angle. Through all four of the research tools utilized in addition to a thorough analysis of the literature relating to the topic, I anticipate that I will be able to form concrete conclusions to the questions of how Facebook has been used as a tool within the movements, whether its use has been effective, and also how it can be used more effectively in the future for the movements studied and all social movements in general.

The main aim of this research is to gather information necessary to increase understanding of social media activism, and Facebook in particular as a tool for social media activism within social movements. Also, it is hoped that the existence of this research and opportunities for more research will inspire other researchers and scholars to continue research in the field because it is needed and will be extremely helpful to both present and future movements.

It is my hope that this research will help to shape and improve how social media is incorporated within social movements and also provide them with vital insight into what is effective and what is ineffective which will lead movements to be more intentional and strategic in the ways that they use social media for activism. Particularly, regarding Facebook, it is hoped that current and future activists can shape their actions and participation on the platform in a way that they will be able to achieve the maximum and necessary impact sought by them.

Ultimately, as has been stated, social media is going to be used in activism regardless and while it has been able to contribute to the whole and partial success of many social movements around the world, it can make movements much more successful if its full potential is understood.

People all around the world are creating new movements every day for very significant causes that could alter lives and potentially the entire world. It is therefore vital that they have access to the best tools that will facilitate in helping them to achieve their goals. Even more important is their knowledge and awareness of how to best utilize those tools in order to achieve their goals and ensure that their activism is as effective as it possibly can be. I hope that this research will transcend borders, cultures, races, and any other separating factors within the human race, to help people who are passionate about change,

to achieve the necessary and desired changes regardless of who they are, what they have, who they know and where they are from. Activism is the best way to achieve this and social media activism is the best tool to make sure that that becomes a reality. It is hoped that this research will ultimately aid in empowering us as a people to make the world we live in a better place now and for future generations.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Overview**

In order to fully discuss and appreciate the complexity, beginnings, participants, successes, and failures of both the Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence movement, particularly through a look at how social media was utilised within the movements, it is first important to understand social movements in terms of why they begin and how they begin. This portion of the paper will therefore take an in depth look at what elements are needed to form a social movement, what sustains the movement, and the reasons why they begin in the first place. Highlighting information about some of the most iconic social movements like the Civil Rights Movement in the United States will serve to give perspective into how the movements studied in this paper have progressed and are similar. An understanding of social movements is the cornerstone of this research.

It is also imperative that an analysis on Social Media Activism be done in order to establish the context in which the movements are operating online, how they are similar to past movements, what they have in common with each other, as well as how they might fail or on the other hand be very successful based on the extensive research which has previously been done on the matter. In looking at Social Media Activism, there will be an examination of what platforms and tools are used within movements and what their specific purposes generally are or have been, and how they have been utilized both in the past and currently.

Then there will be a discussion of an issue which comes up every time social media activism is mentioned, which is the issue of slacktivism and whether or not online actions on behalf of social movements should be considered as slacktivism and if so when, and if not, why not. There is also the need to examine whether or not slacktivism and activism when it comes to online activity regarding a social movement, can exist simultaneously and how. The research will also speak on what the determining and separating factors are for each and it will speak briefly on how to ensure that online activism does not become slacktivism and works effectively and as intended by the movements.

After that there will be an examination of the use of Facebook as a tool specifically for activism because while this research does discuss many online platforms used in activism, the main platform it focuses on is Facebook. It will speak on how it is unique as a tool as

well as how it has been used both in the past and currently by the Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence movement, as well as many other movements that have used it in an attempt to further their success.

Following that, there will be an analysis of previous research done on Black Lives Matter as a movement, the impact it has made globally, successes, failures, and issues it has faced along the way. It will explore the reasons behind the founding of the movement as well as its evolution over time. There will be mentions of the specific instances which led to increased participation in and visibility of the movement worldwide. The research will also briefly discuss some of the similarities the movement has with the Civil Rights Movement of the past. Additionally, it will look briefly at how the movement has affected societies around the world as well as whether or not it has been able to obtain the changes sought or at least has been perceived to be successful. In looking at this, it will speak also about the backlash or counter movements that have been created as a response to the movement out of hatred for it. It will show how the movement has sought change, which groups have been impacted, and what forms the movement has taken over time as well as the impact even the existence of the movement has had on people worldwide.

Lastly, there will be an analysis and discussion of previous scholarly material on the Catalan Independence Movement. This portion of the paper will look closely at how and why the movement began, when it began, how it has transformed over the years, and what shapes the movement has taken since its inception. There will be a discussion about the relationship between Spain and Catalunya and how that relationship has evolved over time particularly as the Catalan Independence movement has involved as well. It will take a look at the journey the movement has had including the victories and failures over the years as well as possible turning points for the movement in the future. There will be a thorough analysis of how social media was and has been used for the good of the movement and which platforms have been most popular for movement participants and why. There will also be a discussion of the hashtags used for the movements and the corresponding events including the referendum that was held against the instructions of the Spanish government and subsequently rocked the entire world and its aftermath. It will also speak about how the pro-independence movement has grown over the years and the possible reasons why.

Through an analysis of all of these things; social movements, social media activism, the use of Facebook as a tool in activism, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the Catalan

Independence movement, it is hoped that the scholarly opinions and issues discussed will provide the framework for the new and original research done in this thesis.

## **2.2 Social Movements**

### **2.2.1 Background**

Social movements have likely existed for as long as people have had problems, as a means of allowing people to express their unified discontent with injustice, unfair treatment, unacceptable situations, and quite frankly anything they strongly believe should change. Social movements are a way of holding those in power accountable and enabling those who are not in power to be heard and thus, share a part of that power. As the citizens outnumber those in governance, by mere democracy and numbers, people can be very effective at obtaining change once there is unity.

The question of what exactly a social movement is has been asked many times and each individual has their own understanding of the definition or perception of the answer to that question. One might even suggest that the answer to that question is unique from person to person. However, across the board there are similarities in understanding:

“Although the various definitions of movements may differ in terms of what is emphasized or accented, most are based on three or more of the following axes: collective or joint action; change-oriented goals or claims; some extra- or non-institutional collective action; some degree of organization; and some degree of temporal continuity.” (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, 2008, p.6)

Based on this definition or identification of the key elements of social movements, every single social movement consists of collective action which speaks to the fact that a movement is a group effort and requires cooperation and unity of multiple individuals in order to even exist. Every movement also exists in order to obtain change. The purpose of any movement is to express discontent with a situation and ultimately obtain change through that expression in the appropriate forms to the appropriate audiences. Leading to the next point highlighting that every movement seeks or requires action taken by those with the power to make changes whether they be governmental, from society as a whole or from businesses or individuals. In order to achieve this, every movement must have a strategy and set in motion a plan to achieve that goal. Movements cannot exist fully without organization; there must be an agreement as to why it exists, how it will exist and

who will exist within it. Lastly, a movement is differentiated by a protest (which can take place within a movement or as a strategy of a movement) because a movement is not an event on behalf of changes desired, but a commitment to fight for change until change is achieved through multiple forms if necessary, in multiple locations if necessary, adaptable in multiple facets of everyday life if necessary for as long as is necessary. The time a movement exists for is determined by the time it takes for the powers that be to make the changes requested.

That being said, many movements do begin with people who desperately need those changes; they begin when there is a heightened sense of frustration, loss, pain, anger or sadness, and in such emotional states people are often times very passionate about the changes they need and unable to think practically about how to obtain them. Many movements become more organized over time through learning from experiences, the addition of new members with new thoughts and understanding, the input of those with expertise, and the evolution of the movement itself. However, in those beginning stages, many times people are just learning as they go along and hoping for the best. This is because for movements, similarly to

“many social situations, it is not at all clear what decision or action is correct in an objective sense. Indeed, it could be argued that most group's decisions concern questions for which there is no way of knowing what course of action is right or will work out best” (Tyler and Smith, 1995, p. 12).

The fact of the matter is that both creating and participating in a movement is a gamble but people participate in them because they feel like they have nothing left to lose if participation fails and everything to gain if it succeeds. Many people starting a movement are inexperienced and have no idea what to do in order to be successful. They participate without knowing whether or not they will be successful. However, they become involved because they desperately desire change and know that their activism is the best way they know how to do that. This concept of taking a chance or risk, and learning along the way, is what contributes to the fluidity and actual evolution of most social movements over time.

### 2.2.2 Why do social movements start?

The idea of what causes movements to begin is an interesting concept which has been explored by many authors over the years in an attempt to understand how people are affected by society and how society affects people. The simple answer is that people speak out against issues that affect them in an effort to effect change and make their lives better. That much is obvious but the specific answer to this question varies from case to case. An example of this is written about by Polletta and Jasper (2001), who explored the Civil Rights movement along with many other social movements that have been iconic over time. When referring to what happens they say:

“Why do movements emerge when they do? In the 1970s, resource mobilization and political process theorists stopped asking why people felt frustrated enough to engage in collective protest rather than organize through conventional political channels, and instead asked when and how they secured the resources to combat their exclusion from those channels.” (Polletta and Jasper, 2001 p.283)

The reason that people stopped asking this question of “why” is because discontentment and reasons for discontentment are made clear by the existence of the movements themselves and what the people are asking for. People take action to achieve change because change is needed.

Movements come about as a response. They come after the problem. They come when people are brave enough and committed enough to solving the problem. Movements begin when people have had enough and are unable to go on without some sort of significant change. Movements are shaped both by what participants have endured and by what is desired, and they start because of both of those things. Many times, the problem is systematic and “people learn to cope with the systematic inequality and build their responses, individually and collectively, upon these experiences” (Salman, and Assies, 2017, p.243). These experiences that people have, as well as their problematic realities as a result of systematic oppression and injustice, are the reasons why they start movements. Movements are the responses of the people and by combining several voices through shared experiences, shared dissatisfaction, and shared frustration they hold significant power. Movements exist so that their responses to problems and decided intolerance for them will be heard and acknowledged then result in action. They exist to inspire action on behalf of those who are dissatisfied with reality and are willing to do what is necessary to get change.

However, one other very significant reason that social movements exist is not just that people are discontent and want change, but because they believe that by protesting or by being a part of a movement due to their discontentment and desire for change, change is possible. People believe in democracy and the responsibility that those in power have to serve them and ensure that their needs are met

This belief in democracy and the ideal that the voices of the citizens matter in modern society is vital to the creation of movements. Protests are an informal vote called by the people and highlighting views and opinions of individuals. They show the results of the protest polls and ensure that the voices are heard, consequently finally holding the government or those in power accountable for change. Della Porta and Diani (2020) express this quite clearly when they affirmed

“progressive social movements experiment with democratic innovations in their internal practices. In fact, their activities are oriented towards prefiguration of alternative forms of internal democracy. Self-reflexive actors, they experiment with new ideas of democracy, which are then the basis of proposed changes in democratic governance” (Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p.2).

This simply means that the entire movement at least for progressive movements, relies on democracy in their existence in order to make their activism worthwhile and achieve change. Every action carried out by those within the movement is geared at those with the ability to make the changes sought and those actions performed by the group, performed by larger numbers, are an effort to show that a significant portion of the population being served and the population being affected, would like a change in the situation. And usually, when a large enough amount of people requests something, the powers that be are forced to listen and give them what they are requesting for the sake of both democracy and peace. People know that numbers speak loudly especially within societies that pride themselves on fairness and equality in terms of how decisions are made.

In spite of these upsides to the use of and belief in democracy for social movements, just like with most things in life, there are also disadvantages. Talpin (2015) speaks on this in their paper and makes a profound statement which encapsulates the challenge with democracy. Talpin said “deliberative democracy and collective action have often been opposed as offering conflicting ways of constructing the common good, based on cooperative discussion on the one hand, and adversarial protest and negotiation on the



other” (Talpin, 2015, p. 71). Showing how while protestors believe in democracy and engage in social movements because they believe that in democratic countries, the leaders and those in power will operate according to democracy and attempt to give the people what they want and think is best for them, there can be consequences. Sometimes these movements become violent and when leadership refuses to listen to the people they begin to demand that the majority, or they themselves win, and fight for what they want instead of peacefully discussing and implementing changes desired or actually ensuring that elections are held and the results reflect their desires. Many times, when there is injustice and the people see how reality negatively affects them or the people they care about, and then further see how those with the power to change these things do not change anything, their frustration can manifest into violence as many have seen in the protests occurring from May 2020 due to the murder of George Floyd by members of the Minnesota Police Department (Freedman, 2020). Regardless, the people participating continue to protest however they see fit because they think they can be successful in obtaining results that way.

Another alternative to violence and peaceful protests is simply boycotting what is causing the problem although many times this can be difficult because there are always people who are not willing to do without certain comforts or privileges even if they come at a high price. This method also influences democracy and democratic strategies within movements because it is also a way for the majority or a significant number of citizens to make a statement about what is desired and why. It is also a way to inflict consequences on those with the power to change so that they are forced to change the situation and regain whatever they have lost or at least a portion of it. Boycotts are a peaceful way of ensuring that those in power are affected by protests and many times they are affected financially which speaks volumes generally to those in power. During the Civil Rights Movements there were several protests that involved boycotts and that movement was very successful in obtaining the changes desired particularly regarding voting rights and de-segregation (Talpin, 2015).

With all of this in mind, what is very clear is that movement participants believe in their own power particularly when unified. If people did not believe that through protesting, demonstrating, and being a part of a movement, change could happen and would likely happen regardless of the form it takes, they would not bother to participate in any movements at all.

### 2.2.3 How do social movements start?

Now that the answer to “why” has been answered, the next section will deal with the “how”. A movement inherently consists of a group of people. A movement cannot exist with just one person. The Oxford dictionary defines a “movement” simply as “a group of people”. A single person can start a movement, however in order for a movement to be classified as such, the creator, or initial participants must enlist the help of others. Furthermore, in order for a movement to be successful and meaningful, those participating must have a vested interest in the changes sought. They must all have something in common which brings them to their common goal. Through this, every movement is able to establish what is known as a “collective identity”. Authors Polletta and Jasper (2001) define collective identity as

“an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity” (Polletta and Jasper, 2001 p.285).

To break that definition down the first part is that it belongs to an “individual” meaning that each person in the movement must possess these attributes and then collectively establish the identity (Zubiaga et al., 2019) once they themselves have established them. The cognitive connection refers to the individual’s mental ability to understand the cause behind the movement and the changes sought. The moral connection refers to the individual’s conviction that the changes sought are right and just. The emotional connection refers to the individual’s personal feelings about the movement and passion for change or hatred for the reality; it could be a plethora of emotions but as long as an emotional connection exists, they qualify.

The next important concept is “community”. The fact that the word community is used instead of group suggests that in order for a collective identity to exist, those who make up the movement must be a community and therefore have something in common or have a shared identity. The “category” part of the definition refers to possible commonalities, classifications, or labels that the individuals have. The “practice” part refers to similar actions, routines, or involvement that they may have. The “institution” aspect of the definition is in reference to the organizations that the individuals might be a part of.

These are all the different items that they may have in common, but it should be noted that in order for there to be a collective identity they should have at least one in common with the rest of the group. The next part of the definition which speaks to “perception” is also very important because it shows that each individual should not only have something in common with the group, they should be aware of the commonalities or at least perceive that they have something in common with the other participants in order for there to be a collective identity. The final part of the definition which talks about collective identity being distinct from personal identity highlights the fact that while the reason for participation or the reason binding someone to the other participants, may be a part of who they are, it is not entirely their identity but instead, combines with the other parts of them that makes them uniquely whole. Therefore, a person has an identity as an individual, and part of that identity is what ties them to the collective identity of the group. Both identities are equally important for movement participants and the movements themselves.

In terms of the steps to making a successful movement and the elements necessary to do so, Jenkins (1983) provides a thorough step by step process which is necessary in addition to what has been previously stated. The next step is to establish that “movement actions are rational, adaptive responses to the costs and rewards of different lines of action” (Jenkins, 1983, p. 528). Both the movement leaders and the participants need to come up with a plan for the movement. When determining what activities to include in the movements’ endeavours, they need to analyse the possible effects and consequences of potential actions and then determine what the best courses of action might be based on that. Next, they need to ensure that “the basic goals of movements are defined by conflicts of interest built into institutionalized power relations” (Jenkins, 1983, p. 528). The goals of the movement must be specific and achievable. They must also be factored in when determining the best actions to take. The goals should also show how those in power have the ability to make the changes desired and how by not making the changes desired those in power are doing citizens a disservice.

Following that, the movement must show that “the grievances generated by such conflicts are sufficiently ubiquitous that the formation and mobilization of movements depend on changes in resources, group organization, and opportunities for collective action” (Jenkins, 1983, p. 528). This is to say that the cause must be worthwhile and the movement has the burden of proof in establishing not only that its existence is necessary but that

change is necessary and its existence is the only way or last resort to obtaining the necessary change. Those participating in the movement need to show those who the movement targets, that they must make the changes requested in order to improve the quality of life for those they serve. The next step is to make sure that the movement is well-organized, well-structured, has reliable leadership and participants, and also has clear and well-defined goals. This is because “centralized, formally structured movement organizations are more typical of modern social movements and more effective at mobilizing resources and mounting sustained challenges than decentralized, informal movement structures” (Jenkins, 1983, p 528). Every movement want to be as effective and as successful as possible and in order to do that, they must ensure that they are organized well and present as a united front. All members must be on the same page. Once all of these elements are in place, the likelihood of success for the movement is maximized because “the success of movements is largely determined by strategic factors and the political processes in which they become enmeshed”. (Jenkins, 1983, p 528). Movements desiring success must be well-planned and must incorporate effective and thoughtful strategies for effecting change.

In summary and regarding modern day movements, after establishing a collective identity for the movement, the next step is to make a plan of action within the movement on how to achieve the change and what the activism will look like within the movement. Firstly, establishing what the goals are and then breaking down what steps are needed in order to achieve that change. Once this has been accomplished the next step would be to establish contact with those at whom the movement is aimed at. As soon as the interaction between the movement and the antagonists of the movement begins and is maintained, it will create the larger political context and begin to modify the system as a whole (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001). The existence of the movement itself and the connection established between the movement and those who have the power to implement the changes is what will serve as the catalyst for change.

As with every catalyst, this part is just the beginning. In many instances, including the Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence Movement which will be the subjects of this PhD research, movements begin to take on a life of their own and continuously grow and involve as both the messages and participants evolve alongside the evolution of society and the world. Particularly with movements like these that have an intrinsically cultural component, due to the fluidity of culture, they tend to be easily

moulded and transformed. As Morris and Staggenborg (2004) stated, “cultural expressions entered into the public sphere cannot be completely controlled by those who originate them. Strategic rhetoric may originate in the interests of particular groups, but its trajectory and ultimate destination can be altered” (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004, p. 185.) This shows that while the leadership of movements and even the founding members may have a particular vision for the movement, when movements encompass issues that affect the wider society and large amounts of people, the movement may begin to reflect the group as a whole as opposed to the founding members and therefore can shift trajectory, actions, strategy and sometimes even the ultimate goal the movement serves to achieve. As has been seen many times in history as well, sometimes the actual outcome of a movement is very different from the intended outcome for which the movement was initially created.

#### 2.2.4 Who starts social movements?

There is no simple or basic answer to this question because the “who” within each movement varies according to the problems addressed. For example, if there is a movement protesting low wages for firefighters, the majority of the participants will most likely be young to middle aged men who are fire fighters and possibly their families because they are the ones affected. Or if there is a movement protesting a lack of diversity in classes at a specific University, the participants will most likely be the young people attending that university as students. Those who are affected by the changes a movement seeks to implement will participate as stated earlier. However, one common factor in many movements around the world has been the presence of youth. Many youth are the lifeline of social movements. Both the Black Lives Matter movement as well as the Catalan Independence movement have that in common and a significant portion of activists for both movements is youth.

In this sense, it is important to understand how to engage the youngest public and ensure their participation. This can be done by analysing past and present movements that have a large amount of youth participants. In looking at youth participation now, it is important to understand the context and also the historical impact of youth participation in social movements. Because with research on both the past and the present, there will be an increased likelihood of obtaining information that will be valuable for future movements and allow improved insight for current movements.

In relation to the history of youth participation it is important to highlight the Civil Rights movement in the United States. That movement which took place in the 1960s and 1970s was led and made of mostly youth who were tired of racism, injustice, inequality, and police brutality against Black people. They were tired of being treated as second class citizens. It is important to note that scholarly articles written about their activism, as well as what led them to be involved in the movements, were written by individuals who did not participate in the movements but observed them from afar and therefore were not able to fully relate what happened or the mindset of activists. This is something that should be avoided for present movements because it gives an inaccurate view and analysis of social movements and therefore cannot provide a stable foundation or reliable source of reference for current movements.

It is important to draw from accurate information about past movements in order to have substantially helpful information for present and future movements. This is something that this research seeks to do and also what Van Ness and Summers-Effler (2018) sought to do in analysing and researching the feelings of those who participated in the Civil Rights movement during their youth who had become writers and scholars that were contributing to and try to correct research done on the movements they participated in. Not surprisingly, they found that “in the 1960s, activists who had become academics turned to existing literature and found difficulty in explaining personal experiences with existing theoretical frameworks” (Van Ness and Summers-Effler, 2018, p. 411). They stood on the frontlines during their youth and made sure their voices were heard but their voices were never heard after the movement ended because someone else reported what they said instead of the participants themselves. In spite of this, those who served as activists are rectifying this and have rectified this problem by becoming academics and writing their own stories themselves which will serve as the accurate references and information that current researchers need in exploring and shaping the field of social movements and activism.

Van Ness and Summers-Effler (2018) also sought to rectify that by interviewing the activists and attempting to gain very crucial insight into why they participated in the movement. They paid attention in particular to their emotional involvement which as was briefly discussed earlier, is very important in obtaining participants and maintaining participation. They said, “when we consider the emotions which run through the networks, as well as the ways in which interactions and situations afford particular

emotional experiences, we reveal why some actors mobilize, while others remain unmoved” (Van Ness and Summers-Effler, 2018, p. 413). This quote in particular stood out because it not only speaks about the emotions of participants and how it can motivate people to participate in social movements, but it also showed the fact that emotions generated from participation can make a difference in whether or not people continue to participate. It also shows that emotional involvement is what motivates youth to participate in social movements. This clearly shows that in the case of this research, the many young people that are participating in Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence movement are emotionally invested in the changes that those movements seek.

Bringing attention to the theme of current youth activists, Earl, Maher, and Elliot (2017) speak extensively about the participation of young people in social movements. In an attempt to decipher what motivates youth to be involved they state that

“youth activism is also impacted by a wide variety of contextual factors, whether that be the acrimony of institutionalized politics (which may drive youth away), the rise of movement societies and fan activism (which expands the terrain for youth protest and may pull young people into protest), and the pervasive use of Internet-based technologies” (Earl, Maher, and Elliot, 2017, p. 12).

The part of the quote speaking to the dual potential effects of the involvement of politics in movement is very interesting and important because many young people are quite turned off by politics and have lost faith in the system; these people will therefore not participate. However, those that still believe in democracy and still have hope, are likely to participate because they see politics as a potential tool as opposed to a lost cause. The part which references fan activism is very important as well and will be discussed further on since many people are participating in movements because they are popular and because they are “cool” instead of because they are invested in the changes sought. And of course, the last part of the quote speaking to the use of internet-based technologies will be thoroughly discussed throughout this text.

### 2.2.5 The evolution of social movements: The incorporation of technology

The main shift in social movements as of late has been the addition of technology which has revolutionised not only the movements but the world. And while technology has simplified things and managed to in some regard bring us closer, it has also managed to significantly complicate things and sometimes tear us apart. Because technology, particularly social media, is so multi-faceted, it is useful in many ways for activism, but it also complexifies activism and makes understanding it more difficult. Rosenbaum and Bouvier (2020) refer to this in their research, and they state that

“the prevalence of technology in activism has fundamentally altered how scholars and activists alike understand the ‘social’ in social movements. Perceptions have shifted from viewing social movements as a more or less organized collection of actors into a far messier, continually changing network” (Rosenbaum and Bouvier, 2020, p. 120).

Social media has made us more social in some ways, but it has also made us less social in others. Also through the many ways, social media is used in social movements to communicate with participants and those whom the messages are aimed at, it is difficult to truly understand how communication works and what communication is effective because they all fulfil their individual purposes and work in tandem to achieve the results the movements obtain.

This however is only one discussed criticism of social media usage in social movements. Another criticism is that social media activism is not real activism because it does not involve what is perceived as significant sacrifice. Social Media Activism is seen as some as useless or effortless participation with little passion or reason for participation. This contrasts with traditional activism like marches, hunger strikes, boycotts, and sit-ins. These traditional forms of activism required significant sacrifice; people were sometimes abused, starved, and taunted; when they decided to protest, they decided to risk their lives (Guyot, 1991). Subsequently, protests were taken seriously and generally made international news which ending up adding even more pressure on those in power to make the changes advocated for by the movements. In spite of this popular view, current movements are also taken seriously and have made international news even though they utilize social media; Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence movement are great examples of that.



## 2.3 Social Media Activism

### 2.3.1 Background on social media usage and study in movements

The movements of today cannot succeed without social media. It is used in everything from dating to networking to events to games and therefore activism can be no exception. Because of the flexibility of the platforms and the ability to personalize activism without losing the heart and focus of a movement, kind of similar to being able to bring your own creative placard to a protest, people feel more connected to movements than ever before and

“social media sharing of emotionally charged protest material has become a vital element of contemporary activism. Platforms play a key role in processes of activist mobilization, emancipation, and identification, in which online and offline activity become inextricably entangled. It is through the mass sharing of emotions that (temporary) public spaces are constructed” (Poell and Van Dijck, 2016, p.228).

It has become a versatile tool used as a microphone, a location, a forum, and many other useful things. Ahuja, Patel, and Suh (2018) broke down very well what is required for social media activism to function well:

“Network building in digital activism requires participation and mobilization. Ultimately, it involves connecting different actors, issues, and events to initiate collective action. To develop and mobilize a network of connected individuals who instrumentally identify with a particular activism, information must be rapidly transmitted across different actors, organizations, and time and space.” (Ahuja, Patel, and Suh, 2018, p. 2204)

This signifies that movements online need as many participants as possible with a call to action who will actually carry out what is asked of them. In order to do this online, the movement must show the relationship the participants have to the movement and how the changes requested would benefit them, similarly to a regular social movement. Then through communication and the different tools set in place, the plan can be set in motion. Social media is where people “go” to meet and commune with each other especially in instances when they are unable to meet physically. This past epidemic with COVID-19 was a key example of that. Social media became less of a tool and more of a space. Even before that people were using the platforms to connect when in-person connections were

difficult or impossible (Turley and Fisher, 2018). Now more than ever we are seeing its value and it is important to understand it fully so that it can be utilized fully.

A noteworthy realization is that social movements have been transforming in and of themselves over time and have thus arrived at this very natural next stage of transformation along with the rest of the world. The process of transformation in social movements which started in the 1960s and the 1970s necessitates the transformation of form of participation inevitably. “When this process is considered with the technological developments and the Internet revolution, there is a possibility that social media activism responds to a contextual need become a current issue” (Ravanoğlu Yılmaz, 2017, p.144). This makes sense because as the issues being protested currently are current issues, it is only logical that they would utilize current means of activism in order to obtain change. The drawback exists because social media is so current that it still has not undergone a full analysis.

### 2.3.2 The need for increased scholarship on social media activism

As stated, due to the fact that social media activism is a fairly new concept, the research done on the topic is increasing with time but is not extensive. Additionally, because there has not been much research thus far on the full potential of social media activism, simply because nobody really knows the full potential yet (as it seems to be limitless), it has proven to be difficult to study. Murthy (2018) expresses that sentiment perfectly in their paper saying

“social media have become increasingly pervasive. However, the literature on social movements and social media has not fully grasped just how much social media have fundamentally changed the landscape of organizational communication, ranging from stakeholders being able to directly mobilize resources to making grassroots transnational social movements more organizationally feasible” (Murthy, 2018, p.1).

This suggests that scholars like Murthy (2018) are well aware that social media activism has untapped potential, has changed communication and activism in general, and also has enabled an increase in productivity and capability within social movements. The problem however is that without the research, people still do not fully comprehend the potential or ability that Social Media Activism has to effect change. Murthy (2018) also speaks to the increased complexity in social media activism and the many components that make it up

and play a part in making an impact (Murthy, 2018). This impact would never have been able to happen at least to the extent that it has without the transformation and use of social media by movements.

It is important to not just see social media usage in activism as transformative for the activism itself; it is also transforming scholarship around activism which is why it must be studied. Foote (2019) sustains, “the increasing use of social media as a venue for political discussion creates an opportunity for rhetorical scholars to (re)evaluate the rhetorical nature of such discourse” (Foote, 2019, p.3). Which implies it is transforming all of the discussion around politics, activism, and the role of citizens in deciding how society will function.

In fact, this transformation is affecting every aspect of modern-day life. Right now, people anywhere of any creed are able to create and disperse messages that have the potential to shape society. Which means that right now, anyone from anywhere can shape society. “No longer are large institutions, organizations, governments and political parties the sole sources of mediated political messages. Instead, alternative and critical channels created by new mobile and inexpensive technologies may create discourse arenas/public spheres for debating individuals and groups” (Burke and Sen, 2018, p.2). Citizens are now the sources. People still rely on traditional media outlets and the government for information, however they have turned to social media to not just hear what is going on in the world but to dictate what is going on in the world as well. Many young people especially in this day and age rely on social media to stay informed and rely on social media to dictate to them what they should be doing, how they should look, what they should stand up for and how they should stand up. Youth are taking advantage of the new media and they are taking the lead. They combine the traditional forms of activism with the new media and use social media to organize thus creating a powerful and effective blend of traditional and modern activism.

“Activism today involves actions in favor of social processes, or actions advocating political change. It may include street protests, riots, direct action, singing protest songs, organizing strikes, attending town hall meetings or demonstrations, donating money, motivating colleagues to vote, volunteering for a campaign, or writing letters to political institutions. The news reports of youth-initiated waves of citizen-led activism, public disobedience, and protest, show numerous educated, unemployed, alienated young people reacting. Their common denominators

provide an umbrella for diverse, global actions and movements.” (Burke and Sen, 2018, p.2)

Young people are participating in politics and activism now more than ever and they share the collective identity of youth who are disgruntled, liberated and feel entitled to better lives. They are using every tool available, particularly social media, to effect change. An important note to make is that when studying social media activism, as it is a tool that is broadly used, it is important not to have a narrow mind during the analysis or in terms of focus. Many topics within social media activism have seemed more appealing and have therefore been covered more, however even the less appealing and “good” parts need to be studied in order for there to be a full understanding of the tool. Gustafsson and Weinryb (2020) mentioned that in their piece this year and stated

“with the rise of prominent social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in the mid-2000s, subsequent studies of networked activism and social movements taking advantage of digital media, mainly focused on ‘good’ causes (the environment, human rights, democracy, social justice, antiracism, feminism, and rights for asylum seekers), whereas ‘bad’ causes more often associated with ‘populist’ movements (racism, anti-feminism, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, anti-immigration) to a large extent went understudied.” (Gustafsson and Weinryb, 2020, p. 433)

Because these “bad causes” exist and because they also use social media as a tool for their activism and most likely, also utilize it effectively, it is important to understand those movements as well and future studies should be done on them. Regardless, the conclusion one can come to, based on this, is that social media activism is clearly a beneficial tool to have within movements because all movements, both good and bad utilize it to further their causes and achieve success.

The two movements that are the focus of this research have grown significantly due to the social media usage, and many other movements could do the same once they understand how to best utilize the tools at hand. Social Media is now a tool that modern movements cannot do without because most modern people cannot do without it even in their regular lives.

“Due to the significant coverage of #BlackLivesMatter and similar social media activism, mass media have extolled the importance of social media as a vehicle for

spreading democracy. The events of the Arab spring, colloquially dubbed “the Twitter/Facebook revolution,” brought forth an avalanche of political change and academic research focused on the use of social media during this time.” (Foote, 2019, p.17)

Indeed, Arab Spring was the pioneer movement online and it paved the way for many others. Through its success and the success of other social movements utilizing social media afterwards, the impact of social media activism is impossible to ignore and even, as stated, the traditional media has acknowledged that and utilized that information to their benefit.

### 2.3.3 Benefits of social media activism

One of the main ways social media has transformed activism is through significantly increasing the reach of participants. Suddenly, anyone has full access to the entire world with just the click of a button or swipe of a finger. Protestors do not have to be on the streets shouting or holding signs in order to get attention, all they have to do is post something or stream something and they will get their messages across. Tufekci (2012) speaks to this when he says, ‘Social media have greatly empowered protestors [movements] in three key areas: public attention, evading censorship, and coordination or logistics’ (Tufekci, 2012, p.2). Protestors are able to captivate and engage with larger audiences than ever before. Movements that may have been in the hundreds or occupying one city before social media, have become global with millions of participants who are for the cause. The freedom of speech as well that exists through social media platforms protects participants and enables them to say what they truly feel without interference of those who are against their cause. As opposed to activism in the past where there were few media outlets like newspapers which many times were owned or controlled by those against the messages people wanted to disperse, protestors now have the ability to choose their platform and their message and still ensure that millions hear what they have to say. Logistically and in terms of coordination, social media is second to none because it facilitates easy and effective organization as well as the gathering of useful data about participants, their feelings about the movement and the reaction of audiences to what is being said.

This element of organization is one of the most talked about benefits of social media and rightfully so because socially media makes organization much easier and much cheaper

than ever before. People are able to create messages and send them to millions within minutes or events on Facebook and inviting entire groups or friend lists which can then do the same with their groups or friend lists also in minutes. Indeed, a powerful argument has emerged that social media are becoming increasingly integral to “organizational communication processes because they afford behaviors that were difficult or impossible to achieve in combination before these new technologies [... were introduced and] may alter socialization, knowledge sharing, and power processes in organizations” (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). This has allowed movements to not only increase their reach, it has allowed them to increase their capacity for change and therefore has increased both their chances of change and demands for change (Navarro, Martínez-García, and Fernández, 2018). In increasing their reach, they increase the awareness of their movement. “With their popular appeal and multimodal affordances commercial social media have reinvigorated hopes for the potential of the Internet for providing social movements with new possibilities for increased visibility” (Uldam, 2018, p.41).

Through this increased visibility, they have access to more opportunities and also can become more trusted. When people trust an organization or movement, they are more likely to support it and participate. Research states that “events in recent years have shown that new media technologies have not only increased the civic engagement of citizens around the world, but have also facilitated greater activism” (Ahuja, Patel, and Suh, 2018, p. 2203). These authors reference the increase in participation in some of the most dangerous and risky movements worldwide for example, the platform Moveon.org which was able to mobilize over three million members in a campaign against the Iraq War through online platforms; Indignados in Madrid fighting for social justice, Occupy Wall Street which saw huge success and took place in New York (Constanza-Chock, 2012), and the movement in Egypt to overthrow an autocratic regime.(Ahuja, Patel, and Suh, 2018) There are movements growing all over the world and the participants are increasing by the day thanks to social media and the utilization of the tool by those working on behalf of the movements.

The impact and potential impact that social media activism (SMA) has on the future of society and politics ensures that it will continue to be used and developed for generations to come. As technology evolves, social media will evolve, and as social media evolves, social media activism will evolve accordingly. Another thing that is evolving is government and political systems around the world. “Just as the character of social

activism and civic engagement is evolving, so are the strategies and techniques of governmentality” (Poell and Van Dijck, 2016, p. 229). Every aspect of social movements and those affected are changing with time and many of those changes are simply reactions to changes within the other elements in motion. Social movements need to ensure that they keep up with the changes in order to maintain its advantages.

Another key advantage of social media and beneficial characteristic of social media as a tool in social movements, is its flexibility. The fact also that one movement can exist across multiple platforms with different features, elements and even audiences also helps to expand the movement, its message, increase reach, participation and also impact. “Digital activism on social media has different narrative forms because narrative conventions may differ from platform to platform” (Yang, C. 2016, p. 14). Thus, even the narrative is increased or flexible within the main goal and points of the movement which allows for increased understanding and appeal of the movement by multiple audiences who can relate.

Another key benefit of social media usage is that it allows for more leadership within the organization of the movement and less movement “leaders”. There is less focus on titles and hierarchy and more focus on the message and change. This gives more accountability and more shared responsibility to every single participant than traditional movements. In comparing traditional movements with modern movements using social media, it is evident that

“new social movements that are arranged in more flexible and informal ways are distinguished from labor movements in terms of their organizational structures. Respectively, this nature of new social movements necessitates more fragmented, atomized, and multipartite participation and activism forms. In this sense, social media activism performed via social networking sites has emerged one of the most significant and newest participation channels in the movements” (Ravanoğlu Yilmaz, 2017, p. 148).

Because of this, and the success this way of activism has had, it is certain that social media will continue to be used by movements that exist now and those that will exist eventually.

And although social media will be utilized in current and future movements, many people are still strangely sceptical about whether it is actually impactful. It has certainly been

noted that internet-enabled action in social movements has received an increasing amount of attention lately, especially in regard to its capacity to either facilitate or undermine social change (Wilkins et al., 2019). There have been very mixed views and reviews of social media activism. Some are certain it is not helpful; others believe it is a very useful tool, others think it is valuable sometimes and then there are those who are simply unsure about whether or not it is beneficial.

One thing that was evident in the research done is that social media platforms have become essential tools for almost all, if not all, 21st-century social movements (Mundt, Ross, and Burnett 2018). Many authors, scholars and activists are therefore studying its use in movements, how it can be beneficial, and also how it can be disadvantageous to movements. However in observing the research that has been done so far on the topic, it was observed that a lot of the publications in this subject area were based more on the opinions of authors rather than actual hard data gathered from experiments (Shirky, 2011; Chatelain and Asoka, 2015; Garcia and Ferré Pavia, 2015; Cohen and Jackson, 2016; Taylor, 2016; Rickford, 2016; Hoffman et al., 2016; Micó and Carbonell, 2017; Dowling, 2017). This is partly due to the fact that social media activism is still fairly new (just about 10 years old) and also due to the fact that it is extremely difficult to study this field because determining the impact of social media in isolation is almost impossible when multiple factors come into play within a movement. There are not many useful statistics that can be measured, analysed or weighed because on any given platform, the social media tools are various and serve multiple purposes, the tools within the different platforms act in tandem with other tools both online and offline, and people's feelings are not always factual or a reflection of reality.

It was also observed that the majority of literature observed actually focused on Twitter as a Social Media platform as opposed to Facebook. This was most likely due to the fact that Twitter provides users with access to data and its data collection tool feature which allows anyone to view statistics for different hashtags, tweets, and users. As the information is already collected, all researchers have to do is analyse the data and many have taken advantage of that opportunity (Esteve del Valle and Bravo, 2018; Campbell, 2018; Guerrero-Solé, 2017; Taulé et al., 2017; Puig Abril, 2017; Bosco et al., 2016; Balcells and Padró-Solanet, 2016; Alonso-Muñoz, Miquel Segarra, and Casero-Ripollés, 2016; Bonilla and Rosa, 2015; Ferré Pavia and Perales García, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012; Waseem, 2016; Carney, 2016; Yang, 2016; Ince, Rojas, and Davis, 2017, Swami et al.,



2017). The data they have collected has indeed been useful, but it has left a significant gap in the research about social media activism and the various other tools like Facebook that are transforming movements.

As such, in spite of the perks of researching Twitter, Facebook needs to be studied when it comes to SMA “because its use is not solely political. Facebook is useful as a source of information for those who are not otherwise exposed, and those who have little political interest” (Siegel, 2018, p. 8). It is a flexible platform with multiple ways of self-expression and engagement from groups to group chats, from creating posts to sharing posts, from posting profile pictures to sharing pictures from other users, and from talking to friends to talking to people one has never met Facebook, due to its versatility, caters to and is used by the diverse and vast majority but despite that several people have still been sceptical about its effectiveness as a tool for activism and whether it can aid in movement success. The use of Facebook both in general and also specifically as a tool in activism will be discussed more in depth a bit later down in this section.

At the end of the day

“social media are not simply tools or spaces that can be appropriated for activist purposes. Instead, these media should be understood as techno-commercial assemblages, which shape and translate user activity. Deploying techniques such as data mining, user profiling, and targeted advertising, social platforms structure how users can express themselves and connect with each other” (Poell and Van Dijck, 2016, p.230).

If that is understood by movements and by users, they can better use the social media platforms, maximize the effects of their usage, and ultimately make the changes necessary to create a better world.

#### 2.3.4 Downfalls of social media activism

There are many positive aspects about social media activism, but much like with most things, there is also a negative side to social media usage for activism. To understand the tool fully, it is important to analyse both the positives and the negatives, and this portion will seek to do the latter.

One of the issues with online activism is that you end up “preaching to the choir”. The people who engage online and witness the activism, are often times those who share the same beliefs (Iskander, 2011). The purpose of activism is not to have a discussion and simply agree amongst yourselves that a change is necessary; the purpose of activism is to inspire or create a necessary change (Valenzuela, 2013). That purpose is defeated if the people who agree are the only ones witnessing the activism. Part of the power of traditional forms of activism is visibility. One can still maintain the participation of those who share the same views but is also able to reach those of differing opinions (this activism usually takes place in public spaces or places occupied by those of opposing perspectives so that they have to pay attention, as examples), and also attract the attention of those who have the power to make a change because they can see that you are making a sacrifice for it and will be held accountable for your sacrifices (McCaughey and Ayers, 2013).

Iskander (2011) further expressed when analysing Web 2.0 activists, that social media have shown how to connect people online and to act as a tool for political debate and organization, but as long as this remained only online, the Web 2.0 activists, although they were talking more, were still largely talking only to each other (Iskander, 2011). This highlights two issues; the one previously discussed about the need to combine SMA with traditional activism and the concern for “preaching to the choir” where activists engaging online are mostly engaging with those that have the same viewpoints which defeats the purpose of a movement to change minds and ultimately actions and reality (Valenzuela, 2013). People end up expressing their convictions to people who already understand, are aware of, and believe them because they themselves are similarly convicted. This completely defeats the purpose that many movements have to create change and increase awareness.

On the other hand, while this is a downside to social media use, it can also be viewed in a positive light. “In particular, social media users can construct and participate in information networks with users similar to themselves, ultimately limiting exposure to other perspectives and reinforcing existing worldviews” (Stewart, Arif, and Starbird, 2018, p. 1). This exposure to other perspectives and those in power is what brings change to fruition and is therefore important (McCaughey and Ayers, 2013), however one could argue that social media usage does not hinder that but helps that as it generally provides easy access (with the click of a button) to anyone utilizing any platform. This helps with

both organization and communication (Costanza-Chock, 2012). In fact, “social media creates participation opportunities—such as boosting protest turnout or supporting fundraising campaigns—that broaden mobilization, thus helping scale movement endeavors” (Mundt, Ross, and Burnett, 2018, p.1). These participation opportunities would most likely be geared at those with similar feelings and convictions and therefore this possible “downfall” of social media in terms of preaching to the choir can actually be something that lifts a movement up from time to time.

Another problem addresses and slightly contradicts one point made earlier in the positives section. Social media has been able to remove some of the organizational structure of social movements and eliminate in some cases almost completely, the hierarchy within organizations, however, in some cases it has done the opposite and promoted a hierarchy where people who began the movement, or have the most followers, or the most “shares” are suddenly looked upon as leaders not because of their content but because of their numbers or engagement. Many people do not even fully comprehend how this works. Therefore,

“a less obvious issue is the lack of understanding of how social media affect the organization of activist networks. Specifically, social media are often thought to make activist movements more transparent. However, social media can and often do foster their own hierarchies and privilege certain voices (usually more central to the organizational network” (Murthy, 2018, p. 2).

While this is an issue, it can be easily solved once those whose voices are privileged share that privilege with others by sharing their content, posts, and forms of participation in general. All they have to do is decide to share their role and communicate that the opportunity for others to lead exists.

That in and of itself can cause another problem because while social media allows the sharing of the privilege of leadership and content production for a movement, there can be a downside. Because while social media may “empower” each individual to have a voice (Murthy, 2016), having each individual use that power all at once will undoubtedly lead to having high levels of noise, which will ultimately inhibit decision-making, innovation, and productivity (Hemp, 2009). This will certainly cause confusion within the group and could also have consequences in terms of the clarity of a movement’s message to outsiders. The simple solution to this problem, however, is to ensure that some type of internal organization and structure exists within the movement, and everyone is

on the same page in terms of what they are communicating and when they are communicating.

The flipside to this is ironically another con for social media activism because while social media allows everyone to have a voice, because of the inherent nature of social media platforms as spaces for socialization and leisure, as opposed to politics and social movements, people might engage a bit and participate, but they will not become too invested in the movement and many certainly will not take on responsibility for or leadership within the movement.

“They use the media to become aware of topics and to be informed of issues of interest, but they tend to follow and read rather than initiate and lead. Because the tools they know well and use regularly allow anyone to be a media producer, they know they have a technical capacity to create democratic dialogue and plan political actions, but they rarely do so.” (Burke and Sen, 2018, p.8).

There is however a bright side to this of course in that, if many are not leading or adding to the conversation and simply are involved to be involved and stay aware of what is happening, there will be less of the problematic ‘noise’ mentioned before and the movement will have achieved at least one of its goals which is spreading awareness, and increasing its audience.

The last disadvantage that will be discussed is the problem of polarity online. Many people post about the same topic however within those posts on the same topic there are very different opinions, for example when searching randomly for the topic particularly through hashtags (and hashtag activism has become a key part of social media activism). “Hashtag activism happens when large numbers of postings appear on social media under a common hash tagged word, phrase or sentence with a social or political claim”: the results are not filtered out based on your preference or opinion; all opinions are grouped together (Yang, 2016, p. 13). So, for example if one were to search #CatalanIndependence, there would be search results from those who are both pro-independence and those who are anti-independence. Or if someone were to search #BlackLivesMatter there would be results for those who were supporters of the movement and from those who were against the movement. The users are then forced to filter out the results, research the sources and then choose who to engage with and how to engage or use the content.

In spite of all of these disadvantages, the benefits outweigh them significantly and for each obstacle faced by social media activism there is a clear way to overcome it. Social media is a powerful tool especially because it shares its power with the people who can then use that power to create change.

### 2.3.5 How using social media empowers users

A common theme when discussing social media activism is how the common individual can be transformed into an activist or a superhero of sorts. Social media gives them the sudden power to not only reach billions of people but ultimately, even in a small way, help or save the world. There is no need for one saviour; everyone can be a hero. “Digital enthusiasm replaces the external singular leader with an individualized charismatic authority, where individuals coalesce around themselves, seduced and blown-away by their own engagement as much as by the movement itself” (Gustafsson and Weinryb, 2020, p. 436). Modern movements do not necessarily need a Malcolm X or a Che Guevarra to be validated to ensure that they are taken seriously; everyone has a voice and every voice has the potential to be heard and make the impact that they are seeking especially if they work together.

Additionally along those lines, those who would not normally have access to those in power and large groups, can gain that access through social media because “social media helps level a media playing field dominated by pro–corporate, pro–government, and (in the USA) anti–Black ideologies” (Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark 2016, p.9). In fact, in general, “the Internet empowers traditionally excluded people with the tools to create their own spaces for self–expression, movement–building, and grassroots–organizing” (Fang, 2015, p.139). This creates opportunities for anyone anywhere in the world to make change.

Another example of this ideology is the work done by Tufekci and Wilson (2012) who are pro Social media activism and stated that “social media have greatly empowered protestors [movements] in three key areas: public attention, evading censorship, and coordination or logistics” (Tufekci and Wilson, 2012, p.2). Fang (2015) agrees and says “specifically, the Internet empowers traditionally excluded people with the tools to create their own spaces for self-expression, movement-building, and grassroots-organizing” (Fang, 2015, p.139). This creation of personal space also allows for the personalization

of activism which makes the movements and the causes they support personal. That, as discussed earlier increases the individual commitment of participants to the movement and to obtaining change.

Because every individual can access platforms and engage in activism the imbalance due to hierarchy that existed previously is now less of an issue. Also, because social media allows for free speech there is less external control of messages and how they are dispersed. The people are now framing the dominant school of thought. Freelon, McIlwain and Clark (2016) stated that “social media helps level a media playing field dominated by pro-corporate, pro-government, and (in the USA) anti-Black ideologies” (Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2016, p.9). Yes, the tools were created by these same institutions, but they were given to the people to use freely. It is up to the people to use the tools to their advantage. As Fang (2015) asserts: “Radical change to America’s systems of oppression cannot be accomplished solely via tools developed by, reliant on, and profitable to corporate America. But that does not mean that social media has no place within the toolkit of the discerning social justice activist” (Fang, 2015, p.141). This is a pertinent observation because while social media gives us a lot of freedom, many people use tools without fully understanding them (Van Dijck, 2012) which simply means that in order to harness its full power, participants need to invest the time to understand the tools that they are using.

Trottier and Fuchs (2014) express the transformational impact of using social media for activism in comparison to traditional activism when they asseverate that

“the use of social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter—as platforms of organization, recruitment and mobilization—constitutes in many respects a veritable rupture in this trajectory. The shift towards the use of commercial platforms of communication not only belies practical motives of efficiency—such as the aim of reaching more people but also reflects a different world view than the one pervading radical politics in previous decades” (Trottier and Fuchs, 2014, p.67).

This is simply to say that times are changing, tools are changing, and possibilities are changing; so now more than ever it is up to individuals participating in these movements and passionate about change to take advantage of the changing times and use their newfound power for good.

Without the participants, the movements cannot exist, and the success of movements is contingent upon their participants. Saunders affirms that social spaces are formed, moulded, and determined only by participants (Saunders, 2006), speaking directly to the quantity and quality of participation. If users are very active and produce quality content, there is a much higher likelihood of success whereas if there are many users and the quality is low they will not be taken seriously; this will also be the case even in movements with very few users but with good content because there may not be enough of them to garner and warrant attention from those in a position to make a change. It is therefore up to the people to create the change.

### 2.3.6 How to use social media activism to create change

As is commonly said in the world of activism, “the revolution itself will not solely be tweeted”. The first thing to understand when speaking about creating change by using social media activism is that social media must be seen as the tool and not the entire movement. It must work in tandem with traditional forms of protest and then together along with any other tools utilised by the participants and the participants themselves, then be the movement. Social media has brought a radical change to America’s systems of oppression; however, the change cannot be accomplished solely via tools developed by, reliant on, and profitable to corporate America. Social media allows normal users to use it to access the profitable companies directly. Like the expression “the more the merrier”. The more methods of activism that can be employed or utilized, the better. Through using different means of activism, the impact is much greater and more extensive.

This research has seen that many participants value in-person participation, however it is almost impossible to ascertain with any amount of certainty how it should be combined with social media to be the most effective in achieving change. Some have argued that a movement must exist and thrive first and only then utilize Social Media as a supplementary tool of sorts in order to be effective. Iskander (2011) for example, expressed that

“the previous failed attempts by activists to use social media to organize substantial protests show that momentum is required at the national level for social media to

amplify and support. Social media could not organize a movement or supply momentum to a protest that was not there” (Iskander, 2011, p.1228).

This is in a sense true because social media is not a movement, but a tool used by the movements for organization and visibility. Social media is a tool just as protests are a tool.

What remains evident however, is that anyone desiring audience participation in an activity or needing the public’s support to obtain, create or change something, flocks to social media to get it. This applies to everything from social movements: “More than any other avenue, activists around the world have used Social Media to call for direct action and seek global coverage for their causes” (Tayebi, 2013, p.92), to politics (Van Dijk, 2012) where it is evident that “while some have come relatively late to membership on Facebook/Twitter, it is unarguable that all politicians recognize its importance, given the considerable claims for the Internet’s prominence in an evolving public sphere” (Ross and Bürger, 2014, p.47), especially since “the dissemination of information has also become a tool that pressures politicians and state media to be more open” (Iskander, 2011, p.1234). People are able to hold those in power accountable for their actions and lack of action at times which places the onus on those in power to make the changes.

Another reason, social media cannot be used alone to obtain change is because it is not a completely free platform. There are restrictions that can be placed on activists very easily (people can be banned, posts can be deleted by others, pictures and videos can be deemed as inappropriate and flagged) as well as technological complications. So, in these cases, it is good to also have in-person protests which cannot be censored or deleted.

In addition to the combination of social media activism and traditional activism, it is important that there be a large number of participants in the movement because the more people speak up, the louder the message will become and the harder it will be to ignore. Bakshy (2013) touches on the need for a large quantity of participants to be taken seriously in this statement regarding the gay marriage equality movement by speaking about how the organizers of the Human Rights Campaign encouraged Facebook users to post the modified red logo for equality as their default profile picture on the 25 March 2013, which was one day before the U.S. Supreme Court’s beginning deliberations on Proposition 8 which pertained to California’s same-sex marriage ban. Within 24 hours, almost three million people in the United States and the rest of the world replaced their Facebook profile pictures with this logo which saw an increase of 120 percent in the usual



number of profile picture modifications (Bakshy, 2013). That movement was successful, and the law was passed. And while there was a lot of groundwork done, it would be incorrect to say that the large social media presence and activism did not play a part in the movement's success.

Another important attribute needed to ensure success with the use of social media activism is consistency. Social media platforms are also a place where there is free speech with multiple tools to facilitate communication and organization within the movement. As such, one way to use social media successfully is to utilize all the tools available and necessary for coordination because many activists have expressed that social media was the main instrument used for communicating and organizing in-person protests. It makes online and offline activism easier.

Lastly, social media must be used to disseminate the calls for action for the movements as well as to hold those in power accountable because they too have social media and are affected by what is posted. They also use social media for personal and political gain and therefore, for direct access to them, social media is the easiest path. Iskander (2011), also pro social media activism, speaks on the increased need for accountability for those in power due to social media; citizens can now hold politicians more accountable and ensure that their promises are kept, and that they do their jobs well because the world is watching. (Iskander 2011, p.1234). Politicians cannot claim that they are unaware of a problem if many people participate because their actions will be public and, in some cases, published. Also due to the transparency of social media, they are forced to be accountable openly; everything is monitored and recorded, and as such those in power must at least respond to their constituents or face backlash.

The benefits of SMA are endless and therefore its use is extremely beneficial for any movement (Rotman et al., 2011; Breuer and Farooq, 2012; Dimond et al., 2013). Those benefits are evident in both the BLM and CIM movements however it would still be insightful to gain participant input on how they used Facebook, why they used it and how often they used it to benefit the movements. Social media activism is unique and can be simple but impactful.

One of the major potential downfalls of social media activism and a hot button topic in the field is "slacktivism" and that will be discussed in the next chapter. However prior to getting there it must be said that while slacktivism can hinder the success of a social media movement, SMA is a powerful and tool that, when used the right way by the right people

at the right time, can help people to obtain the changes that are so desperately needed and change the world for the better. The problem is not the tool itself; the problem lies within how the tool is used.

## **2.4 Slacktivism Vs. Activism**

### **2.4.1 Brief Context of Slacktivism and Activism**

To begin this chapter, there will be a photo of an interview published by *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* in which Alicia Garza was interviewed about the Black Lives Matter movement and highlighted is a section in which she speaks honestly and extensively about the use of social media activism, pitfalls of slacktivism, and additionally the importance and irreplaceability of social media use in movements but in Black Lives Matter in particular. This piece of research provides invaluable context for the discussion of slacktivism versus activism and serves as a great transition from the previous chapter speaking about social media activism.

Way beyond my paygrade. But a lot of our activist youth use it and use it very strategically and use it very consistently. One thing we grapple with a little bit is, how do we deal with the fact that people engage differently on different platforms for different reasons. Sometimes people will be like, 'You didn't say shit about this thing.' And we'll be like, 'Yeah, but you're looking for us on Snapchat, we're not even on Snapchat. So if that's where you're looking, of course you're going to be disappointed, because we don't have a presence there.'

**Do you think it's necessary to cover a wide range of social media, or more important for people to use the tools that they find effective for them?**

I think it's more important for people to use the tools that they find effective for them. And what's even more important than that is to make sure that, no matter what platforms and tools you're using, that you're really taking advantage of being with people in real time.

**Yeah, I'd like to talk more about that. You were talking about how there needs to be a coming back to real space and real time. Do you think that Internet activism, or hashtag activism, is a tool or is it doing something entirely new and different from traditional activism?**

I think that there's still a lot of learning happening about the best ways to mobilize people in a digital age where people's group behaviour has changed. I don't think there's any one answer there. If you look at some of these bigger platforms like MoveOn, for example, they have a huge reach, but they also have a pretty diverse group of people who are involved, and it's in some ways difficult to find the common denominator that will move the majority of people. Then if you look at a platform like ColorOfChange, which has like upwards of two million members, they pay a lot of attention to what their base wants and there are times, I think, when they have to make choices about which issues they step forward on because of the behaviour of their base. But I think where there's a lot of synergy and where there probably wasn't like five years ago or ten years ago, is that the Internet is an important tool to help facilitate organizing at a scale that has impact within its particular context.

What the jury's still out on is, can the Internet replace traditional methods of organizing? I think where

we fall, because we're organizers, is -- no. Nothing can replace the hard work of doing that kind of face-to-face engagement, even though people have tried, across time. I don't think you can shift that, mostly because I think organizing is so very much about relationships, and transforming relationships, and the Internet allows you to build relationships, but they are somewhat artificial. That's the major contradiction there. With a real person in real time, it's actually kind of hard to stay fake. Whereas on the Internet, everything is curated, everything. I don't care if you talk about, 'I'm so honest on Twitter, I'm 100% myself on Facebook.' You're totally curating everything. [laughs] I do it too! So for us, the main path is to figure out what's the best and brightest way to use many tools in cooperation with each other, rather than trying to replace what we already know works with something that we actually don't know if it works in the same way. The big downside to traditional organizing is the scale question. On two feet or in a wheelchair, you can only reach so many people per day. And we've got that shit down to a science. We know how many people we can talk to in an hour in like a traditional canvassing operation. We even know how many of those people that we talk to will agree to become a part of something. But I think, with the Internet, the lifespan is shorter. It's pretty hard to keep somebody involved and engaged on the Internet in the same thing over a long period of time, which is actually what we're going for.

**With forms of protests, like a march, do you think there's a visibility that makes it a more effective form of protest than tweeting something, for instance?**

It really depends on the context. We've had to organize actions against many different kinds of targets. We had to launch something against a crowd-funding site and, actually, the most effective way to target them was on the Internet because everything they did was on the Internet, and I'm not even sure they had a physical location.

**So holding a march in protest would not be productive? [laughs]**

Yeah! [laughs] We had a big blow-out with them. They actually withdrew \$23,000 that we had raised for legal defense for activists, because somebody had flagged our fundraiser. And then, they were 'holding it' until

The main gist of this interview with Alicia Garza, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement (Mulcahy, 2017) is that while social media does have a lot to offer to activism and social movements in general, and is sometimes the only tool that can be utilized in order to get a specific job done, traditional activism is still very much needed and is also possibly the most important and effective form of advocating for change particularly through in-person contact and participation which is seen as more powerful than communication online. In addition to that, what was made very clear by Garza in the interview is that while social media has extensive reach to individuals around the world and in-person activism has limited capabilities in terms of access, once contact is made in person the effects tend to be longer lasting than those created when contact is made online.

Another key point from the interview is that social media does have the potential to become slacktivism or hashtag activism if it is used in the wrong way, however, if it is used correctly as a tool, it can be invaluable to a social movement especially in the area of organization and mobilization which has been a common finding in this research so far.

In shaping this chapter on slacktivism, the most important points to keep in mind from this interview are that traditional activism is irreplaceable and will always be necessary when possible for social movements; that slacktivism does still exist and it can negatively impact or affect a movement; that social media is not as effective as traditional activism is for many of the goals of social movements; that in spite of that, social media does have good uses and can serve as a beneficial tool when used correctly; that one differentiating factor between slacktivism and social media activism is the quality of participation and motivation for participation as well as how invested participants and movement organizers are in obtaining the changes sought by the movement; that a lot of research still needs to be done on the pitfalls of slacktivism including how much it can hurt or help a movement; that movement organizers like Garza remain uncertain about the absolutely best way to use social media for their movement and how it should be combined with traditional activism; that engagement online does not tend to last as long as engagement in person (and therefore those who participate in social movements in person are more likely to be consistent within a movement than those who participate in activism solely online); and lastly that for the moment, social media activism is necessary and helpful and should be combined with traditional activism instead of replacing it.

#### 2.4.2 Overview of slacktivism and activism

A lot of research contains vital information about what slacktivism is, how it has failed and the potential it has to be an instrument of change. Some are critical of the use of social media within movements hinging on the negative definition of slacktivism (Ma, 2009; Gladwell, 2010; McCafferty, 2011), others are optimistic about its use and potential (Rotman et al., 2011; Breuer and Farooq, 2012; Dimond et al., 2013) and others are sceptical or uncertain about whether or not it is effective (Christensen, 2011; Jones and Wayland, 2013; Castells, 2015). They all analyse at least one movement and speak about the success or failure of the movement particularly pertaining to the usage of social media activism or slacktivism within the movement. That is why it is important to define what it means to have a successful social media movement and how to achieve success. But first, it is necessary to understand what exactly slacktivism is.

It should be noted that this research argues that Social media activism does have the potential to become slacktivism and have little impact, however, it counts as activism depending on the intentions and actions of participants and it has the capacity to effect great change. It recognizes that many digital activism movements have been successful because of their use of online tools as well as their understanding of the rhetorical situation and exigencies involved (Skoric, 2012).

#### 2.4.3 What is slacktivism?

The use of Social Media in movements is not always effective and sometimes can be seen more as “Slacktivism” rather than “Activism”. Slacktivism as defined by the Oxford Dictionary is “actions performed via the Internet in support of a political or social cause but regarded as requiring little time or involvement”. The Oxford Dictionary cited signing an online petition as Slacktivism. The general understanding of what slacktivism entails is similar to Morozov’s definition of slacktivism which states it is “political activities that have no impact on real-life political outcomes, but only serve to increase the feel-good factor of participants” (Morozov, 2009). That means that people do participate online in social movements and do take action, but the issue does not lie in the actions they take, it lies in the motivation. Slacktivists participate in order to feel accomplished regardless of

whether or not they have actually accomplished anything, and as if they have contributed to something, regardless of how effortless or meaningless the contribution is.

The term slacktivism was initially coined by Dwight Ozard and Fred Clark in 1995 combining the words “slacker” and “activism” in a critique of young people’s little communicative efforts towards effecting change. Back then an example of slacktivism was planting a tree or wearing a bandana instead of going out and marching or a hunger strike (Christensen, 2011). The term adopted its present meaning in relation to social media when Malcolm Gladwell, a writer for *The New Yorker* spoke about it in 2010 describing slacktivists as people signing online petitions and sharing things on Facebook instead of marching with banners and getting into altercations with the police (Gladwell, 2010). The main point is that people do act, but the actions do not require much effort or sacrifice which indicates that people are participating just to participate instead participating and doing what it takes to get change.

Another definition by Kristofferson, White and Peloza (2013) highlights some very integral points about what slacktivism is. They express that slacktivism is “a willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause with an accompanying lack of willingness to devote significant effort to enact meaningful change” (Kristofferson, White and Peloza, 2013, p. 1149). This exists in almost every social media movement however and simply means that people are willing to participate just as long as they do not have to sacrifice much in terms of time, money, or anything else of value which itself speaks to how valuable the movement is to them. They will support the cause in menial ways for whatever the reason might be but that is as far as they will go. The change the movement is seeking is not significant enough or urgent enough for them to think it is worth making a sacrifice for, or perhaps they simply believe that they do not have to do much in order for a change to occur because someone else will.

Very common forms of slacktivism online are changing a profile picture, sharing a post, joining a group, or even something as simple as liking a picture. Clicking a “like” button is easy and does show support to a cause or opinion, but is it activism? Writers like Obar, think that it isn’t, stating that “in regards to social media advancing the goals of advocacy, they indicated that social media provides recognition, nothing more. A like button does not help us in any way” (Obar, 2014, p.224). This is slacktivism at its finest. Yes, people are taking action but no, they do not make a difference.

In spite of this, many people participating in slacktivism sometimes seem to think that their online actions in “aid” of a movement are helpful. Harlow and Guo interviewed grassroots activists and they stated that social media creates perceived activism “where people think because they hit a like button or join a group they are an activist” (Harlow and Guo, 2014, p.472). This however is not the case for everyone and there are some people who do engage in slacktivism, even in large amounts, but are not hopeful that their actions online are making an impact. Dookho (2019) writes about this and states that “while Millennials engage heavily in online activism, they are sceptical of its ability to have an actual impact offline. This phenomenon has been identified by the academic and popular press as “slacktivism or low-cost, low-risk online activism, such as using Facebook’s *like* feature to show support for a political group” (Dookhoo, 2019, p.2). This scepticism begs the question of why they continue to participate but that question will be answered further on. The key identifying factors of slacktivism are highlighted in the quote and those are that slacktivism is low-cost and low risk. This begs another question about whether actions that are low-cost and low risk can ever be considered as activism, but that will also be discussed later down. Another key part of what slacktivism is, is the fact that it has a very small impact or at times, no impact at all in terms of achieving the goals of the movement. This is partially why many people are critical of slacktivism; it seems very insincere and in spite of the fact that the actions do not take much effort or time, because it is done with the wrong intentions and has no impact, the actions actually end up being a giant waste of both effort and time for both slacktivists and activists in the movement. The next section will discuss other criticism the literature has of slacktivism.

#### 2.4.4 What are the criticisms of slacktivism?

Many authors view social media activism in general as slacktivism and make no distinction of the two (Skoric, 2012; Kristofferson, White, and Pelosa, 2013; Lee and Hsieh, 2013; Cook et al., 2014, Hoffman et al., 2016; Castells, 2015; McCaughey and Ayers, 2013; Chan-Olmsted, Cho, and Lee, 2013; Breur and Farooq, 2012; Skoric, 2012; Howard and Parks, 2012; McCafferty, 2011). These authors for the most part believe that traditional forms of protest are not only the best way to achieve change, but the only way to achieve change. They think that social media activism or slacktivism ends up doing much more harm than good within movements.

Several activists are also weary of slacktivism, similar to what was stated by Garza in her interview, they believe that there is no substitute for in-person participation. Many activists are even resentful of the label “activist” being given to those who only participate online because since they did not have to make any significant sacrifices, were not emotionally invested, and showed little commitment, they did not earn the title “activist”.

A lot of the research has also shown that young people participating in slacktivism do believe that they are somehow making a difference or at least feel good doing it. However, Foreman cautions against that saying “It is, however, a mistake for *slacktivists* to view their clicks, shares, and tweets as comprehensive, meaningful, intentional engagement of an issue. Engagement is costly in terms of time and often money” (Foreman, 2018, p.3). In other words, the movements are spending a lot of resources on increasing engagement online and can be fooled into thinking that they are achieving success within the movement in terms of quantity of participation and awareness when looking at statistics on engagement and ultimately believe that their investments are paying off. They would think that because of the large amount of slacktivism which includes liking, sharing, changing pictures, etc. and would be calculated or factored into the statistics for engagement within the movement. This not only misleads activists; it is a sign that money is being wasted on false engagement because those participating and therefore the movement is not making as much progress as it was believed to have made based on the stats.

Another way, that statistics are being challenged or are unclear, is within the concept that when young people participate in slacktivism (the low-cost and low-risk opinions) it means that they are not heavily invested in the movement and will therefore not participate in actual activism (high-cost and high-risk), and make sacrifices in order to fight for change. The research is split on this, with many authors like the ones previously mentioned believing that *slacktivists* never participate in activism, versus others like Kwak et al., who believe the opposite. Kwak et al., actually found no correlation in their studies between the types of participation people engage in online and whether or not they participate offline in traditional methods and forms of activism.

It is very difficult, if not impossible to determine the exact impact that slacktivism has on social movements, but the overarching consensus is that it is negatively impacting it. They clearly declare:



“It is important to note that we do not observe a negative effect of expression on participation as the narcotizing dysfunction or Slacktivism accounts would predict, but rather find no evidence to suggest that political expression on social media is influencing young people’s offline participation.” (Kwak et al., 2015 p. 215)

This is contrary to a lot of the research on this topic but could revolutionize views of slacktivism if it is true. Part of the problem lies in the difficulty of analysis of the effects of actions online.

Another very difficult thing to do sometimes is distinguish between slacktivism and social media activism, and then further whether actions online, help, hurt or do not affect the cause they are on behalf of. Some authors are conscious of that. Lane and Dal Cin (2018) revealed that

“when young people share a video from a cause they care about on their Facebook wall, they are engaging in both impression management and a complex performance of identity with perceived social consequences. Online sharing is often viewed as low-cost participation (because it is fast and easy to accomplish) but sharing social and political views online is in fact a highly delicate matter.” (Lane and Dal Cin, 2018, p.1527).

This simply shows that in spite of the criticisms of slacktivism as low-cost and low risk, sometimes it can have an impact. In the example stated, while sharing a video for a cause may not obtain the exact change the cause seeks, it does help to increase awareness of the cause and also, as stated has social consequences. Particularly for young people, the possibility of social consequences can be viewed as a high risk and this further complicates the research on slacktivism and criticisms of slacktivism because slacktivism should technically be low risk.

Regardless of whether or not actions are classified as slacktivism, it is useful to understand and know why people participate in it in order to fully understand participants, their motivations, and possibly make activism more appealing to participants in the future. As a result of that, the next question will identify, address, and analyse what exactly is so appealing about slacktivism and why people tend to participate in it.

#### 2.4.5 Why does slacktivism exist?

Before answering this very important question, this section will begin with an illuminating and revelatory quote from Foreman.

“We are all “slacktivists” to some degree if we have any presence on social media that goes beyond posting selfies and pictures of our dogs, kids, and trips. I click a button and feel like I have done something to express solidarity and raise awareness for at-risk kids; I share information that I think others would find interesting, or I might share a post to indicate that I care about the issue.”  
(Foreman, 2018, p.1)

This was one very important realization of the research. Everyone on social media engages in low-cost or low-risk activity that has to do with some level of activism, and if that is the criteria to establish actions as “slacktivism”, then everyone is guilty of slacktivism. This question of “why” is answered within the quote as well where Foreman says that people engage in slacktivism because it is self-validating. Once you have liked something, you feel like you have shown support to the individual or cause that the post is about; you share things to help others increase their knowledge; you post things about causes to show solidarity with the movement; all of these things are low-cost and low-risk, however, the intentions behind them and even the actions themselves, if you think about it, do sound like activism and not slacktivism. Perhaps this is an additional reason why slacktivism exists; it can actually help sometimes, or at least make one feel like they have helped or have made a contribution to a worthy cause.

The problem with “slacktivism”, however occurs not just when people participate in low-cost and low-risk activities; the problem comes about when they do that, feel as if it was enough effort and then do nothing else. When people do absolutely nothing, they are able to sense a discrepancy and feel unvalidated or useless. “Token displays of support may reduce such a discrepancy, thereby rendering subsequent action unnecessary” (Lane and Dal Cin, 2018, p.1526). People participate to feel validated and useful, and then they do nothing else. That is when the problem occurs because not participating in person or in traditional forms of activism which would pose a higher risk and have a higher cost, will set the movement back significantly because those actions have proven to be the most effective.

The concept of engaging in slacktivism in order to bring awareness was a recurring reason for participation in slacktivism in the research. Coffé and Chapman (2014) write in their study “Changing Facebook Profile Pictures as Part of a Campaign: Who Does it and Why?” that the most commonly cited motivation of young adults participating in social media activism is to “spread awareness” (Coffé and Chapman, 2014, p.18) Interestingly enough, when one posts in order to bring awareness of a cause, one is also bringing awareness of one’s self because the simple fact that one posts about something reveals a lot about the one posting it. This train of thought is particularly applicable with college students and younger participants because they are still in the process of forming their identity and act based on how they want to be perceived. Slacktivism is also a way of forming external perception of one’s self. Thorson (2013) shows that college students approach sharing with concerns about how they present themselves and the social ramifications of their posts (Thorson, 2013) and Davis’ research shows that “young people balance their desire to express themselves with the knowledge that they are under constant scrutiny” (Davis, 2012), which is a process that Xenos, Vromen, and Loader (2014), have named a “personalized politics of self-actualization and expressive engagement” (Xenos, Vromen, and Loader, 2014, p. 155). They therefore act or “slack” accordingly to make a statement and on the occasion that it is not slacktivism, make a difference as well.

Based on the research, Social Media Activism can easily be confused with slacktivism, however the motives for participation seem to be the best way to distinguish them. People participate in slacktivism because it takes little effort, is low-risk, low-cost and can make them feel good about themselves, validated, or like they somehow made a contribution to the world and therefore fulfilled their purpose here on this earth.

A fascinating discovery was that the same reasons that people participate in slacktivism can be what encourages social media activism and therefore could be used as a strategy to gain more participants. For example, many people use Facebook for activism because they already use it in everyday life and it is therefore not just familiar to use, but very easy. However, the ease of Facebook as a tool for movements is a positive thing because “Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice” (Gladwell, 2010, p.45). Even these actions that do not require real sacrifice can be impactful in spite of the fact that many might be concerned about the

intentions of participants. Sometimes the simple things or the smallest things can make the biggest impact especially when they exist in large quantities. “It is a misleading sense that publications on social networking websites, participation in campaigns of sympathy, sharing of information et cetera, cannot fundamentally change something” (Sutkute, 2016, p. 5). These simple actions do have the power to make an impact, and that in its essence is why people continue to participate through these modes.

In fact, these small ways of participation, or the slacktivism, contribute to user identity online which gives participants a vested interest in the movement, keeps them in the loop and ultimately may lead them to becoming more active. The option to personalize activism online is part of the appeal to slacktivism. People also have the freedom to determine what their activism looks like and how effective they want it to be then act accordingly. Users can create and shape their personal online presence and also the impact those they engage with can make with collective effort. Saunders states that “the Internet emerges as social space only through the actions of its users” (Saunders 2006, p.51) The actions taken online are only as effective and powerful as the participants engaging in those actions, and the results they want from them. Through the research it was found that most people participate in slacktivism because they genuinely want to help in some way or form; either by showing support or bringing awareness or making a statement about where they stand. And while, some people certainly participate because sometimes movements are trendy, it can be assumed that the vast majority, particularly those who participate with longevity, actually are participating in activism as opposed to slacktivism solely based on the answer to the question of “why?”. This leads to the next section which seeks to distinguish slacktivism and activism.

In analysing the research and the newfound realisations, it was clear that it was essential to look at intentions of activists and their perceptions of their actions because that would determine what actions they take online and whether they take them seriously, then ultimately whether those actions should be deemed as activism or slacktivism. It was discovered in one of the few articles focusing on participant perception, that participants in SMA do see even the littlest effort online as activism and think that their contributions online constitute them as activists (Harlow and Guo, 2014, p.472). This may come across as negative, but any action aimed at advancing a cause is activism regardless of the amount of effort it takes. Then, ‘With the advent of new technologies, such as social networking sites, people are able to connect and organize around common beliefs and

causes despite geographic and time restrictions' (Edrington and Lee, 2018, p. 302).which has seen a significant increase in both activism and slacktivism worldwide.

#### 2.4.6 How is slacktivism different from activism

The main distinction that has been made between slacktivism and activism by existing research so far is that slacktivism consists of actions that are low-risk and/or low-cost, while activism consists of actions that require sacrifice. This research, however, slightly disagrees in that it has seen that activism can also be low risk and low cost, and also that both slacktivism and activism especially when combined, can be very useful in obtaining change.

As this is the literature review however, in continuation, the literature on this subject matter will be discussed in order to identify the distinguishing factors between social media activism and activism.

A quote by Li et al. (2018) encompasses many of the main known distinguishing elements of slacktivism from activism although the quote was made in criticism of using those labels to determine activism. They state that

“Technology has enabled new digital forms of activism, such as participating in online social movements or signing petitions. Performing these actions in lieu of physical protesting may eliminate accessibility barriers for people with disabilities. Unfortunately, many of these actions are viewed as ‘slacktivism’ – low-effort and low-impact alternatives to meaningful engagement with a cause. Activist rhetoric often refers to ‘putting your body on the line’ or ‘being in the streets’, which not all disabled activists can do” (Li et al., 2018, p.1).

From this, it can be noted that the main identifying factors of slacktivism are that firstly, as has been discussed, the actions occur online instead of physically or in person; secondly, that actions are low effort; thirdly, slacktivism is low impact, fourthly, the engagement is meaningless; and lastly from the quote, that one avoids or simply does not “put their body on the line” or “be in the streets”. These elements are generally agreed upon by the majority of the literature. From this, it may be taken that activism on the other hand does not really occur online, requires significant effort, has an impact, consists of meaningful engagement, and also involves people putting their bodies on the line and being in the streets. However, as the quote says, some people are simply not able to

participate in these ways in spite of the fact that they may want to; and therefore they are forced to participate within the means of their abilities and that participation may look like what is traditionally known as slacktivism. However, this does not seem right which is one of the reasons why this research disagrees with the antiquated perceptions of slacktivism and instead argues that the most important distinguishing factor is the intent and willingness of participants.

Another distinguishing factor of slacktivism is solely participating online and not being at least willing to participate in person and make the sacrifices necessary to achieve change. “Slacktivism includes clicking ‘like’ or ‘retweet’ to show support for a cause, signing online petitions, sharing videos about an issue, and changing your profile picture to support a cause – but not engaging in offline activism” (Dookhoo, 2019, p.6). In an experiment that was conducted by Lee and Hsieh on slacktivism and how it affects in person participation or subsequent related actions, they observed their participants to test whether or not signing a petition online would increase or decrease subsequent donations to charity. “The results were surprising and revealed that when participants signed an online petition, they were more likely to donate to a related charity” (Lee and Hsieh, 2013). This contradicts the earlier supposition by Lane and Dal Cin (2018), who stated that participants are less likely to participate in person after engaging in activism online, because through those online actions they feel satisfied and are absolved of the need to contribute any further. From this part of the research it may be implied that those engaging in slacktivism will be satisfied with participation online, however those whose actions constitute activism, are likely not to stop with the online actions, but participate offline as well.

Another distinction also related to intention of participation is the concept of trends. People who only participate in a movement in order to follow or be a part of a trend are slacktivists, while those who participate in order to obtain the changes needed and desired, are the real activists. Multiple sources spoke about movements succumbing to the perils of slacktivism and trends but they unfortunately do not suggest ways to avoid that outcome (Howard and Parks, 2012; Skoric, 2012; Kristofferson, White and Pelozo, 2013; Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark, 2016; Hoffman et al., 2016). This appeal of trends and participation to be trendy has been the case for several movements however it does not signify that the actions are ineffective or that the movement will fail. In fact, several

movements in the past have thrived off of being trendy (like the #Icebucketchallenge<sup>1</sup>) and have received and exceeded their desired results, regardless of the intentions of participants. This does not negate the fact however that it is crucial to understand the intentions and perception of participants because through understanding that, movements can garner maximum participation, interest, and ultimately, impact.

There is a lot of research on what the problems are within activism, but sadly, not much research on how to solve them. It is hoped that this research will help to solve at least a few of the puzzles and problems existing in the world of social movements, and social media activism.

Another example of a trendy movement that was extremely successful was the movement for gay marriage equality in the USA. Millions of people changed their profile picture to the marriage equality meme which was a relatively easy and simple task requiring little effort and little sacrifice. Many may have posted it to show support for gay marriage equality, however others may have placed it in their profile just to follow the crowd — perhaps their friends and celebrities were all doing it, so they joined in. Adoption of the logo therefore may not necessarily have indicated that the profile owner felt strongly about supporting gay rights equality, however when seeing the millions of participants, it was hard to tell, and intent did not really make a difference. The bill for marriage equality was passed and the movement was successful (Vie, 2014). Slacktivism in this case may have even been a little helpful. It is important to note that the bill was not passed simply because millions changed their profile pictures, there were also millions on the ground protesting for weeks to ensure that the bill was passed. The social media activism surely did help as well though and allowed those who could not be there in person to take a stand.

As time passes by, even the most sceptical people are beginning to see the benefits of social media activism and with that, an evolution of thought has come about dismissing the idea that online activism is automatically slacktivism and seeking to make the distinction between the two. These scholars are also accepting social media activism as valid and impactful but only when combined with traditional activism (Ma, 2009; Lee, 2013; Jones and Wayland, 2013; Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017; Howard and Parks, 2012; Gupta, 2019; Chan-Olmsted, Cho, and Lee, 2013; Eltantawy and Wiest,

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<sup>1</sup> Existed to promote awareness of Lou Gehrig's or ALS and had millions of people participate worldwide in dumping a bucket of ice over their heads and/or donating to the cause.

2011; Ahmed, Jaidka, and Cho, 2017). This is because even though social media is a very powerful tool on its own, it cannot replace traditional forms of activism in terms of effectiveness and longevity. As such, it needs to be combined with traditional activism and only then will movements achieve their full potential for change. (Hamilton, 2016). In the meantime, there is a lot of work which needs to be done in order to harness the power of those engaging in slacktivism and convert their efforts to activism and be inspired to make the changes that the world needs.

#### 2.4.7 How can slacktivism be transformed into activism?

A very important and reflective quote from Foster et al. (2019) will start this section and hopefully inspire reflection on the perception of social media activism and slacktivism. They state quite boldly in response to criticism of social media activism:

“These criticisms assert that social media activism is ineffective for social change, and instead serves only to make us feel good. Inherent in this argument are several assumptions: (1) social media activism is understood only as the click of a button; (2) as such a small action, it must be ineffective; and, (3) that ‘feeling good’ does not play a role in activism. In contrast, we argue that (1) social media activism can be conceptualized as a necessary type of collective action, namely consensus mobilization, and as such, need not be discounted as effective activism, (2) positive feelings have an important role in promoting activism, and (3) there are conditions under which the positive feelings that result from social media activism may be more likely to promote future activism.” (Foster et al., 2019, p.1)

The main takeaway from this quote is that in order to ensure that social media activism is effective and in order to easily convince those participating in slacktivism to convert to activism, it is imperative that through participation, they will feel like they are making a difference and a part of something bigger than themselves. As most movements are already attempting to make a difference and inherently exist as a collective, the only thing that organizers and current activists need to do, is communicate the importance and the joy that can be obtained from joining, serving as an activist and of course getting the change they are fighting for. Foster et al. (2019) speak to this when they say that “feeling good after social media activism is not necessarily an end, but a means to an end. And perceived power, which can be used for good, may be a simple way to help people



increase the effectiveness of their social media activism.” (Foster et al., 2019, p.6). If people feel empowered by what they are doing and are convinced that through their actions they can make a difference, chances are that they will participate.

This simply means, that awareness of the issues being protested must increase and take at least an equal seat of importance for movement goals. The more people are aware of what is at stake and how it can affect them, the more likely they will be to participate and ensure that their participation is impactful and effective. If they see participation as personal as opposed to a social trend which is fleeting, and acknowledge the potential that the problems being addressed have to negatively affect their lives and the lives of those they care about, this will provide adequate motivation for activism which can include spreading awareness of the cause. What better way to do that than to meet them where they are, online, and not only communicate with them there but charge them with the mission to spread the word. As such, slacktivism can become activism if a social media strategy is developed by the movement and it is used to spread information about the cause and serve as very helpful in increasing awareness which is also very important.

“Unlike mobilization-focused activism, the goal of awareness-oriented activism is not to organize a team or demonstration, but rather to promote a particular issue in order to shift public opinion or increase general awareness. We should not dismiss such activity as meaningless simply because its impact appears less overt; evidence shows social media activism to be a tool of empowerment.” (Holcomb, 2016, p.8)

Online activism can therefore be put to good use and ultimately, because research suggests that people participating online are also likely to participate offline, chances are that more people will also engage in in-person activism once they have realized the importance for the activism and also previously participated in the movement online. It should be noted that this strategy has been utilised both by Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence Movement in the past.

Along the lines of increasing awareness and promoting the utilisation of the tools already being used by slacktivists in order to convert them to activists, one other way to obtain the change within them is to highlight the potential impact of the activities and actions they are already participating in online. Also, based on the research, the establishment of identity and formation of how one is seen by those accessing online profiles is very important. Particularly with social movements, people take great care in showing who they are and where they stand. Therefore movements, can use this information to

encourage individuals to not only establish an online presence within the movement, but to customize their online platform and establish an online identity as an activist for the movement. In order to do this, movements could themselves create identities and establish identifying markers for participants.

One such marker which was used in the past is changing the profile picture to a specific symbol. This makes a statement that the owner of the profile is aligned with the movement and as such,

“the ability to change one’s Facebook profile picture can thus be seen as a prime opportunity to create a (political) identity. It allows Facebook users to show their friends political issues they care about and, in that process, construct an identity which corresponds with how they wish to be perceived” (Coffé and Chapman, 2014, p.9).

This is a simple and effective way of transforming slacktivism to activism because while the action required does not take much effort, it can be very effective. It is effective because the power of awareness and advocacy-based activism primarily lies in the convergence of mass messages, such as the 18 million Facebook users who changed their profile pictures to support the Human Rights Campaign (Vie, 2014). While the small exhibits of individual support such as simply changing a Facebook profile picture may sometimes be misplaced or misunderstood as useless, they still serve as visual and real symbols that may have a positive impact (Vie, 2014). Another good example of this is the movement for breast cancer awareness. While putting a pink breast cancer awareness profile filter on Facebook may not raise more money for research or heal anyone with breast cancer, it can serve as a reminder to all women that they need to schedule a mammogram or check for lumps in order to ensure that they are cancer free or can detect it early if they are not (Skoric, 2012). This is evidence that even in the case of those people who might still participate in “activism” online for the wrong reasons, and may not have the intended or desired intentions, the message sent by the actions online still have the potential to make a positive impact and/or achieve the movement goals.

In the case of Facebook profile pictures, people will be changing them regardless because it is a big part of their online identity, but with the addition of knowledge about the movement which will undoubtedly increase passion for the movement, and combining that with the movement’s established collective identity online, this simple change can have a powerful impact and transform slacktivists to activists who are ready to take action

in order to obtain results. It is a win-win situation and will ensure increased success of movements.

Next, to address the point made by Li et al. (2018) about online activism being seen solely as slacktivism and the fact that sometimes, participants want to participate offline but are physically unable to and as such only participate online because that is the best they can do; a suggestion to transform slacktivism to activism is to ensure that online and offline activism act in tandem and have equal parts to play in the mobilization and activities taking place in the movements. That way, those contributing online, have the opportunity to make contributions that are just as significant as those being made in-person. “Connecting offline and online activism could increase the visibility of disabled activists, thus increase the importance of remote activism and challenging its perception as ‘slacktivism’” (Li et al, 2018, p.10). In today’s society where social platforms have an array of tools which allow for people to be present even when they are not in the same place, like video calling and livestreams, now is a great time to make movements more easily accessible and make participation a bit more flexible. This can only encourage increased participation which will increase people’s personal investments in the movements and ultimately help to increase the results from the activism taking place online and offline.

To end this chapter, it must be reiterated that actions that are low-risk and low-cost, like anything else in the world can be used for good or the opposite. It is up to the users to determine how they are used and what effects they have if any. Slacktivists are those who utilize these tools for the wrong or no purposes and that lack of intention to use the tools for good and motivation for change is what sets them apart from activists. Therefore in order to change slacktivists to activists, it is important to instil in them a passion for change and that can only be done through educating them about the issues of the movement and showing them how they are negatively impacted by the reality and why they will benefit from a change. Also importantly, is that movements not only have a collective identity offline, but establish that identity online so that those who are unable to participate in person may participate as fully as possible and have as large of an impact as possible while feeling like they are contributing members of the activist community. Additionally, to reach slacktivists and have them instead participate in activism, it is important for movements to meet them where they are and utilise the tools that are already

in use and can be used to the significant advantage of the social movements if they are used in the right way.

As understanding of social media activism increases, the existence of slacktivism will decrease. Along with that, the negative opinions of social media activism will also decrease as they already have over time. Not all social media activism is slacktivism. Social media has played an important role in current day social movements and can continue to do that and even increasingly do so if the platforms are used to their full potential and used both intentionally and consistently. The impact will also increase once the participants increase, and to ensure the maximum impact, the onus is on the movements to educate those who participate in how to use the tools available; not just the traditional forms of activism, but the new forms due to the technological advancements being made like social media. This will allow for people to participate regardless of physical ability or physical location which are things that would have hindered participation in the past.

The world is evolving, and activism needs to evolve with it. Activism needs to improve as the world evolves because all the tools to do so are already at the disposal of mankind and will make activism more effective. In saying this, it is important to say that traditional forms of activism which proved fruitful in the past and effective, should still by all means be utilised but they have to incorporate the technological advances and find a way to work in tandem harmoniously in order to obtain the changes in law and society that the entire world so desperately needs. “Despite the emergence of Slacktivism as the newest iteration of this longstanding fear, there is ample evidence that low-threshold political participation on social media can “spill-over” into higher-threshold offline engagement” (Kwak et al, 2018, p. 199). Investing in understanding and utilizing social media activism can only be beneficial in the long run.

This is something that most of the researchers referenced in this paper would agree on regarding the theme of slacktivism and social media activism; the world is in need of change and everyone capable of achieving change must use every effective tool available (new and old) in order to engage in the most impactful, effective, efficient, and successful activism that the world has ever seen. The movements are capable of coming up with strategies to do this and with the help of researchers in the field providing a better understanding of the tools, an effective approach to the existence of impactful activism both on and off of social media can be established.

## **2.5 The Use of Facebook as a Tool in Social Movements**

### **2.5.1 Overview of The Use of Facebook in Social Movements**

Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms (if not the most popular) ever created. It has been used in versatile ways ever since its inception and as it continues to grow and develop over the years, its users and their usage has developed with it. Facebook has been the epicentre of social media and sits alongside Twitter in the epicentre of social media activism. As the majority of the research on social media activism has already been done on Twitter for reasons stated earlier, the main social media platform that will be the focus of this research will be Facebook.

Facebook has been used by movements worldwide from #ArabSpring, to #OccupyWallStreet to #Kony2012, and literally thousands of others. Time and time again, the benefits of using it for activism have been made clear through the successes of several of those movements in terms of changes made that they sought to make and of course the sheer popularity of the movements which led to global awareness of some very important causes.

Two of those causes are the subjects of this research, Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence Movement. Many people around the world learned about these movements on Facebook and many other people joined the movements on Facebook as well. Both movements attribute a significant amount of what they have been able to achieve to Facebook and of course see the continued benefit of using it as a platform because both movements are still active on Facebook and using it to communicate, organize and mobilize.

The widespread popularity of Facebook and the presence of those in power as well as celebrities on the platform, make it a great tool to be used when appealing for change. Users can appeal directly to those who can make the changes as well as celebrities for example who hold a lot of influence worldwide and can help to immediately spread awareness of a cause and distribute a call to action.

Black Lives Matter has well over half a million group members on Facebook from around the world in its main group and in breakout groups of the movement, they have tens of thousands of members. The same can be said for the Catalan Independence groups on Facebook for both sides. In total, with all of the groups on Facebook regarding Catalan

Independence there are also hundreds of thousands of members with subgroups like “American for Catalonia” and groups for each of the political parties and activist movements as well.

The simple fact that so many people are using the platform is reason enough for it to be studied especially since so many are using the platform for the movements being studied. It is hoped that through this portion of the literature review there will be some insight into how Facebook is used by social movements and why it is effective as a tool in social media activism.

### 2.5.2 Facebook as a social media platform: Statistics

To start off, this section will reveal and analyse the basic statistics and logistics for Facebook as a social media platform. Facebook is the most widely used social media platform among users of all ages. Facebook is also by far the most popular social medium in the world and currently boasts over two billion monthly active users (Statista.com, 2017<sup>2</sup>). Founded in 2004 but made available for general use in 2006, the company’s mission<sup>3</sup> is “to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together” (Throneburg, 2018, p.10). The tagline was ironically updated after the elections in 2016, where Facebook was naturally utilized significantly in campaigning for the presidential candidates and also against them when the opposition used the tools. The role of Facebook in politics not just in the United States where it was founded and is currently based, became increasingly impossible to ignore and as a result the CEO and founder of Facebook changed the tagline for the company and made some updates to the site in order to preserve its original purpose and also allow for the new purposes it was serving (Constine, 2017). These efforts by Facebook to diversify and accept the evolving use of the platform should be applauded because the changes were inevitable and by accepting them, they were able to better serve users and provide a more personalized experience for each individual based on their needs and how they wanted to use the platform.

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<sup>2</sup> The statistics portal, retrieved April 2015 from: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>.

<sup>3</sup> Facebook’s 2009 mission statement claimed that the company’s goal was to make the world “more open and connected”.

Along those lines, it is very important to discuss how Facebook as a communicative and social interaction tool has evolved in order to be able to compare its intended purpose with the purpose it actually serves today. Müller and Hübner (2014) state that “originally Facebook had been conceived as a private online communication platform that allowed for inter-personal communication of text and visual messages between individuals, but with a reach for larger groups or communities” (Müller and Hübner, 2014, p.28). This is true and it is still fairly private and allowing private interactions and conversations via posts, Facebook messenger, and even video and conference calls. Its initial potential to reach larger communities has expanded. Now, people can not only create and join groups, but create events, forums, sell items, etc. Means of interaction with the wider society and public are endless. This is part of the appeal of social media usage for activism and Facebook in particular for activism. The flexibility in means of communication as well as the diversity of users ensures that anyone anywhere can communicate with a large and diverse audience that they would not normally have access to at any time.

The one minor drawback to this extensive access is that as a result of differences in cultures, languages, and even censorship in some places, accessibility of certain groups can be limited or may simply require a little extra work or research in order to establish contact. These “regional differences exist in terms of what social media are available, to what extent they are used, by whom and in what particular ways” (Gretzel, 2017, p. 2). Each country and culture has their own way of usage which can at times make communication difficult but is also what is so endearing about the platform; it is highly flexible in terms of personalization and allows for individuality on the platform, which as expressed, creates a certain amount of endearment and loyalty from users. Social media is so widely used these days that regardless of how you use it or whether you use it at all, it will affect life in some way. Social media is where many people get their news, where people date, where they conduct business, where they find entertainment, and where they socialize. It has shaped the lives of everyone so much that people’s vocabulary has changed. People now tag, unfriend, like, and post relationship statuses. It has changed the way people socialize with each other both when they are separated and when they are together. Social media has begun to

“impact how we consume information, especially news (e.g. we subscribe to social media influencers’ Twitter feeds), influence how we shop (e.g. we look at ratings and reviews before making a purchase) and have permeated all aspects of

our identity and psyche, changing the way we present and think of ourselves and feel (e.g. we post selfies, obsessively check newsfeeds, lie about ourselves and have Facebook envy)” (Gretzel, 2017, p. 2).

The lives of everyone have been changed in every single aspect and it should be no surprise that social media, and Facebook in particular has changed the face of activism as well.

The beginning of the platform as a space to socialize and the fact that most people use it as a means to socialize primarily, is what makes it especially easier to use by those less serious about politics. It presents matters in a familiar way within a familiar space and makes activism which might seem scary, intense, or boring otherwise, seem necessary and appealing. Facebook has been a pioneer for the use of social media activism. The main benefit of the platform is that it still has the largest number of users and the most diverse users in terms of age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. Due to the large amount of usage it is no surprise that “Facebook appears to have captured a major position in the discourse on the social and political effects of the Internet” (Lev-On, 2019, p. 41) and naturally so. The multiple tools on the platform from statuses to live streams to groups and fundraisers that can serve a multitude of purposes make it particularly appealing for social movements.

### 2.5.3 How Facebook works/ Facebook User Benefits

There are many different and well thought out elements that make using Facebook appealing to users. The backbone of many of those elements is the fact that they are customizable and adjustable and therefore can create a very personalized experience for anyone or any organization with an account. The main reason for a lot of these elements is to maintain and protect the privacy of users which is another thing that people appreciate about the platform.

“Social media platforms offer people different degrees of privacy control. For example, Facebook users are required to create a personal account before they can make relational ties with ‘friends’ and access the content of their network of friends. In addition, users protect their privacy by inviting their friends to join their networks or by signing up for events and groups in which all the participants feel



that they are able to control the outflow of private and valued information to other parties.” (Ahuja, Patel, and Suh, 2018 p. 2206)

This way, people can generally “know” or at least feel like they know who they are interacting with. From just one click on a profile, as long as the information is public, you can see what the person you are interacting with looks like as well as a plethora of other information about them including their city, schools, workplaces, and even entertainment preferences and events they plan to attend or have attended as long as they make that information public. Users have control over what information is made available to the public and can even specify what they want particular individuals or groups to have access to. This serves to protect those on the platform and is also useful in terms of activism because many people worry about their security when they become involved in social movements. Additionally, they are able to possibly access information about, form relationships with, and get to know those that are participating in the movement with them as well.

Regarding the concept of personalization, Facebook has gone even further in order to make usage of the platform more beneficial or pleasurable to users. Analytics based on data gathered about users are used in order to customize the user experience in terms of timeline content, ads, friend suggestions and event suggestions.

“No two users see the same stream of content on Twitter or Facebook; each feed is uniquely crafted based upon the user’s demographics, those of their friends, listed hobbies or interests, posts they *liked*, videos they watched, products they purchased, and places they physically visited.” (Throneburg, 2018, p.2)

As a result of that, user experience is tailored to each individual and many times individuals interested in the same things will help to shape what content each of them is exposed to which ultimately can possibly increase the bonds, connections and commonalities between movement participants. This customization of content does have a downside in that it limits awareness of what is going on outside of an individual’s “bubble”. People are not exposed to the fullness of reality but instead are exposed to their personal realities, or preferred portions of reality, and therefore remain ignorant of alternate schools of thought, programs, and everything else listed above. That is problematic because while self-awareness is important, it is important also to be aware of wider society because awareness is the first step towards change. Also the fact that Facebook is able to “choose” what people see can be seen by some as dangerous because

in the wrong hands, people could be placed at a severe disadvantage due to underexposure of reality or overexposure to harsh realities.

This is the case for most social media platforms. And just like how the platforms tailor content according to each individual's usage, the individuals on the platform tailor their usage and content based on the platform they choose to utilize. "Today, people have access to a variety of social media, and different platforms with varying affordances can be used to serve varying functions" (Kow et al., 2016, p. 3884). People, for example, use Instagram for personal posts and trends, they use Twitter for the news and more political debates, and they use Facebook for socialization and activism. Each platform based on the way it is used and the tools that are available will shape unique experiences and usage within movement participants in particular.

"In this view, there exists an ecology of tools through which people can engage in the discursive, organizing work, integral to the function of a social movement. For example, technologies such as Twitter and Facebook enable users to broadcast messages to larger audiences, whereas technologies like WhatsApp and Instant Messenger facilitate more local, nuanced organizing work between different actors underlying a movement." (Kow et al., 2016, p. 3884)

As such, the availability of different tools on the platforms as well as their flexibility are what will determine how each platform is used and ultimately what role it might play in social media activism. Will someone form a group for the movement or post a blackout picture or perhaps simply share a hashtag? It depends on which platform is being used, who is using it, how they are using it and of course what they want to accomplish by usage.

Facebook has been used widely in the field of activism not only because of the quantity of users, but also because of the quantity of uses it has. It provides the opportunity for social movements to interact with each other, establish the movement strategies and ensure that they are relayed clearly to members, and then put things in place to ensure that activism occurs as desired and as necessary in order to obtain change. Through Facebook, many movements have been able to achieve unprecedented levels of success, and the platform is known for its ability to facilitate social movements particularly in mobilisation.

“Facebook has been widely presented as a mobilization tool, a ‘springboard’ for ‘recruiting’ new movement members and preparing them for offline action much of which involves instances of spatial assembling, with spatiality incorporating both symbolic and material standing (e.g., the Occupy Wall Street Movement and activists occupying central public squares, from Tahrir Square in Cairo to Syntagma Square in Athens).” (Ueno and Bélanger, 2019, p. 2)

Facebook has replaced the newsletters and coded messages of movements in the past and users are able to privately and efficiently organize, rally, and mobilize members and communities in order to get much needed work done. Movements now expand beyond the tight-knit physical communities and extend towards places participants have never been before with people they have never met. However, because this online presence is such a vital part of the world that humans live in today, it is trusted, and is accepted by users.

Facebook has truly and continues to truly revolutionize social movements and social media activism. The next sections will speak on exactly how it has been able to do that for movements through firstly examining its role in communication for social movements followed by an examination of its role in organisation and mobilization in social movements.

#### 2.5.4 The Role of Facebook in Activism: Communication

One of the main uses of Facebook is communication. This is not only due to the fact that users are provided with unlimited access to other Facebook users and can send group messages as well as private messages that can be text or multimedia or even voice recordings, but because it is absolutely free. It is a quick and easy way to communicate with anyone around the world as long as they have access to the platform. It is also a quick and easy way to disseminate messages, and graphics and social movements use Facebook for this reason in addition to others. They can identify exactly who is interested in the movement and who their audience is because those people will most likely have joined their group. They can send one message to the group and suddenly in seconds hundreds of thousands of people receive it and understand it without there ever having to even be any verbal communication. The communication that exists however is two-way and while social movements and organisations are communicating with their followers or

group members, the group members are also able to speak back and speak up when necessary.

“Today, in Facebook, one of the biggest social networking sites, many users join activist, political and social groups. In this way, they get an opportunity to express their feelings and ideas about social and political subjects. Facebook’s features make it an excellent tool for informing, mobilizing, and organizing political supporters. In this context, internet activism, also known as digital activism, social media activism or cyber activism is a form of participation in social movements via electronic communication technologies such as social media.” (Ravanoğlu Yilmaz, 2017, p.149)

As stated, by engaging in social media relating to social movements, if participants are active with the intent to further the movement or a cause through their actions, then they are engaging in activism. Facebook and other similar social media platforms therefore facilitate activism.

One of the communication features that is appealing on Facebook is that people have the ability to choose their audience and can even choose which audience members to exclude without them knowing. This was seen in the social movement studied by Kow et al. (2016) and they discovered that “while Facebook was used most widely to engage publics that consumed and circulated a large volume of relevant information, undercurrents and subgroup interactions (e.g., class schedule) were purposefully targeting an intended audience. “(Kow et al., 2016, p. 3891) This ability to specify one’s audience, gives one the ability to customize the message and therefore make it more specific to the recipients which leads to more effective communication which benefits both the senders and the receivers of those messages. Through this, movements, and movement leaders in particular are able to plan and delegate tasks.

It is also important when speaking about communication through Facebook to remember that not only the messages should be tailored towards the recipients, the format of messages should be appropriate as well in order to increase effectiveness. When all of this thought goes into communication both the individuals receiving the messages and those sending them become more invested in the movements and the outcomes because by taking the time and effort to engage, they are investing in the success of the movement. Pingree touched on that. He confirms, “through the process of composing and posting messages, individuals are more likely to pay close attention to and learn from information

they have received, elaborate on and justify their position, and establish a greater level of commitment to their ideas (Pingree, 2007)”. Based on this information, activists should get participants as involved as possible in social movements because with more involvement they will be more invested and if they are more invested, they will more likely seek change.

In further reviewing this information about the possible ways in which communication is transmitted the words of Qualman hold true. The novel role of Social Media such as Twitter or Facebook is relevant because these Internet-based networks are beyond the control of companies (Qualman, 2012). A huge part of why people participate on social media and why they have some of the most important and intimate conversations there is because of the trust in the security of the platforms and they know that if that security was violated at any point in time there would be major problems. They also know that there is freedom of speech on the platforms and therefore they can say how they truly feel without worrying about being censored which has proven to be a hinderance for participation in past movements.

Social media also helps to level the playing field in terms of access and suddenly those who are the most highly ranked in a company are having conversations with high school children that have concerns. “Stakeholders can initiate and discuss any issue of their interest and engage in dialogue about and with the company, in a media characterized by almost immediate and worldwide diffusion” (Gomez-Carrasco and Michelon, 2017, p. 3). And while the companies do not have to respond, the simple fact that every day individuals can at least access those in power is progress in this regard. And as companies are being held more accountable to their customers, the accessibility and interactions will only increase with time.

All of this is to say that Facebook use is very beneficial for activism. It has two main purposes which are to facilitate communication and also to ensure that it provides the opportunity for increased participation and engagement.

“The role of Facebook is double: it can reinforce civic talk and debate through activists’ digital story telling (around shared feelings and personal stories) significant for meaningful activist participation online and offline. Second, it can support new forms of alternative politics inspired by more participatory modes of engagement.” (Papa, 2017, p. 583)

As long as Facebook is serving that very important role, it will continue to be used by social movements for years to come.

For now, Facebook continues to lead in terms of social media activism and participation in movements online. An indication of how effective it is as a tool for activism is the vast amount of movements that utilise it for that purpose and the variety within those movements around the globe. It will continue to serve its main purpose as a communicative tool for users and movements alike. Ueno and Belanger (2019) state clearly when looking at Facebook activism done by foreign domestic workers online: “Regarding the role of online communication, Facebook appeared to be the most popular social media platform among movement participants. Facebook pages were created to publicize and disseminate information” (Ueno and Bélanger, 2019, p. 7). Facebook itself as a social media platform was created to publicize and disseminate information and it is no surprise that social movements and activists use it to their advantage for activism.

#### 2.5.5 The Role of Facebook in Activism: Organization and Mobilization

Facebook, as mentioned, is inherently a communication tool and as suggested by its name, activism, requires action, however the main point of activism is to engage in actions that communicate a message; ‘stop killing us’, ‘we need independence’. ‘we want freedom’. ‘there is a problem with the system’, ‘we deserve higher wages’, the list could go on and on. As such, all social movements, and all activism in general exists through communication which is why a tool like Facebook is so powerful and helpful to them. Because of its reach and because of how fast a message can be communicated online (to millions of people potentially), and because one can determine who they want to reach and who they want to communicate with, it is the perfect tool to be used by a movement in order to organize what activism will take place collectively and incite members to action.

In an intriguing analysis of the teams in charge of the social media platforms for huge movements such as Occupy Wall Street (USA), Indignados (Spain) and UK Uncut (UK) Gerbaudo (2017) describes them as small groups with a maximum of 20 members who manage the official Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and livestream accounts of the movements he analysed. He says they “played an important –though often invisible – role” (Gerbaudo, 2017, p.2) Each big movement, for the sake of organization, just like traditional grassroots movements, needs a team to help with communication in order to

facilitate the action. These people work behind the scenes but as everyone knows, without anyone behind the scenes there can be no show. In the past, before social media, these people would be the ones frantically printing flyers for protest, coming up with “swag” for the movement like t-shirts, pins, etc., booking the event spaces, creating catchy slogans, managing mailing lists, and of course making hundreds of phone calls per day to participants, speakers and even potential sponsors. They were the reason the biggest marches and protests were able to occur and their role in activism is oftentimes overlooked. The equivalent of those actions today would be what the social media teams do. Gerbaudo (2017) upon observing them expressed how the social media teams

“have been responsible for managing official movement social media platforms with a public of hundreds of thousands users, attending to such tasks as writing, editing and scheduling Facebook status messages, and tweets, responding to user interactions, as well as producing accompanying materials, from websites, to videos and visuals” (Gerbaudo, 2017, p.2).

They may get the main ideas and understanding of the movement from movement leaders, but they create the messages sent to the public. They create the content on the pages which is how the movement is represented to the public. They ensure a social presence to assure the people that they are active and effective. They use messages to create awareness and inspire others. They answer questions from everyday people, they maintain the flow of communication between participants. They are the reason protests have such huge turnouts and success. They are the ones doing the behind the scenes work and “in so doing these groups have deeply shaped the communications and ultimately the action of many recent protest movements” (Gerbaudo, 2017, p.2). Facebook has made it much easier to shape communication and action.

The significant power held by these teams and also the platforms that they use is evident in the amount of action they have the potential to inspire. The official social media accounts of many of these big movements “have often been described as “power accounts”, because they have accrued a user base of hundreds of thousands of fans on Facebook and Twitter, making them the most popular activist accounts in relevant political conversations” (Gerbaudo, 2017, p.8). However, as is said, with great power comes great responsibility, and these movements indeed have a responsibility to not only establish a large following, but to engage their followers in activism and ultimately achieve big change. Movements like the ones studied by Gerbaudo in addition to

movements like Black Lives Matter and the movement for Catalan Independence have taken their responsibility to the public and to society very seriously and through their strategic usage of social media channels like Facebook, “their influence on collective action has been profound, given the way in which they have launched protest campaigns, attracted the attention of hundreds of thousands of web users and acted as a key channel to launch calls to action” (Gerbaudo, 2017, p.8). The movements that exist today simply would not exist to the extent that they have without their social media teams and as a result, the action that has taken place as a result of communication and organization from those teams, would not have been able to occur to this extent either. Therefore naturally, neither the changes that have been made as a result of the actions taken nor the movement successes would have ever been possible without the teams using social media like Facebook.

Most of the literature studied agrees with this. Social media and the presentation of the messages as well as the broadcasting of the messages is what helps movement participants to know what to do, when to do it and how to do it. They also can aid protestors in their decisions regarding activism and actions. Tufekci and Wilson (2012) interviewed 1,200 participants in Egypt’s Tahir Square protests (and it was revealed in the research that many times because of potential danger of the protests, plans for protesting had to be changed last minute and protestors relied heavily on Facebook and communication from the movement accounts in order to be aware of the situation, find out about changes in plans and ultimately preserve their lives. Kidd and McIntosh (2016) upon analysing this say

“participants reported that social media played a central role in shaping the decisions that individuals made regarding whether to attend protests, the logistics of the events, and the likelihood of success. The social networking site Facebook was identified as a particularly useful tool in this regard” (Kidd and McIntosh, 2016, p.787).

Facebook was used significantly for the mobilisation within the movement and the access to information on Facebook may have ultimately saved lives. As such, while people tend to think of social media platforms like Facebook as strictly social or trivial, the views need to change because it is so much more than that. Facebook is powerful and revolutionary and should be recognised as such because perhaps if there is more respect for the platform as a tool, or it is taken more seriously, people can truly understand its



potential for making an impact and ultimately harness the power it holds especially to organize and mobilize in order to make much needed changes anywhere in the world.

Movements themselves need to understand this potential as well and open their minds to these new ways of activism, organisation, mobilization and obtaining change. Many activists and movement leaders are still sceptical of social media usage in movements because of the existence of slacktivism or hashtag activism, however, as research on these topics increases, it is evident that social media is a necessary force for social movement success. They must realize that social media can empower the movement through empowerment of its users.

“They are so focused on massive hegemonic forces that they do not allow for any agency on the part of social media users, despite frequent moments when activists have surprised us with the powerful ways they engage Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms. The Black Lives Matter movement is an excellent example of social media users collecting and organizing in powerful ways.” (Kidd and McIntosh, 2016, p.792)

It is the hope that this research will help to enlighten social movement leaders and participants about the power of social media in activism and ultimately help to empower them to use these tools in order to obtain increased success in their movements.

Additionally, there needs to be more research and therefore increased faith in social media activism. There needs to be a shift from the school of thought that it is slacktivism because as stated before, social media is a tool with limitless potential for change. Gomez-Carrasco and Michelon (2017) break down why; “Social Media represents a novel medium that channels, catalyses and, potentially gives rise to, activism” ((p. 8). It not only facilitates communication, through the organization and inspiration taking place on the platforms, it leads to activism both online and offline once the ways to do that are communicated clearly. The reach that the platforms have both locally and internationally is incomparable. Movements are able to go global faster than ever before and reach more people than they ever could have without it. “In a world where corporations operate globally, Social Media offers a unique platform where fragmented international constituencies can come together and mobilize” (Gomez-Carrasco and Michelon, 2017, p. 8). Because of social media and how interconnected the human race is, people around the world, some of whom have never been to the USA, are saying Black Lives Matter and protesting with the graphics and branded content from the movement in the USA. Because

of social media, people around the world stood with Catalunya in their fight for independence. Because of social media and globalization, the world is more connected than ever before, and social movements must take advantage of that opportunity. Another way social media is used in social movements is to maintain activism and interest and ensure that people do not forget about the issues. Social media helps sustain movements and creates longevity within social movements where consistency is a problem. Both Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence Movement have been maintained online even in periods where there is less activity offline. “Social media enhance and diffuse protests that may otherwise die out, without reaching potential audiences” (Gomez-Carrasco and Michelon, 2017, p. 8)). This is yet another benefit of social media.

Lastly, people are able to organize protests online and protest in virtual spaces. The different elements of the protests are organized by the movements or movement leaders and then they are carried out online which allows for maximum participation. This is valid activism. “Specifically, Social media protests fulfil the three requirements of social movements: they are collective, organized and public” (Gomez-Carrasco and Michelon, 2017, p. 8). They are collective in that they require participation from multiple people, they are organized by the movement teams as has been discussed in this section, and also they are public in that the activism is for the world to see and for the world to participate in.

The role of Facebook in organizing and mobilizing for social movements is second to none and movements need to utilize this tool as best as possible in order to have the best possible results. The next section will speak on how movements can and/or have been achieving those results.

#### 2.5.6 How Facebook has been an Effective Tool for Social Movements

As was shown in the previous section, Facebook is both powerful and valuable, and therefore can greatly assist movements with achieving their goals (Navarro, Martínez-García, and Fernández, 2018). Some people discredit it as a viable source or channel of activism because of the fact that it is used by many solely as a social platform and also because it is incredibly simple and easy to use, and therefore does not require much sacrifice.

Trottier and Fuchs (2014) would argue that impactful activism cannot be easy and that using social media “constitutes in many respects a veritable rupture in this trajectory” (Trottier and Fuchs, 2014, p.67). However, its ease of use does not make its use slacktivism or ineffective, and it certainly does not discourage people from participating in traditional activism, in fact it does and has the potential to do the opposite. “By making political participation on social media appear impactful or easy, more people may be drawn into politics and encouraged by their experiences with political expression to participate the old-fashioned way” (Pingree, 2007, p.217). For some reason, society tends to discredit things that are easy or simple as worthless or without valuable; however, many times in both life and social movements, there is beauty and value in simplicity. Activism is hard enough as it is, and the availability of a tool like Facebook that makes activism easier does not lessen its value or its impact, it simply makes it easier to increase both the value and the impact of the movement.

Views of social media activism are changing within the field and the next step is simply to make new research and discoveries available and known to wider society including the government and powers that be. Through this, their views can also evolve with the research and they can have increased understanding of the social media tools, their potential, and their power; and therefore, utilize the platforms more effectively. Most research confirms Facebook is both effective and essential when it comes to politics and activism today (Van Dijk, 2012). So, as social media usage increases, its power to affect change has increased. Most politicians are still uncertain about Facebook’s ability to deliver results at the ballot box or facilitate genuine dialogue between themselves and the public, but they also recognize that social media is too important to ignore (Ross and Bürger, 2014). Additionally, they must at least think it is worth the effort because they continue to use it. In fact, it could be argued that people are actually aware of the power of social media activism and the use of tools like Facebook in activism in spite of what they might say about how they feel because actions speak louder than words and their actions include participation online.

The view of social media as something trivial or to be used casually also must be evolved. The fact that it is used for socialization and casual entertainment is not a downfall but an asset because when more serious topics are introduced via the platform, people who use the platforms for personal reasons and are accustomed to using the tools on the platform will be more likely to participate than they would if the same topics or issues were

introduced outside of social media. For example, if on the news they ask viewers to go online to a website and fill out a survey in 5 minutes for an important cause or reason, very few people would. Even less people would fill out the survey if they had to go to an in-person location and fill it out. However, if while people were browsing Facebook they saw the survey and saw that they were being asked to fill it out right there on the platform for a very important cause or reason, chances are that more people would be likely to comply. This likelihood of increased participation in non-social or more serious matters is supported by research particularly from a political perspective. Ross and Bürger (2014) say that “looking at social media from the public’s point of view, findings from studies of various election campaigns suggest that social media could provide an opportunity for people who are habitually less attracted to politics to get more involved” (Ross and Bürger, 2014, p.49). As a result, more people are not only learning more about politics but participating more as well. Facebook has been instrumental in this. According to the research, “Facebook, for example, is evaluated as very effective in reaching and engaging masses of interested individuals and groups by providing a space for high-quality political discussion” (Papa, 2017, p. 585). It provides a “space” that is engaging, fun, flexible, innovative, informative, and social; and these elements only make participation more appealing.

To conclude regarding the usage of Facebook as a communicative tool, there is a large quantity of empirical evidence which demonstrates that the implementation of online activism in conjunction with offline and traditional modes of activism has had an increasing impact and positive effects particularly on movement participants and within the fields of activism and politics. The positives, in fact, far outweigh the negatives. Research also has shown that social media usage and participation in activism (both online and offline) are directly proportional meaning the more social media is used, the more participation there is in both online and offline activism (Valenzuela, 2013). The key therefore is simply to ensure that users are engaged and active in as many and the most effective ways possible.

Facebook is definitely effective in increasing engagement particularly amongst those who would not normally be engaged in the same matters offline. This is why, for the best results and maximum participation it is essential that social movements develop strategies to advance the goals of the movement both online and offline. The key is to ensure that

both are taken seriously and to understand that both have their unique and respective parts to play.

## **2.6 Black Lives Matter**

### 2.6.1 Overview of Black Lives Matter

The next two chapters will focus on the movements upon which this research was based in order to view the movements in the context of previous research as well as what has framed this research thus far. This chapter will focus on the Black Lives Matter movement or #BlackLivesMatter which encompasses many movements, initiatives and calls to action worldwide. The movement has seen participation from millions over the years and the researcher for this paper has also been an active member leading to her vested interest in understanding the movement and discovering what can be done to make it more effective.

Black Lives Matter is an international movement, originating in the African American community, that campaigns against violence and systemic racism towards Black people. Black Lives Matter began after the founder expressed her disdain when Trayvon Martin's murderer was not prosecuted and ended her statement with "Black Lives Matter" which caught the attention of people in her network who went on to start the movement with her. Black Lives Matter aims to increase police accountability especially in the policing of Black men and women in the United States and create equality with the way safety and the very lives of Black people are perceived by the general population (Garza and Cullors, 2014).

When this research began in 2016, it was difficult to find academic research specifically on Black Lives Matter and how online activism within the movement has actually created change however as the movement and its impact has increased, research on the movement has increased as well. The main obstacle has been the difficulty of obtaining quantitative research on the movement because most of the research previously done on Black Lives Matter and the use of social media for the movement was not obtained by experiments or data collection (Carroll and Hackett, 2006; Shirky, 2011; Asmolov, 2014; Chatelain and Asoka, 2015; Cohen and Jackson, 2016; Rickford, 2016; Taylor, 2016; Ostertag, 2019). Instead, the research was mostly observational or acquired from insight. At the same time, there was little research that focused specifically on the use of Facebook in social

movements which was expressed in the previous section. This research focuses on Facebook but most of the previous research relating to social media activism was either an analysis of all social media platforms or just an examination of Twitter as a platform used for social media activism (Gerbaudo, 2012; Bonilla and Rosa 2015; Ferré-Pavia and Perales García, 2015; García Perales and Ferré-Pavia, 2015; Carney, 2016; Waseem, 2016; Yang, C. 2016; Ince, Rojas and Davis 2017; Campbell, 2018). Once again, that is probably because it is much easier to quantify user data from Twitter users because it is readily made available and accessible by Twitter. And while Black Lives Matter and the founders of the movement have been very active on Twitter (in fact that is where the movement began), because of the lack of research on Facebook usage by Black Lives Matter, it was decided that this research would attempt to try to fill the existing gaps in research because the movement not only uses Facebook for activism, it can attribute a lot of its success to its usage as well.

Some sources of course have spoken about Black Lives Matter using social media in a negative regard and have even implied that the movement has succumbed to the perils of slacktivism and trends by doing so. Even after going as far as to highlight that issue, they do not suggest ways to solve the problems. (Howard and Parks, 2012; Skoric, 2012; Kristofferson, White and Peloza, 2013; Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2016; Hoffman et al., 2016). This research is of the opinion that while there has been some instances of slacktivism within the Black Lives Matter movement, the implementation and utilization of social media, and Facebook in particular, in the activism and strategies put forward by the movement, have proven to be quite useful. The use of Facebook by and within the movement has aided in the evolution and increased success of Black Lives Matter particularly in terms of awareness, improved organization, expansion, and of course success in achieving the initial goals of the movement.

According to one of the founders, Patrisse Khan-Cullors (2018), the ideals, desires, and values that guide Black Lives Matter as a Movement are an increase in diversity in media, academia, the workplace, and representation in general; restorative justice, ensuring that people of colour are treated fairly or at least equally to their white counterparts; globalism, meaning that the movement works internationally and is inclusive of multiple cultures and nationalities; queer affirming, meaning that it is a safe, inclusive, and accepting space for those identifying as queer (Petermon and Spencer, 2019); unapologetically Black, meaning the members, the activists, the communication and everything happening on

behalf of the movement promotes and is made up of an unwavering sense of Black pride; collective value, promoting unity within the group and ensuring that everyone is able to contribute in their own unique way; empathy, not sympathy in an attempt to increase understanding the collective impact of what they are fighting against; loving engagement, it is a familial atmosphere promoting love and standing against hate; transgender affirming, they accept, respect and include transgender people; Black villages, because they speak to, include and protect Black communities; Black women, they uplift and support black women around the world (it is after all led by Black women); and lastly, it is intergenerational meaning the movement is not ageist and is inclusive of people from all generations because people from every generation are affected by the issues at hand.

Khan-Cullors broke down the main reasons that the movement exists, and it is important to highlight those in order to fully understand it. Black Lives Matter was established in order to:

- End all violence against Black bodies
- Acknowledge, respect, and celebrate difference(s)
- See our[them]selves as part of the Global Black family remaining aware that there are different ways that Black people are impacted or privileged as Black folk who exist in different parts of the world
- Honour the leadership and engagement of our Trans and gender non-conforming comrades
- Be self-reflective about and dismantling cisgender privilege and uplifting Black Trans folk, especially Black Transwomen, who continue to be disproportionately impacted by Trans-antagonistic violence
- Assert the fact that Black Lives Matter, all Black lives, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious belief or disbeliefs, immigration status or location
- Ensure that the Black Lives Matter network is a Black women—affirming space free from sexism, misogyny, and male-centeredness
- Practice empathy and engaging comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts. Fostering a Trans-and Queer-affirming network. And when they gather, they do so with the intention of freeing our[them]selves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking or rather, the belief that all in the world are heterosexual unless s/he or they disclose otherwise

- Foster an intergenerational and communal network free from ageism. They believe that all people regardless of age, show up with the capacity to lead and learn
- Embody and practice justice, liberation, and peace in engagements with others

Now that the basics have been stated, the next section will talk about the background of the movement in terms of what it is, how it began and why.

## 2.6.2 Background on Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter as a movement has grown exponentially since its inception and has become famous worldwide as a movement. It has several branches which engage in different and necessary aspects aimed at improving the quality of life for Black people. Overall,

“Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression” (Garza, Tometti, and Cullors, 2014).

It was created as a guardian angel of sorts for Black people and as a way to revolutionize the way the race is seen and treated (even by themselves) particularly in the United States (but Internationally as well) which would drastically improve the lives of them all. And since “Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a social movement centered on the problem of state sanctioned racist violence” (Pellow, 2016, p.1), it will continue to exist for as long as racism, injustice and violence against Black people exists anywhere in the world (Barlow, 2018).

The movement is now present on a variety of platforms and has thus increased its reach. It engages in new and technological forms of activism and also traditional methods of activism. The movement itself began online as was mentioned earlier. #BlackLivesMatter with the hashtag is the label for the movement online whereas Black Lives Matter constitutes the entire movement and its branches both online and offline but mostly offline. Because it exists in both and is active in both, the movement has been able to achieve a maximized level of success through combining online and offline activism. “#BlackLivesMatter...forms a hybrid between connective and collective action and provides a great deal of lessons that can be learned from the utilization of technologies to



promote activist behaviors” (Rosenbaum and Bouvier, 2020, p. 123). Indeed, many subsequent movements have taken cues from Black Lives Matter in shaping their activism and ensuring that they combine online and offline means of protest. This combination has proven quite effective and as research and understanding increases of how the two work best in tandem, movements, including Black Lives Matter are becoming better and stronger.

When the hashtag was created, it is certain that the founder did not expect a response like the one the movement has received. She simply chose to express her sincere feelings about the injustice that pervaded the American system and allowed for a young boy to be murdered without consequences to the murderer. Her statement was an affirmation to all individuals that in spite of the fact that they are not treated as such, the lives of Black people are valuable, and just as important as the lives of everyone else. The creation of the hashtag was a reminder to mankind. It was an expression of the need for change. In fact, when she posted it for the first time,

“the hashtag was a “call to action” to address anti-Black racism, but it was not until November 2014 when White Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson was not indicted for the shooting of Michael Brown that #BlackLivesMatter saw widespread use. Since then, the hashtag has been used in combination with other hashtags, such as #EricGarner, #FreddieGray, and #SandraBland, to highlight the extrajudicial deaths of other Black Americans” (Gallagher et al., 2018, p.1).

This list has only grown with time and some of the latest hashtags are #BreonnaTaylor, #AhmaudArbery and #GeorgeFloyd, however in spite of the fact that these killings are continuing, because of Black Lives Matter there is now increased awareness of the injustices and murders of Black people in America and now more than ever, police officers and the entire country is being held accountable to ensure justice for the slain. There have been significant amounts of activism both online and on the ground in the name of #BlackLivesMatter.

This concept of increased awareness is very powerful because if people are not aware of a problem, they will not be aware that a solution is necessary and therefore the problems will continue to go unsolved. Through the use of social media which has allowed for the distribution of videos of the brutality and disparities with police officers and white people in general against Black people, many in the entire world have become more conscious of the plight of African Americans.

“Social media, including the now pervasive #BLM hashtag, provides opportunities to peer into the realities of blacks in the U.S. similarly to how television captured the violent reactions of white community members to the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century.” (Byrd, Gilbert, and Richardson, 2017, p. 1875-1876)

Social media and Facebook in particular have taken movements to the next level and have been able to help them justify their activism when necessary. The problems are clear, there is ample evidence, the world is watching, people are participating in activism, citizens are demanding justice, and as such, the government and those in power are under pressure and have nothing else they can do to satisfy the people except make the changes requested and needed. The repercussions of not making those changes are now much greater than any possible consequences or costs that could come about as a result of making them.

Black Lives Matter has been able to achieve significant and necessary changes. The next section will discuss some of the movement goals.

### 2.6.3 Goals of Black Lives Matter

Due to the incessant killings and instances of police brutality particularly against Black people in the United States and the lack of prosecution and punishment for the killers; there were many effects on the Black Community. Since awareness of these injustices have increased there has been an increase in the distrust of police officers within the Black community, an increase in fear within the Black community, an increase in anger within the Black community and also an increase in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder within members of the Black community. There was first of all a need for increased awareness of the injustice (Sepinwall, 2018), then awareness of how it was affecting Black citizens, an appeal for change in the behaviour of police and also the multiple other issues affecting the community, and most importantly an outlet or avenue for people to say that enough is enough and fight back.

“Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, and Sandra Bland, among many others, are names forever etched in the ethos of American life as martyrs of police brutality and a racially biased criminal justice system. Stemming from this martyrdom, the #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) movement has utilized social media

to organize, protest, and renew the awareness of many issues and conditions facing black communities across the U.S.” (Byrd, Gilbert and Richardson, 2017, p. 1872)

Social Media was the way for everyone to fight back and bring awareness. Black Lives Matter used both the online platforms and in-person protests to achieve their goal to bring awareness and give people an outlet to express their frustration.

Part of the need for awareness is due to the ignorance that has pervaded American society and also the rest of the world. Many people globally think that we live in a post-racial society when in fact, people of colour in every part of the world are still victims of racism. The racism is also systemic which leads to a lack of identification of many actions as racist and therefore a lack of consequences for racism. One of the goals of Black Lives Matter was to show people that racism still exists and that it is not okay. “In fact, the entire point of the Black Lives Matter movement is, in some ways, an intervention to remind us that blatant acts of anti-Black violence are not a thing of the past and are still quite rampant in what some observers had hoped would be a “postracial” era” (Pellow, 2016, p. 9). Reminding people or bringing attention to racism which is still a prevalent issue was another goal of the movement and it has been very successful in that regard. For example, with the recent protests about George Floyd, people are shouting “Black Lives Matter” not just in the United States where it occurred but in Jamaica, Spain, the UK, and all over Africa. The movement has brought attention to and reminded the world of this global issue.

Many people might misunderstand the purpose of the movement and believe it is a giant witch hunt for Americans and white people in general, but the main goal of the movement has been to show that Black Lives matter in an attempt to make Black lives better. There are many people who ironically feel attacked by the movement and movement participants but the main goal of the movement “has not been to show, shame, or to teach people how and why Black lives matter, but rather to create the conditions for Black lives to thrive” (Austin et al., 2016, p.14). The main way they have attempted to do this is through educating the masses about the issues and proposing solutions to the problems. In spite of the fact that the many continued instances of injustice and persecution do anger Black people, can cause de-motivation, and do cause rebellion and fear, the movement has managed to continue to press on and advocate for change. And “Although technology, cell phone videos, and live streaming have provided a grim chronicle of violence against Black and Brown bodies, activists involved in #BLM have remained focused on structural

change, accountability, and alternatives. Education is central to that.” (Austin et al., 2016, p.14) The movement knows and understands that and as such, another goal that the movement has is to educate people.

As such the main goals of the movement have been to improve the living conditions for Black people; provide a global community and safe space for Black people; obtain justice for those Black individuals who have been treated unjustly by the police; obtain equality in terms of treatment of Black citizens especially in comparison to treatment received by White individuals; to provide an outlet for Black voices and individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, pain and dissatisfaction; to give people a sense of accomplishment or purpose to avoid feeling helpless and hopeless as they are being hunted and harmed; to remind people that racism still exists and negatively affects others; to show how racism is negatively affecting people; to inspire changes in the law that will protect all citizens; to increase awareness of the problems faced by Black people; and lastly, to educate those who are unfamiliar with, ignorant to or simply ignoring the issues affecting the Black community.

#### 2.6.4 Different Facets and Approaches of Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter has several different branches and chapters around the world. They have signature events, fundraisers, official platforms, and protests led by the movement. It has inspired other movements operating under its umbrella like the “Movement for Black Lives”, “Black Spring” and “Campaign Zero” which all have similar goals but have different roles and methods in achieving them. They work both separately and in tandem in order to bring the movement success. One example of a Black Lives Matter initiative operating co-dependently on the movement is the Channel Black program. “Their Channel Black program trains future Black leadership to “construct, optimize, and implement strategic interventions on race.” In the short term their goal is to diversify the faces of people identified as experts and featured in media discussing and intervening in vital issues that impact Black communities.” (Thomas and Zuckerman, 2018 p.3) This is just one program out of many other initiatives that the movement has and supports all over the world.

The presence of the various initiatives, groups and organizations can cause confusion. Even with the terminology Black Lives Matter, many authors have felt the need to define, distinguish and designate the different elements of the movement. Freelon, McIlWain and

Clarke (2016) use the term 'Black Lives Matter' in reference to the official umbrella organization, then they implement the hashtag and use #BlackLivesMatter in reference to the movement online and to distinguish it from the movement because the hashtag is used by people who are not a part of the movement, and then finally they use BLM in reference to the movement itself. This distinction of some of the different elements of Black Lives Matter is important to note because they all serve different purposes and involve different people in different places. While it is one overall movement, there are many methods of activism employed. Wilkins Livingstone and Levine for example also take this approach but state that they use 'BLM' "to refer to the overall movement, which is all organisations, individuals, protests etc. who seek to raise awareness about and end anti-Black violence" (Wilkins, Livingstone, and Levine, 2019, p. 3). In analysing the literature, it is important to make and understand these distinctions when speaking about the different elements of the movement but as this research focuses on the movement as a whole there is no need for that in this case.

Because of the different aspects of the movement, there have been varying interpretations of what each aspect represents and what the role has been. For example, Yang (2016) says that "#BlackLivesMatter, for example, was a protest movement that happened both in the streets and on social media in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in July 2013 in the shooting death of African American teen Trayvon Martin." (Yang, G. 2016, p.13) while the authors previously mentioned believe that #BlackLivesMatter, by nature of the presence of the hashtag, exclusively exists online. To reiterate however, while there are minor distinctions in the different names of some of the facets of the movement, they are all a part of the same organization and exist to achieve the goals of the organization.

#### 2.6.5 The Use of Social Media as a Tool in Black Lives Matter

Social Media has been an extremely beneficial tool for the Black Lives Matter movement since its inception. It is the reason the movement exists, it is how the movement was born and it is a big reason why the movement has been sustained for so long. While the activism can be a bit inconsistent at times depending on what is occurring, the online presence has been consistent because every day at least one person somewhere in the world is a victim of or a witness to injustice, or is simply reminded, and will choose to post

#BlackLivesMatter. The hashtag has been used millions of times worldwide up till now and will continue to be used for generations (Cascante, 2019).

Part of the appeal of using social media is the access. A large portion of the world has access to social media and can access it from wherever they are meaning they can stay connected even when they are apart. Black Lives Matter is not the first social movement to use social media, but it is one of the pioneer social movements utilizing social media platforms and is possibly the one that has been sustained for the longest.

“The ready access to technology such as cell phones to quickly send messages, videos, and share news and other information indicates how social media is an important tool for collective action. The integral use of social media by BLM establishes this social movement as different through its use of technology and social media platforms, which did not readily exist in the past for other social movements.” (Byrd, Gilbert, and Richardson, 2017, p. 1873)

Its use of social media platforms has not only set them apart, it has shown other movements the benefits of usage and has helped in transforming activism forever.

The appeal of constant access has put social movements in the same position that media outlets and the government are in, in terms of the power to connect with, influence and communicate with the people. The use of social media is “social” as the name suggests, but when it is used for activism, it takes on a second identity as “political” as well. Sue to that, “BLM exists in the social-political context of the present. The public and private spheres of information are diverging on social media networks; globally people are active online at all times” (Lutz, 2018, p.37). Messages can be crafted and customize for different audiences. People are constantly receiving communication and therefore are constantly reminded of the issues and will constantly be inspired to participate or take action to make things better. The movements choose what to say to the people and the people choose how to respond. That interaction creates relationships and bonds similar to those created in traditional forms of protest and movements.

People are inspired now more than ever before to take action not just because changes are necessary but because due to the fact that social media provides ample opportunities for activism at the touch of a button, activism is easier now than it ever has been. Black Lives Matter has taken advantage of that fact through its utilization of social media. They use the platforms to accomplish their goals and also to inspire people to help them accomplish

their goals by convincing them that the goals of the movement should be the goals of the individual as well. And based on the success of the movement so far and comparing where it is now to how it started, it is obvious that those who believe in something and are willing to fight for change should do so. As is evident by how the founders of the movement created it after a hashtag went viral, “those involved in the online narrating of #BlackLivesMatter, they are concrete evidence of the necessity of taking personal action” (Yang, G. 2016, p. 16). Imagine if they never used social media and imagine if they never took any action after the hashtag went viral. There would be no movement. It is therefore important to note that social media has empowered both movements and individuals to make change on both a small and a large scale, but it is imperative that individuals with a cause take advantage of all that social media has to offer in terms of activism because it could provide irreplaceable and incomparable impact in terms of achieving change.

And certainly, from what is seen on social media currently as a reflection of what is happening in the world, more and more hashtags are going viral and more and more movements are starting. Ince, Rojas, and Davis (2017) studied the how different hashtags were used on Twitter in relation to Black Lives Matter in order to show support to the movement and interact with movement participants. They were able to categorize the tweets which ultimately also helped the Black Lives Matter movement in understanding and organizing the views and desires of participants. That helped to shape the movement and is a prime example of how Black Lives Matter operates as an organization without hierarchy. All opinions matter. When analysing the hashtags, they found that there were several other created hashtags within the movement that also went viral and helped to inform communication for the movement. Some examples of those viral hashtags were #HandsUpDontShoot, #ICantBreathe (which has returned recently due to the murder of George Floyd, #HandsUpDontShoot, and #BlackOutFriday which surely influenced the recent #BlackOutTuesday hashtag as well (Ince, Rojas, and Davis, 2017).

This participation from people engaging in activism online not only shows what is happening, they help to sustain the movement and ensure that it never dies. They also ensure that the movement is able to understand the needs and problems faced by the people and then organize in order to collectively address the needs and advocate for solutions. (Lutz, 2018). In that way, social media facilitates the evolution, growth, and helpfulness of Black Lives Matter for the people, and allows the people to be an active

part of the activism that is performed on their behalf and meant to help them. This interdependence is very powerful.

Social media has not always been used for the good of the movement, however, and there has been some backlash and counter movements which will be briefly discussed in the next section.

#### 2.6.6 Criticism and Resistance Faced by Black Lives Matter

In response to Black Lives Matter there have been a few anti-Black Lives Matter movements that have been birthed which has sought only further highlight the issues of racism and systemic problems in the United States. The irony is that the existence of these “anti” movements has only brought more attention to Black Lives Matter which has allowed the movement to further its mission.

Many around the world are fully aware and cognisant of the importance of Black lives Matter as well as the good it has done so far (Sichynsky, 2016), but there are also those who do not see the good in the movement and have been very critical and resistant to its existence (Laiola, 2018), and in doing so have been inherently racist (Matthews & Cyril, 2017). The most blatant show of resistance however has been the creation of counter-hashtags. “In particular, a number of counter-hashtags appeared on social media that were used in arguments against BLM; three of the most prominent are #BlueLivesMatter, #WhiteLivesMatter, and #AllLivesMatter (Langford & Speight, 2015). Thus, BLM is also a contested social movement” (Wilkins, Livingstone, and Levine, 2019, p.8). The Black Lives Matter movement, while protesting inequality and injustice has been the victim of people protesting its very existence.

In particular the hashtag, #AllLivesMatter has been very active online. “Advocates of #AllLivesMatter affirm that equal attention should be given to all lives, while #BlackLivesMatter supporters contend that such a sentiment derails the Black Lives Matter movement” (Gallagher et al., 2018, p.4). And although the participants are very small in quantity compared to Black Lives Matter, many people are aware of its existence and Black Lives Matter has fought back against it and addressed its problematic nature several times.



While Black Lives Matter has received a lot of backlash both online and in-person at the protests, it has not discouraged the activists from continuing to fight to achieve their goals. As a matter of fact, it has been said that resistance is a sign that you are doing something right, and the movement is definitely doing a lot right. Social media, and Facebook, in particular has only helped it to make an even better impact and improve the lives of Black people around the world.

The next chapter will focus on the second movement that is being analysed in this paper, which is the Catalan Independence Movement. The movement is still ongoing but has been a bit more inactive of late. However, it is certain that, based on its history, at some point in time the movement will be re-invigorated, and it will become extremely active once again.

## **2.7 The Catalan Independence Movement**

### **2.7.1 Overview of the Catalan Independence Movement**

The movement for Catalan Independence is not new. It has been going on for decades and while the messages have more or less remained the same, the characters communicating them and the means of communicating them have changed (Cramer, 2015). Regarding the theme of independence, naturally there are two sides; those who want independence, and those who do not. As such, “the Catalan conflict has radicalized the Spanish panorama into two main groups; those who call themselves pro-independence or those who call themselves constitutionalists” (Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2020, p. 9). These titles are just a few of the terms that have been established through this situation. It is important to note that both sides truly believe that they have the best interests of citizens at heart.

“With the former group, it is evident that all those who declare the necessity for a Catalan Republic identify themselves with the population and with this line of solving all of the territory’s problems. The latter group, the constitutionalists, defend the idea that the Spanish Constitution ought to be respected, and therefore its laws as well.” (Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2020, p. 9)

The pro-independence parties believe that the Spanish government is not respectful of Catalan culture, Catalan people as an ethnic group (Cole, 2011) or Catalunya in general,

and therefore in order to preserve the culture and obtain control over the finances of the region, they should be independent.

To pause a bit at the finances because that was an extremely touchy part of the movement and issues surrounding it: “Catalonia ranks first among most prosperous regions of Spain. Its GDP is approximately 223 billion Euros, generating around 20% of the entire Spanish economy” (Bosch, 2018). Those who wanted independence found issue with the fact that they contributed 20% to the Spanish economy but received less than that back in funding and therefore felt like they were being cheated and treated unfairly by the Spanish government. Many also made the claims that the reason the Spanish government did not want them to have independence was because of the financial ramifications of losing Catalunya and therefore they were holding on to the region to hold on to the money. Naturally, constitutionalists disagreed and felt that it was a privilege to be able to contribute that much to the country and that the money should be shared among regions as needed and as they believed the Spanish government had already been doing. They felt the reasons the government was holding on to Catalunya and denying them the right to hold a referendum was because they cared about the unity of the country, felt Catalunya was not in a position to govern themselves, and they wanted to uphold the law.

The anti-independence people believe that while they are Catalan, they are also Spanish and as such should adhere to Spanish law which does not allow for regions to become independent of Spain. One might ask at this point if there is room for or the possibility of a compromise. “Although these two groups represent the polarization that Spain is enduring, there is a third group which advocates a modification of the Spanish Constitution in order to give the Catalan people the power to vote in a referendum on independence, such as the one which occurred in Scotland” (Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2020, p. 9). This third group may seem neutral but the simple fact that they are requesting a vote means they are willing to go against Spanish law which states that they may not, and to reiterate, the Spanish government denied permission for the vote. That was a huge contributing factor to the events of 2017 which will be discussed further on.

Social media of course has played a crucial role in this conflict and has provided a platform for self-expression and displays of allegiance. Prior to 2017, when there were only rumours of a referendum and requests for a vote Balcells Padullés and Padró-Solanet (2016) documented that “the debate [was] actually taking place among citizens and has found in social media a space for confronting arguments and ideas” (Balcells Padullés

and Padró-Solanet, 2016, p.125). People flocked to social media to discuss their views and opinions on independence and have debates about it in a way that was civilized and respectful. However, since the events of 2017; it is safe to say that perspectives, feelings, thoughts, and even allegiance in some cases have changed a lot for many individuals.

### 2.7.2 Background on the Fight for Catalan Independence

As stated, the problems faced in this region are not new. In fact, they date all the way back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The feelings of frustration and the desire for independence however have managed to withstand the test of time.

“Since the first national problems, dating back to the end of C. XVIII, with the economic *injustices* and the withdrawal of privileges from the Catalan territory, a feeling of discontent on the part of Catalonia toward the Spanish state has only grown, almost always around questions of economics and identity.” (Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2020, p.8)

Heras-Pedrosa draw attention once again to the recurring theme of finances and injustice and highlight that the issues between Catalunya and Spain are and generally have been about fair financial practices and respect for cultural differences.

As such, for years, many Catalan people have sought independence from Spain and have been relentless in attempting to gain their independence. They have been persistent in the fight and while they have failed many times to achieve the independence they seek; they have gotten closer and closer to achieving it with every new attempt. One crucial attempt took place 14 years ago when “Catalonian citizens expressed indignation as the aspirations in their new referendum-approved Statute of 2006 had been rejected by the Spanish Constitutional Court” (Marcet, 2019, p.9). After publicizing those words about the indignation of the Catalan citizens and the result of the statute the movement was awakened. The first big protest in Barcelona occurred in 2010 drawing thousands to the streets declaring that they wanted independence (Benach, 2010). The activism lasted for a while however, economic crisis, the financial deficit of the Spanish state, and reinforcement of secessionist parties followed leading to one of the worst socio-economic periods in the history of Spain. Everyone was affected and everyone was naturally

focused on ensuring they could pay their bills, keep their homes, and put food on the table which understandably took away from the focus on the fight for independence.

The movement has seen, for multiple reasons, various periods of high activity, discussion and participation in the movement and then also various periods where it is hardly mentioned at all. Like Black Lives Matter, there has been a problem in maintaining consistency in quantity of participation but because the issue will not go away and people will remain convicted until there is a change, there has never been a period with zero participation which has kept the movement alive this long. With every defeat, ironically the group striving to achieve independence has grown because they see it as a collective defeat or a defeat against their home team. The combination of activism for independence and against independence has increased the sense of pride in the region regardless of which side anyone is on. Those who are pro-independence continue to expand because of the movement's promotion of Catalan culture and pride; two things that the region certainly does not lack. It is important to take note of the fact that as Kwon (2016) says, "The pro-independence movement is not a consequence of the rise in independentism, but it is a political process of uniting dispersed opinions and exhibiting protesters' power by mobilising various resources" (Kwon, 2016, p. 168). The movement exists and has grown because pride in the region and unity within the region has grown. This is also why the movement will never fully end until there is a change. It is growing as passion is growing and while they get knocked down, they always seem to get back up and continue fighting.

The next period of large amounts of participation occurs in April 2014 when Spain's Congress voted on legislative proposal backed by a majority in the Catalanian Parliament about giving the Catalan government the competency to authorize, call and hold a referendum regarding Independence. The 'no' result (299 against, 47 in favour, 1 abstention) did not diminish the expectations or hope of the people (Rotman et al., 2011). People hoped for the best but expected the worst and therefore still attempted to gain the "yes" vote. Of course, this did not stop them from trying again, and the next very significant period of activism within the movement took place in 2017 which will be discussed in the next section.

### 2.7.3 The 2017 Referendum

Part of the motivation for the desire and fight for independence as expressed earlier was the growth in Catalan unity and pride. People spoke up against the Spanish government for denying what they believed was their right to democracy in saying that they could not even vote on whether or not Catalunya could achieve independence. As the Catalan government grew stronger and openly supported the people and the idea of an independent Catalunya, the movement only became stronger and the people became more convicted than ever before. They already felt separate and as if they had nothing to lose but everything to gain through activism and the referendum. So, in 2016 as tensions were brewing, Sánchez, De la Casa, and Pérez (2016) observed that

“the Catalan movement ha(d) leveraged its results in the call for a referendum. Legality and scrutiny d(id) not matter, given that the goal was not the unilateral independence. This confirm(ed) the first hypothesis given that the idea of the Catalan identity as differentiated political entity ha(d) been strengthened” (Sánchez, De la Casa, and Pérez 2016, p.972).

As the identity of the region was strengthened, the identity of the government, particularly as the main decision maker for the region was also strengthened which made the idea of independence seem increasingly appealing and also increasingly feasible to those who were pro-independence. This was part of the events leading up to the referendum of 2017.

In 2017, online activism peaked. Catalan President Carles Puigdemont made an ‘Institutional Declaration’ and confirmed the non-existence of an agreement with the Spanish government, then announced a referendum for October 1, 2017. When they said that the referendum would take place against the Spanish government’s wishes, the Spanish government made preparations for the Spanish military to stop the voting (Tobeña, 2017). This infuriated Catalan people but made them more resolved than ever to vote. The reactions of the people and their voices on social media, made international news and everyone all around the world eagerly waited to see what would take place on “voting day” (Gagnon, Montagut, and Moraga-Fernandez, 2019).

The day came and

“on 1st October 2017, 2.2 million Catalans turned out to vote, defying the heavy repression by state security forces who resorted to firing rubber bullets and the seizure of ballot boxes and closure of polling stations. Mass actions of civil

disobedience ensured that the Spanish national police were only able to shut down 319 out of a total of 2,315 polling stations” (Della Porta, O’Connor, and Portos, 2019, p.6).

Several people were injured, and the media covered what was happening all around the region. Even some of those who were against independence were infuriated by the reaction of the Spanish government and utter disregard for its citizens which led them to switch sides or contemplate switching.

Regardless, the people had spoken, and the majority of those who voted, albeit that the voters that showed up to the polling stations were a fraction of all of those eligible to vote, voted for independence.

Similarly to what happened in 2016 regarding the decision on whether or not to hold a referendum when Sánchez, De la Casa, and Pérez (2016) noted that “in the field of politics, the results of the vote did not lead to a change of status, nor to extraordinary decisions or measures in the political sphere. Success is not achieved in the traditional political arena” (Sánchez, De la Casa, and Pérez, 2016, p.970); while the majority voting for independence still did not constitute a legal or traditional “win” for those advocating for independence, the people’s voices were still heard. And even after the referendum and attacks from the Spanish military occurred, people continued to have faith in their government and rejoiced on October 10 when Puigdemont declared independence. Then a week and a half later on October 21 when Rajoy invoked Article 155 thus re-taking control over the region people still would not give up and vowed to continue the fight for independence. They were down but as always, certainly not out and citizens became more united than ever because they had undergone significant and life-altering trauma together (Gagnon, Montagut, and Moraga-Fernandez, 2019).

This shows the importance of shared emotional experiences and commonalities within movement participants in order to strengthen a movement and ensure longevity of the movement as was discussed in the portion about social media activism. The Catalan Independence Movement is a key example of this because in spite of the many defeats and trauma that the people faced, they continued to fight for independence and only became stronger and more convicted with each defeat which united them and contributed to significant growth within the movement. Each protest was larger than the last. Kwon expresses this very well by declaring that in addition to the history and increased organization of the movement particularly through social media, “what was also essential

in the expansion of the Catalan pro-independence movement was participants' emotional experiences such as enthusiasm, confidence, and feelings of solidarity, most of which were generated in the course of participation" (Kwon, 2016, p. 169). This affirms the idea that allegiance is built through participation and in order for participants to foster a personal connection with a movement, it is imperative that they actually participate in and contribute to it in some way.

#### 2.7.4 The Usage of Social Media in the Catalan Independence Movement

A huge part of the reason that people were even aware of their shared experiences was social media. Platforms played a huge role in the movement from organization stages, to self-expression, to communicating changes of plans, to making people aware of what was happening in the region, and even to share details of the different protests and marches occurring all throughout the different cities. Many have previously written about this. Several have written about this (Cetra and Liñeira, 2018; Pellistrandi, 2018; Stewart, Pinter, and Eisenstein, 2018; Ostrach, 2018; Cetra, Casanas-Adam, and Tàrrega, 2018; Turp et al., 2017; Palacios Cerezales, 2017; Nichols, 2017; Abat, 2017; Anderson, 2017; Azmanova, 2017; Balfour, 2017; Martí and Cetrà, 2016) and it was noted by all writing about it that, "the Catalan political conflict is also a conflict constructed through the media...by organizing demonstrations and other offline and online mobilization actions." (Gagnon, Montagut, and Moraga-Fernandez, 2019 p. 161) Social media was used by both sides to advance their causes. In 2017 it was clear to see who people were supporting by just looking at what they were posting. Social media users made their allegiances clear through their profiles and used the platforms' various tools in order to support, establish and improve the chances of success for whatever endeavour their respective sides chose to embark on.

In 2016, as Balcells Padullés and Padró-Solanet shared, the movement participants were actively engaged in debates online and made their positions known and clear. This facilitated understanding between both sides and also served as an avenue of much needed expression of opinions, thoughts, misunderstandings and even frustration. Prior to 2017, social media platforms were used very often as forums for discussion about Independence for the region which is one useful characteristic of social media. It was observed that "Social media can contribute to the formation of more balanced and judicious public opinion depending on whether they resemble an echo chamber or whether there is the experience and expectation of being challenged by rival opinions" (Balcells Padullés and

Padró-Solanet, 2016, p. 127). People were able to hear the reasoning of both sides and become much more informed about the movement and opinions of those on either side. However, in 2017, once the referendum got closer, and after it occurred, social media usage changed.

Before the referendum there were constant campaigns online and members of the Catalan government, through their cognisance of the benefits of social media use, took advantage of the tool. They flocked to Twitter and Facebook to express their views and appeal to citizens to join them. These tactics were quite logical and intelligent because most of the targeted participants, particularly young people, have constant access to social media.

“The extension of Twitter among Catalan parliamentarians is in consonance with a society where the use of the Internet, social media, and smartphones is widespread: 80% of Catalan citizens are Internet users; 68% of these Internet users take part in social media; and 97% of Catalan households have a smartphone.” (Borge, and Esteve del Valle, 2017, p. 266)

These statistics from 2017 are an indicator of the fact that social media is now and must be a tool that is used for any kind of activism because it is the most effective way to reach and engage with large audiences which will increase participation and ultimately the probability of a movement’s success. That falls in line with the theories mentioned earlier.

Another beneficial component of social media is the fact that individuals are able to act independently but also in a unified manner, meaning they can personalize their activism or make independent decisions on how they positively impact the movement. When the referendum took place and Article 155 was invoked, many of the political leaders and activists were imprisoned and during the time they were imprisoned (some of them are still behind bars), they were obviously unable to lead or establish calls to action. However, the lack of leadership did not leave the people hopeless, useless, or motionless; they simply stepped up in their absence and began to lead themselves. Social media was the tool they needed in order to do that and thus empowered them greatly. When the Spanish government applied the restrictions on Catalan political action “...which prevented the Catalan government from logistically preparing for the vote, the organisational burden was taken up ordinary citizens. People were organised through local ‘Comitès de Defensa del Referendum’ (the name translates to Referendum Defence Committees) that coordinated through Twitter, WhatsApp and Telegram” (Della Porta, O’Connor, and



Portos, 2019, p.6). Facebook was another platform that was used for the organisation and enabled the movement to continue and not just continue but grow exponentially.

Social Media participation surged as people used it to organize protests and speak on happenings. “Beyond the public discussion about the political conflict, the Catalan ‘process’ has also acted as a catalyst of organizational communication of popular demonstrations and protests, bringing special attention to the role of social networks and apps as mobilization tools” (Gagnon, Montagut, and Moraga-Fernandez 2019, p. 165). This is also an example of how social media activism has evolved over time (Rotman et al., 2011). And through this example, many people who doubted the benefits of social media activism at first, are now convinced that it can be useful and aid significantly in the success of a movement through increasing accessibility, communication, and engagement. What happened with the Catalan Independence Movement has shown how powerful social media platforms can be when they are used correctly and for causes that people believe in.

Since then, many users affiliated with Catalunya and the movement for independence who witnessed the effectiveness of social media usage in activism have increased their usage of the tool.

“Aware of the relentless exposure that social media and around-the-clock coverage allow, proponents as well as detractors, militant participants, political leaders as well as media professionals and the general public have routinely used platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to shape and expand the reach and influence of their ideas and actions.” (Balibrea and London, 2020, p. 283)

They use social media strategically not just because everyone is using it, or everyone has access or because it is easy to use; they use social media because usage has repeatedly proven to be extremely effective.

Even the different organizations related to the movement for independence have been using social media to further their causes. Some of them saw the benefits of usage years ago and have been using the platforms ever since. Òmnium Cultural for example, was a pioneer in social media usage for the movement for independence. They used the platforms primarily to organize in person demonstrations and also to communicate with followers. As early as 2010, they created the hashtag #somunanacio which means “we are a nation” and it trended. They also

“used social media to disseminate information and mobilize support for a demonstration on Catalonia’s new Statute of Autonomy. ANC and Òmnium were instrumental in the organization of both the first referendum in 2014 and the second in 2017 and have been extremely effective in their use of social media” (Iveson, 2020, p.292).

The fact that they have managed to maintain themselves as an organization even with the changing times and tides over the past 10 years is in and of itself a testament to the effectiveness of the organization and its use of social media.

This need to change with the times and tides is important for longevity. Movements must be adaptable, and the Catalan Independence Movement has indeed adapted well. It is evident that “while the roots of the movement and the nature of the dispute are longstanding, its current form undoubtedly belongs to the digital age” (Balibrea and London, 2020, p. 283). Chances are that as technology becomes more dominant, the use of technology in aid of the advancement of the movement will have to become more dominant as well and they are off to a great start. In the last couple of years, as a sign that the movement is accepting of the changing times many “different Catalan associations organised pro-independence demonstrations throughout Catalonia and Twitter was decisively employed to bring citizens to the streets” (Rodon, Martori, and Cuadros, 2018, p. 25). The words ‘decisively employed’ are important because they suggest that social media usage was part of a strategic plan to increase participation which shows that movement organizers and leaders at least partially understand the tools at their disposal and their potential to increase participation which is again a good sign for the movement and its future.

Another way that movements have used social media platforms which was touched on briefly earlier is through the usage of hashtags which, as in the case of Black Lives Matter, serve as identifiers in terms of opinions, support and the activists themselves. Hashtags communicate entire messages without taking up the space of an entire traditional message. They are unifying (or dividing, in the case of opposition) factors in social movements. For example, Rodon, Martori and Cuadros (2018) analysed some of the most popular hashtags on Twitter for the Catalan Independence Movement. Two stood out. The first one that they discussed was #apunt which served as a signal of pro-independence and also was added to messages to encourage attendance and support at an event. It comes from the Spanish word “apuntado” which is the equivalent of an RSVP to an event saying

you will be in attendance (Please, reply). The second one that stood out was #diada (meaning “day of”) which was used by those who were anti-independence and similarly, advertised events that were aimed at those who were anti-independence and also was included in messages about ceremonial activities. “In other words, the polarisation of the independence debate also manifested itself in social media via the use of hashtags” (Rodon, Martori, and Cuadros, 2018, p. 17). Due to this, one could easily identify which side someone or an organization was on based on the hashtag that they used. This points back to the concept of collective identity and the presence of identifying markers online which as mentioned previously, can promote unity and a sense of belonging within a movement which ultimately does increase and inspire participation.

Lastly, in addition to communication, organization, increasing participation, self-expression, discussion, establishing a collective identity and simply engaging in online activism, social media also served the role of provision of news. Social media platforms became and still are (in spite of issues with fake news of late), trusted sources of the news. During the fight for independence where

“much of the hostile relationship between Catalans and Spaniards [was] catalysed by the Spanish media. Many young adults in Catalonia distrust(ed) the national media because it (wa)s linked to the state. To a large extent, this account(ed) for the massive ‘flight’ to social media for news-updates” (Peek, 2018, p.52).

People, particularly young people were wary of the incorrect or biased portrayals of events in the news (Xicoy, Perales-García, and Xambó, 2017) and as such, used social media in order to stay aware and informed. Social media, as is evident, was used in varying and effective ways by those participating in the movement for Catalan Independence from both sides and it is certain that the platforms available will continue to be used and evolve as both the usage and the users evolve as well.

#### 2.7.5 The Aftermath: What now for Catalunya and Independence?

While there were no desired legal changes to speak of in terms of achieving independence, there have been many residual social effects of the events in 2017 and 2018. Peek, a student in Barcelona observed that “The aftermath of the referendum is all around the city, the news and in everyone's mind: there are flags empathising with both parties

hanging from balconies and both parties expect everyone to be opinionated on the issue. Every now and then, elite place comments on social media to stir the pot” (Peek, 2018, p.39). This is indeed an accurate representation of what has happened. The general morale of the people has also dropped significantly and while there are no longer as many large protests, people all around the region are silently protesting each day by wearing their yellow pins in support of independence or flying their Catalan flags from their balconies.

Another observation has been the fact that the movement, through the participation of civilians who truly made it their own and about Catalan citizenship as opposed to politics, managed to achieve much more success in terms of awareness, global coverage, organization and progress with the Spanish government. That simple fact inspired statements like this one by Iveson: “Conceived as a bottom-up social initiative, this civil movement is reported by some to have had a stronger influence than political parties in mobilising the population” (Iveson, 2020, p.289). This can be attributed to the fact that social media levels the playing field and also that trauma tends to unite people because they have shared experiences. Additionally it shows that people are perhaps tired of politics or turned off by them and even though many politicians say that they have the best interest of the citizens at heart, they still operate with severe division between the various parties; the citizens are the ones who definitely and truly have their own best interests at heart and that is why it was important for them to lead and participate in the movement. The movement became less about politics and more about what was best for the people.

This also shows the role that activism plays in the lives of even ordinary citizens. Kwon (2016) articulates that “collective actions and individual life do not exist separately but are intimately connected and influence each other” (Kwon, 2016, p. 171). Kwon also expressed that connection between activism and individuals significantly helped in showing what has enabled the movement to continue for so long. As long as the people exist, the movement will exist as well because they are connected. This indicates that the movement will keep going until a change is seen even if the participants do take a few breaks in between.

Overall, as Balibrea and London (2020) asseverate, “there is no doubt that the Catalan independence movement is a major historical development in recent Spanish and Catalan history. What seemed unlikely and farfetched fifteen years ago is now, not only a reality, but one that is here to stay for the long haul” (Balibrea and London, 2020, p. 282). The

movement shows no signs of disappearing anytime soon and while participants might not be making as much noise as they have in the past, the prevalence of Catalan flags, pins, graffiti, language, and even private conversations about independence declare loudly that they are far from giving up and far from losing hope that Catalunya might one day be independent. One simply has to wait a bit for the next wave of very active activism to undoubtedly come. In the meantime, through analysing the movement and seeing how much it has progressed over the last few years particularly comparing the events of 2017 and 2018 to those of previous years, the growth of the movement is evident. Plus, “the acceptance of independence by unprecedented numbers of Catalans as a concrete objective (one that is attainable in their lifetime)” (Balibrea and London, 2020, p. 282) is assurance that the movement will be maintained and people will not just continue to hope for independence but advocate for independence and one day possibly receive that independence.

That being said, in response to the question “*What is next for Catalunya and Independence?*” the answer is; more activism, more participation, more engagement, more tools, more resistance, more wins, more losses, more fights, more hope, more disappointment, more civic leadership, more leadership in politics, more unity, more strategy, more protests, more expression, more allegiance, more pride, more ways to show opinions, more coverage of the activism, more personalized activism, more use of social media, more organization, more mobilization and ultimately more chances to achieve independence.

## **2.8 Takeaways from the Literature Review**

Overall, the literature on social movements, social media activism, slacktivism versus activism, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the Catalan Independence movement was very helpful in shaping and framing the context of this research. There however is still a significant need for a focus on Facebook as a social media tool and ways to utilize social media in general more effectively to advance the goals of activism. It is hoped that this original research that will be discussed in the next section, will be able to help with that.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 General Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to determine what impact (if any) social media activism (particularly through Facebook) within Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence Movement had on the law and society in general, and also what the perception (of the public, participants, industry experts and activists) is of social media activism and the effectiveness of that activism in achieving the changes desired by social movements. This research is also aimed towards determining what factors can inhibit the success of a movement and what factors can contribute to success in order to gain the insight and understanding of what tools and strategies are necessary for both current and future social movements to achieve their goals. This research could potentially prove revolutionary in the development of social media activism and activism in general.

#### **Research Questions**

- 1) Has the use of social media (Facebook in particular) as a tool in the Black Lives Matter movement been effective, and if so, how?
- 2) Has the use of social media (Facebook in particular) as a tool in the Catalan Independence movement been effective, and if so, how?
- 3) Based on the research done, how could social media usage (Facebook in particular) be more effective in helping social movements to achieve success?

#### **3.2 Research Methods**

The research balanced quantitative and qualitative tools and used a mixed method approach in obtaining data. Quantitative research is objective and takes the form of numbers, statistics and/or graphs that will prove or disprove a hypothesis, while qualitative research is subjective and takes the form of words and perception used to give context and increase understanding of certain concepts. Both offer value in completely understanding phenomenon.

##### **a) Google Trends**

The Google trends research was mainly quantitative and based on statistics. This research demonstrates its results through graphs showcasing quantity of participation which helped

to identify trends, increases and decreases in participation, as well as the lack of consistency or the opposite for the popularity and activity of each of the search terms used. The numbers and figures helped in proving the hypotheses proposed; the main one stating that social media activism within the movements has been inconsistent and that has hindered the success of the movements. By analysing that data alongside the coinciding incidents, the Google Trends research provided quantitative insight into how participation is affected by current events in terms of quantity, length of time and patterns in participation. Both aspects were very useful in determining consistency within both movements and whether participation relies heavily on the trendiness of activism.

## **b) Surveys**

The surveys in this thesis are both quantitative and qualitative through the results from participants serving as an exploratory sample of the overall participants in each group. There were many logistical questions which allowed for the creation of graphs demonstrating the statistics affiliated with the responses that helped to confirm or disprove a few of the hypotheses; the main ones being that participants participate in social movement because they are personally vested in the changes sought, and that participants believe that their activism is effective in helping social movements to achieve success. Many of the responses were quantifiable and able to be grouped. However, there was also a significant amount of open-ended questions and questions based on personal experience, perception, and motivation, which contributed to the qualitative aspect of the surveys and helped in providing much needed understanding of the participants and the movement overall.

## **c) Legal Research and Social Changes**

There were no Catalan Independence movement legal changes of note (in fact the opposite occurred) and therefore there is a brief explanation of the legal ramifications which occurred both against and as a result of the Catalan Independence movement. The majority and remainder of the legal research portion focuses primarily on Black Lives Matter and what changes the Black Lives Matter movement achieved legally in the United States. The legal research was documented and significant in that the different legal changes or lack thereof were tracked, observed, and noted over time allowing for the

creation of graphics showing the law changes in each specific state. The changes in the law provided in-depth insight into the actual impact that Black Lives Matter has had on the USA as a whole as well as which states have been more receptive to change in this area and as a result of the movement.

There was also research and observations of the social changes that occurred as a result of each movement within the different societies. This part was important because while both movements targeted specific laws and legal changes, both also had the objective to achieve significant social change. Black Lives Matter sought to change the way Black people were perceived and treated in the United States and the Catalan Independence Movement sought to change the way people perceived and treated Catalan people and culture.

#### **d) Interviews**

The interviews were not based on probability nor statistics but intentional. They were mostly based on expert opinion which significantly contributed to and helped to reinforce the contextual comprehension of the movements and the role of social media within the movements. Interviewees responded to very open-ended questions about their respective movements, the impact of social media activism and their experiences with activism which helped to increase overall comprehension of the movements, why they began, what participation looks like and what might help with making these movements successful.

### **3.3 Google Trends**

#### **3.3.1 Overview of Google Trends**

The Google Trends research was quite revelatory for both movements and showed strikingly similar patterns in the two. There were hypotheses about inconsistency and trends in social movements and those aspects leading to unsuccessful movements, so it was important to check to see if the movements had been inconsistent and then compare that to the reality of whether or not the movements had been successful. Different search terms were placed in the search box for the Google trends representing pre-set and selected periods of time, and a graph was generated showing the quantity of online participation both from those who were for the causes and against them over that time.



Graphs also showed when participation levels were highest and thus enabled a comparison with the current events of the time in order to provide a clear indication of what may have caused the increase in participation and how long the weight or swing of that event lasted. There was always a correlation between an event and a surge in participation. These correlations and patterns were important to be studied in order to help movements identify what affects participation which could ultimately empower them to gain maximum participation through implementing what is proven to work and subsequently decrease the frequency of inconsistency in participation.

### 3.3.2 Google Trends for Black Lives Matter

There was an analysis of Google Trends for the Black Lives Matter movement in terms of increases and decreases in popularity, and quantity of posts over different time periods. Findings are presented in graphs which show clearly why there may be issues with the movement and its success. This was done to understand the online activity related to Black Lives Matter on a global scale. In addition to that, the research was able to pinpoint and identify the statistics by location (cities, countries, etc.) and therefore provide a better understanding of the activity taking place.

Graphs also show the correspondence between the different elements of the movements, and the current events, in order to indicate the presence of trends. Within the Black Lives Matter movement, there have been many incidents that have sparked participation and those hashtags were studied individually to see if interest and activism were maintained offline.

There was an analysis of the prominence of the hashtags over different periods of time and for the most part, there was a pattern with each. Some of the terms analysed were “Black Lives Matter”, “Trayvon Martin”, “Mike Brown”, “Sandra Bland”, “Tamir Rice”, “Hands Up Don’t Shoot”, “Baltimore”, and many other memorable incidents that pertained to Black Lives Matter. There was a review of the time period from 2012 when the movement was initiated all the way up to 2018. The research allowed for graphing multiple terms at the same time against or with each other so that it could be seen how they compared in the same time period and in terms of the quantity of participation.

### 3.3.3 Google Trends for the Catalan Independence Movement

Google Trends were analysed for the Catalan Independence Movement and particularly the *Votarem* campaign [We will vote] in terms of increases and decreases in popularity and quantity of posts over different time periods. It indicated the presence of trends in terms of participation for each of the terms searched.

Within *Votarem*, there have been many incidents that have sparked participation and pertinent hashtags were studied individually to see if interest and activism were maintained offline. Prominence of the hashtags over different periods of time and for the most part was analysed, there was a pattern with each.

Some of the search terms for CIM were “*Votarem*”, “*Independència*”, “*Catalan Independence Movement*”, “*Referendum*”, “*Cataluña*”, “*Puigdemont*”, and “*Democràcia*”. These are some of the most common words used pertaining to the CIM and therefore would show the maximum results in terms of mentions and participation online when included in the search through Google Trends.

These results show the longevity of the movements which shows the impact they had on the participants, long term impact in general, increases in participation and awareness, and success based on growth and consistency. A visual representation of participation was very helpful in the analysis and in identifying clear trends and patterns. Analysing these graphs may have pointed to not just whether the online activism was effective or not, but also why the online activism was effective or not.

There were certainly many similarities in the shapes of the different graphs regardless of the time period or the term that was searched. Immediately after the incident there was a high level of participation and mentions but shortly after, both participation and mentions decreased significantly, and in a matter of weeks, participation for most of the terms decreased all the way to zero in many cases. A few weeks or months later, there tended to be another surge in participation once again corresponding with a related event. The participation would continue to fluctuate after that and continue the pattern of inconsistency.

### **3.4 Surveys**

#### **3.4.1 Overview of Surveys**

Surveys were distributed to known participants in the Black Lives Matter movement through different Facebook groups related to Black Lives Matter with the aim of obtaining and analysing 200 responses. 200 participants indeed responded to the surveys on what they did in the movement and its success. Participants were questioned to see how they impacted the movements and what they thought of their participation. They were also asked about whether they thought the movement was effective and what could be done to make it more so. This provided a lot of insight into the minds of these “activists” including their motivation for participation and perception of their work and the movements themselves. Results also showed the different ways they participated both online and offline. In addition to that, they were able to express why their participation decreased or was inconsistent (if it was).

#### **3.4.2 Surveys for Black Lives Matter**

Surveys were distributed to Facebook Users (for the majority) who also participated in the movement either online and/or offline. There was a wide age range (18-88 years old), almost even genders (48.5% Female and 51.5% Male) and people from very diverse backgrounds both in the United States and outside of it. There was also a variety of ethnic backgrounds so that both people who were directly affected by the incidents and indirectly affected could speak on how they participated on and offline in order to avoid inaccurate representations of reality in the research.

In addition to that, to have unbiased results, there was no distinction made between those who were pro Black lives Matter and against the movement because all participation affected the results.

Surveys asked about themselves as individuals (age and gender), their involvement in the Black Lives Matter movement (why they were involved, how they were involved on Facebook, how they were involved offline, etc.), as well as their opinion on how successful the movements were and why. They also contained open ended questions regarding their thoughts on what is needed to make a movement successful based on their involvement in and observation of movements

This was extremely helpful because it allowed for a gain in access to information about participant involvement in movements which allowed the identification of what similarities may have led to varying levels of commitment within the movements and therefore identify possible reasons behind success and failure of the movements. It also allowed for understanding of what factors and mindsets contributed to Black Lives Matter possibly becoming a trend as opposed to an instrument of change.

Surveys were distributed through Google Forms between 2017 and 2018 and the questions asked in the survey were;

1. What is your gender?
2. How involved were you online with Black Lives Matter in your opinion?
3. What did your online Black Lives Matter activism look like on Facebook? (Options were: Personal posts, Profile Pictures, Sharing other people's posts, Liking other people's posts, Joining a group related to the cause, Live streaming events and/or protests, Creating events, fundraising, or other)
4. Did you participate in the Black Lives Matter Offline? If yes, write yes and state how. If no, write no.
5. In your own words, what inspires you to participate in Black Lives Matter? (Options were: You and/or your family members are affected by the issues, Your friends/co-workers are affected by the issues, You are passionate about the issue, You are concerned about the future, You want to help, Other people's passion about the issue inspires you, It's just the right thing to do, Not sure, Other)
6. What contributes to a lull/decrease in your online participation in Black Lives Matter? (Options were: Busy, Issues have been resolved, Issues aren't as popular, Forgot, There hasn't been a lull/decrease in your participation, and other)
7. Based on your online participation in Black Lives Matter, would you consider yourself an activist?
8. Do you think Black Lives Matter has been effective in bringing about social change?
9. Do you think Black Lives Matter has been effective in bringing about legal change?

10. How do you think the movement could be more effective in bringing about social and legal change? (Options were: Better organization, more physical/in-person participation, More celebrity participation, More meetings with heads of state and politicians, other)
11. If you had to estimate, how many of your friends on Facebook also participate in Black Lives Matter? (0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-100%)
12. Do you think that Black Lives Matter has been successful in achieving its goals? (yes, no, to some extent)
13. Do you think that your online participation in the Black Lives Matter movement contributed to its success?

### 3.4.3 Surveys for the Catalan Independence Movement

The survey responses were very interesting however some of the responses were contradictory, which is a limitation of using surveys, but this still did not stand in the way of gaining valuable insight and coming to conclusions on the hypotheses. Responses were still very telling about the movement and the participants who analysed themselves as activists, their actions, their contribution to the movement and the overall success of the Catalan Independence movement particularly due to actions via Facebook. They were also able to reflect on their motives for participation and reasons behind inconsistency. This information is vital to social movements because it allows them to understand what to do and what not to do in order to not only gain participation but maintain it as well. That will improve the overall quality of any movement.

Through access to different groups supporting Independence online, results were taken from 201 survey participants about how they participated in the movement and their perception of its success. Through the medium they were distributed, surveys were mainly taken by Facebook users who participated in the movement online and/or offline. Participants took the survey through a Google forms link. There was a wide age range (18–88 years old), almost even genders, and people from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, for unbiased results, both people who were both pro Independence and anti-Independence (against the movement) were given the surveys because all participation affected the results. However, the majority who took the surveys, based on their responses were pro-independence.

The survey was given through Google Forms between 2018 and 2019, and it included these questions in both English and Spanish due to the fact that the majority of survey takers were native Spanish speakers:

1. What is your name? (¿Cómo se llama?)
2. How old are you? (¿Cuántos años tiene?)
3. What is your gender? (¿Es un Hombre o una Mujer?)
4. How involved were you on Facebook with the referendum and the subsequent events? (¿En qué medida su participación en Facebook tuvo que ver con el referéndum y con los eventos posteriores?)
5. What did your online activism for Catalan Independence look like on Facebook? Check all that apply (¿Como fue su activismo en Facebook sobre el referéndum? Marque todo lo que corresponda)
6. Did you participate in the activism for Catalan independence Offline? (Protests, letter-writing, court visits, programs, etc.) If yes, write yes and state how. If no, write no. (¿Participó en el activismo por la Independència de Catalunya offline? (Manifestaciones, cartas, programas, etc.) En caso afirmativo, escriba *sí* y explique cómo. Si no, escriba *no*.)
7. In your own words, what inspires you to participate in the movement for independence? Check all that apply. (En sus propias palabras, ¿qué le inspira a participar en el movimiento por la Independència? Marque todo lo que corresponda.)
8. What contributes to a lull/decrease in your online participation in the movement for independence? Check all that apply. (¿Qué contribuyó a una pausa / disminución en su participación en Facebook en los asuntos relacionados con la Independència? Marque todo lo que corresponda)
9. Based on your online participation in the movement for independence, would you consider yourself an activist? (Según su participación en línea en el movimiento pro Independència, ¿se consideraría un activista?)
10. Do you think the movement has been effective in bringing about social change? (¿Cree que el movimiento ha sido eficaz para generar cambios sociales?)

11. Do you think the movement for Independence has been effective in bringing about legal change? (¿Cree que el movimiento por la Independència ha sido efectivo para generar cambios legales?)

12. How do you think the movement could be more effective in bringing about social and legal change? Check all that apply. (¿Cómo cree que el movimiento podría ser más efectivo para generar un cambio social y legal? Marque todo lo que corresponda)

13. If you had to estimate, how many of your friends on Facebook also participated in the activism for Independence? (Si tuviera que calcular, ¿cuántos de sus amigos en Facebook también participaron en el activismo por la Independència?)

14. Do you think that the movement for Independence has been successful in achieving its goals? (¿Piensa que el movimiento ha sido exitoso en conseguir sus objetivos?)

15. Do you think that your online participation in the Movement for Catalan Independence contributed to the results? (¿Cree que su participación en línea en el Movimiento por la Independència catalana contribuyó a los resultados?)

#### 3.4.4 Reasons for the Questions Chosen and the Survey Design

The open-ended questions granted diverse insight into what factors may be necessary for a successful social media movement and gave the participants the freedom to reflect and share responses that researchers may not have been able to think of. The diversity in the responses helped to show differences in participants but also the common threads that joined them together. In addition to this, the surveys allowed reviewers to go into the mind of participants which showed whether or not they thought that what they do on Facebook for the movement actually helps to bring about change as well as whether or not what they do on Facebook for the movement makes them consider themselves as activists or is counted as activism. Surveys overall helped with understanding the perception of and motivating factors for activism and social media activism particularly by movement participants in the Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence Movement.

### **3.5 Legal Research**

#### **3.5.1 Overview of Research on Legal Changes**

Black Lives Matter obtained several legal changes through their branch, Campaign Zero, however, the Catalan Independence Movement did not achieve much legal change resulting from the movement as the referendum was never approved and Independence was not given. However, there were legal ramifications and results when there was the application of Article 155 blocking the referendum and independence. Since that was not an objective of the movement, and in fact served to hinder the movement it does not constitute success of the movement in achieving legal change which is what is being studied, but it is valid for discussion in this research because the movement caused its application and its application subsequently had a huge effect on the movement as well. Hence, for successful legal changes this research will focus mainly on BLM, while the legal changes occurring as a result of the Catalan Independence Movement will be briefly discussed and explained. On the other hand, regarding the social changes both BLM and CIM will be discussed briefly in the body of the text because both movements observed significant social change. They will be briefly discussed in the body of the text because the existing proof of the social changes is based solely on the personal observations of the researcher in addition to the observations of other authors.

#### **3.5.2 Legal Changes for Black Lives Matter**

There was research on the pertinent laws and how they changed after the movements targeting them began. A review was done not only on statutes and articles, but also on the different legal demands made to hold police officers accountable and punished under the law as opposed to getting off scot-free. Research on the specific targeted laws by Campaign Zero was very straight forward to analyse because it was initiated by the movement directly and they showed whether or not they were implemented. This helped in determining success of the Facebook activism for the Black Lives Matter movement because if actual laws have changed as a result of the movements, they have achieved at least some of their goals in substantive ways.

Another possible form of legal research was looking at the outcomes of the different trials and cases against police officers as well as the outcomes for the protests against specific



laws that were deemed to be discriminatory against Black people in the United States. However, due to the fact that those trials, incidents, indictments and cases exist in the hundreds of thousands, it was more effective and efficient to look at the laws governing those and future incidents as well as the laws proposed in response to those events and cases.

As a result, the legal portion of this research focused on Campaign Zero which is a branch of Black Lives Matter. The goal of Campaign Zero is to transform the world into a place where police do not ever kill people. They want to achieve that through the limitation of police interventions, improvement in community interactions, and the increasing assurance of accountability and punishment for incorrect procedures. They have created specific proposals for policy solutions and legal changes which have been distributed to the many factions of the USA government on behalf of the Black Lives Matter movement. Each state and their respective laws or lack thereof has been targeted and for the purposes of this research the changes were recorded.

Proposed laws were created with the aim of having zero tolerance for police brutality, unprofessionalism of law enforcement, and injustice. They have been fairly successful in the USA so far and continue to advocate for even more legal changes and increased success for the movement.

There are ten different categories of laws that they are proposing should be changed or implemented in each state in the US. Each of those categories targets specific legislation in existence in each state in the US or proposed new legislation for the states where there is no pertinent legislation in place. All of the legislation that has been passed so far as a result of Campaign Zero can be classified or grouped into at least one of the ten categories that they have presented, and the movement has been keeping track of those changes in each of the categories. Those categories are displayed in the graphic below courtesy of Campaign Zero:

Figure 2 Categories of Legislation Proposed by Campaign Zero



Source: <https://www.joincampaignzero.org/#vision> on April 20, 2020

These categories of laws; “Ending broken window policing”, “Community oversight”, “Limit to use of force”, “Independent investigation and prosecution”, “Community representation”, “Body Cams on the police”, “Training for the police”, “Ending for profit policing”, “Demilitarization”, and “Fair police union contracts”, would help to achieve the changes desired by Black Lives Matter and make America in general safer for its citizens; particularly those of colour.

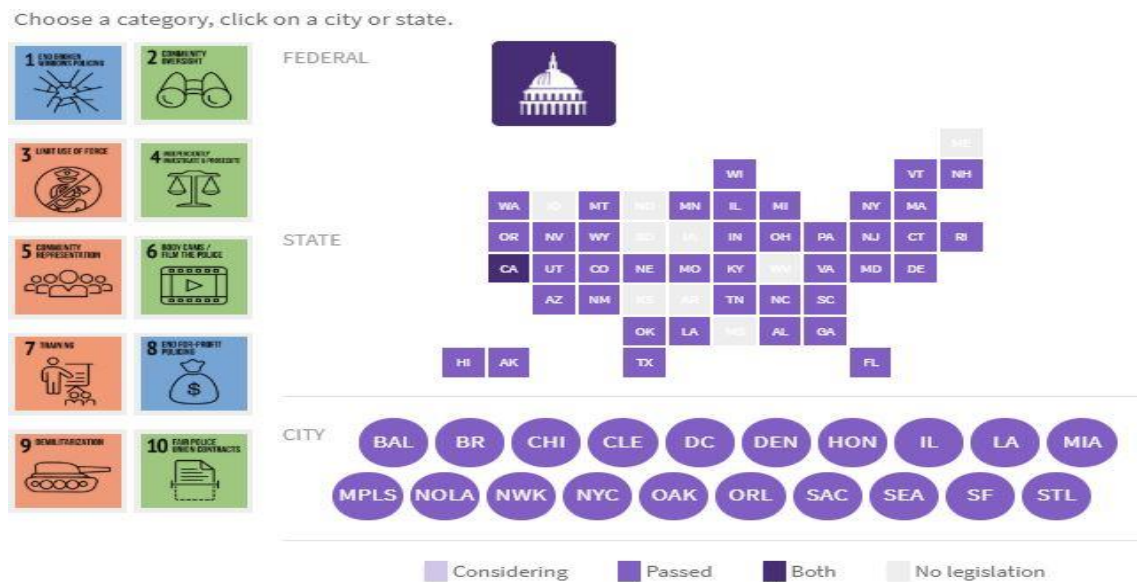
Campaign Zero has so far had a lot of success in ensuring legislation passed on the Federal, State and Local level addressing police violence in multiple states in the US which means Black Lives Matter has had a lot of success in using activism and of course strategic action to change the law. This is the reason why it was important to do the legal analysis on the specific laws targeted.

Through Campaign Zero’s efforts and the efforts of BLM on a whole, at least 107 laws have been enacted between 2014 (when Campaign Zero began operation) and 2019 to address police violence and make people of colour safer in the US. The new legislation has been enacted in 41 of the 50 states in the United States during that time. And 10 states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Oregon, Utah, Texas, Washington) have enacted legislation addressing three or more Campaign Zero policy categories. Also, many of America’s largest cities have passed local ordinances along the lines of the legislation proposed by Campaign Zero. They continue to work hard to

implement all the changes in all of the states. It should also be noted that many more laws have recently been passed or have been approved to be passed due to the demonstrations in the US resulting from the death of George Floyd. However, they have not been recorded fully yet and thus will not appear in this research.

The research takes the forms of graphics like the one below with the specific law category highlighted and showing which states have implemented the law as highlighted in dark purple. The diagram below is an example of what the legal research will look like however this one shows which states have implemented legislation pertaining to at least one of the 10 categories from Campaign Zero as a result of their work. In the results section there will be a breakdown of the success of each category.

*Figure 3 States which have Implemented Legislation Proposed by Campaign Zero*



Source: [www.joincampaignzero.org/#action](http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#action) on April 20, 2020

An important limitation of this method was not being able to distinguish between the legal changes made because of Facebook activism versus offline activity or both. That distinction is impossible to make and both likely had an impact on the legal changes that were obtained, which renders the inability to make the distinction a non-issue.

## **3.6 Interviews**

### **3.6.1 Overview of Interviews**

Activists, lawyers, a journalist and leaders within the movements in analysis were interviewed to determine the context in which the movements were operating, the impact of activism for the movements, their perception of the impact, perceptions and insight into the intents of the movement, and overall effectiveness of the movements in obtaining change socially and legally. With their years of experience and understanding of the movements discussed and activism in general, their words were very helpful in highlighting the significant points of the movement, social media activism in general, and how it can be used more effectively. They also were able to speak within a historical context by comparing current means of activism to traditional forms of activism; both of which they all participated in.

### **3.6.2 Interview with Angela Davis**

The first interview for Black Lives Matter was with Angela Davis on October 10, 2017 in Barcelona, Spain.

Davis is a renowned civil rights activist, feminist, author, and former Black Panther who is recognized all over the world for her activism and has been able to fight for and obtain change throughout her life. She has been on the frontlines, imprisoned, criticized, and threatened and therefore knows better than most the sacrifices that real activism can entail. Her activism was never easy or simple. Therefore, many of the questions she was asked for this research had to do with her perception of online activism which is seen by some as ‘slacktivism’ or requiring very little effort and sacrifice. It would be interesting to know if as an activist herself, she considered those involved in activism online (with little to no risk) activists as well. During her interview she candidly shared her thoughts on slacktivism and how it has both negatively and positively affected the movement. She spoke to using Facebook intentionally as a tool to get people involved and aware. She was also able to describe the downsides of using Facebook as a tool of activism and speak on the negative impact that Slacktivism can have on a movement.

The interview was based on two specific questions, but the format was open and provided for flexibility. The questions she was asked were:

- What is one advantage that Black Lives Matter has as a movement?
- There is a backlash against Social Media Activism as slacktivism which means it does not require much work or sacrifice. Do you as an activist feel that they have been as effective as they can be, or as effective as traditional movements perhaps during the Civil Rights Era and what can they do to be more effective?

Her responses were thoughtful, candid, and based on her wealth of experience and definitely contributed to the research contextually and allowed for a different and powerful perspective on activism. Her answers to the questions will be discussed in the results section.

### 3.6.3 Interview with Janette McCarthy

The interview with the lawyer, Janette McCarthy took place on June 10, 2019 via Google Hangouts Videocall. McCarthy is the Deputy General Counsel of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and her interview was very insightful because she was able to respond to questions both from a legal perspective and as a civilian who has participated online and offline in advocacy for Black Lives Matter.

She provided very valuable understanding of how American law works and the processes needed to implement new laws or make changes to old ones. She was also able to shed light on how citizens can or cannot impact the law and what steps need to be taken to do that. She was also helpful in discussing previous BLM cases and why many of them had the outcomes that they had.

Additionally, she provided her perspective on BLM, how they had been successful and also what factors may have inhibited success in terms of changing the law or indictments. The interview was structured and based on pre-established questions but still left room for flexibility.

The questions she was asked were:

- What is your job position?
- Are you familiar with the Black Lives Matter movement?

- How do you think Black Lives Matter has affected the law in general?
- Are you familiar with Campaign Zero which is a branch of Black Lives Matter?
- What are the main similarities you see in the Black Lives Matter movement and the Civil Rights Movement of the 50s, 60s and 70s?
- Do you think the NAACP is very supportive of the Black Lives Matter movement or is it neutral? Or is there a disagreement?
- How much activism and work is done by the NAACP on social media?
- Do you think Social Media Activism is helpful in terms of bringing about changes in the law?
- How do you think our use of Social Media could be more effective in bringing about legal changes?
- Do you think that the online activism in Black Lives Matter has been just as effective as the in-person protests or do you think one has been more effective than the other?

Her legal insight was quite valuable in terms of understanding the potential impact of activism and also the processes behind making changes in legislation including how active a role the citizens can play in changing the law. Her responses will also be discussed in the results section.

#### 3.6.4 Interview with Pere Franch

For the Catalan Independence Movement, the first interview was with well-known Catalan journalist, author, and activist Pere Franch on March 4, 2018 in Barcelona, Spain.

Franch was instrumental in providing a lot of context not just about the impact of online activism on the Catalan Independence Movement but the history of the movement as well. He was able to thoroughly break down what had occurred in the past and succinctly tell the story of the movement all the way up to the current day situation which provided a much better understanding of why Independence is desired.

It is important to note that he is very pro-independence and has been active in the movement for independence. It is also important to note that in terms of SMA, most of his expertise is on the use of Twitter, however he was still able to shed light on SMA in general as well as the use of Facebook.

The interview was based on set questions but was open enough to allow for flexibility and discussion. The questions he was asked were:

- What is your current occupation?
- What caused the push for independence and a referendum in 2017?
- Do you use Social Media?
- Did you use it to participate in the events for the Catalan Independence Movement?
- Were people using Facebook quite a lot for organizing or voicing opinions based on whatever you observed?
- What would you say was the most popular social media platform used?
- How useful has Social Media Activism been for organizing protests?
- Do you think social media was more effective than mainstream media in creating awareness of the situation here?
- How useful has Social Media Activism been in creating social change amongst the Catalan people? Have there been any social changes that you have recognized because of the movement?
- What were the most popular hashtags this time around that you know of?
- How has the movement affected the law? Has it changed anything legally that you know of?
- Overall, do you think Social Media Activism is helpful in bringing legal changes?
- How do you think it could be more effective in bringing legal changes?
- What were the main differences that you observed between the movement of 2017 and past movements for Catalunya?
- Do you think this last October (2017) was more effective than previous times in bringing Catalunya closer to independence?
- So, do you think that the increased usage of Social Media contributed to the success of this movement? Is that part of the reason that it was more successful?
- Do you think Social Media Activism has been as effective as in person protests? Or do you think it is more effective, less effective, or needs to be combined with traditional

protests? Is Social Media Activism like typing or writing or liking something online as effective as marches or demonstrations? Or do they need to work together?

His responses were extremely helpful in understanding the events leading up to the movement for independence and the reasons behind the movement. In spite of his stance, he was able to provide objective and factual reasoning which considerably allowed for a more comprehensive study.

### 3.6.5 Interview with Marina Serrat

The next interview for CIM was with highly accomplished lawyer Marina Serrat via telephone call on July 15, 2018. Serrat works for Becerra Advocats which is over 100 years old and one of the oldest law firms in Catalunya. It should be noted that she is also pro-independence but was able to be unbiased when speaking about the impact on the law.

The interview was based on pre-established questions but still maintained an open format and allowed for conversation on the different topics. The questions she was asked were:

- How do you think Social Media Activism has affected the Catalan Independence Movement in term of its effectiveness, changing minds, or organizing within society and how impactful has it been on the law? Firstly, how effective has it been on advertising?
- How effective was Social Media (mainly speaking about Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other Online platforms) in creating awareness of the situation here in Catalunya?
- For creating social change, like actual social change within the society, do you think that social media was an effective tool, particularly Facebook or even WhatsApp?
- What do you think were the most popular hashtags for the movement for Independence?
- How do you think the movement for independence, particularly the activity taking place on social media, affected the law? I know you are a lawyer so did it create any legal changes that you could see or did the laws remain the same?
- As a lawyer do you think that Social Media Activism could be helpful or is helpful for bringing about legal changes?
- Could social media be more effective in bringing about legal changes?



- Is this the first time that people have protested or advocated for Independence in Catalunya?
- What was the difference between the advocacy last year in 2017 and the times before? I'm not sure what it was like before but to you, what were the main differences as an observer and as a lawyer that you saw between the movement this time and the times before?
- In 2017, Puigdemont actually declared Catalunya independent for the first time even though it lasted for a short time. Do you think that this 2017 movement for independence was more effective than the movements in the past or were the results about the same in your opinion?
- Do you think that an increase in social media usage contributed to it being more effective this time around?
- Do you think that social media protests are just as effective as in person protests (for example the protests here)? Do you think it is less effective or more effective or do you believe that they need to be used in tandem or together?

She added necessary legal insight to the Catalan research and also understanding of how laws are passed in the region as well as the different roles the varying levels of governance have which helped in understanding power dynamics and who has the power to make or change laws.

### 3.6.6 Benefits of the Interviews

All of these interviews provided much needed contextual information and were very helpful in understanding from a professional and scholarly standpoint, how the movements have been perceived, how SMA has been helpful, and what needs to be done in order to achieve more social and legal impact. All of these interviews will help to answer the question of how Facebook activism has affected both the Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence Movement and whether or not the movements were successful because of it. They also speak to whether there needs to be traditional activism combined with social media activism to affect or change the law and/or society.

### **3.7 Research Limitations**

There were a few limitations for each method used which will be discussed more in-depth below.

#### **3.7.1 Google Trends Limitations**

The limitations for Google Trends were that there was not much of a breakdown in terms of usage in terms of what platforms and modes were used to communicate, and also the usage did not reflect whether people were pro Black Lives Matter/pro-independence as opposed to anti Black Lives Matter/ anti-independence. All participation was lumped together when showing online activity and therefore did not indicate or highlight a specific pattern in terms of how it affected the success of the movement. Additionally, there was no indication of the specifics of the users in terms of their locations, nationality, age, gender, race which limited understanding of participation because there was limited understanding of the participants.

Another limitation of Google Trends has to do with the source of the participation once again in that it is impossible to know if the activity came from activists or participants or simply was from the traditional media and news sources or even those writing articles about the movement. There was no way to identify the information or activity coming from participants or civilians. Despite this the trends spoke for themselves and were extremely useful for the research.

#### **3.7.2 Survey Limitations**

The limitations of the surveys were basically the presence of human error. The responses were based on perception of individuals and therefore were not necessarily factual. There is the possibility also that people may misrepresent themselves or lie with no way to prove that they did. There were some inconsistencies identified in the responses however they did not take away from the conclusions due to the research. Other limitations were that there was not a question about whether participants were for or against the respective causes so there was no separation between the two, however that had no bearing on the results either because their responses still revealed their perceptions, ways of participation, and motivations for participation.

Another limitation was that only 200 participants from the BLM movement and 201 from the CIM movement took the surveys and therefore the sample size was relatively small but with 401 responses in total, that was enough to draw concrete conclusions based on what was said. Another limitation is that some of the questions were not open-ended whereas it might have been beneficial for them to have been open-ended in case there were options or insight that was not thought of. The opposite serves as a possible limitation for the questions that were open-ended because some of the responses were not helpful to the research. However, overall, the surveys were quite helpful and insightful, and the limitation did not hinder the collection of useful data.

### 3.7.3 Legal Research Limitations

The limitations for the legal changes are mainly that many of the changes occurred during the last few years and it is almost impossible to tell which ones occurred mainly or solely due to the movement and particularly the activism online. Black Lives Matter has been able to achieve a lot through Campaign Zero (mentioned above) which has targeted and proposed many specific laws which have been adopted by multiple states but similarly to what was stated, it is very difficult to tell which ones were as a result of Campaign Zero, Black Lives Matter, or its online activism. Additionally, the research does include legal changes that are being considered but it is impossible to tell how likely it is that they will be passed and therefore impossible to measure effectiveness of the movement on the law accurately. Also, the research mainly focuses on legislation and laws passed particularly relating to Campaign Zero but neglects other legal changes like indictments or court rulings. The limitations for the research on legal changes for the Catalan Independence movement are clear in that no legal changes proposed or desired by the movement occurred which made the desired research impossible. However, legal ramifications were observed and included in the research because they were an effect or consequence of the movement.

### 3.7.4 Interview Limitations

For the interviews, the limitations were that those interviewed were not unbiased and while experienced in the field of activism, journalism (in the case of Franch), and the field of law they were experienced also as advocates for the causes. Angela Davis is a

renowned activist and has been very helpful to the BLM movement. She has supported them and their cause openly. Janette McCarthy was perhaps the most unbiased but was still biased in that she works for the NAACP an organization supporting Black People and Black Lives Matter. She also made it clear that she supports the movement and believes in the changes they are trying to obtain. Pere Franch is a very recognised journalist and he is quite open about his support for Independence. That viewpoint was also clear in his interview. Marina Serrat was clearly pro-independence based on what she said and while she provided a lot of legal insight and unbiased thoughts, it was clear that her views were also possibly influenced by the movement.

### **3.8 Takeaways from the Research Methods**

There was a good mix of different tools and the presence of each tool added significantly to the research. Their differences balanced each other out and their similarities helped in the formation of conclusions for the research, addressing every hypothesis existing and directly responding to them. They complimented each other well and supplemented each other in whatever areas were lacking from the individual research methods.

The mixed-methods approach was extremely beneficial because it allowed for the gathering of facts pertinent to the research, very clear graphics which communicated the presence of or solutions to some of the issues raised in the research, confirmed some of the hypotheses from multiple standpoints and indicated areas that may have been overlooked or were more significant than previously thought which helped in the evolution and improvement of the research.

Google Trends was necessary for showing how the activism has progressed online and patterns in participation and engagement. The surveys were helpful in showing motivations for participation and perceived impact of the movements as well as possible ways to improve participation and effectiveness. The legal research helped to show the actual success of the movements in terms of achieving the legal changes sought by the movement (or lack thereof in the case of Catalan Independence). The interviews provided much needed context from very reliable sources about both social movements and social media activism.

The versatility of the methods allowed for a well-rounded approach to the research as well as the results. In spite of the limitations of each, the strengths of the others were able

to compensate for the areas lacking in them. The benefits of the methods, sample and diversity of tools outweighed any negatives coming from the limitations of the research. The findings from each of the tools mentioned above will be shown and discussed in the results section of this paper.

## 4 RESULTS

The results of this research are going to be presented in this order: Google Trends; surveys; legal changes, and interviews. The Google Trends results will be presented in the form of graphs, the survey results will be presented in the form of pie charts and bar graphs, the legal change results will be shown through images, and a transcript of the interviews will be included. Each set of results will be followed by an analysis.

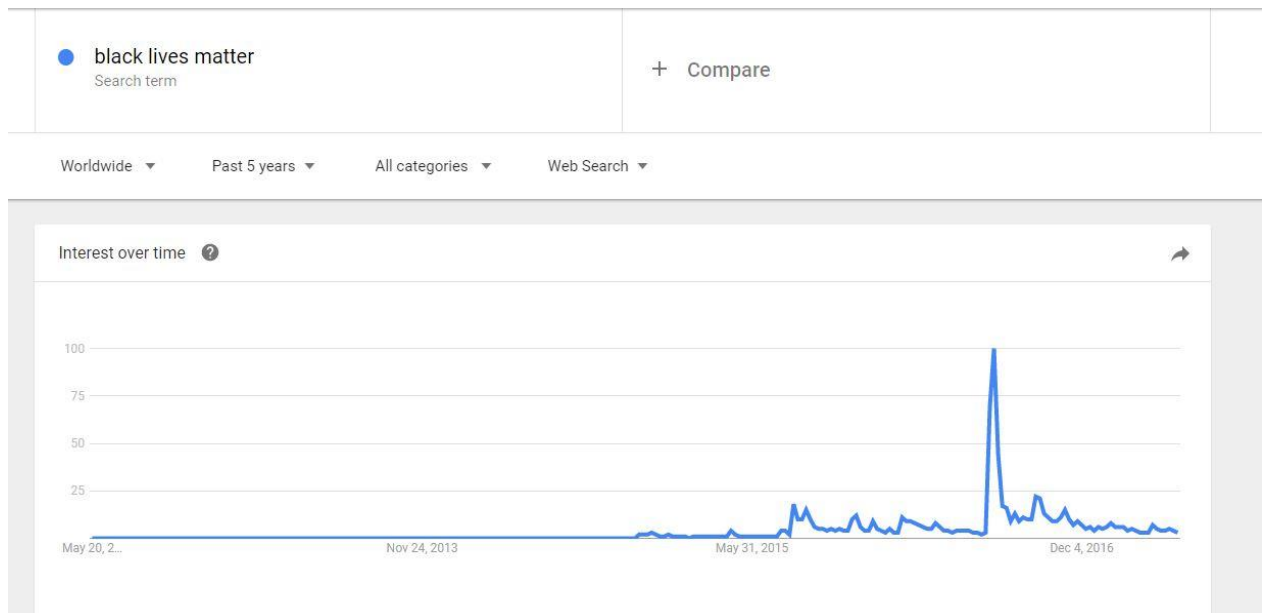
### 4.1 Google Trends

The Google Trends Research will be presented in the form of Line Graphs.

#### 4.1.1 Black Lives Matter Google Trends

##### 4.1.1.1 Black Lives Matter Yearly Activity

*Figure 4 Black Lives Matter 2011-2017*



Source: Google Trends Research by the author (2020)<sup>4</sup>

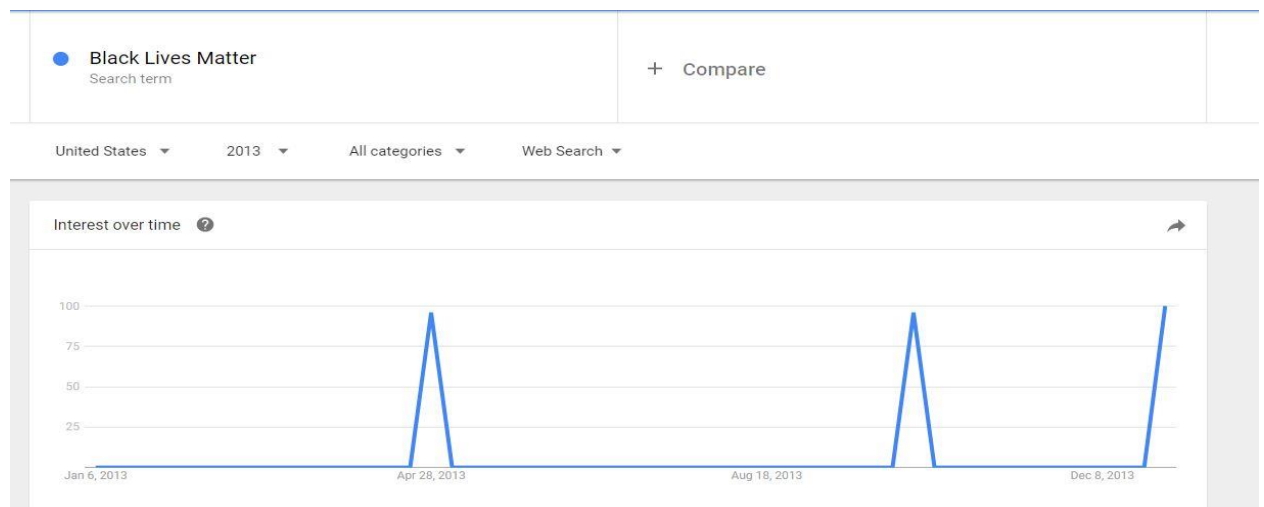
This chart shows the prominence of the term \*BlackLivesMatter in the world between 2011 and 2017. As you can see there is no consistency in the amount of times # Black

<sup>4</sup> All Google Trends graphs/results are original research of the author (2020)

Lives Matter was mentioned. There was a huge spike in July 2016; that period of time coincided with the shootings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile.

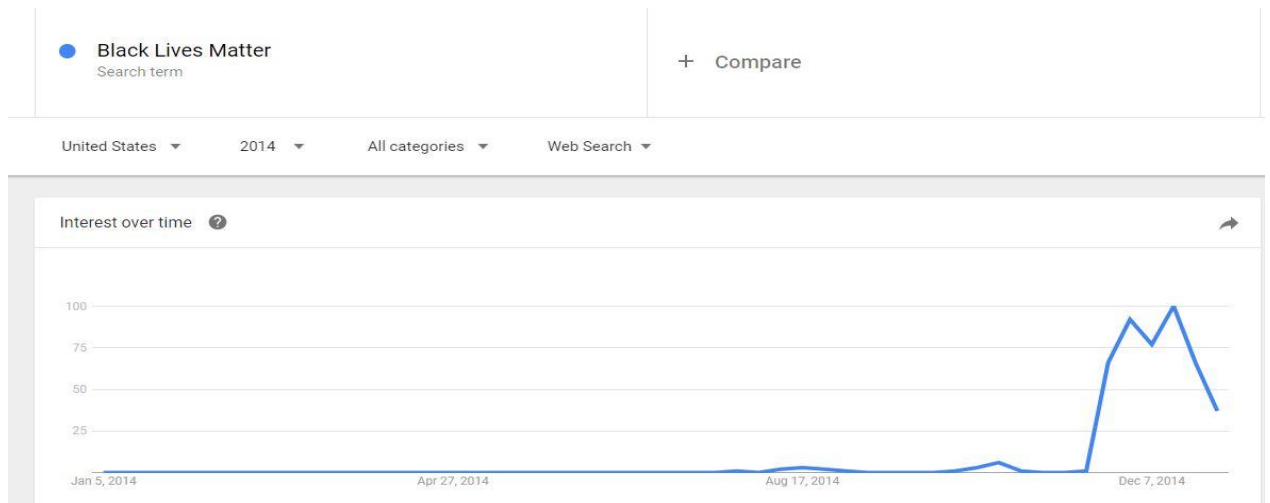
Worldwide, the most active countries were the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the UK in addition to Sweden, Denmark, Norway, South Africa, Ireland, Singapore, Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, Philippines, Mexico, Spain, Italy, Poland, Brazil, Japan, Russia and India.

*Figure 5 Black Lives Matter from 2013 to 2018*



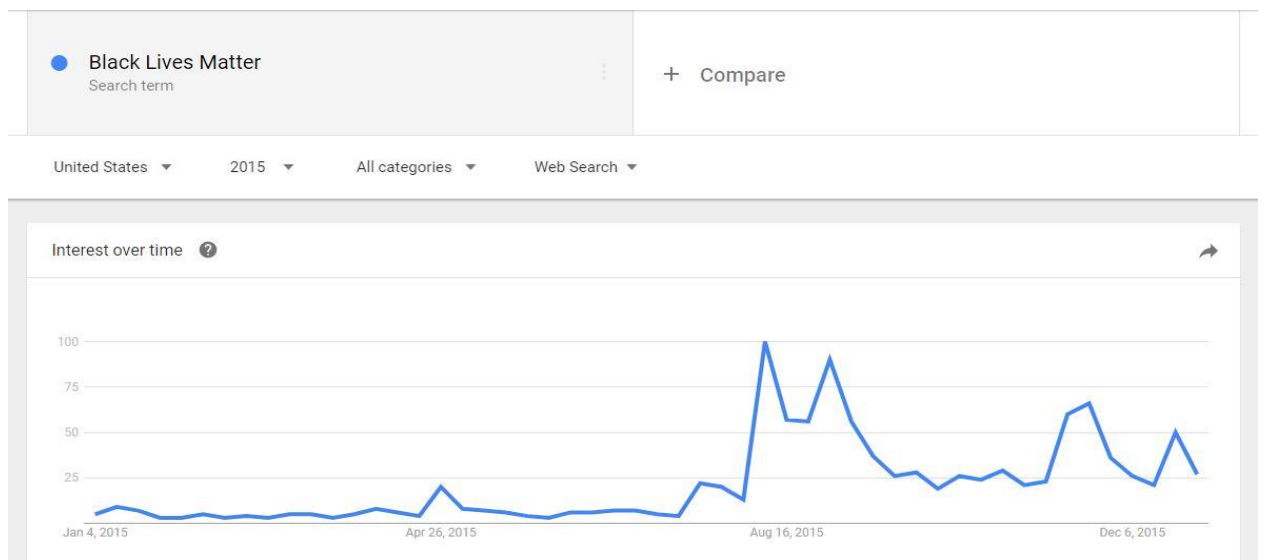
The spike in April 2013 comes with the aftermath of the murder of Trayvon Martin. It was during this time when Zimmerman was tried and acquitted in this and future spikes in the graph. The hashtag #BlackLivesMatter was also born in 2013 as a result of the incidents coming after Trayvon Martin and other Black men were killed and nobody was held accountable or punished for their deaths.

Figure 6 Black Lives Matter in 2014



2014 was a very active year for Black Lives Matter. You can see a slight spark in July which was around when Eric Garner (#Icantbreathe) was murdered. In August Mike Brown (#Ferguson) was murdered. Ezell Ford was also murdered by police in Los Angeles in August. The instant rise in November 2014 was because of the shooting of Tamir Rice (a 12-year-old boy shot in Cleveland). Tamir's death was a catalyst for a huge increase in the movement's participation and activity. In December there was a lot of participation; thousands of people went to the Mall of America in Minnesota to protest. In addition to that in December, when officer Darren Wilson was not indicted for murdering Mike Brown, many people were enraged and participated.

Figure 7 Black Lives Matter in 2015

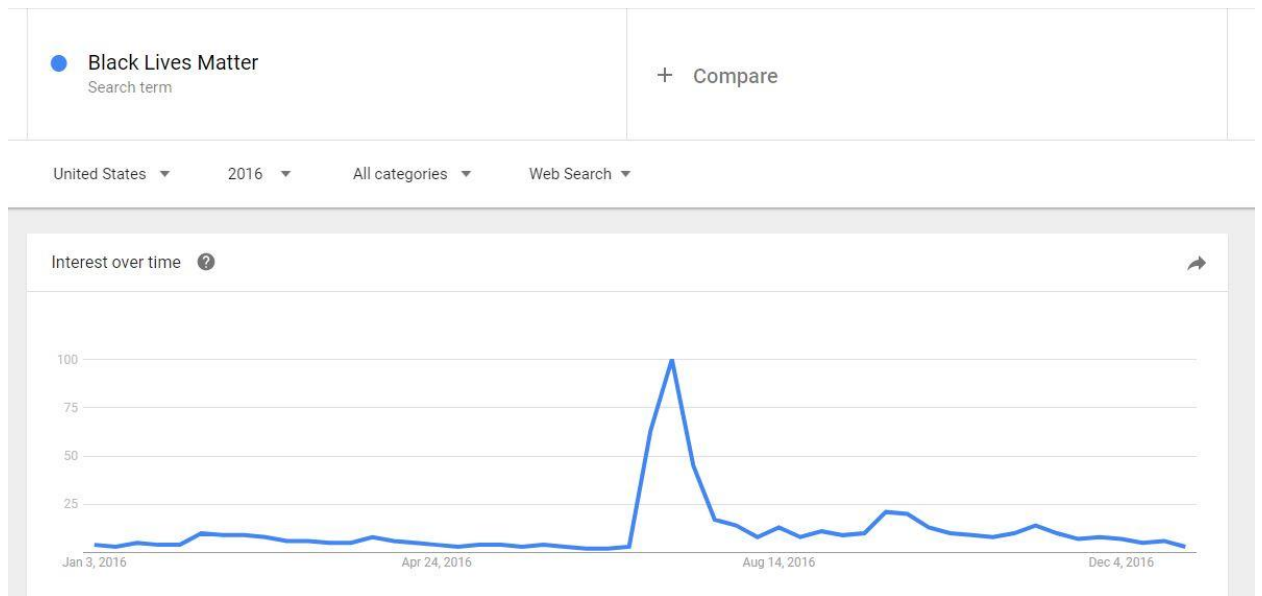




2015 participation fluctuated significantly. Despite the spike in December of 2014, participation shoots right back down as soon as the New Year starts. The spike in April is due to the murder of Freddie Gray which led to the huge Baltimore protests. The spike in April is also due to the shooting of Walter Scott in North Carolina. The spikes in June are as a result of terrorist Dylan Roof's massacring of several members worshipping in a historically Black church in Charleston, South Carolina. In July it goes back up again due to the killing of Jonathan Sanders while in police custody on the 8<sup>th</sup> and also because Sandra Bland was killed on the 13<sup>th</sup> (her body was found hanged). Another police officer murdered Samuel DuBose in Cincinnati less than a week later. In August 2015, Black Lives Matter had several rallies around the US. The Black Lives Matter form of protest called "die-ins" were created and executed effectively thus garnering more attention and participation. This happened after a judge declared a mistrial in the case of the death of Jonathan Ferrel in 2013.

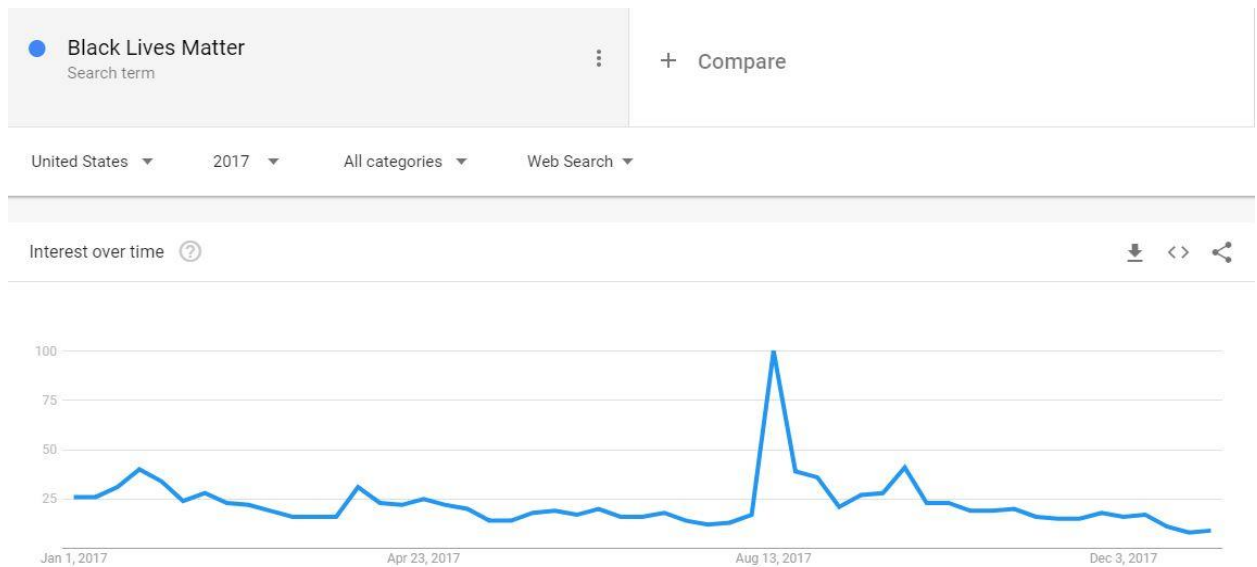
August 9 was the first anniversary of Mike Brown's death and vigils were held. In September hundreds of people in Texas rallied against police brutality. Hearings for the Freddie Gray case also occurred in September. Jerry McDole, a Black paraplegic was shot and killed by police while in a wheelchair during September (on the 23<sup>rd</sup>) as well and Black Lives Matter protested his assassination. The Rise Up October campaign against police violence worked in tandem with Black Lives Matter. In October, Laquan McDonald was also shot (16 times by Chicago PD). Then in November, Jamar Clark was shot in Minneapolis and there were continuous protests outside the police department where men with firearms opened fire on protesters.

*Figure 8 Black Lives Matter in 2016*



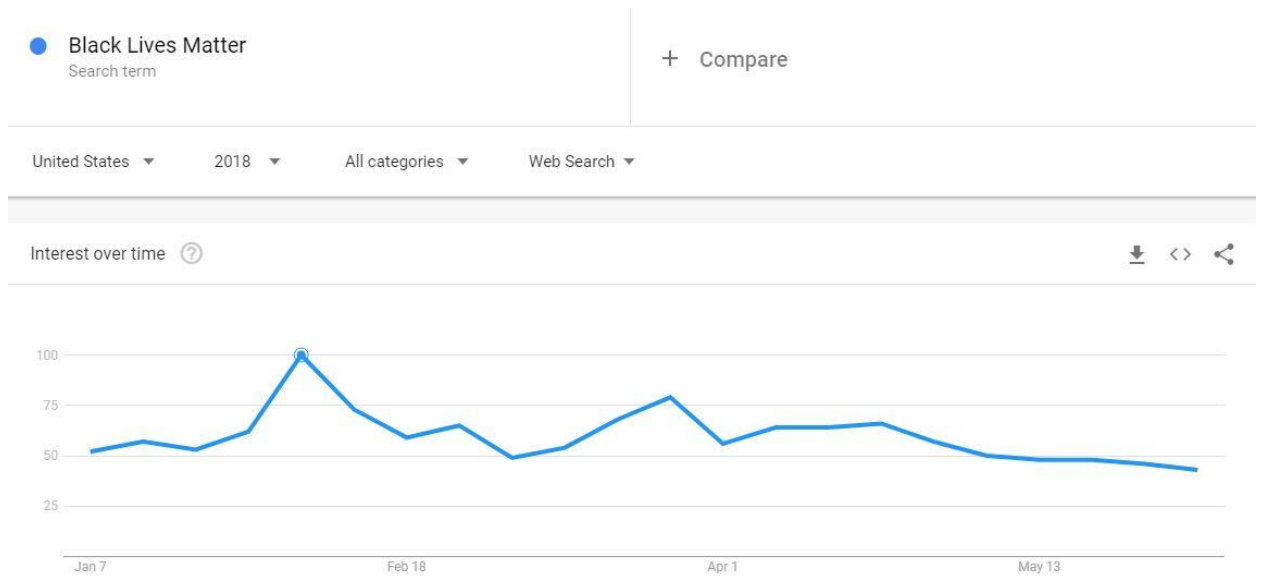
2016 was a very interesting year for the movement. In January, during the Superbowl, hundreds protested the death of Mario Woods the month before. On Feb 27 Abdullahi Mohamed was shot by police and that caused an increase in participation. The raise in July is because of the shooting of Alton Sterling on the 5<sup>th</sup> in Louisiana. Protests were heavily attended. Then on July 6<sup>th</sup>, one day after, Philando Castile was murdered by police while in the car with his girlfriend and 4-year-old daughter. The July 7<sup>th</sup> protest in Texas was for both of those men. In the first half of July there were at least 112 protests in 88 cities and the NBA opened with a Black Lives Matter message. In August, several athletes (led by Colin Kaepernick) began to kneel for the anthem in protest of the shootings). In September Terence Crutcher (Sep 16) and Keith Scott (Sep 23) were murdered. Protests followed. The rest of the year was fairly quiet.

*Figure 9 Black Lives Matter in 2017*



On February 10, Jocques Clemmons was shot in Tennessee and when that police officer was not prosecuted in May, there were demonstrations in Nashville. On April 29, Jordan Edwards was murdered. On August 11 and 12, hundreds gathered to protest the confederate statues and racism and they were bullied by white supremacists who ended up eventually driving into the crowd of protesters and killing people. That is what contributed to that spike in August. In September, some members of Black Lives Matter went on stage at a Trump rally and won over those present. On September 27, students associated with Black Lives Matter protested an ACLU event because of their participation in Charlottesville. Activity within the movement remained extremely consistent comparatively for the rest of the year. In November, there were protests boycotting Black Friday. In December Erica Garner, the daughter of Eric Garner and a Black Lives Matter activist died of a heart attack. These events are what helped to maintain the level of participation.

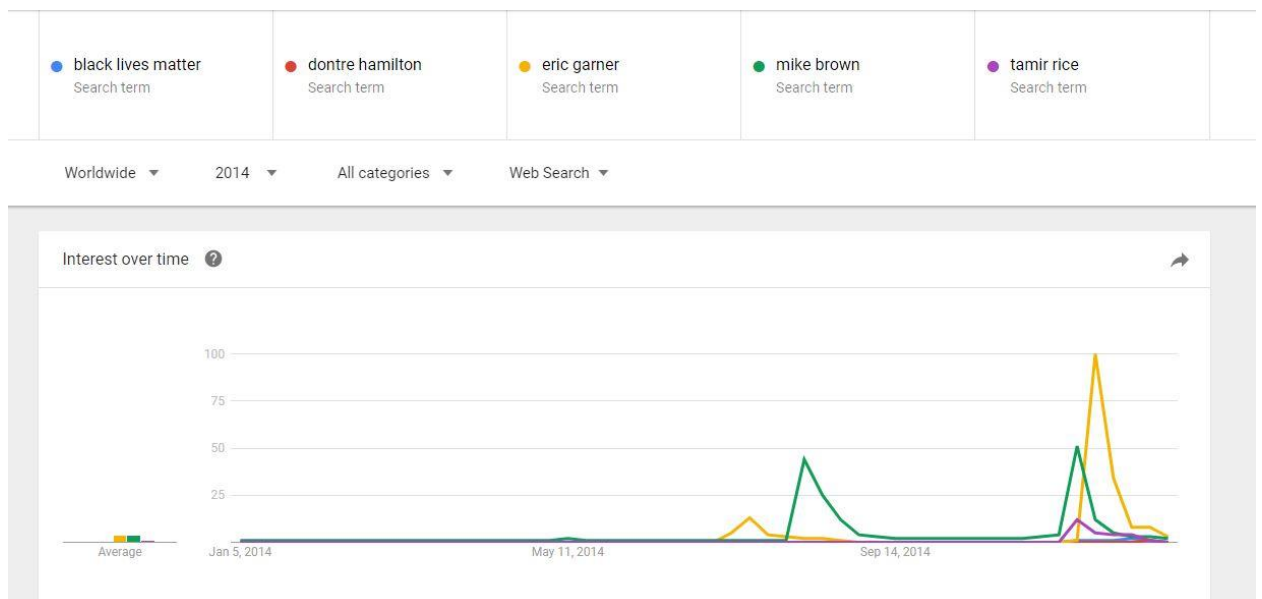
Figure 10 Black Lives Matter in 2018



In March, Stephon Clark was murdered. Saheed Vassell was also killed by police on April 7<sup>th</sup>. It was discovered that the largest Black Lives Matter Facebook page was run by a white Australian man in April. Much of the participation is also Trump related. Another contributor to the participation is athletes continuing to take a knee and the NFL subsequently banning it.

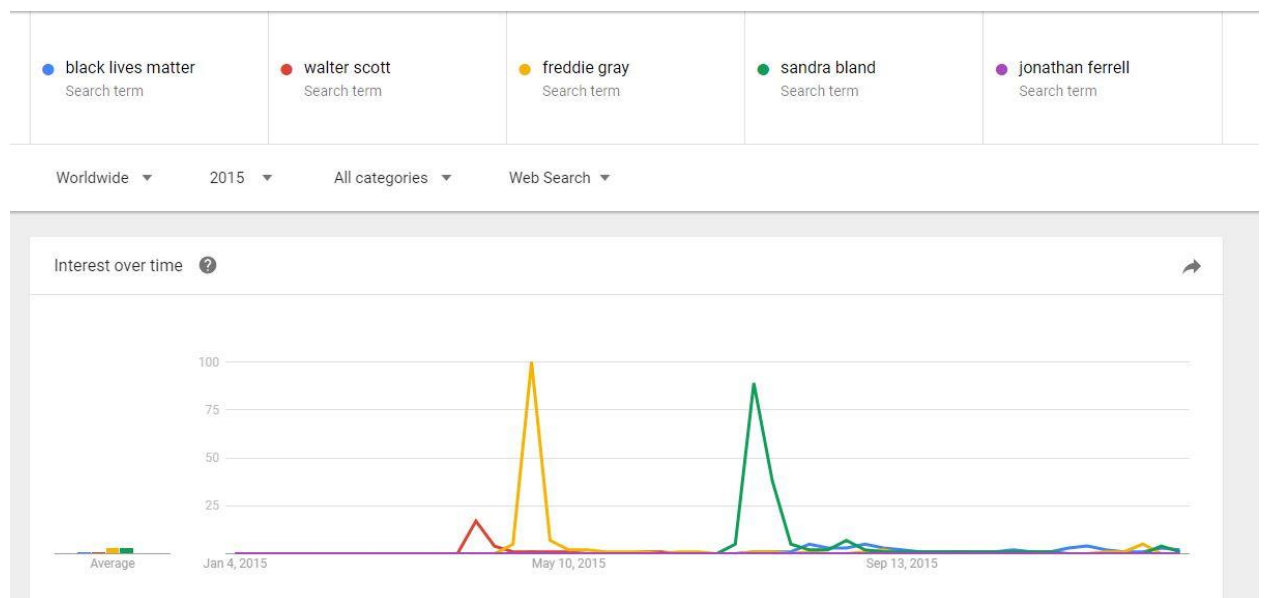
#### 4.1.1.2 Black Lives Matter Event Comparison

Figure 11 “Black Lives Matter”, “Donte Hamilton”, “Eric Garner”, “Mike Brown” and “Tamir Rice” in 2014



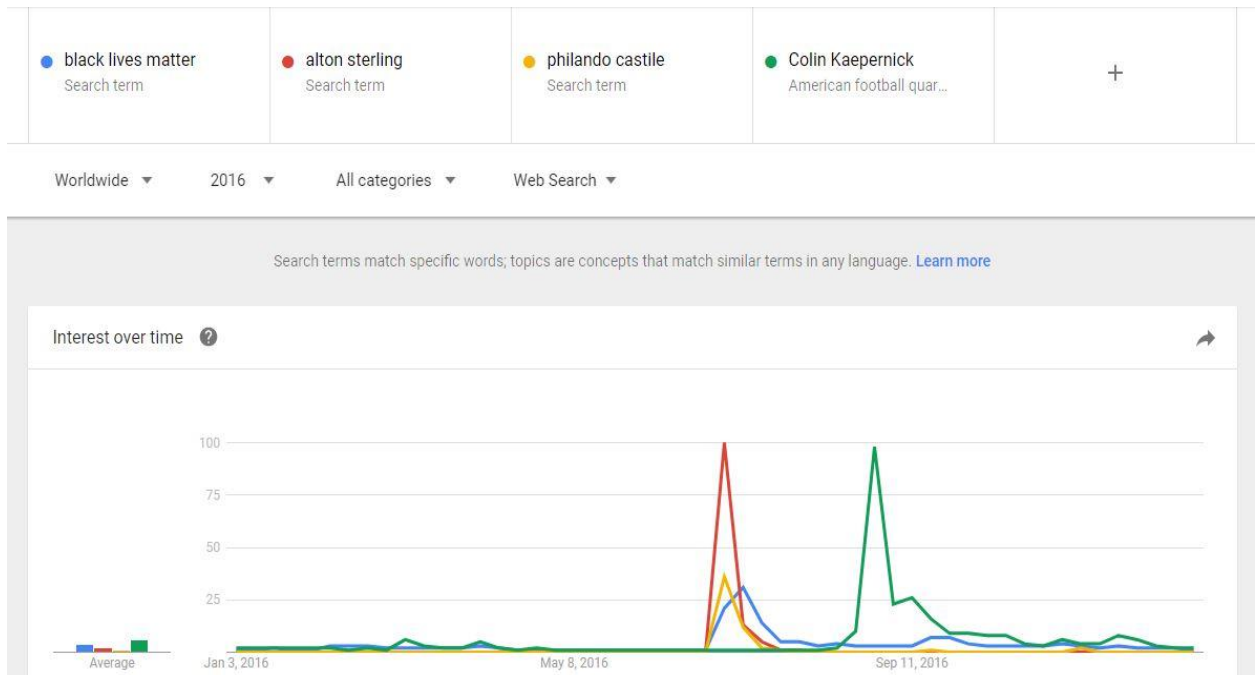
This graph compares the popularity of the various hashtags in 2014. You can see the popularity of each compared with the popularity of the others. We can see that the trends in popularity coincide especially at the end of the year. Dontre Hamilton was shot by a police officer in Wisconsin on April 30th. Eric Garner was choked to death by police on July 17. Mike Brown was murdered by police on August 9<sup>th</sup> in Ferguson, Missouri. Tamir Rice was murdered by police on November 23 in Cleveland, Ohio when he had a toy gun.

Figure 12 “Black Lives Matter”, “Walter Scott”, “Freddie Gray”, “Sandra Bland”, “Jonathan Ferrell” in 2015



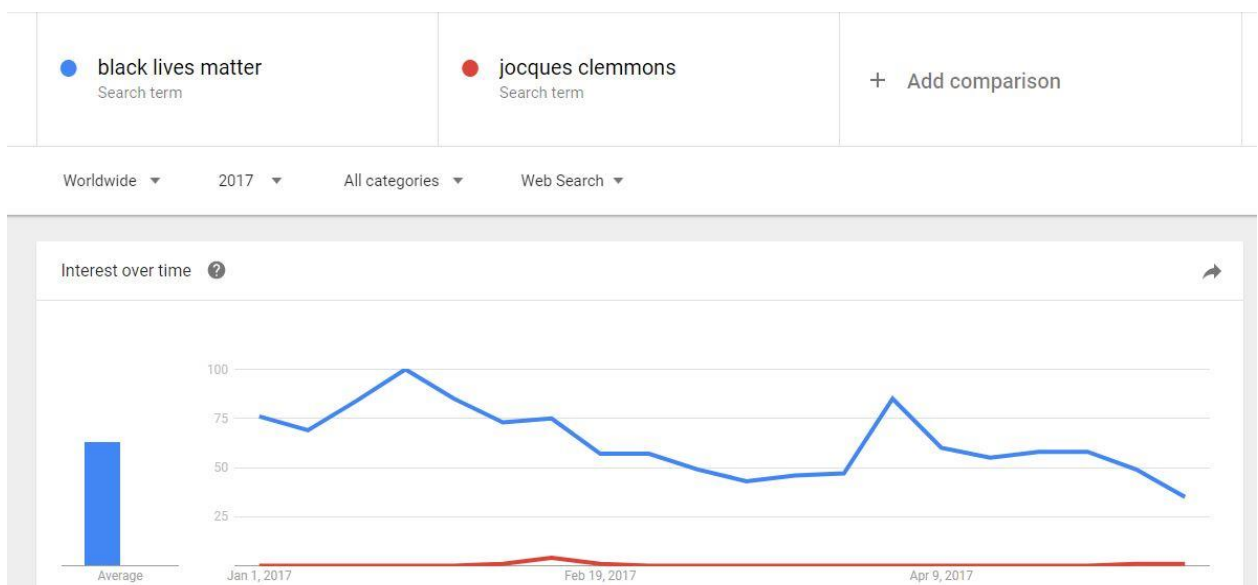
This graph compares the popularity of the Black lives matter hashtag with the hashtags of the other major events in 2015 for the movement. As you can see, everything seems to be pretty separate. There are no obvious common trends. Walter Scot was shot by police in April for a non-functioning brake light in South Carolina. It also shows the popularity of the hashtag for Freddie Gray later in April who was murdered while in police custody in Baltimore. Sandra Bland was lynched in her jail cell by police in July 2015. Jonathan Ferrell was shot in 2013 but the trial took place in 2015.

Figure 13 “Back Lives Matter”, “Alton Sterling”, “Philando Castile”, “Colin Kaepernick” in 2016



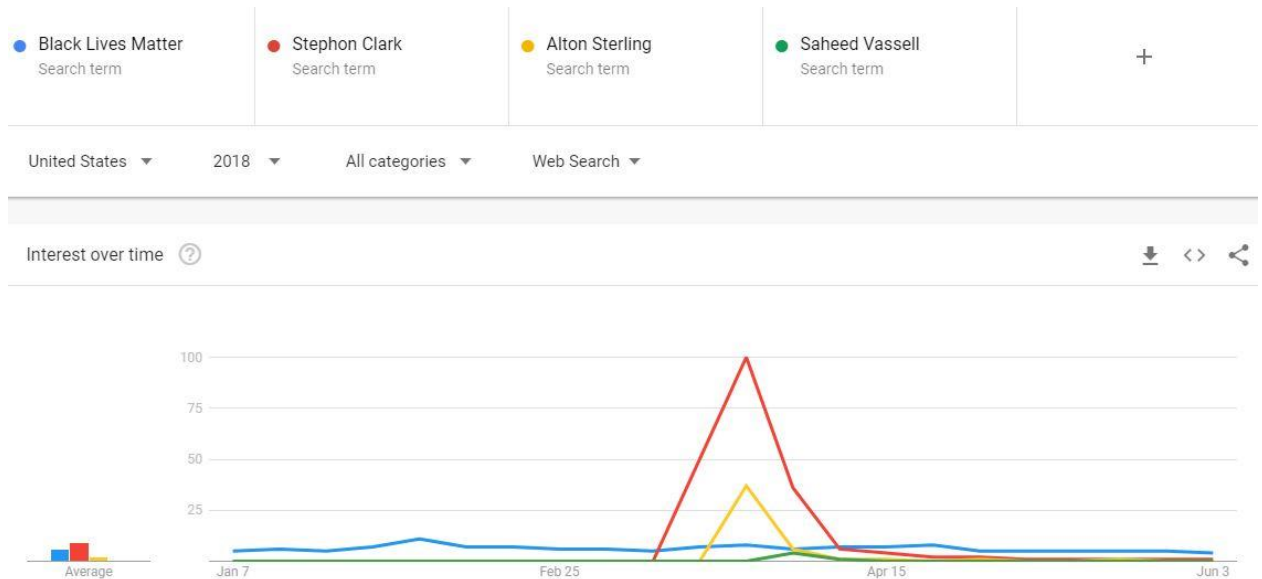
This graph shows the popularity of Black Lives Matter compared with the popularity in mentions of the other major events related to Black Lives Matter that year. Trends show a direct relation between the keywords. They increase at the same time and decrease at the same time. Alton Sterling was murdered by police in Louisiana in July. Philando Castile was murdered the day after on July 6. Colin Kaepernick an NFL player who started the trend to kneel during the anthem.

Figure 14 “Black Lives Matter”, “Jocques Clemmons” in 2017



This graph compares the prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement with other major events during the year. 2017 was not an extremely active year for Black Lives Matter. But you can see that when there was a spark for Jocques Clemmons, there was also one in Black Lives Matter. This occurred in February.

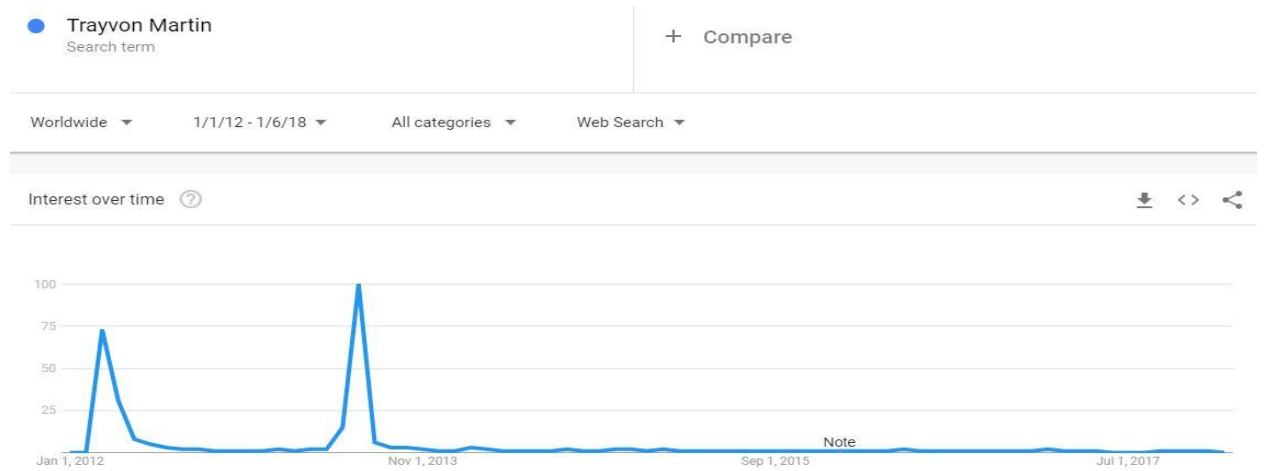
Figure 15 “Black Lives Matter”, “Stephon Clark”, “Alton Sterling, Saheed Vassell in 2018



This graph shows the trend in the mentions of the topic Black Lives Matter alongside the trends for the topics that were applicable in 2018. While the year is not over yet, there have been many noteworthy incidents within Black Lives Matter. The movement has become extraordinarily popular in recent times with memorabilia and posts and events that are outside of actual protests. Many have been aimed at uplifting the Black community as opposed to fighting for it. Stephon Clarke was murdered and shot in his backyard by police in February; that was the first major event of 2018. While Alton Sterling was shot in 2016, the trial occurred in March of 2018. Saheed Vassell was wielding a pipe that police claim to have thought was a gun. The protests were very intense and extremely well-attended.

### 4.1.1.3 Trayvon Martin Prominence Over the Years

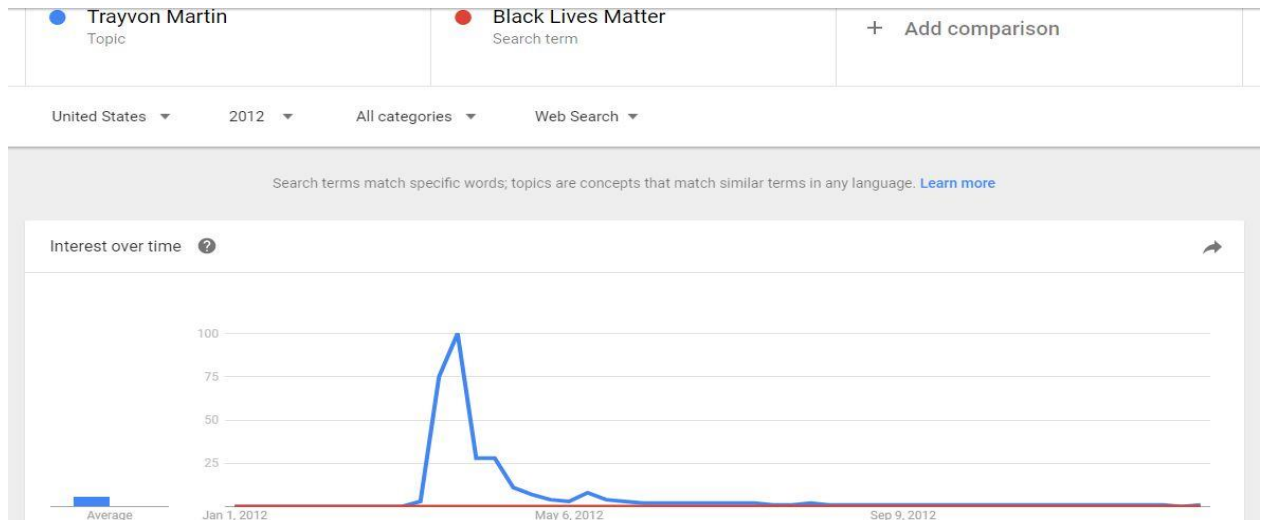
Figure 16 Trayvon Martin from 2012 to 2017



This Trayvon Martin case is very important in the analysis of trends within Black Lives Matter as it was the catalyst for the movement. This case inspired the founders (Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi) to use the hashtag for the purpose of advocating for accountability for and an end to people murdering Black people. On February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin was murdered by George Zimmerman which leads to the spike in February 2012. In March 2012, pre-court proceedings occur and maintain the presence of the incident on the news and media. In June, Zimmerman's murder trial begins and in July, he was found not guilty hence that second spike. Zimmerman was acquitted in 2013. Subsequent spikes occur with the shooting deaths of other victims or the anniversaries of Trayvon Martin's death.

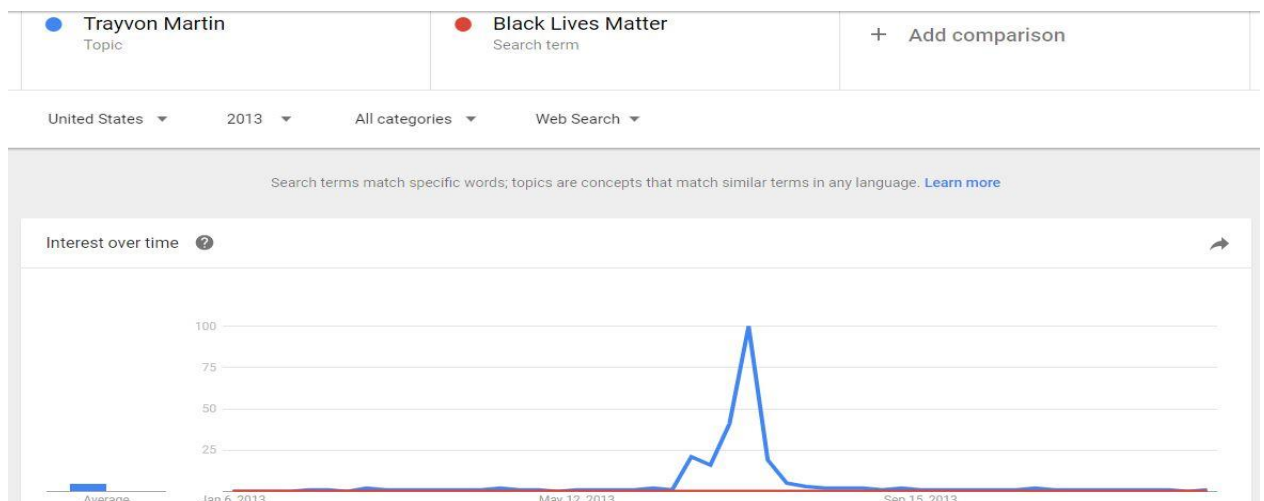


Figure 17 “Trayvon Martin” and “Black Lives Matter” in 2012



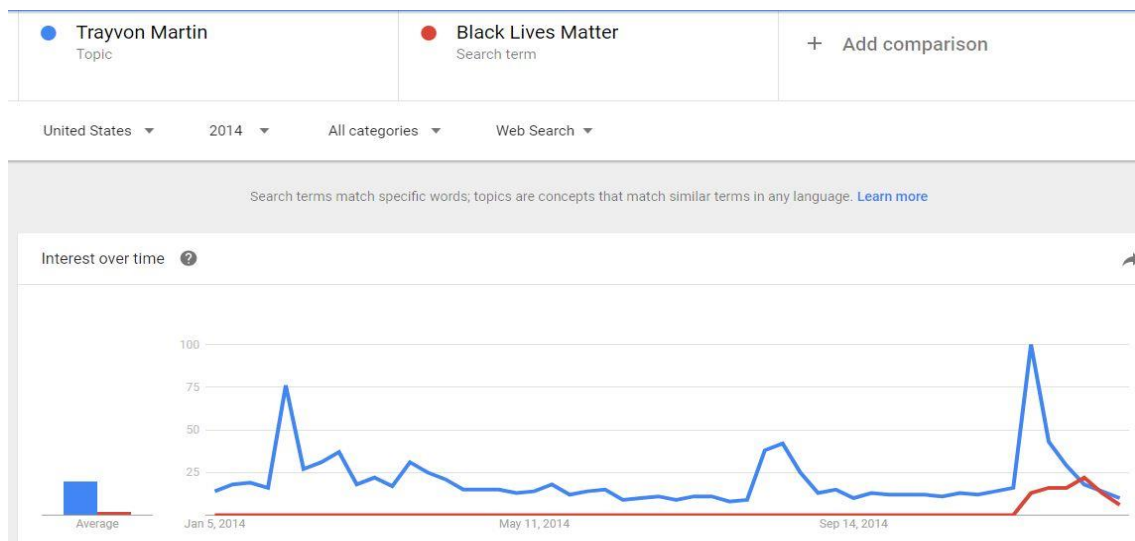
This is a timeline of the 2012 events. The main incident was the shooting of Trayvon Martin by Zimmerman who ended up getting off scot free because it was found to be covered by the Stand Your Ground Law in Florida. Zimmerman said Martin looked suspicious because he was wearing a sweatshirt and had something that looked like a gun (Arizona Iced Tea and Skittles) in his pocket. An armed Zimmerman stalked Trayvon, called the police (who told him to stay calm, not pursue Trayvon and definitely not shoot) and eventually murdered 16-year-old Trayvon Martin. Zimmerman had previously made several paranoid calls to the police and had a history of racism, domestic violence, and mental health issues. He was never charged for any of his crimes and continues to live freely. This incident is what inspired the start of #BlackLivesMatter.

Figure 18 “Trayvon Martin” and “Black Lives Matter in 2013



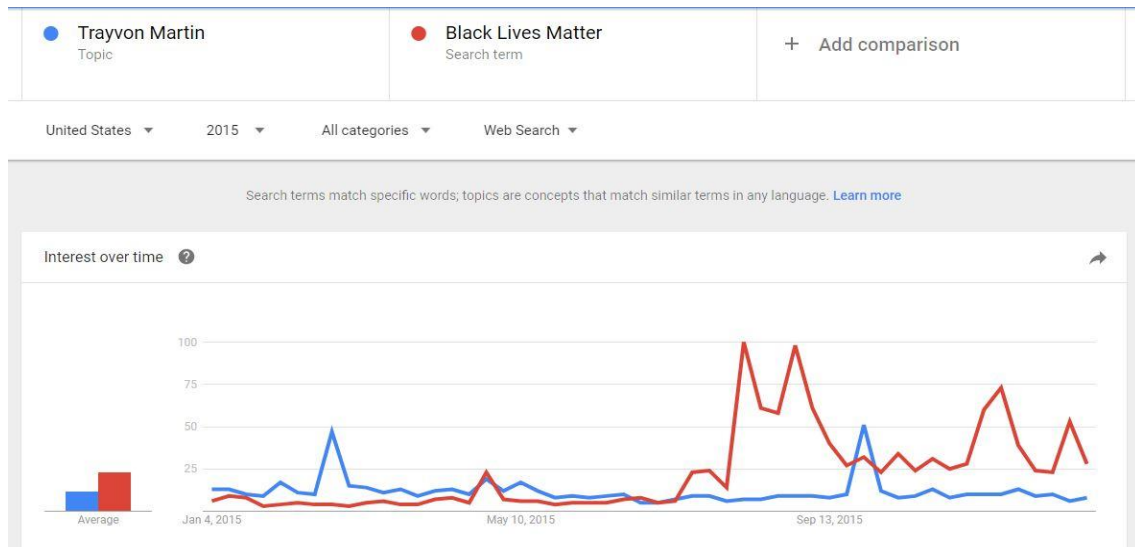
This graph of the Trayvon Martin and Black Lives Matter prominence in 2013 really says a lot. The term Black Lives Matter was beginning to get popular but had not risen to prominence yet. As you can see, there was no consistency in the presence of Trayvon Martin mentions online throughout this year even though he was murdered just in 2012. Instead, there is a spike in June and July because that is when the trial of Zimmerman occurred, and then later strikes are when Zimmerman struck again with domestic violence again and other inappropriate behaviour. You see a few rises in the mentions early in the year which is when people were advocating for justice for Trayvon as well as a trial for Zimmerman and they were keeping up with the progress of that. Interestingly, Trayvon Martin’s case is so important within the Black community that many protests were staged and every year since his death, people remember him on his birthday and recall with grief, they day he was shot every date it comes around.

*Figure 19 “Trayvon Martin” and “Black Lives Matter” in 2014*



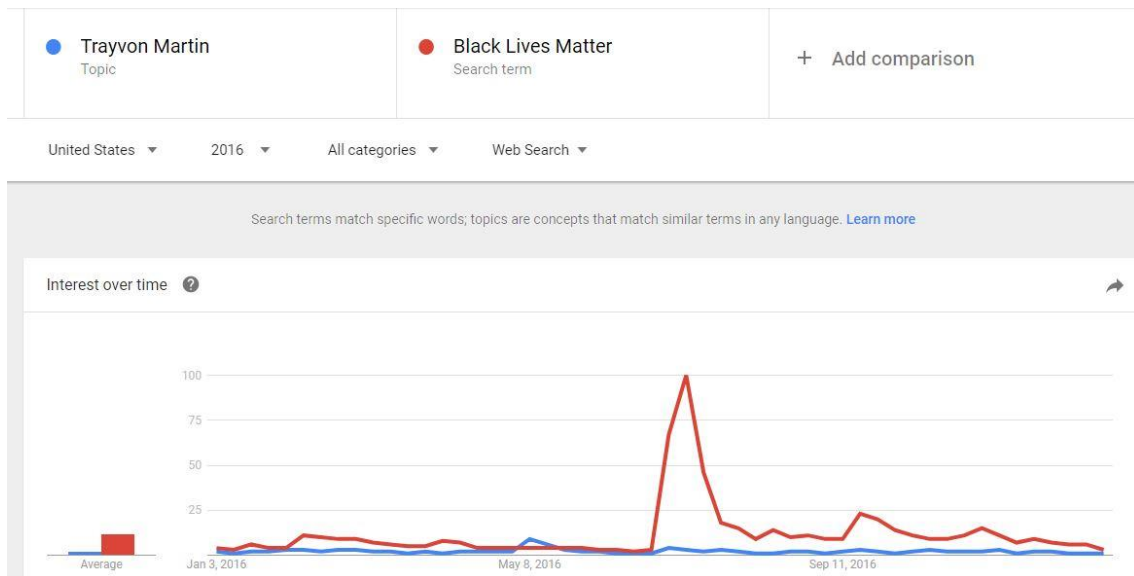
This is a comparison between the presence of mentions of Trayvon Martin and that of Black Lives Matter online. As you can see, there is no consistency in the graph. 2014 was a very busy year for Black Lives Matter as many people were murdered unjustly by police including many key cases like Eric Garner, Mike Brown, and Tamir Rice. Other people that were shot include Dontre Hamilton, John Crawford 111, Ezell Ford, Laquan McDonald, Akai Gurley, Antonio Martin, and Jerome Reid. Those were just the main cases; there were multiple others. The spikes happened every single time another Black man was unfairly murdered and they drew comparisons with Trayvon Martin’s death. Some of those spikes also coincide with indictments/trials.

Figure 20 “Trayvon Martin” and “Black Lives Matter” in 2015



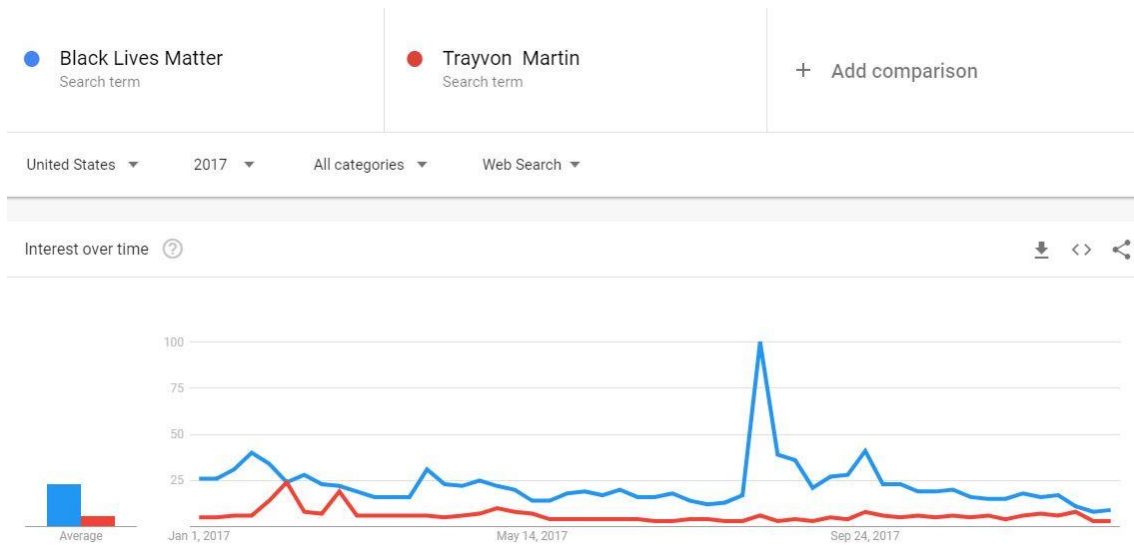
This graph can be compared with those of the previous years and if it is, you see the clear inconsistency once again in the levels of participation. You can see that Black Lives Matter is trending much more than Trayvon Martin in this year mostly because it has become much more popular and killings have increased. Also, Black Lives Matter encompasses Trayvon Martin’s case in addition to several more which would explain why there was higher participation for the movement on a whole as opposed to one search term. However, there are still a lot of mentions of Trayvon Martin which shows consistency. Sometimes the spikes for both coincide (mainly when there are huge travesties/very popular murders).

Figure 21 “Trayvon Martin” and “Black Lives Matter” in 2016



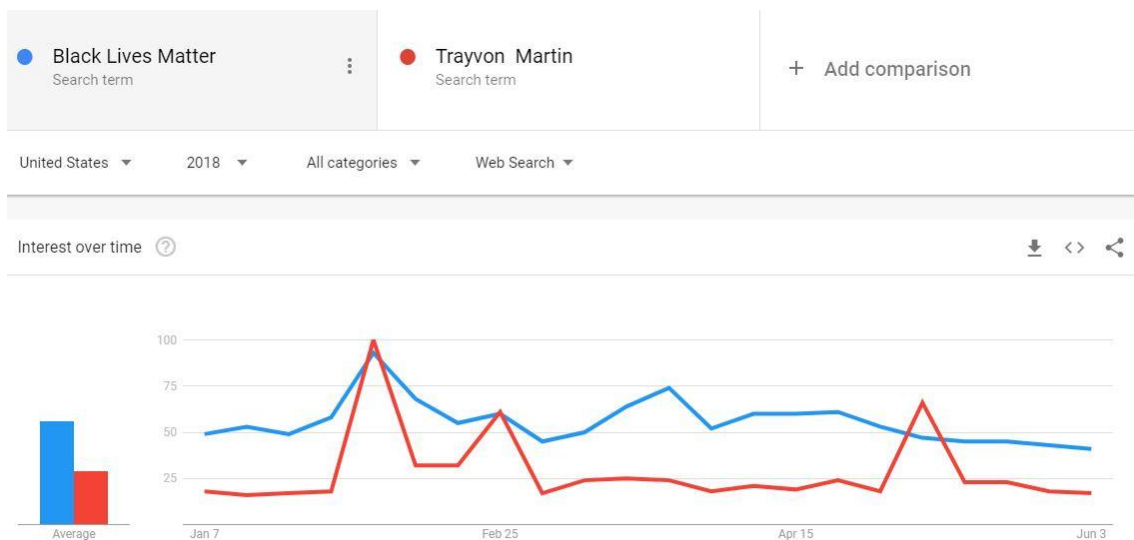
This is with the same two terms; Trayvon Martin as well as Black Lives Matter, in 2016 and you can see that Trayvon Martin is still not completely off the radar even 4 years later but most of the spikes are for his birthday and the anniversary of his death in addition murders of other young men. Participation levels remained more or less consistent throughout 2016. Black Lives Matter is very popular in this year as well, particularly in July when both Alton Sterling and Philando Castile were murdered. Both incidents brought large amounts of participation online in terms of mentions, the news, social media, and were trending topics in general. The online activism coupled with coverage of the protests offline caused the increased participation.

Figure 22 “Black Lives Matter” and “Trayvon Martin” 2017



In 2017, Black Lives Matter (now in blue) was extremely popular. Trayvon Martin still had not disappeared from the radar. The spikes once again coincide with murders of Black people. In February Jocques Clemmons was killed and you can see a spike there. Others coincide with ALT right protests, Trump’s election, and public racism.

Figure 23 “Black Lives Matter” and “Trayvon Martin” in 2018



In 2018, both were still very popular. Both also rose at the same times generally. All coincide with the shootings of unarmed Black men and issues in the news and media regarding race and Trump. However, what is different about 2018, is that even though

there is a lot of fluctuation, the levels are consistently higher and never go to zero meaning that there is never a huge lull in participation in the movement and never a time when the majority of people forget about making a change. This either means that people now realize that consistency is key to obtaining change and therefore are making more of an effort to be consistent, or that there are more constant killings of Black people around the world and no justice for them.

#### 4.1.1.4 Analysis of Google Trends for Black Lives Matter

The Google Trends results on 2011-2017 show that throughout the entire world there was a very significant and evident lack of consistency in the prevalence of Black Lives Matter activism, activity, mentions and presence online. From careful observation of the graphs it was obvious that whenever there was a related event, the participation shot up and then went right back down shortly after until the next event as was expected and also the case for the Catalan Independence Movement.

The fact that participation increased when a related event occurred was no surprise, however the quickness with which participation levels went down afterwards and how long they stayed down was what was surprising. It was also quite noticeable that the last few months at the end of the years were generally very active, however there was no discernible specific reason why. It would be very helpful to identify the reason for this because that could lead to beneficial insight into what drives up participation which would allow groups to know exactly how to increase the participation in their movements when desired.

One of the most consistent, impactful, and sustained hashtags/topics has been #TrayvonMartin most likely because his murder was the catalyst for the movement. After he was shot, and his murderer was released the Black Lives Matter movement began. The existence of the hashtag is significant but the most significant revelation from the research is that it has still managed to remain pertinent and active in movement participants for the last several years in spite of the fact that the case is not currently active and he was murdered several years ago. If it could be identified why this hashtag has managed to maintain at least some level of presence and participation online for such a long time, whereas similar hashtags related to other men have not, that information would be very

useful because it would help movements to understand what is needed for maintenance of importance in the public eye and participation.

As we can see in Figure 4, once again, the inconsistency in the online activity for Black Lives Matter is evident and the increases coincide with the spikes visible in the graphs. One observation that was particularly interesting was that several of the countries that had activity relating to the Black Lives Matter movement in fact do not have large Black populations and many of them were located far away from the US and so there was nothing directly tying them to the movement or its roots. This shows that the movement has indeed had an international impact and also that it has an extremely large and diverse scope of participation. It also shows that the topics addressed by the movement are universal and that the changes sought by the movement are in fact changes sought all around the world.

Figure 5 once again shows very clearly the inconsistency problem that has been the downfall of many movements and significantly harmed the success of Black Lives Matter. When significant events occur the engagement peaks. However, a month or two later, the participation decreases until another incident occurs which causes participation to increase only once again for it to go down again in an endless cycle of increases and decreases without maintenance of either.

Figure 6 was extremely interesting because 2014 was a very active year for Black Lives Matter; but it is very difficult to see that in the graph which means it is possible that many people were active offline in the protests which occurred around the USA, but not online.

Figure 7 confirms that 2015 was a very active year for Black Lives Matter. A lot of the activism taking place on behalf of or in aid of Black Lives Matter in 2015 was offline or in-person with the many protests and riots that were occurring all over the country, however, it very likely acted in tandem with online participation in order to organize the protests and include those who were not located in the places where the in person activism took place.

In Figure 8, much like the other graphs, it is clear that activity and participation online increases when a pertinent event occurs but wanes after a period of time then goes back up after another incident.

Figure 9 has coinciding results as well demonstrating the variability in participation and the irregularity. There is a clear pattern that has been established through viewing the levels of participation.

Figure 10 provided insight into additional factors that lead to participation as it showed that the President and athletes, while not being Black men who have been shot, managed to spark a lot of debate and participation in Black Lives Matter. People are more aware of the issues than ever before and are eager to participate in the movements and obtain justice. Also, the littlest instances can trigger a huge reaction both in movement participants and in the wider public. This is part of the reason for the inconsistency in the levels.

In Figure 11-15 which show the prominence of online activity for Black Lives Matter in the years 2014-2018 respectively, there is a clear correlation between Black Lives Matter activity and the activity for the other graphed topics when they are compared to the Black Lives Matter activity. They seem to be directly proportional and both increase and decrease concurrently.

Figure 16 shows the online activity for Trayvon Martin between 2012 and 2017. This Trayvon Martin case is important in the analysis of trends within Black Lives Matter as it was the catalyst for the movement and has had the most long-lasting and memorable impact of most of the cases. This case inspired the founders (Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi) to use the hashtag for the purpose of advocating for accountability for police murdering Black people. By looking at this graph, it is evident that this topic has had longevity in online participation which is important for the success of a movement.

Figure 17-22 show the online participation related to Black Lives Matter and Trayvon Martin for each year between 2012 and 2018, respectively. By graphing them together the research is able to highlight the impact or possible correlation they have in and on participation. Figure 17, highlighting the year 2012 shows that levels of participation have a symbiotic relationship with the freshness of related events. When the shooting occurred, the levels were very high up but as time went on, the levels gradually decreased until the trial for Zimmerman which is when the participation went up once again.

In Figure 20, there was no consistency in the presence of Trayvon Martin mentions online even though he was murdered just in 2012. In Figure 21, there is no consistency in the



graph either. The spikes in online activity occurred every time another Black man was unfairly murdered; some of those spikes also coincide with trials. In Figure 20, The prevalence of Trayvon Martin mentions were maintained at high levels although the levels were not as high as those for Black Lives Matter. This Graph shows some of the highest levels of participation for the movement ever when compared to the other graphs from this study because 2015 was a very active year for Black Lives Matter with the huge increase in the filmed and exposed police killings of Black people in the US.

Figure 16 has much lower levels of participation however, but it should be noted that the participation levels never fell to a zero which means that even though they were not consistent in levels, at least there was consistent activity in the movement which indicates that consistent action was taking place as well. This is a good thing, but it causes one to wonder why levels would fall so drastically especially when police shootings still occurred very often in 2016 causing a lot of discontentment.

Figure 22 also has very low levels of participation but the spikes in participation for Trayvon Martin occur at the same time as the spikes in participation for Black Lives Matter which indicates that the online activity for both coincides with and is influenced by the incidents occurring in relation to them, and that they are both interconnected. In Figure 23, even though there is a lot of fluctuation, the levels are consistently higher than the year before and never go to zero meaning that there is never a huge lull in participation. This either means that people now realize that consistency is key to obtaining change, or that there are more constant killings of black people around the world and no justice for them, or that the killings have just been highlighted more and are more prevalent in the media which leads to more attention from possible movement participants. It is very difficult to conclude which of those is the reason for the increased participation; it could be all three.

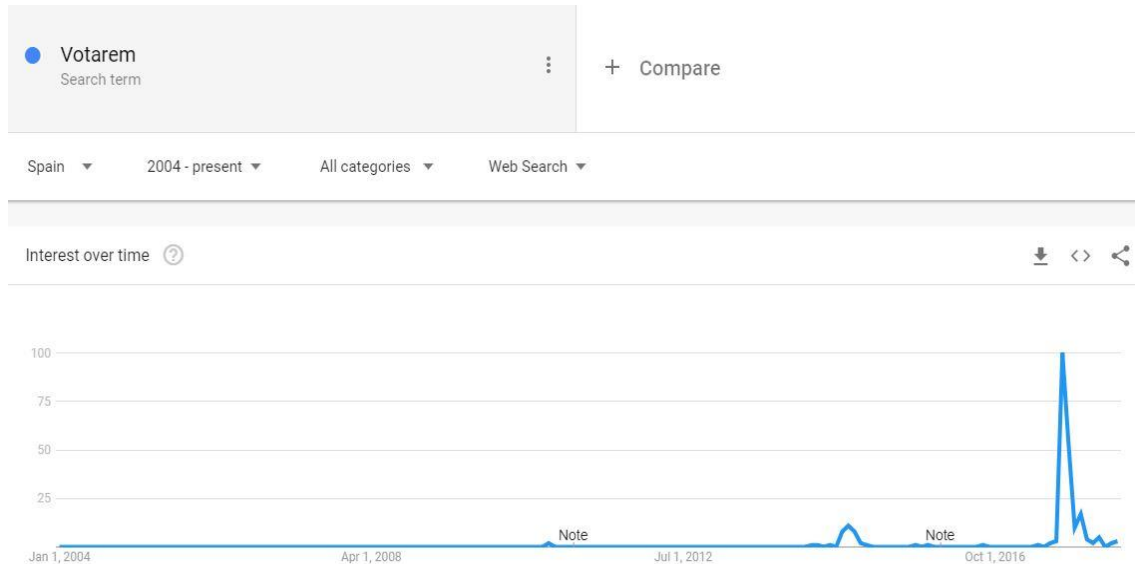
Overall, these trends for Black Lives Matter were very helpful in highlighting the inconsistency in participation for the movement as well as the different factors that serve as motivation for increased participation. They also showed the extent of the popularity of each of the related hashtags that were analysed for the movement as well as the longevity of each of the terms.

With this information, current and future movements can understand their targeted participants better and inspire their increased and more consistent participation in the movement online.

## 4.1.2 Catalan Independence Movement Google Trends

### 4.1.2.1 Catalan Independence Movement Google Trends Results

Figure 24 “Votarem” in Spain from 2014 to 2018



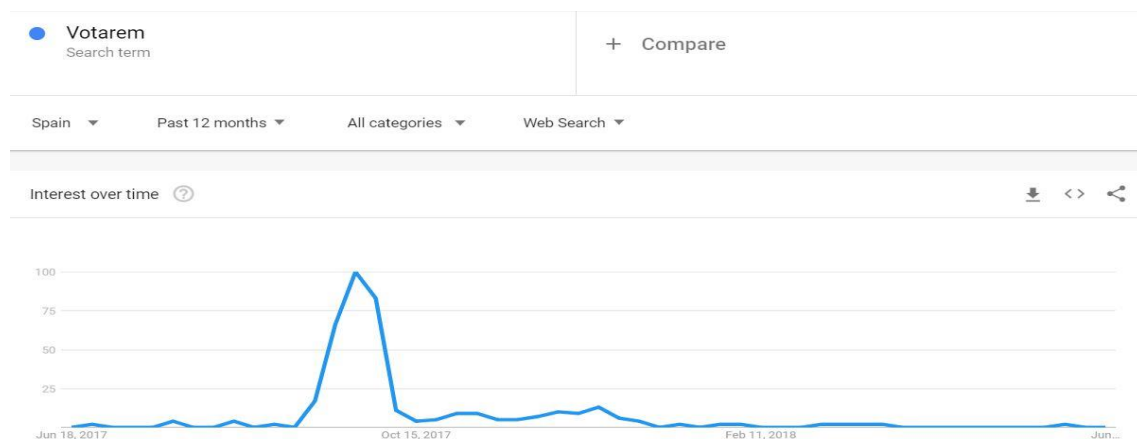
Sep 10, April 14, May 14, June 14, Sept 14, Oct 14, Nov 14, Dec 14, Jan 15, Sep 15, Aug 16, May 17, Jul 17, Aug 17, Sep 17 (peak), Oct 17, Nov 17, Dec 17, Jan 18, Feb 18, Mar 18, May 18

This first graph looks at the prominence of the term “votarem” from 2004 to now. The first spike was in June 2006 which was when there was a constitutional referendum (June 18) regarding whether or not people approved of the Statue of Autonomy of Catalonia Bill. 48% of voters turned out and 78.1% said yes. The next breakout is in June 2009 when there was a vote for a nonbinding Catalan Independence Referendum. The first was in Arenys de Munt on September 13, and 166 municipalities followed. There was also a spike in October 2009 when they wanted to organize votes then December 13, 2009 when they chose to do the next round of voting in 167 municipalities. The next spike is in April 2010 which was the fourth stage of consultations in 211 municipalities as well as referendums on April 24 and 25. In January 2013 there was a declaration of sovereignty. The next big surge is between September and November 2014.

In March, Spain had ruled that a referendum was unconstitutional, then in April parliament rejected a proposal to hold the referendum. After, in September president Artur Mas called another referendum in November and in October it was rejected but

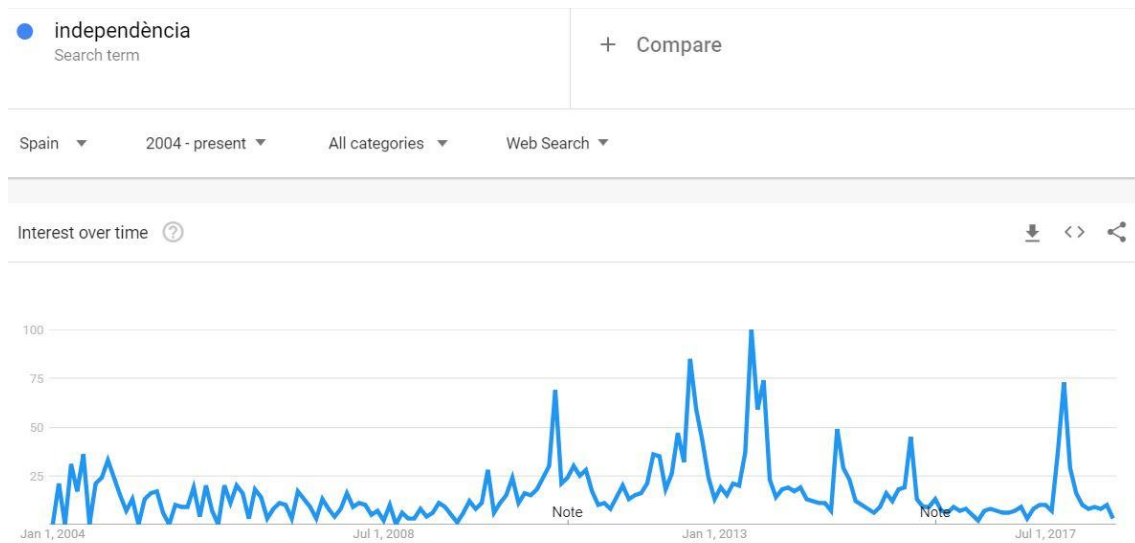
Catalunya decided to continue. In November they voted for independence. In January 2015 new elections were called. In 2017 there was the highest surge in history. In September there were many protests for the referendum that was declared to occur on October 1. The referendum happened and became violent when Spanish military attacked the voters. The majority voted for independence for Catalunya. And on October 3, 2017 Puigdemont decided that they would act on the referendum and declare independence. Then on the 9<sup>th</sup>, he went in front of the Spanish parliament to make that known. In December, the pro-independence party won the election. In 2018 there have been fewer protests and less excitement, but people were still passionate. People protested for the release of political leaders who have been locked up since they declared that they were pro-independence. They are incarcerated to this day.

*Figure 25 “Votarem” in Spain in 2018*



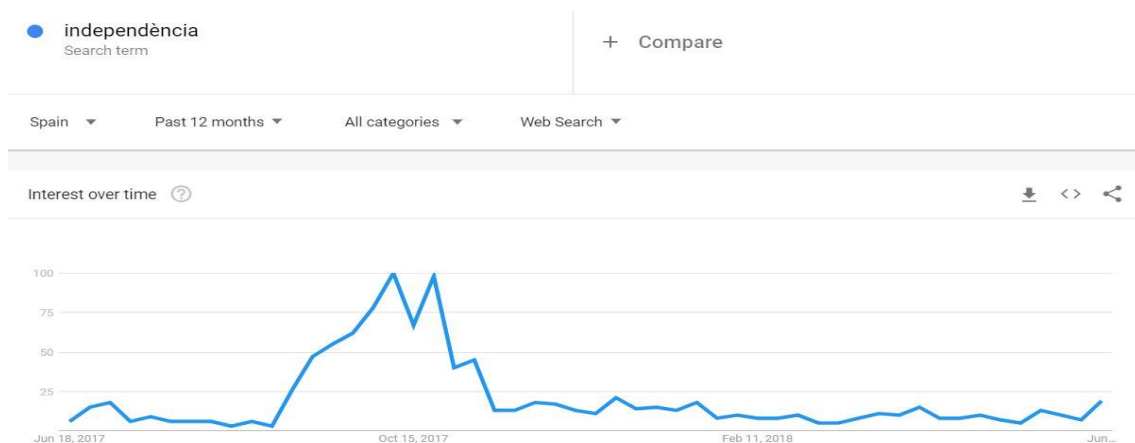
This period was filled with activity and it started with the call for a referendum on October 1. The call for referendums started in September. Spanish police raided the Catalan headquarters on September 20 and 14 officials were arrested, On October 1, the referendum was held, and they voted for independence, after that on October 10, Puigdemont declared independence. On October 21, Rajoy invoked Article 155 causing another spike. Spain then requested a new parliament of Catalonia which was elected on December 21 however, the winners were also pro-independence. In January and February spikes were around Puigdemont getting captured and seeking asylum in Switzerland.

Figure 26 “Independència” term in Spain from 2004-2018



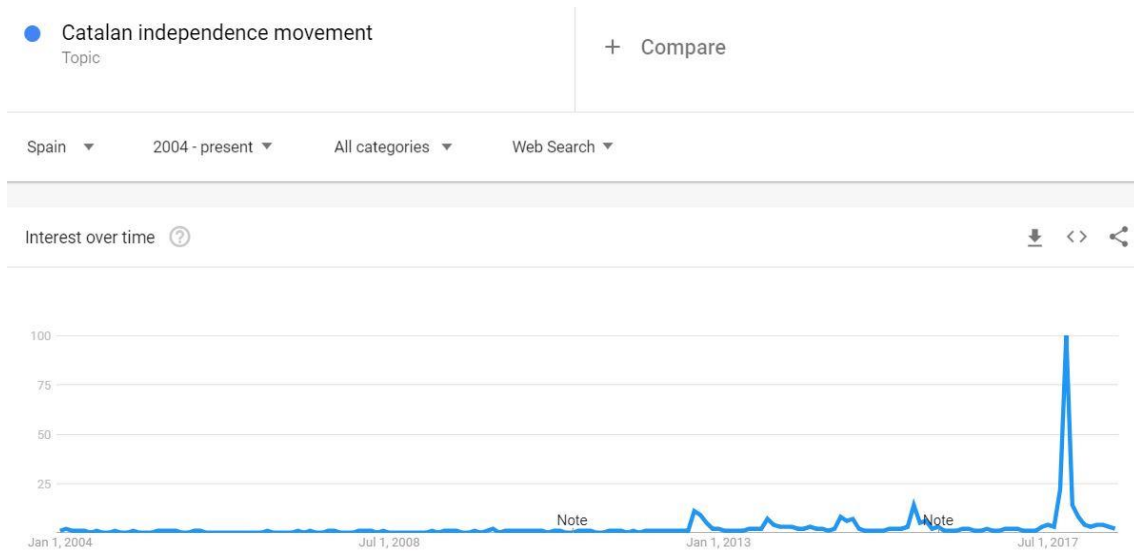
When you look at this graph you can see that even though there are many spikes over the last 14 years, there has been no constancy with the movement for independence. People have consistently wanted independence however their activity is only based on current events, not their actual feelings about the movement. The highest spikes are in 2014 and 15 when there was a call for elections and also in 2017 when there was a call for a referendum, and there were subsequent protests and activism.

Figure 27 “Independència” in Spain from 2017-2018



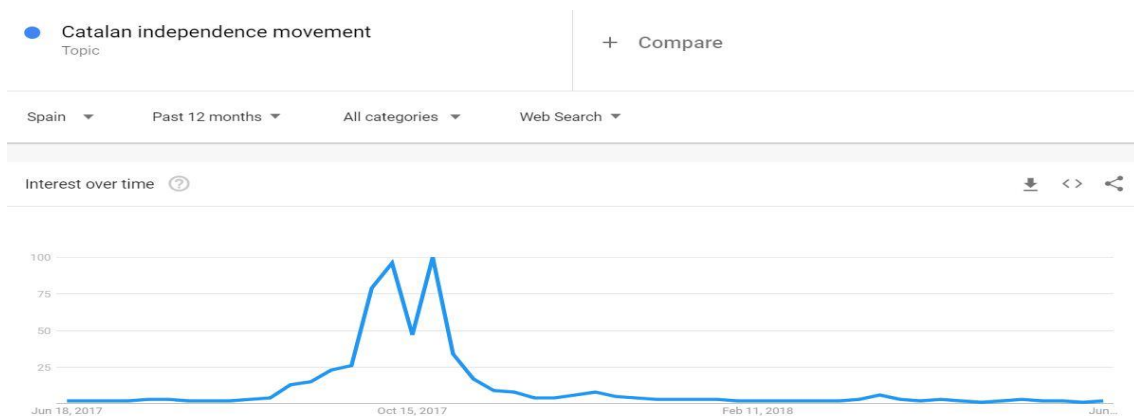
In these 12 months you can see there is also no consistency. There is a large spike in October when the referendum was supposed to take place and due to the aftermath of that event and the remaining tension, it stays high for a while. Then slowly people lose interest and get tired of fighting and involvement tapers off.

Figure 28 “Catalan Independence Movement” in Spain from 2004-2018



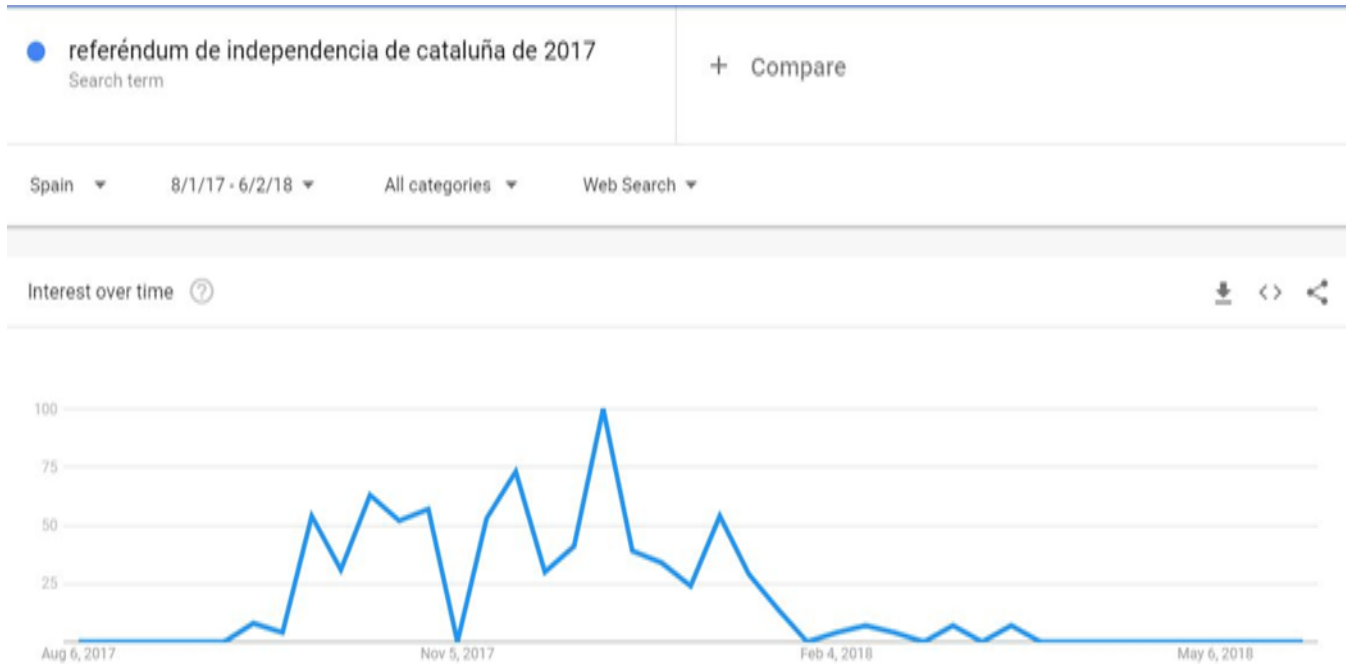
For this independence movement you can see the spikes since 2004 at the times when they called for a referendum. The highest spike and coinciding highest levels of participation occurs in October of 2018 which is when social media usage was at an all-time high and involvement in the referendum was larger and more effective than ever before.

Figure 29 “Catalan Independence Movement” in Spain from 2017-2018



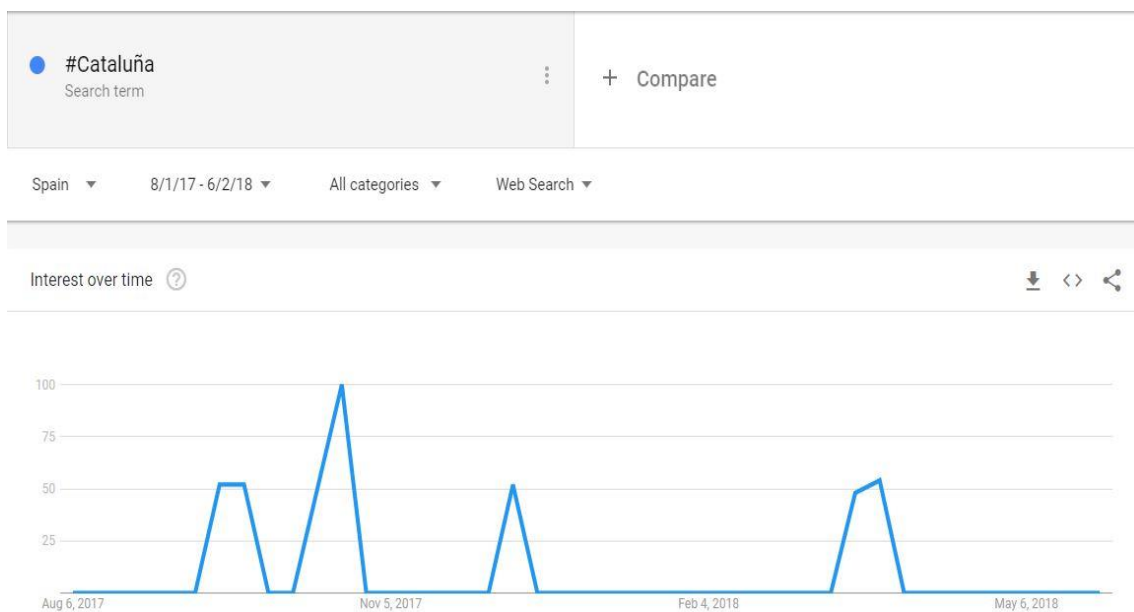
The same goes for the Catalan independence movement in 2017 and 2018. The biggest spike occurring in the graphic happens in October which was when there was a referendum and many subsequent related events which had a huge impact on the movement.

Figure 30 “Referendum” from 2017-2018 in Spain



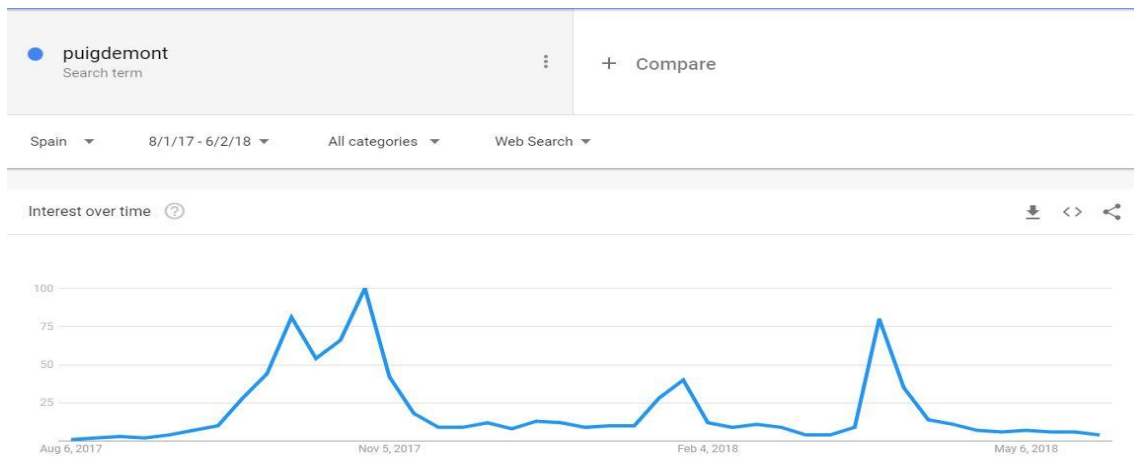
This graphic demonstrates very well that there is a lot inconsistency. Spikes coincided with the main events of the year relating to the movement as stated before.

Figure 31 Cataluña in Spain from 2017-2018



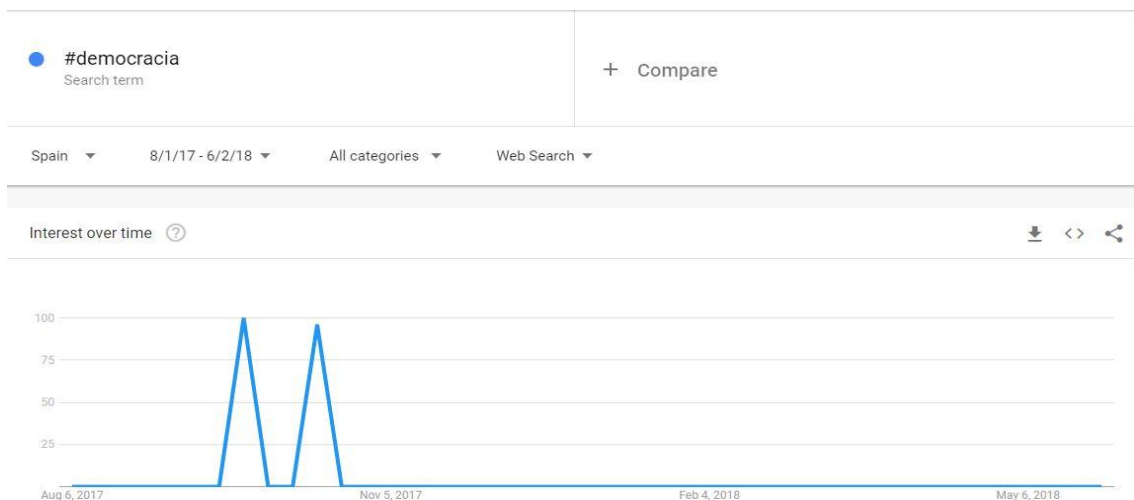
Once again there is a clear amount of inconsistency in the graphic and each spike coincides with a significant event including the ones stated earlier.

Figure 32 Puigdemont” in Spain from 2017 to 2018



Carles Puigdemont was the president of Catalunya and the spikes coincide with both the referendum and subsequent events as well as his exile and the changes in power and leadership.

Figure 33 “Democracia” in 2017-2018



The search term “democracia’ was entered because many people were adamant that the Spanish government denied them their right to democracy and that was part of what they were fighting for. There are two very clear spikes coinciding with the results of the referendum and petition for it then there is almost zero mention of democracy in the weeks afterward.

#### 4.1.2.2 Analysis of Google Trends for Catalan Independence

The analysis of trends in the Catalan Independence Movement was mainly to see if participation online was consistent because that shows the level of interest of participants, level of importance of participation to participants and their level of commitment to the movement and the success of the movement. An analysis of the trends also helps to show how the movement has not only been sustained in terms of maintenance of participation and motivation to participate, but how it has grown throughout the years.

Figure 24 shows the overall level of online participation in the Catalan Independence Movement between 2004 and 2018. There were several spikes in the graph but for each spike, as expected there was an event, that coincided with it. The first spike was in June 2006 which was in line with when there was a constitutional referendum (June 18) regarding whether or not people approved of the Statue of Autonomy of Catalonia Bill and wanted Independence for Catalunya. At that time, 48% of voters turned out to vote and 78.1% said *yes* they wanted independence while 31.9% said that they did not. A few people were concerned about the accuracy of the votes because less than half of voters actually voted. The next breakout and increase in participation were in June 2009 when there was a vote for a nonbinding Catalan Independence Referendum. The first was in Arenys de Munt on September 13 and 166 municipalities followed. There was also a spike in October 2009 which was when the Catalan people wanted to organize votes, then once again on December 13, 2009 when they chose to do the next round of voting in 167 of the municipalities. The next spike occurred in April 2010 which was during the fourth stage of consultations in 211 municipalities as well as referendums on April 24 and 25 of that year. Following that, in January of 2013 there was a declaration of sovereignty. The next big surge happens between September and November of 2014. In March, Spain had ruled that a referendum was unconstitutional, then in April the parliament rejected a proposal to hold the referendum. Afterwards, in September, President Artur Mas called another referendum in November and one month prior in October it was rejected but Catalunya decided to try and continue anyway. In November they voted for independence. In January 2015 new elections were called and there was a coinciding increase in participation. Another highlight of the graph was in 2017 when there was the highest surge in participation in history. In September 2017 there were many protests for



the referendum that was declared to occur on October 1. The referendum happened and became violent when Spanish military attacked the voters. The majority voted for independence. And on October 3, 2017 Puigdemont decided they would act on the referendum regardless of the decision of the Spanish government and declare independence for Catalunya which did not last very long. Then on the 9th, he went in front of parliament to discuss what had happened. In December, the pro-independence party won the election. In 2018 there were fewer protests and less excitement, but people were still passionate. People had protested for the release of political leaders who have been locked up since they declared that they were pro-independence. They are incarcerated to this day. Every spike in the graph corresponds with one of the events listed above which indicates that as expected, the participation is not very consistent in general and is affected by unusual events pertaining to the movement.

To take a closer look at the events and levels of participation in 2017 (when the most recent referendum occurred) and 2018, there was an analysis done on online participation for the movement during those specific years (Figure 25). This period was filled with a lot activity related to the movement for Catalan Independence and it started with the call for a referendum to take place on October 1. The call for a referendum occurred in September. Spanish police then forcefully raided the Catalan headquarters on September 20 and 14 Catalan officials were arrested and taken into custody. On October 1, the referendum was held in spite of the fact that the Spanish government explicitly forbade it and the Catalan people voted for independence. After that on October 10, Puigdemont declared independence. On October 21, Rajoy invoked Article 155 causing another spike. Spain then requested a new parliament of Catalonia which was elected on December 21 however, the winners were also pro-independence. In January and February spikes were around Puigdemont getting captured and seeking asylum in Switzerland.

Since the movement focuses on Catalan Independence, a Google Trend with the term “Independència” which means “Independence” in Spanish, was analysed for the period 2004-2018 (Figure 26) and one glimpse of the graph shows how consistently inconsistent the movement has been. There has been little to no maintenance of participation levels within the movement and it tragically demonstrates a possible reason as to why there has not been any official change. People have consistently wanted independence however they have not consistently fought for independence. Their activity is only based on current events which when in relation to the movement, incite them to participate until the events

are no longer current and they forget. Participation does not seem to be indicative of the participants' actual feelings about the movement but more so about their effort and perhaps also their attitude towards it. The highest spikes are in 2014 and 15 when there was a call for elections and also in 2017 when there was a call for a referendum, and there were subsequent protests and activism.

Figure 27 shows the prominence of the term "Independència" between 2017 and 2018 to focus a bit more closely on the most active year of activism online for the movement for Catalan Independence and the subsequent year. It is important to analyse the movement at its most successful in order to identify potential traits that may have contributed to success which would enable the movement and others to identify what might enable them to have increased success in terms of quantities of participation. There is a large spike in October when the referendum was supposed to take place and due to the aftermath of that event and the remaining tension, it stays high for a while. Then slowly people lose interest and get tired of fighting and involvement tapers off. This is another example of inconsistency.

In order to be more specific to Catalunya, the search term "Catalan Independence Movement" was analysed for the period 2004 to 2018 (Figure 28). For this Google Trend, you can see the many spikes since 2004 at the times when the citizens of Catalunya called for a referendum. The highest amount of participation seen in the graph is in October 2017 as expected which is when social media usage was at an all-time high and involvement in the referendum was larger and more effective than ever before. This same term was analysed for 2017-2018 (Figure 29) and there is once again a huge spike during the time of the referendum as was expected based on what has been seen in the other graphs.

Other terms that were analysed especially during the time period 2017-2018 which was when things were most active, were "Cataluña" which is the region where they wanted to gain independence, "Puigdemont" who was the ex-leader of Catalunya and is now exiled and unable to return to Spain, and additionally, "Democràcia" which means "Democracy" in Spanish and was analysed because it was a buzzword during the time. "Democracy" was a buzzword because people were criticizing the Spanish government for not allowing the referendum which would allow for democracy and enable the people to exercise their constitutional rights. This word rang particularly severely for the Catalan people and Spanish people in general because of the history with Spanish government after Franco.

With the Google Trends results for the Catalan Independence Movement it is evident that consistency is an issue and when looking at those results alongside the results for the survey that was given to movement participants one could draw a few conclusions on why that consistency is lacking. Some of those reasons could be those stated in the question about why there was a lull in participation online. It is only logical, as mentioned earlier, that consistency and the ability for those in power to take movements seriously are directly proportional and as such when there is consistent effort, efforts will be taken seriously, and when efforts are taken seriously, those with the power to make change will make the changes requested if possible. All in all, based on levels of participation and reasons for participation, it could be assumed that participants continue to use Facebook and other social media tools for activism like the Catalan Independence Movement because they perceive it to be effective in achieving the goals of activism.

#### 4.1.3 Analysis of Trends for Black Lives Matter and Catalan Independence

An analysis of the data collected from the Google Trends results for both of the movements reveals a truth which was stated many times. That truth is that based on what has been showcased by the results from Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence Movement, movements that are operating online tend to have a problem with consistency. This seems to be the case across the board but speaking regarding this research in particular, it was quite revelatory to see how similar both these very different cases were in this regard. The data also seems to indicate a pattern in human behaviour in terms of participation, stimulation and also emotional involvement in movements which leads to passion.

For each of the movements it is seen that once an event that pertains to the movement occurs, people become re-engaged and increase participation online. Much like the traditional media, on social media the hot topics are discussed and incite feelings within citizens that encourage them and in fact, push them to participate. Similarly to anything “hot” however, the topics tend to cool down and be replaced by other “hot topics” which causes people to lose both focus on and interest in the movements due to the fact that their attention is elsewhere.

For both movements, it has been seen that participation is at a maximum when events causing outrage in the affected communities occur and for these types of events the participation is generally maintained for a longer amount of time. For both movements as well, it was recorded that many times political opinions and decisions directly affect the feelings of the citizens which leads to participation. Both of these realizations highlight the importance of emotion in any movement because once people are affected negatively by something, are passionate about something, or simply are convinced of the need to change something, they will engage in the activities necessary to affect change where necessary.

The downfall of movements comes when people's feelings, passions, and emotions are reduced which is directly proportional to their sense of urgency. If people do not feel the need to act, they do not act, and when they are not completely conscious of the problems or not completely focused on how these problems affect them, they begin to settle with the way life is and have no desire to change things but to cope with the cards they are dealt instead.

From the Google Trends analysis, the main observations in summation were that in both Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence movement, the participation was never consistent and was directly proportional to how emotional the citizens were about the issues. This indicates that perhaps in order for a movement to be successful, and taken seriously, consistency is necessary because if it is not, based on the research, politicians and anyone with the power to make change will simply wait for the inevitable; a decrease in participation, a decrease in urgency, and ultimately a decrease in the pressure placed on them by the people who need the change the most.

## **4.2 Surveys**

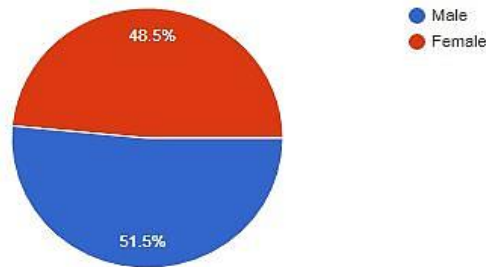
### **4.2.1 Black Lives Matter Surveys**

#### **4.2.1.1 Black Lives Matter Survey Results**

*Figure 34 Gender distribution (Black Lives Matter)*

What is your gender?

200 responses



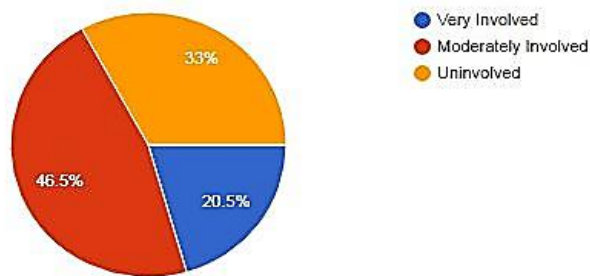
By the author (2020)<sup>5</sup>

For participants, 48.5% (97 people) were female and 51.5% (103 people) were male. This eliminates the possibility of gender bias.

*Figure 35 Online involvement perception (Black Lives Matter)*

How involved were you online with Black Lives Matter in your opinion?

200 responses

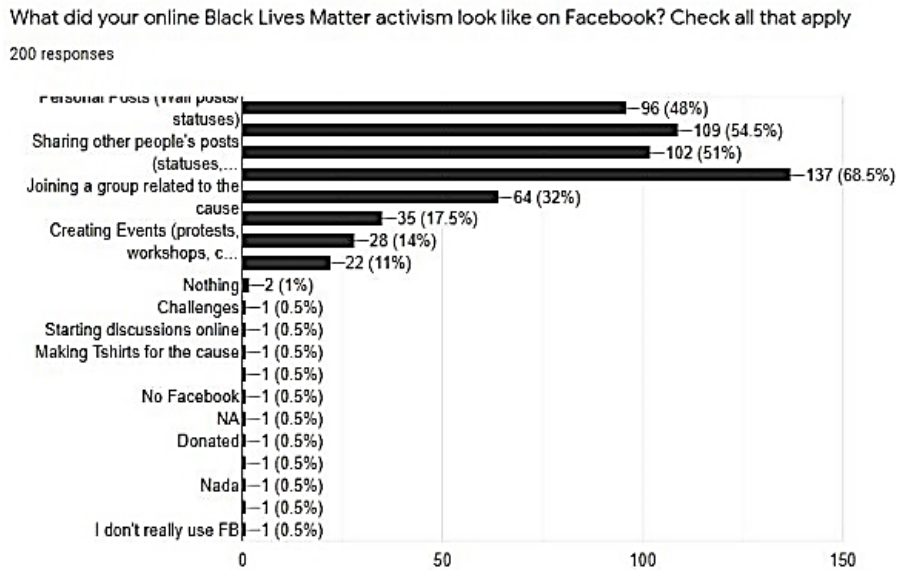


20.5% of participants said they were very involved, 46.5% said they were moderately involved and 33% said they were uninvolved.

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<sup>5</sup> All surveys figures in this chapter are from the original research of the author (2020).

Figure 36 Online participation actions (Black Lives Matter)



When asked what their online participation looked like (with the choice to select as many options as applicable and/or write one “other” that wasn’t there): 96 people (48%) said Personal Posts (Wall posts/statuses), 109 people (54.5%) said Changing a Profile Picture, 102 people (51%) said Sharing other people's posts (statuses, videos, pictures, petitions, etc.), 137 people (68.5%) said Liking other people's posts, 64 people (32%) said Joining a group related to the cause, 35 people (17.5%) said Live streaming events and/or protests, 28 people (14%) said Creating Events (protests, workshops, concerts, etc.) geared at helping the movement and 22 people (11%) said Fundraising. Some of the remaining individual responses for those who selected “other” were “Nothing”, “Online”, “Challenges”, “Starting Discussions Online”, “Making T-shirts for the cause”, “Starting a t-shirt” business, “No Facebook”, “Donations”, and “Writing Petitions and collecting signatures”.

Figure 37 Offline Participation (Black Lives Matter)

Did you participate in the Black Lives Matter Offline? (Protests, letter-writing, court visits, programs, etc.) If yes, write yes and state how. If no, write no.

200 responses



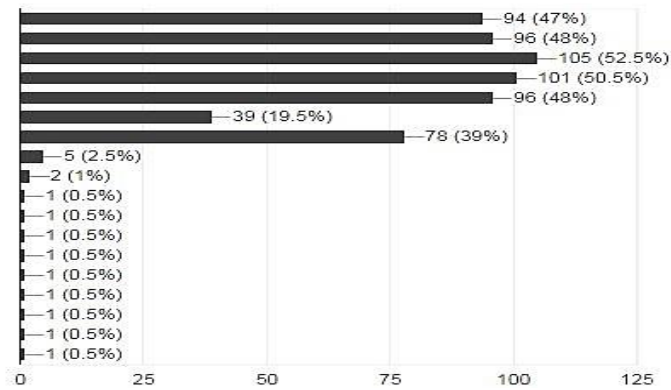
No.
Yes. Protests.
No
Yes. Protests
Yes. Events.
Yes. Protests and events.
Yes. Programs.
Yes. Protests and Programs.
Yes. Protest.

When the participants taking the survey were asked the question about whether or not they had participated in Black Lives Matter offline (for example through protests, letter-writing, court visits, programs, etc.), and exactly how they had participated in the movement offline if they did indeed participate offline: 83 people (41.5% of participants) said *no*, 95 people (47.5% of participants) said they were involved in protests and 25 people (12.5% of participants) said that they went to events. A few other participants said that for their offline participation, they had started companies, went to funerals, wrote letters, did workshops, and had meetings. The majority of people (58.5%) participated offline.

Figure 38 Motivation for Participation (Black Lives Matter)

In your own words, what inspires you to participate in Black Lives Matter? Check all that apply

200 responses

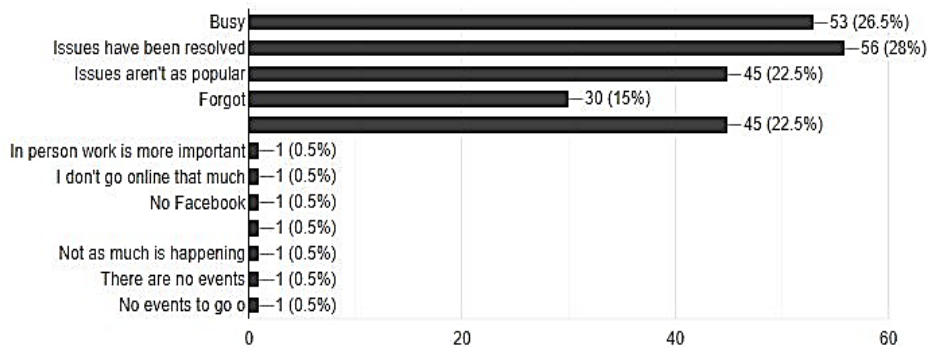


Participants were asked what inspired them to participate in Black Lives Matter. 94 people (47%) said “You and/or your family members are affected by the issue” meaning they were inspired to participate due to personal and familial impact. 96 people (48%) said “Your friends/co-workers are affected by the issue” 105 people (52.5%) said “You are passionate about the issue” 101 people (50.5%) said “You are concerned about the future”. 96 people (48%) said “You want to help” which shows the importance of philanthropy. 39 people (19.5%) said “Other people's passion about the issue inspires you. 78 people (39%) said “It's just the right thing to do”. Only 5 people (2.5%) said they were “Not sure”. A few people responded “Other” and their responses for “other” ranged from statements about it being 2018 to people not feeling inspired to participate.

Figure 39 Decrease/increase involvement perception (Black Lives Matter)

What contributes to a lull/decrease in your online participation in Black Lives Matter? Check all that apply

200 responses



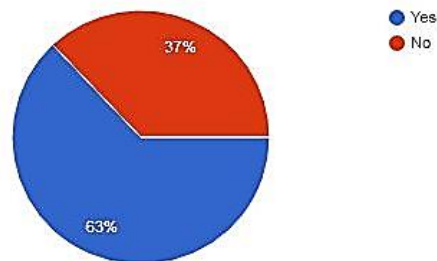


When asked what contributes to a decrease in their online participation for Black Lives Matter: 53 people (26.5%) said they were “Busy”, 56 people (28%) said they believe the “Issues have been resolved”, 45 people (22%) said that “Issues aren’t as popular”, 30 people (15%) said they “Forgot”, and 45 people (22.5%) said “There hasn’t been a lull/decrease in your participation”. A few additional people said “Other” and the responses were mainly from people who did not have social media stating that as the reason they picked other.

*Figure 40 Activism self-perception (Black Lives Matter)*

Based on your online participation in Black Lives Matter, would you consider yourself an activist?

200 responses

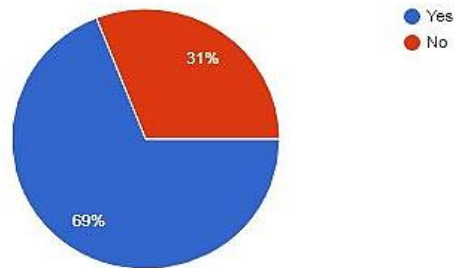


When asked if they would consider themselves activists based on their online participation in the Black Lives Matter movement, 126 people (63%) said *yes* while 74 people (37%) said *no*. This shows that most people see Social Media Activism as real activism and that their work on it qualifies them as activists.

Figure 41 Black Lives Matter social effectiveness perception

Do you think Black Lives Matter has been effective in bringing about social change?

200 responses

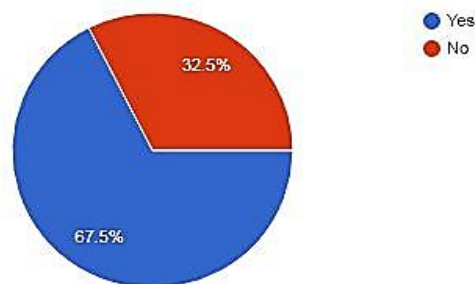


When asked whether they thought Black Lives Matter brought social change, 62 people (31%) said *no*, it had not been effective in bringing about social change while 138 people (69%) said *yes* they thought it had been effective in bringing about social change.

Figure 42 Legal success perception (Black Lives Matter)

Do you think Black Lives Matter has been effective in bringing about legal change?

200 responses

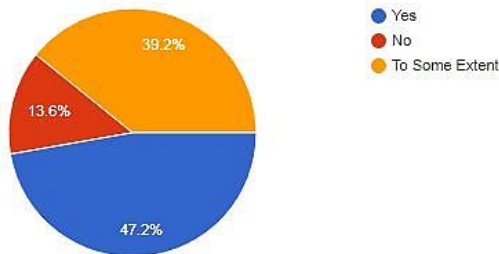


When asked if they thought that Black Lives Matter had been effective in bringing about legal change, 65 (32.5%) said *no* they thought it had not been effective in bringing about legal change and 135 (67.5%) said *yes* they thought it had been effective in bringing about legal change.

Figure 43 Success perception (Black Lives Matter)

Do you think that Black Lives Matter has been successful in achieving its goals?

199 responses

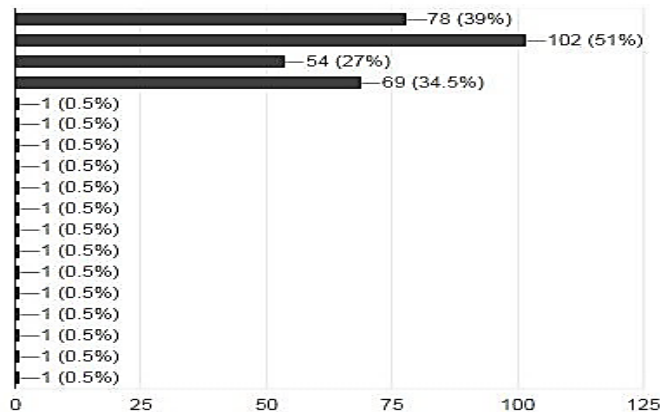


When asked if they thought that Black Lives Matter was successful in achieving their goals: 94 participants (47.2%) said *yes*, 27 participants (13.6%) said *no*, and 79 participants (39.2%) said *To Some Extent*.

Figure 44 Opinions about increasing success (Black Lives Matter)

How do you think the movement could be more effective in bringing about social and legal change? Check all that apply.

200 responses



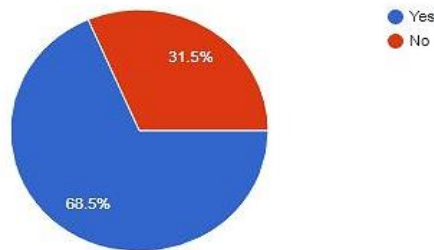
When asked for suggestions on how the movement could be more effective, participants could select multiple options and selected as follows: 79 people (39%) said *Better Organization*, 102 people (51%) said *More physical/ in-person participation*, 54 people (27%) said *More celebrity participation*, 69 people (34.5%) said *More meetings with heads of state and politicians*, A few people said “*Other*” and their suggestions were” more consistency”, “more funding”, “people with more experience”, “more law

proposals”, and a few other suggestions. The main response for other was “consistency” which is very telling.

*Figure 45 Perception of Success of Social Media Activism (Black Lives Matter)*

Do you think that your online participation in the Black Lives Matter Movement contributed to its success?

200 responses

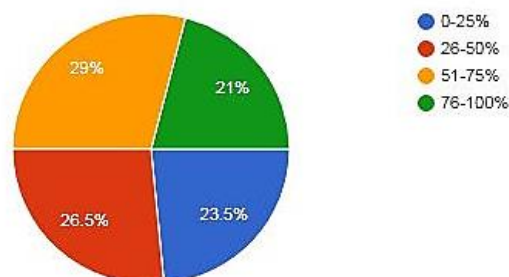


When they were asked if they thought that their online participation in the Black Lives Matter movement contributed to its success, the responses of the participants were as follows: 63 participants (31.5%) said *no* they did not think that their participation contributed to success, and a resounding 137 participants (68.5%) said *yes* they thought it did.

*Figure 46 Facebook Friend Participants (Black Lives Matter)*

If you had to estimate, how many of your friends on Facebook also participate in Black Lives Matter?

200 responses



Participants were asked what percentage of their friends also participated in Black Lives Matter on Facebook. These are the responses: 47 people (23.5%) said 0–25% of their

friends participated in Black Lives Matter movement on Facebook, 53 people (26.5%) said 26–50% of their friends participated in the Black Lives Matter movement on Facebook, 58 people (29%) said 51–75% of their friends participated in the Black Lives Matter movement on Facebook, 42 people (21%) said 76–100% of their friends participated in the Black Lives Matter movement on Facebook.

#### 4.2.1.2 Analysis of Black Lives Matter Survey Results

Based on perception of individuals involved in the movement and their perspectives on the movement and themselves as participants, the surveys have been the most telling research. When the participants were asked about how involved they were in the movement, over fifty percent of them admitted that they had been quite involved with the movement, however based on their responses to the other questions in the survey about involvement, it is quite clear that way more than those who stated they were involved in the movement were actually involved. However, as this survey relies on perception, which is sometimes not factual, the discrepancies are understandable.

The underestimation of their activity and involvement may simply be attributed to their personalities or character as individuals, or perhaps, because some of them have not allocated much value to their actions and they do not think it should count as participation. It is also possible that some have made the distinction between actions and participation and do not classify all their actions in relation to the movement as participation. Remarkably, the responses given to that question were very similar and in fact almost identical in number or quantity of responses to the question asked about whether or not the participants would personally consider themselves as activists in which 67% said that they would indeed consider themselves to be activists while on the other hand, 37% said that they would not consider themselves as activists based on their participation in the Black Lives Matter movement online.

Based on the patterns observed in the research, it is extremely probable that the same individuals who stated that they would not consider themselves as activists based on their participation online, were the ones who selected that they would classify themselves as uninvolved in the movement. Regarding the different forms and methods of participation on Facebook, the results displayed that based on the responses, most of the people

participating in the movement and taking the survey liked posts (68%), changed their profile pictures (54.5%) and shared posts (51%). These are generally the most prevalent types of activity and ways of participation on Facebook on the whole, so these responses are not surprising. It was also observed from the responses that the more effort and initiative the activities took or the more difficult and time consuming they were, the less people took part. For example, for personal posts 48% of participants made them, joining groups was done by 32%, Live Streaming events and protests were taken part in by 17%, Creating events was done by 14%, and Fundraising was carried out by 11%. 58.5% of survey takers participated in the Black Lives Matter movement offline as well as online which is surprisingly the majority, while 41.5% of the participants only participated in the movement online.

Based on the responses regarding the participation offline, of the total amount indicating that they had engaged in activism offline relating to Black Lives Matter, 47.5% said that they had participated in protests and 12.5% said that they had attended events. It is also very important to note that some but very few of the participants only participated in the movement offline. Since it was established by this research and the literature review done for this research, that it is very likely that it is important for both types of participation to occur in tandem, it was important for this research to understand the reasons why people generally participate in movements, so that both current and future movements will be able to know how to gain participants and maintain participation.

Survey takers were asked what inspires them to participate in Black Lives Matter, 52.5% of them said that it was their passion that inspired them, 50.5% said that they participated because they were concerned about the future, 48% said that they were involved in the movement because their friends and coworkers were affected, 48% of the survey takers said that it was because they just wanted to help, 39% said they are active in the movement because it is the right thing to do, 19.5% of them said that the passion of other people inspired them to participate, and finally a very small 2.5% said they were not sure.

It could be very reasonably hypothesized that many of those involved in the Black Lives Matter movement were simply participating because their friends were also participating and as such they were asked about the levels of participation that their friends had in the movement. Within the responses there were a few unexpected answers given based on the theoretical research which implied that in movements most times people tend to go with trends and do not participate because they are passionate about the movement but

because the people in their circle are involved and the movement is popular. 29% of the participants said that 51-75% of their friends were also participating in the movement. A much higher number of estimated participation from friends was expected based on what was revealed in the theoretical research about trends. 26.5% said that 26-50% of their friends participated in the movement. 23.5% said that 0-25% of their friends participated meaning that almost a quarter of participants had little to no friends participating in the movement even though they were active in Black Lives Matter.

Finally, only 21% said that 76-100% (or the majority) of their friends also participated in the movement. It was supposed and expected that the friends of the participants would generally have the same amount of participation as their friends or that since they participate, the majority of their friends would participate as well, however that differed from the results, and so we see that perhaps, friends have less influence than they were previously thought to have. It would be interesting to see whether the theories about trends are true and whether friends and trends have more influence than other motives for participation which were highlighted in the survey; like passion and being personally affected by the issues addressed and desired to be resolved by the movement.

When asked about what factors caused a decrease in participation, the responses from the survey takers were quite even across the board. 28% of the participants said that they believed that the issues had been resolved (It is uncertain how or why since it is clear that they haven't been resolved although there have been a few small resolutions and wins along the way), 26% of participants said that they were busy which speaks to the level of priority that activism on behalf of the Black Lives Matter has in the lives of the people, that the issues addressed were not as urgent to participants as they perhaps should have been, and it may also suggest that perhaps participation in the movement was more of slacktivism as opposed to activism, 22.5% said that there was no decrease in their participation which could be viewed positively or negatively based on how much they were participating before because if they had been participating a lot as would have been indicated by their responses about levels of participation, then they would have maintained a high level of activity but if the opposite is true they would have consistently engaged in a small amount of activism, additionally 22% said that they decreased their participation because the issues were not as popular which speaks directly to the idea of the movement being more about going with the trend as opposed to solving issues, and 15% said they forgot. It was interesting to note that there were also a few conflicting

responses here as the participants could check more than one box indicating multiple reasons for a decrease in participation. The inconsistencies or contradictions occurred when participants said that there was no decrease in their participation but simultaneously stated reasons for a decrease in their participation in the movement online.

The participants were then asked if they believed Black Lives Matter had been effective in achieving social change which was a very important question because it allowed for insight into perception of success of the movement and also effectiveness. It was expected that the majority would agree that it had been effective because they would only participate if they thought their actions were impactful. Not surprisingly, 69% of them said *yes* and 31% of them said *no*. For the 31% of naysayers, it would have been interesting to know why they participate if they do not think that the movement has been effective. The only problem was the phrasing of the question as it was not entirely specified whether or not it was the movement's online actions that caused the change or not.

As this research focuses on the idea of "success" from both a social and legal perspective and desires the perception of participants in addition to the facts relating to legal change, the participants were also asked about how they viewed the impact of the movement on the law. When they were asked if they believed the movement had been effective in obtaining legal change 67.5% of respondents said *yes* and 32.5% of them said *no*. This is of course extremely great news which proves to be very logical because it shows that the activists believe in their work and think that they are bringing about positive change; and they are.

The results for the impact on legal and social change were almost identical with a few more saying the movement had an effect on social change. That information is not surprising because it was found that less people know about the legal impact of the movement whereas most people are aware of the changes occurring within society because they are a part of it. Participants were also asked if they believed that the movement has been successful overall and 47.2% said *yes* while 39.2% said to some extent and 13.6% said *no* which suggests based on the information about legal change and social change that they believe that only some change proves a movement is effective but it doesn't constitute success. It however indicates that people believe that success is achieved when all or most of the necessary change is achieved and evidently, Black Lives Matter is yet to achieve that. Participants were also asked if they believed that their



participation online had led to the success of the movement and 68.5% of them said *yes* while 31.5% of them said *no* which shows that for the most part, people who are active in these movements believe that online participation does help to bring about necessary change.

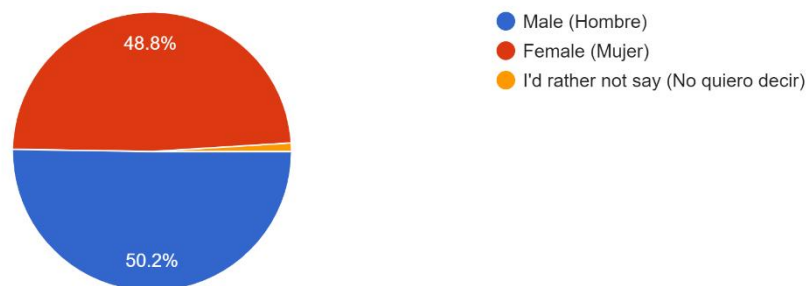
Lastly, they were asked how the participants thought the movement could have been more effective and 51% said with more in-person participation, 39% said with better organization, 34.5% said through having more meetings with politicians and 27% said with more celebrity participation. A few other answers that were placed in the other section were: with more funding, more experienced leaders, and more consistency. Those are excellent suggestions. What was most interesting was that the majority believed that the effectiveness of the movement could have improved if more people participated in-person which shows that there is indeed a need to combine both online and offline activism in order to increase effectivity.

#### 4.2.2 Catalan Independence Movement Surveys

##### 4.2.2.1 Catalan Independence Movement Survey Results

*Figure 47 Gender distribution (Catalan Independence Movement)*

What is your gender? (¿Es un Hombre o una Mujer?)  
201 responses

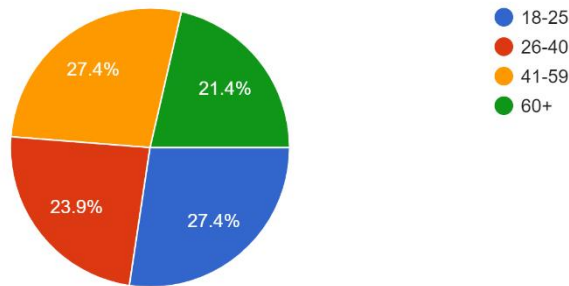


101 (50.2%) of participants were male and 98 (48%) of participants were female. 2 (1%) declined to say.

*Figure 48 Age of Participants (Catalan Independence Movement)*

How old are you? (¿Cuántos años tiene?)

201 responses

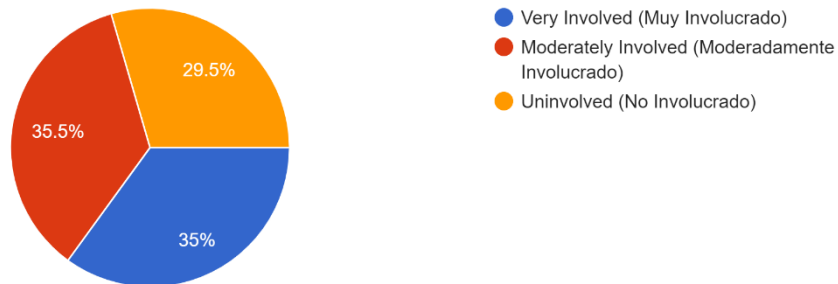


201 people were asked their age and 55 people (27.4%) said they were 18-25, 48 people (23.9%) said they were 26-40, 55 (27.4%) said they were 41-59% and 43 (21.4%) were over 60.

*Figure 49 Online involvement perception (Catalan Independence Movement)*

How involved were you on Facebook with the referendum and the subsequent events? (¿En qué medida su participación en Facebook tuvo que ver con el referéndum y con los eventos posteriores?)

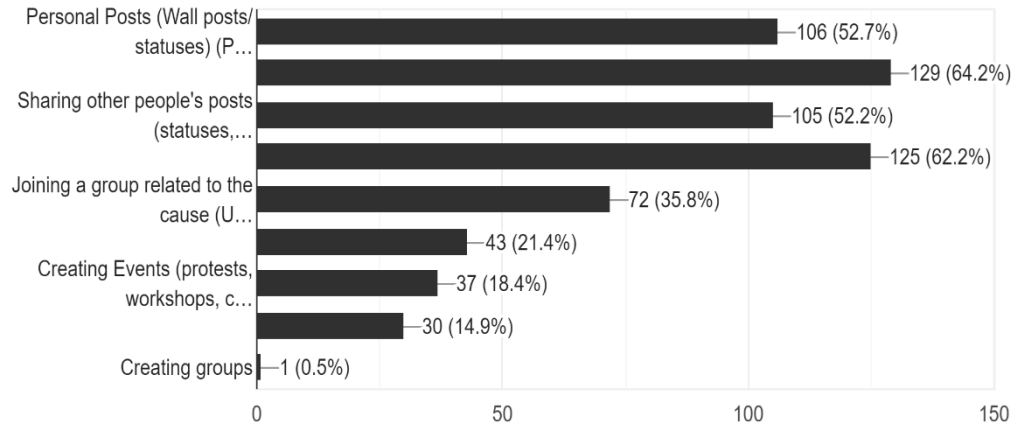
200 responses



When asked how involved they were on Facebook with the referendum and subsequent events, 70 people (35%) said they were very involved, 71 people (35.5%) said they were moderately involved and 59 (29.5%) said they were uninvolved.

*Figure 50 Online Participation Actions (Catalan Independence Movement)*

What did your online activism for Catalan Independence look like on Facebook? Check all that apply (¿Como fue su activismo en Facebook sobre el referéndum? Marque todo lo que corresponda)  
201 responses



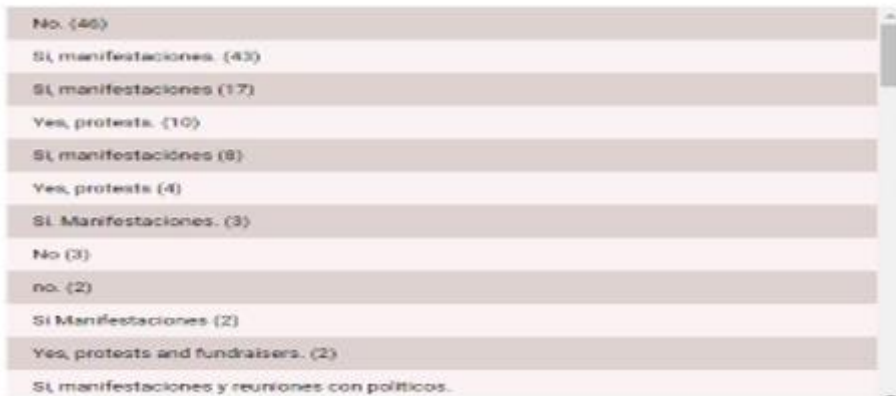
When asked what their online activism for Catalan independence looked like and consisted of (they could check multiple boxes), the responses from the participants were as follows:

106 people (52.7%) said Personal Posts (Wall posts/statuses) (Publicaciones personales-un estatus/un post en su muro), 129 people (64.2%) said Changing a Profile Picture (cambiar tu imagen de perfil), 105 people (52.5%) said Sharing other people's posts (statusses, videos, pictures, petitions, etc.) (Compartir las publicaciones de otras personas), 125 people (62.2%) said Liking other people's posts ("Liking los posts de otras personas), 72 people (35%) said Joining a group related to the cause (Unirse a un grupo relacionado con la causa), 43 people (21.4%) said Live streaming events and/or protests (Transmitir eventos y/o manifestaciones en vivo), 37 people (18.4%) said Creating Events (protests, workshops, concerts, etc.) geared at helping the movement (Crear eventos para ayudar al movimiento), 30 people (14.9%) said Fundraising (Recaudación de fondos)

Only 1 person said Other and they put "creating a fundraiser" as the details of their response.

*Figure 51 Offline Participation (Catalan Independence Movement)*

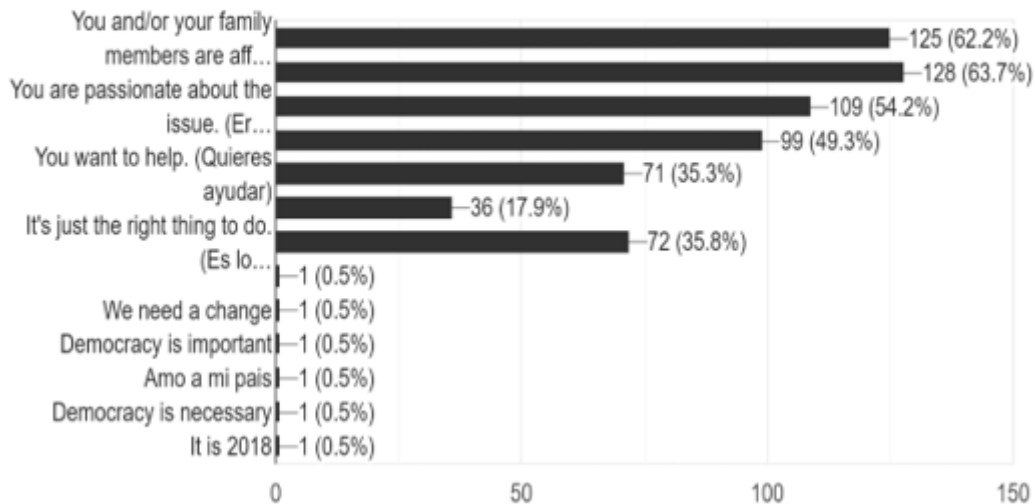
Did you participate in the activism for Catalan independence Offline? (Protests, letter-writing, court visits, programs, etc.) If yes, write yes and state how. If no, write no. (¿Participó en el activismo por la Independència de Catalunya offline? (Manifestaciones, cartas, programas, etc.) En caso afirmativo, escriba sí y explique cómo. Si no, escriba no.



When asked if people participated in activism for Catalan Independence Offline and how, 53 (26%) said *no*. Some gave the reasons that they were travelling and that it was why. 148 (74%) said *yes* and the ways they stated were protests (132 people- 66%), Fundraisers (20-9%), Meetings (10-5%) and Programs. The main way of participating was protests.

*Figure 52 Motivation for Participation (Catalan Independence Movement)*

In your own words, what inspires you to participate in the movement for independence?  
 Check all that apply. (En sus propias palabras, ¿qué le inspira a participar en el movimiento por la Independència? Marque todo lo que corresponda.)



When asked what inspired people to participate in the movement for independence, the participants said: 125 people (62.2%) said You and/or your family members are affected by the issue (Usted y/o los miembros de su familia están afectados por el problema).

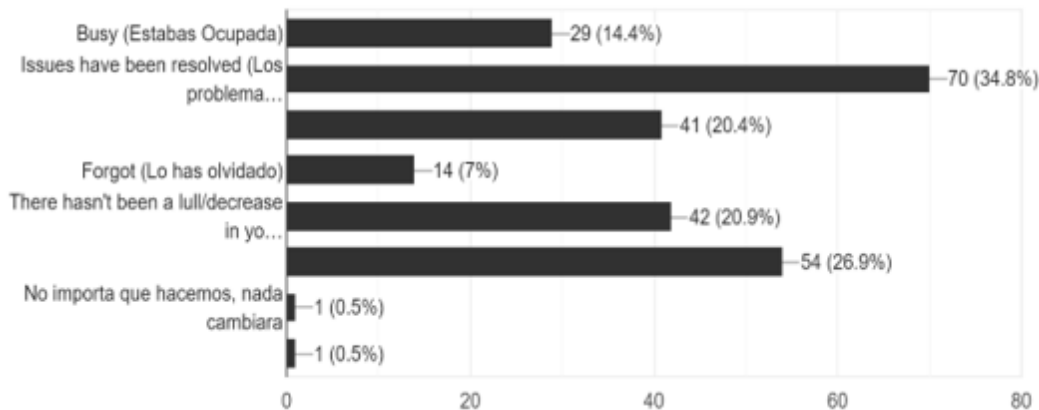
128 people (63.7%) said Your friends/co-workers are affected by the issue (Sus amigos/compañeros de trabajo están afectados por el asunto). 109 people (54.2%) said You are passionate about the issue (Es un apasionado del asunto). 99 people (49.3%) said You are concerned about the future (Usted está preocupado por el futuro). 71 people (35.3%) said You want to help (Quiere ayudar). 36 people (17.9%) said Other people's passion about the issue inspires you (La pasión de otras personas sobre el tema le inspira). 72 people (35.8%) said It's just the right thing to do (Es lo correcto). 1 person (0.5%) said Not sure. No está seguro/Other.

Some of the responses for **other** were “we need a change”, “democracy is important”, “amo a mi país”, and “democracy is necessary”.

Figure 53 Decrease/increase involvement perception (Catalan Independence Movement)

e

What contributes to a lull/decrease in your online participation in the movement for independence? Check all that apply. (¿Qué contribuyó a una pausa / disminución en su participación en Facebook en los asuntos relacionados con la independencia? Marque todo lo que corresponda.)



When asked what contributed to a lull/decrease in online participation in the movement for independence, (they could check all that applied), the responses were:

29 (14.4%) said they were **Busy** (Estaba ocupada/o)

70 (34.8%) said the **Issues have been resolved** (Los problemas han sido resueltos)

41 (20.4%) said **Issues aren't as popular**. Los problemas no son tan populares que antes.

14 (7%) said they **Forgot** (Lo ha olvidado)

42 (20.9%) said **There hasn't been a lull/decrease in your participation**. No ha habido una pausa / disminución en su participación

54 (26.9%) said **You are tired/ You don't think anything you do will make a difference**. (Está cansado / No cree que nada de lo que haga marcará la diferencia)

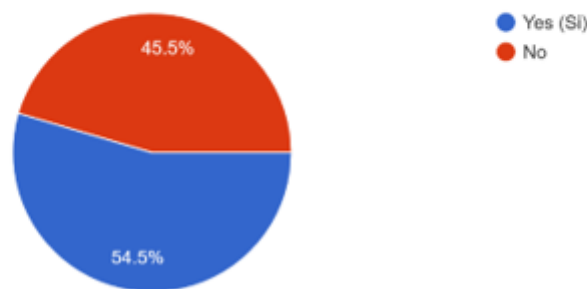
1 (0.5%) said Other and their reasons were “no importa lo que hagamos, nada cambiará” and “it’s over and there’s nothing else we can do”

Most people said the reason they no longer participate is that issues have been resolved. It would suggest that they have given up, however if we base anything on history, we can see that even though they have been resolved, people will not give up until they get

independence. Consequently, while there may be a lull now, the movement should resurface soon.

*Figure 54 Activism self-perception (Catalan Independence Movement)*

Based on your online participation in the movement for independence, would you consider yourself an activist? (Según su participación en línea en el movimiento pro Independència, ¿se consideraría un activista?)

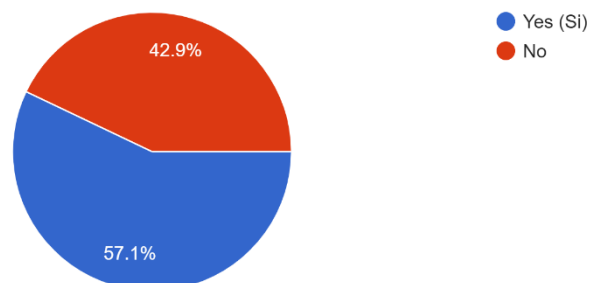


Participants were asked if they would consider themselves activists based on their online participation and 90 people (45.5% of the participants) said *yes* while 108 people (54.5% of the participants) said *no*.

*Figure 55 Perception of Effectiveness in Obtaining Social Change (Catalan Independence Movement)*

Do you think the movement has been effective in bringing about social change? (¿Cree que el movimiento ha sido eficaz para generar cambios sociales?)

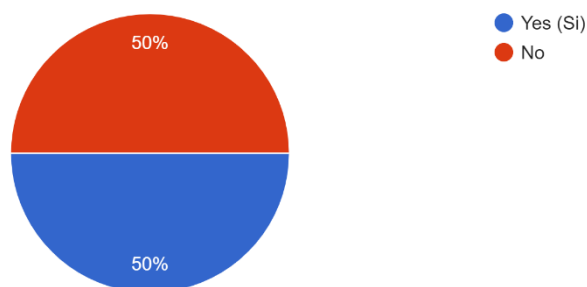
198 responses



When asked if they thought the movement had been effective in bringing about social change, 85 people (42.9%) said *no* and 113 people (57.1%) said *yes*.

*Figure 56 Perception of Effectiveness in Achieving Legal Change (Catalan Independence Movement)*

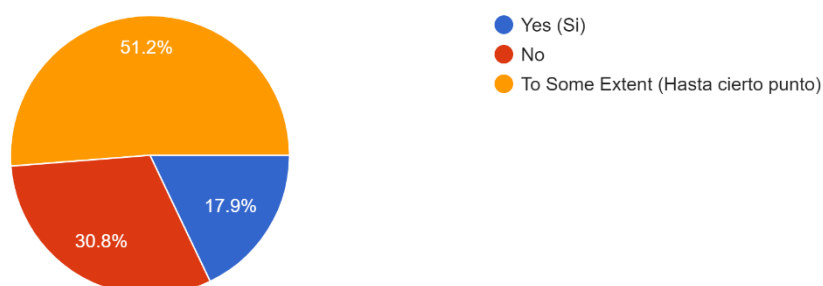
Do you think the movement for Independence has been effective in bringing about legal change?  
(¿Cree que el movimiento por la Independència ha sido efectivo para generar cambios legales?)  
200 responses



When asked if they thought the movement had been effective in bringing about legal change, 100 people (50%) said *no* and 100 (50%) said *yes*.

*Figure 57 Success perception (Catalan Independence Movement)*

Do you think that the movement for Independence has been successful in achieving its goals?  
(¿Piensa que el movimiento ha sido exitoso en conseguir sus objetivos?)  
201 responses

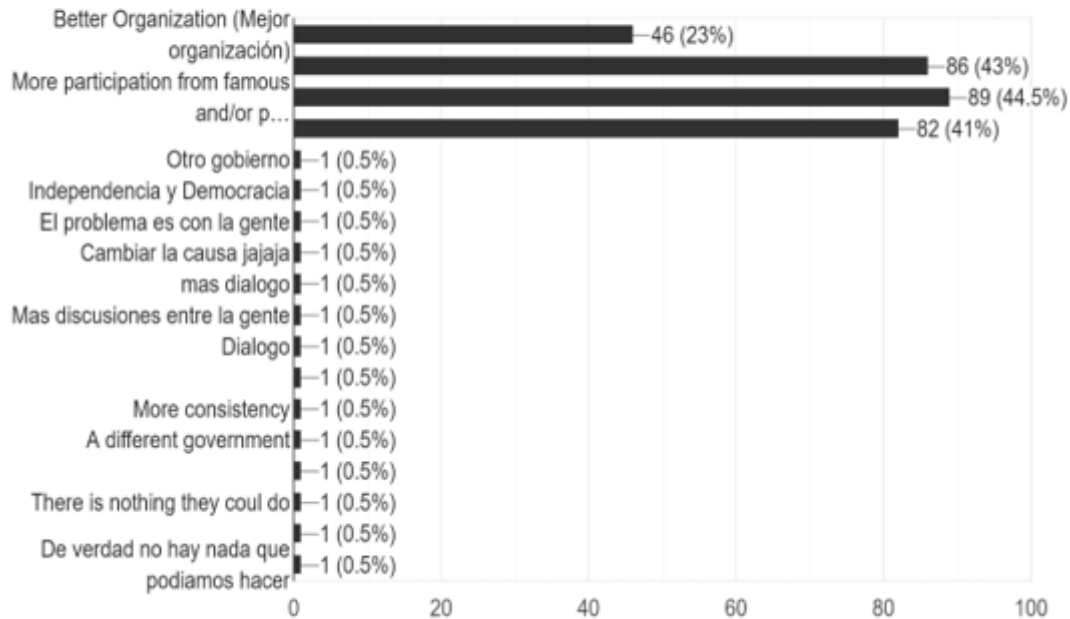


When asked if they thought the movement for independence was successful in achieving its goals 36 people (17.9%) said *yes*, 62 (30.8%) said *no*, and 103 (51.2%) said to some extent.



Figure 58 -Opinions about increasing success (Catalan Independence Movement)

How do you think the movement could be more effective in bringing about social and legal change? Check all that apply. (¿Cómo cree que el movimiento podría ser más efectivo para generar un cambio social y legal? Marque todo lo que corresponda)



When asked how they thought the movement could be more effective in bringing about social and legal change (they could check multiple responses), participants responded as follows: 46 people (23%) said Better Organization (Mejor organización), 86 (43%) said More physical/ in-person participation (Más participación física/en persona), 89 people (44.5%) said More participation from famous and/or powerful people (Más participación de personas famosas y /o poderosas), 82 people (41%) said More meetings with heads of state and politicians (Más reuniones con políticos).

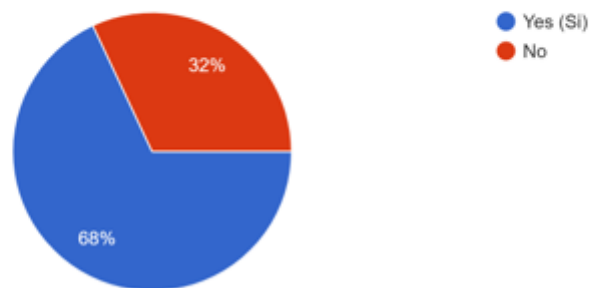
Other

Some of the responses for “other” were: “otro gobierno”, “Independència i democràcia”, “el problema es con la gente”, “cambiar la causa”, “más diálogo”, “más discusiones entre la gente”, “diálogo”, “de verdad no hay nada que podamos hacer”. “The Spanish government should have been more open”, “more consistency”, “a different

government”, “a government that cares about the people”, “there is nothing they could do”, “we need democracy”...

*Figure 59 Social Media Activism Success Perception (Catalan Independence Movement)*

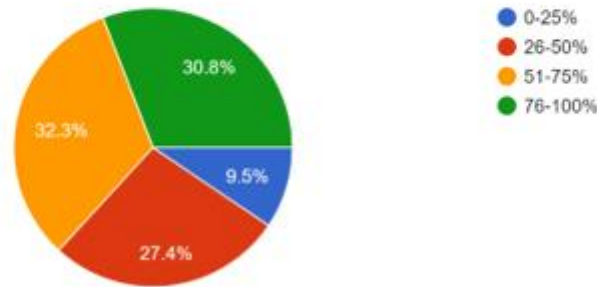
Do you think that your online participation in the Movement for Catalan Independence contributed to the results? (¿Cree que su participación en línea en el Movimiento por la Independència catalana contribuyó a los resultados?)



When asked if they thought their online participation in the movement contributed to the results, 64 people (32%) said *no* and 136 (68%) said *yes*.

Figure 60 Facebook Friend Participants (Catalan Independence Movement)

If you had to estimate, how many of your friends on Facebook also participated in the activism for Independence? (Si tuviera que calcular, ¿cuántos de sus amigos en Facebook también participaron en el activismo por la Independència?)



When asked how many of their friends also participated in activism on Facebook for the Catalan Independence movement, 19 (9.5%) said 0-25% of their friends, 55 (27.4%) said 26-50% of their friends, 65 (32.3%) said 51-75% of their friends and 62 (30.8%) said 76-100% of their friends.

#### 4.2.2.2 Analysis of Catalan Independence Movement Survey Results

In the survey 201 people were asked their age (Figure 48) and ages were diverse which implies that messages and movements can garner maximum participation from all age groups if people of all ages are affected. The almost even distribution in gender (Figure 47) helps to avoid gender bias in the results. When asked about their level of involvement on Facebook regarding the referendum and subsequent events (Figure 49) 70 people (35%) said they were very involved, 71 people (35.5%) said they were moderately involved and 59 (29.5%) said they were uninvolved. It is safe to assume that these responses are not necessarily an accurate representation of the amounts of involvement because they are based on the individual perceptions and estimation of involvement of each of the participants as opposed to measured and verifiable facts. For example, based on an analysis of the collective responses, it is apparent that some of the people who claimed they were uninvolved, were actually involved, highlighting expected

contradictions in the responses. However, it is fantastic that at least 70% thought that they were at least somewhat involved.

In order to establish what their involvement looked like, participants were asked what their online activism consisted of by selecting all applicable options (Figure 50) 106 people said Personal Posts (Wall posts/statuses) (Publicaciones personales- un estatus/un post en su muro), 129 people said Changing a Profile Picture (Cambiar su imagen de perfil), 105 people said Sharing other people's posts (statuses, videos, pictures, petitions, etc.) (Compartir las publicaciones de otras personas), 125 people said Liking other people's posts ("Liking los posts de otras personas), 72 people said Joining a group related to the cause (Unirse a un grupo relacionado con la causa), 43 people said Live streaming events and/or protests (Transmitir eventos y/o manifestaciones en vivo), 37 people said Creating Events (protests, workshops, concerts, etc.) geared at helping the movement (Crear eventos para ayudar al movimiento), 30 people said Fundraising (Recaudación de fondos), and 1 person said Other and they put "creating a fundraiser" as their response. As expected, the two most popular options (Changing a Profile Picture and Liking Other People's Posts) are those that require very little effort.

What is good in regard to activism, is that more than half of survey participants chose the most challenging option which was creating personal posts. This contradicts the belief that people would only participate in the easiest methods of online participation It was also important to know if participants participated in activism for the Catalan Independence movement offline (Figure 51) and select all applicable options because as stated earlier it was determined that a combination of both online and offline activism is optimum. 53 said they had not participated offline. 148 said they participated offline by protests (132 people), Fundraisers (20), Meetings (10) and Programs which is the vast majority of the participants and also contradicts any hypotheses about slacktivism which states that those involved in activism online are not as serious about the movement as those involved in activism offline.

In analysing movement participation, the "why" is just as important as the "how" and as such it is important to see both the ways people participated and the motivation for participation. Participants were asked what inspired them to participate in the movement and select all applicable options (Figure 52), 125 people said You and/or your family members are affected by the issue (Usted y/o los miembros de su familia están afectados por el problema), 128 people said Your friends/co-workers are affected by the issue (Sus

amigos/compañeros de trabajo están afectados por el asunto), 109 people said You are passionate about the issue (Es un apasionado del asunto), 99 people said You are concerned about the future.(Usted está preocupado por el futuro), 71 people said You want to help (Quiere ayudar), 36 people said Other people's passion about the issue inspires you (La pasión de otras personas sobre el tema le inspira.), 72 people said It's just the right thing to do (Es lo correcto), 1 person said Not sure (No está Seguro) and Other. Some of the responses for other were “we need a change”, “democracy is important”, “amo a mi país” (I love my country), and “democracy is necessary”). The two most popular responses had to do with the impact the issues addressed by the movement had on participants themselves, their families, friends and co-workers which suggests that people will participate when they or their loved ones are affected. It is important to note especially at this point, that the objectives of participation could have been very different. It is possible that some participants participated to stop independence as opposed to advocating for it.

It is also important to know why some people stop or decrease their participation. When asked what contributed to a lull in participation and check all applicable answers (Figure 46), 29 said they were Busy (Estaba ocupada/o), 70 said the Issues have been resolved (Los problemas han sido resueltos), 41 said Issues aren't as popular (Los problemas no son tan populares como antes), 14 said they Forgot (Lo ha olvidado), 42 said There hasn't been a lull/decrease in your participation (No ha habido una pausa / disminución en su participación), 54 said You are tired/ You don't think anything you do will make a difference (Está cansado / No cree que nada de lo que haga marcará la diferencia), 1 said Other and their reasons were “no importa que hagamos, nada cambiará” (It doesn't matter what we do, nothing will change) and “it's over and there's nothing else we can do”. It was very interesting that the most popular response was that the issues have been resolved when in fact independence had not been achieved. Perhaps this was in reference to the referendum having happened or the chances for the vote to occur no longer existing. And while this may indicate a decrease or inexistence of hope within movement participants, based on what has happened time and time again, this period of hopelessness will not last long and before much time has passed, they will be ready to continue the fight for independence once again.

The next few questions are crucial to this research as they directly asked participants about their perception of themselves as activists and their online activism. Participants

were asked if they would consider themselves activists based on their online participation (Figure 50) and 90 people said *yes* while 108 people said *no* suggesting that the majority believe that their online activity does not make them activists. This begs the question of whether they viewed their online activity as activism and whether they think it makes an actual impact. Because if it does not, what is the point of participating?

In Figure 51, participants were directly asked if they thought the movement had been effective in causing social change 85 people said *no* and 113 people said *yes*. It would have been helpful to have information about what kinds of social changes people have observed but the fact that the majority thought social change was achieved is an indication of success.

Since the movement for independence was not just about achieving social change but legal change as well, participants were asked if the movement was effective in bringing about legal change (Figure 52). Half of the people said *no*, and the other half said *yes*. Since independence was not achieved (only for 5 minutes), it would be good to know what the perceived legal changes were.

As many changes were not achieved, participants were asked how they thought the movement could be more effective (Figure 58) 46 people said Better Organization (Mejor organización), 86 said More physical/in-person participation (Más participación física/en persona), 89 people said More participation from famous and/or powerful people (Más participación de personas famosas y /o poderosas), 82 people said More meetings with heads of state and politicians (Más reuniones con políticos) and a few selected “Other”. Some of the responses for “other” were: “otro gobierno” (another government), “Independència i democràcia” (independence and democracy), “el problema es con la gente” (the problem is with the people), “cambiar la causa” (change the cause), “más diálogo” (more dialogue), “más discusiones entre la gente” (more discussions between the people), “diálogo” (dialogue), “The Spanish government should have been more open”, “more consistency”, “a different government”, “a government that cares about the people”, “there is nothing they could do”, “we need democracy...”, and “de verdad no hay nada que podamos hacer” (honestly, there is nothing that we can do).

It was very interesting that the highest response called for more participation from famous and more powerful people which shows how highly people value the opinions of people in positions of power. The other top two answers called for more physical or traditional forms of activism like protests and meetings with politicians. This shows that while online

activism in perceived as effective, people believe that traditional forms of activism should also be involved in movements. It would be interesting to know if people view the combination of online and offline activism as ideal for achieving change. So far from the research, responses definitely indicate that that is the case and that a combination of both online and offline activism is the best option and course of activism in order to achieve maximum results.

The next question asked about the quantity of Facebook friends that participated in the movement (Figure 60) in order to assess the level of influence that friends and trends have on participants because that speaks to motives for participation as well. 19 said 0-25% of their friends, 55 said 26-50% of their friends, 65 said 51-75% of their friends and 62 said 76-100% of their friends. The overwhelming majority had most of their friends participating. This suggests several things; maybe trendiness is important in participation, perhaps these are the results because friends tend to have similar views and beliefs, and/or it is possible that since the participants have been affected by the issues within the movement, their friends also have been affected because friends tend to have similar experiences.

In Figure 57 participants were asked if they perceived The Catalan Independence Movement to be successful in achieving its goals 36 people (17.9%) said *yes*, 62 (30.8%) said *no*, and 103 (51.2%) said to some extent which indicates that the majority believe it did not achieve all that it set out to achieve and more work needs to be in done in order to obtain that success. They were also asked directly whether they perceived their online participation in the movement to have contributed to the movement's success and 64 people (32%) said *no* while an overwhelming 136 (68%) said *yes*. This would suggest that movement participants do believe that their online participation (specifically Facebook in this study) has been an effective communication tool in the movement for Catalan Independence.

#### 4.2.3 Analysis of Surveys for Black Lives Matter and Catalan Independence

As stated previously, one of the most obvious drawbacks of the use of a survey is the fact that responses are not necessarily factual because they are based on perception which varies from person to person. For both movements, the majority of participants believed

they were at least moderately involved but results of other questions suggest that even more than those stated were very involved. The next question one would ask is “what did that involvement look like?” The majority in both tended to participate in ways that required less effort like changing profile pictures and liking other people’ statuses. What was good to see however, is approximately half of participants created personal posts which does require more effort and shows they were personally invested in the changes sought.

This also reflects in the numbers for offline participation where the majority also participated offline through protests, events, and fundraisers. This proves that those who participate online are not necessarily uncommitted and unwilling to make the sacrifices required by traditional activism as is thought to be the case by many who have opinions on social media activism.

That observation leads to the question of why people are committed to these movements. Why do they participate? The answer is evident; people participate in social movements and social media movements because they are personally affected by the cause. This is shown in the responses made which revealed people participate when they are passionate about the issue, they themselves, their family, friends and/or co-workers are affected, and/or because they are concerned about the future. This suggests that in order for movements to gain participation it is imperative that the movements demonstrate and emphasize how the changes they are seeking directly affect the potential participants because once they see how the situation is negatively affecting them and how changing the situation with the movement can positively affect them, they will be more likely to participate in obtaining those changes.

The explanation for the efforts of participants is further explored when the majority stated that they thought the social movements had been effective and had achieved their goals at least to some extent. This shows they believe the movements do make a difference which is an incentive to participate. Additionally, from a personal standpoint, the majority also stated that they not only considered themselves activists based on their SMA for their movements (63% for BLM and 45.5% for CIM) but they also believed their individual participation helped the movement to be successful. What was also interesting about the results and findings were that the majority didn’t have a majority of their friends participating which suggests that participants are genuinely seeking change because it is



important and not because it is trending which was a concern previously expressed by some authors.

### **4.3 Legal Research**

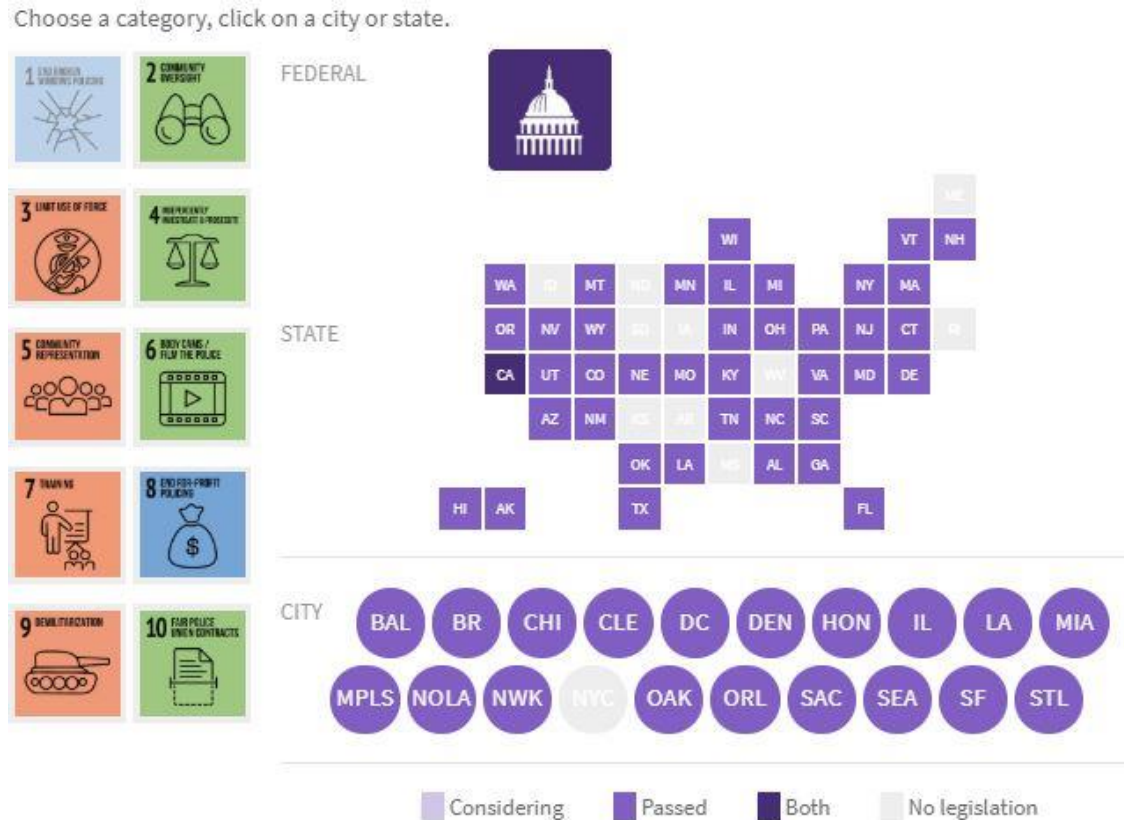
For Black Lives Matter, the research on legal changes was obtained by Campaign Zero which is branch of the Black Lives Matter movement specifically dedicated to researching, proposing and achieving legal changes that target police brutality, injustice against Black people and unequal treatment of Black citizens in comparison to other citizens in America. The research done by Campaign Zero is on the current laws in each city and state in the United States that leave the Black community more vulnerable and more susceptible to violence, injury to property, bodily harm, discrimination from the police, lenient, lack of or unfair prosecution of police officers at fault, and death resulting from altercations with the police. The laws that Campaign Zero seek to implement are to ensure that police do their job fairly and well, and also to attempt to get to a point where the police never have to shoot and kill anyone regardless of the situation at hand. The researchers for Campaign Zero have managed to track changes over time and note which proposed legislations have been successful and where they have been successful.

The research done on the Catalan Independence movement regarding the legal implications of the movement was collected from several news sources both locally and internationally. The sources were used to give a complete picture of the legal ramifications that the movement has had on Catalan citizens, law, governance, reputation, government officials, movement leaders, and the Catalan economy, due to the retaliation of the Spanish government. While the majority of research, reporting and information on this topic is in Catalan or Spanish because of the location of the incidents, since the rest of the research has been done in English and there were several reliable and accessible sources in English, the researcher felt it important to include the Catalan legal research in English as opposed to Catalan or Spanish to provide a clearer understanding of what occurred and also to ensure uniformity of the research in terms of consistency of the language used. Any terms in Spanish or Catalan have been translated to English as well for the sake of cohesiveness.

### 4.3.1 Black Lives Matter Legal Research Graphics

#### 4.3.1.1 End Broken Windows Policing

Figure 61 Campaign Zero States with Legislation to End Broken Windows Policing



Source: [www.joincampaignzero.org/#action](http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#action) Retrieved on April 20, 2020<sup>6</sup>

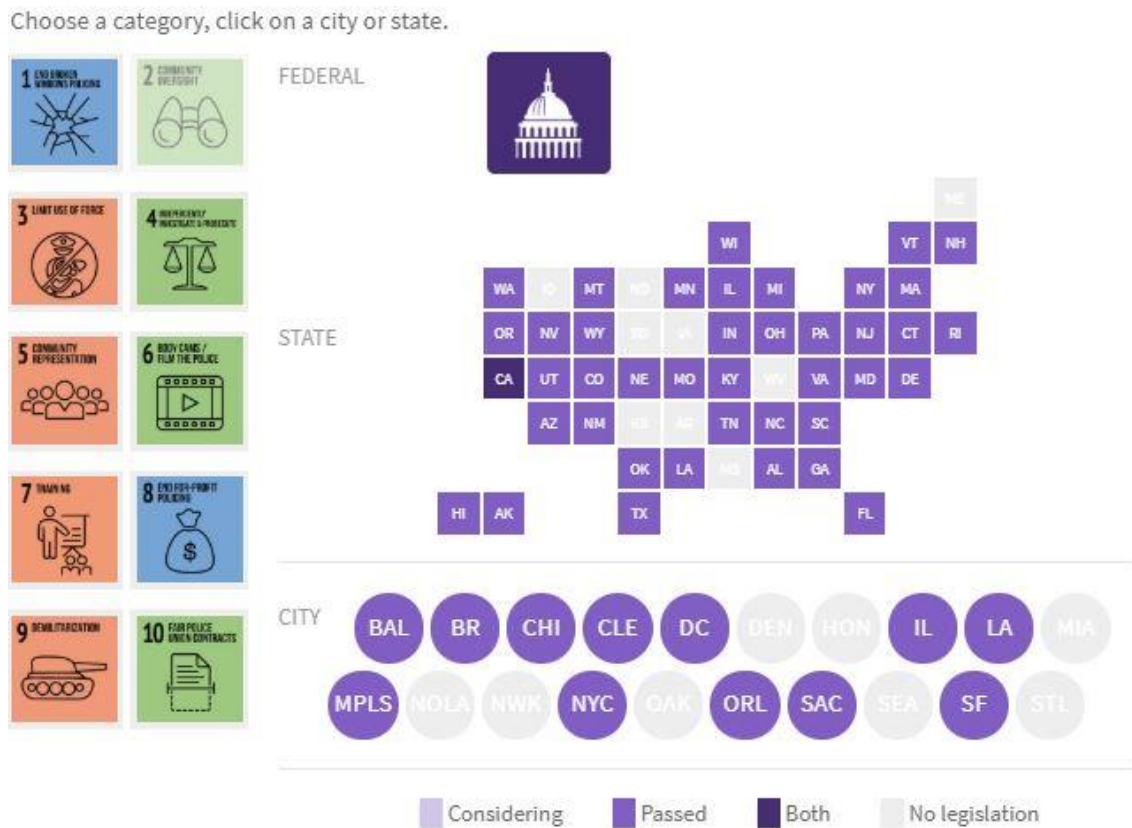
Broken Windows Policing is the targeting and prosecution of minor crimes which has led to the criminalization and over-policing of communities of color and excessive force in otherwise harmless situations. ([joincampaignzero.org](http://joincampaignzero.org)). Legislation pertaining to Broken Windows Policing was passed in Washington , Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Philadelphia, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont,

<sup>6</sup> All research regarding legal changes in Black Lives Matter was obtained from [www.joincampaignzero.org/#action](http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#action) Retrieved on April 20, 2020

Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware and New Hampshire. Major cities where the legislation was passed are Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver, Honolulu, Illinois, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, Oakland, Orlando, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

#### 4.3.1.2 Community Oversight

Figure 62 Campaign Zero States with Legislation for Community Oversight



Community Oversight occurs when police get away with misconduct as a result of the fact that those who decide what punishment, if any, they receive are also officers and tend to protect their own. These laws were proposed in order to ensure that communities can hold officers accountable for their misconduct. The states that implemented legislation to combat community oversight are Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania,

Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. The major cities that implemented the legislation were Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, Orlando, Sacramento and San Francisco.

#### 4.3.1.3 Limit Use of Force

*Figure 63 Campaign Zero Success Regarding States with Legislation to Limit Use of Force*

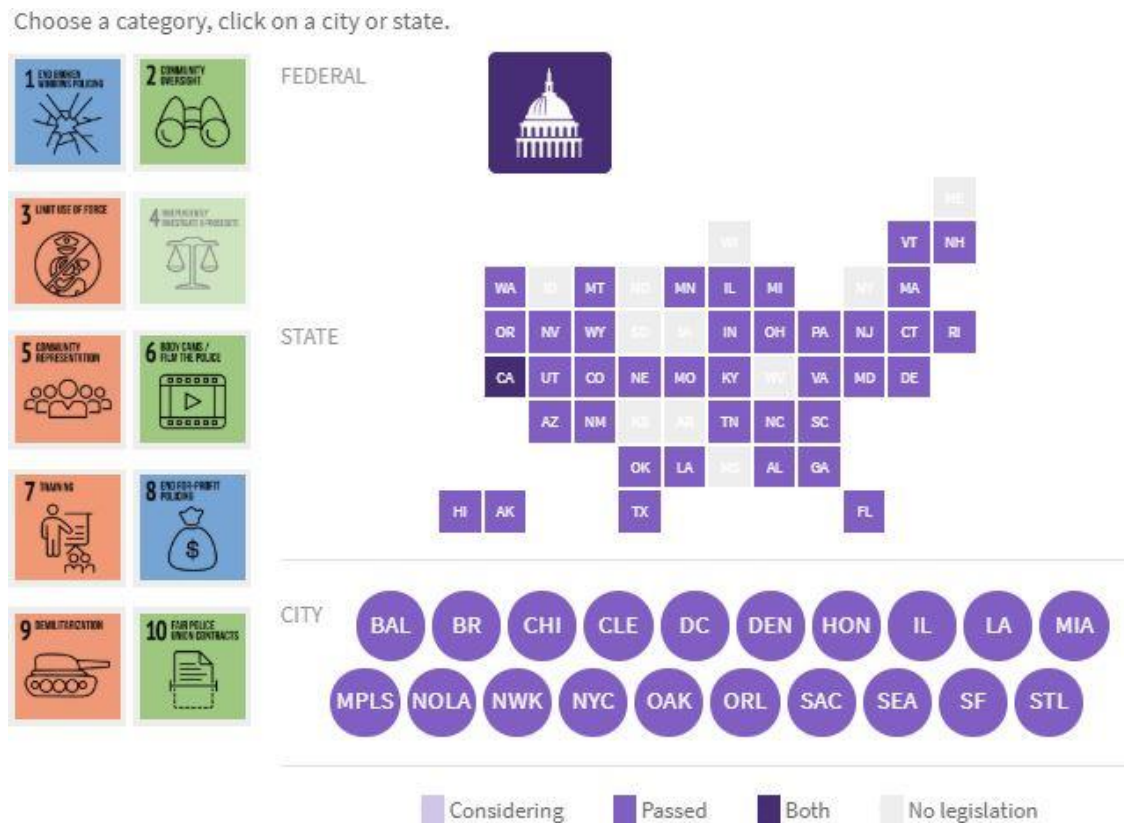


The legislation under the category “Limit the Use of Force” was aimed at increasing the police’s ability to protect citizens and do their duty without killing or seriously injuring people. In order to decrease instances of excessive use of force by police officers, the states that implemented legislation were Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana,

Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Georgia New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The major cities that implemented the legislation were Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, Oakland, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

#### 4.3.1.4 Independently Investigate and Prosecute

Figure 64 Campaign Zero States with Legislation to Manually Investigate and Prosecute



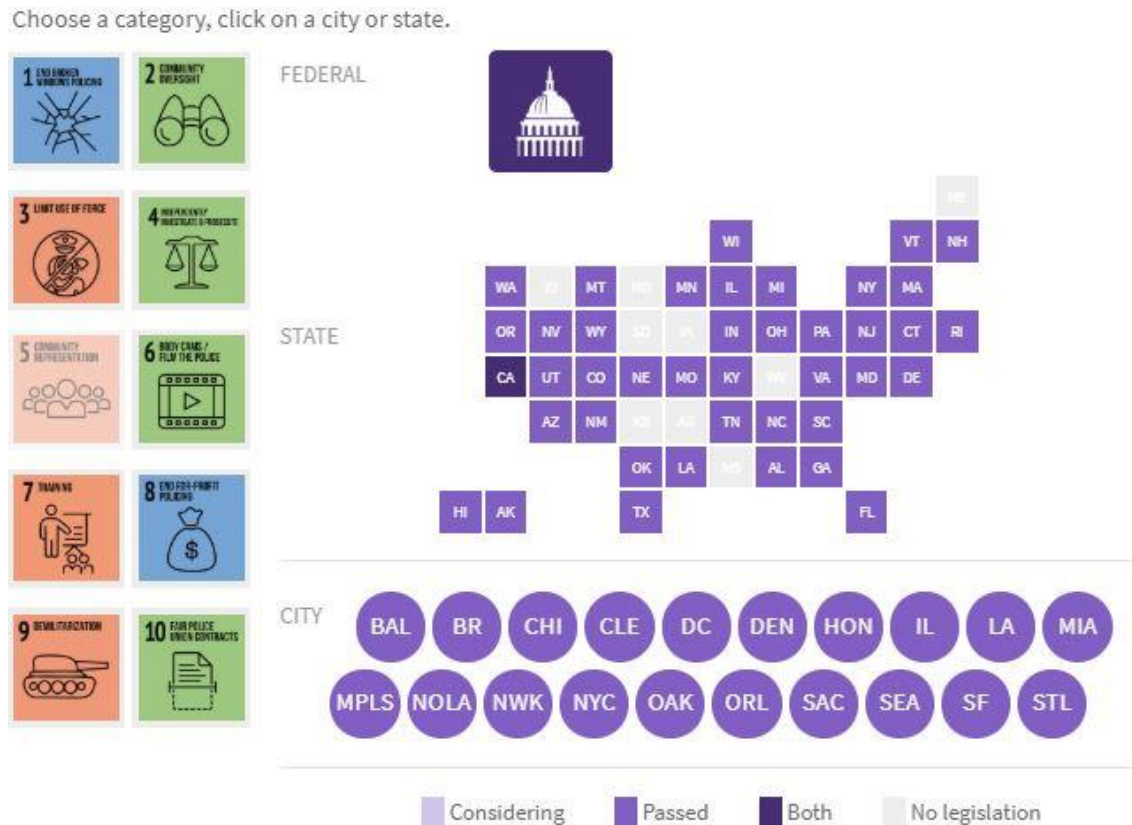
The legislation to independently investigate and prosecute are so as to avoid bias and misconduct when the work or mistakes of police officers are under review. This is due to the fact that police officers are usually investigated and prosecuted by their own who as previously mentioned, tend to be protective of each other even at the cost of justice. States that have implemented legislation to correct this are Washington, Oregon, California,



Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Louisiana, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The major cities that adopted the legislation were Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver, Honolulu, Louisiana, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, Oakland, Orlando, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

#### 4.3.1.5 Community Representation

*Figure 65 Campaign Zero States with Legislation for Community Representation*

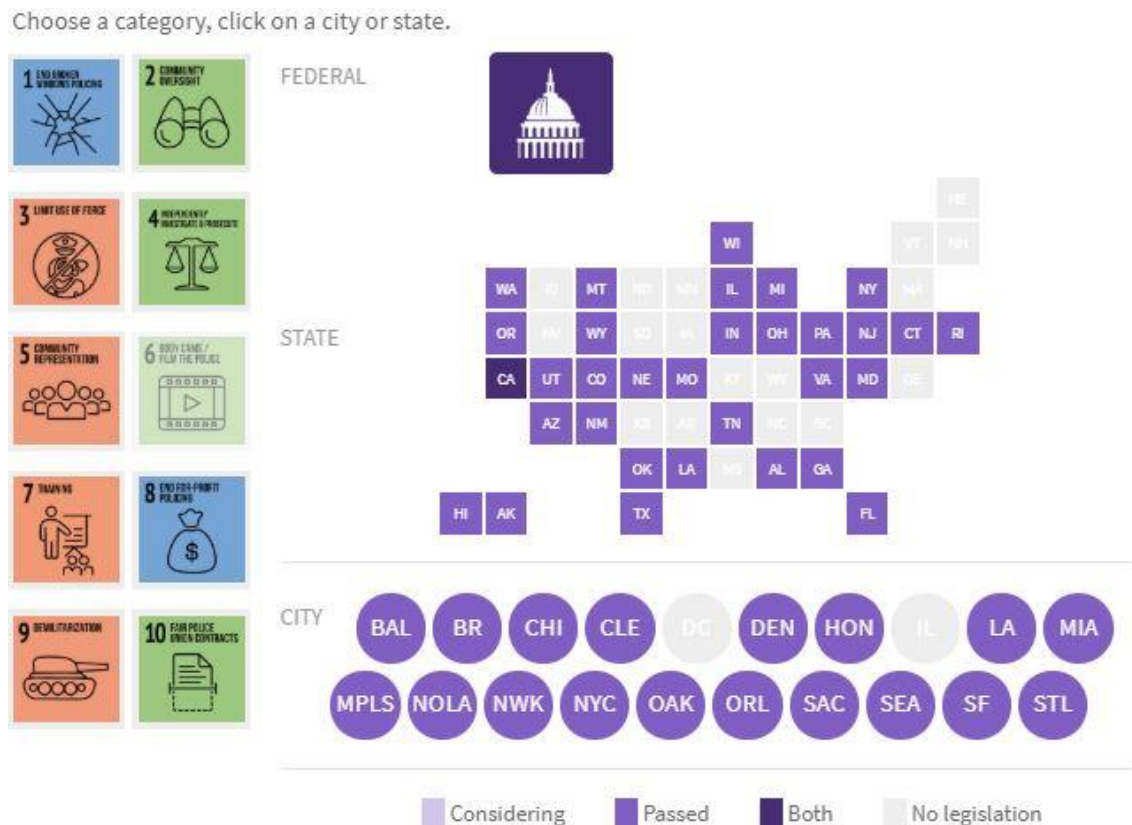


The proposed legislation for community representation addresses the need for more diverse police officers and a police force that has the same amount of cultural, racial and

gender diversity as society. The legislation requests that those in power including police officers have the same cultural make up as citizens which would allow them to relate to and understand the people they are charged with protecting a bit better and therefore help with fairer treatment. The States that enacted this legislation are Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. The states that Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver, Honolulu, Illinois, Louisiana, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, Oakland, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

#### 4.3.1.6 Body Cams/ Film the police

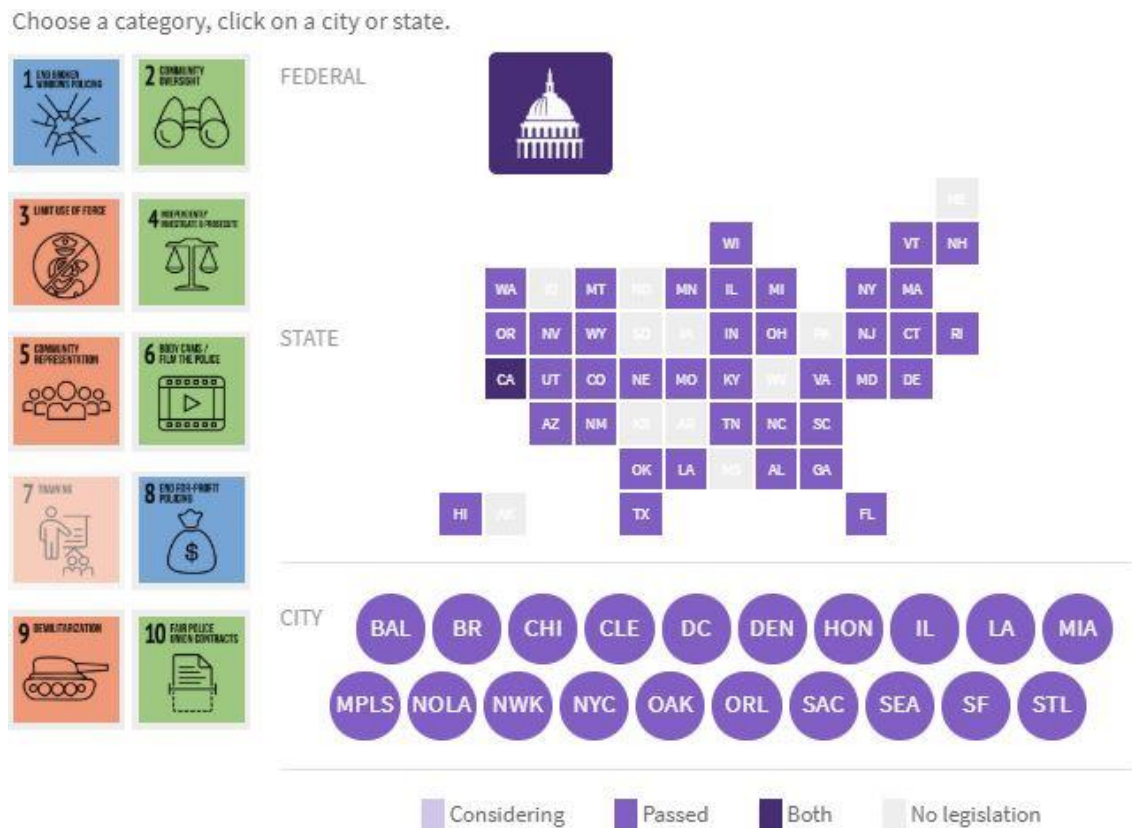
Figure 66 Campaign Zero States with Legislation for Body Cams/Filming the Police



There has been an increase in the desire for body cameras because the presence of those cameras helps to hold police officers accountable and provides potential evidence needed in the case of a problem. Police are less likely to abuse their power knowing there is surveillance of their actions which also helps in protecting citizens from harm, false arrests, and illegal searches. Legislation also allows and encourages people to film the police especially when they are behaving illegally or using excessive force. The states that implemented legislation related to making body cameras and filming the police legal were Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, and Rhode Island. The major cities that implemented the legislation are Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, New York, Oakland, Orlando, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

#### 4.3.1.6 Training

Figure 67 Campaign Zero States with Legislation for Training

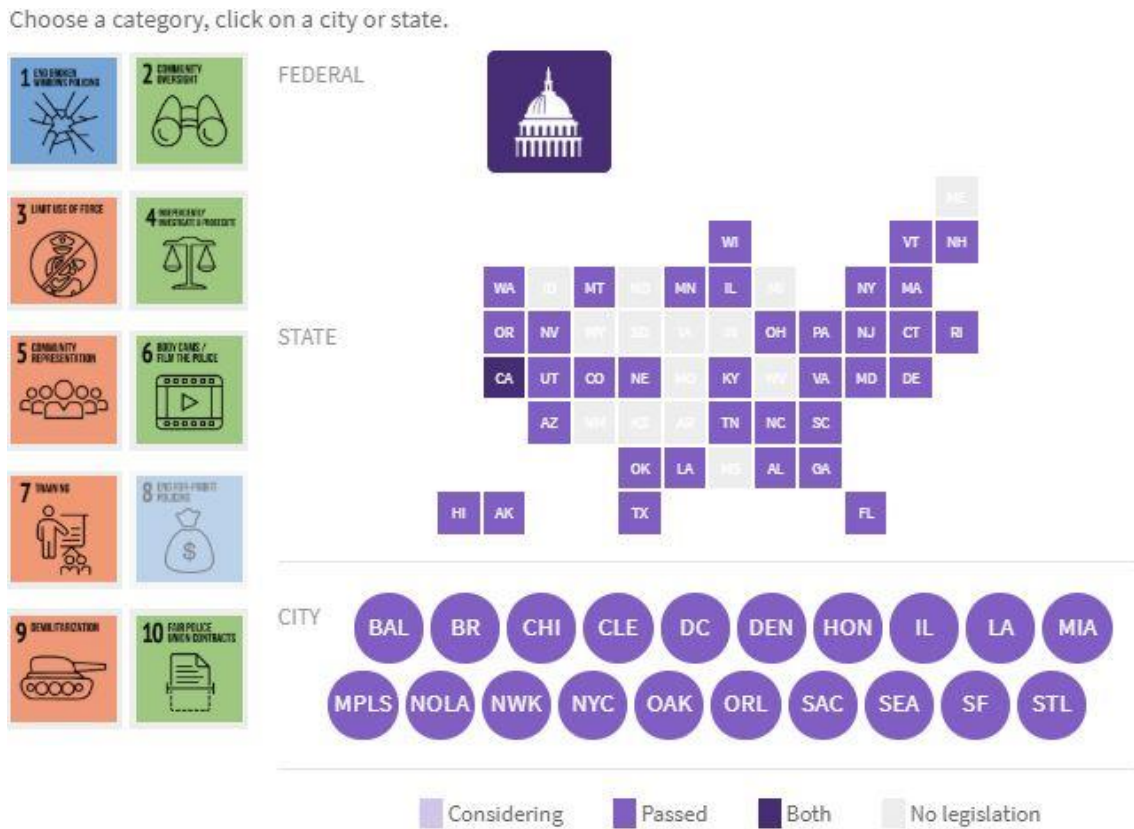




Legislation calls for an increase in training for police officers which will allow them to do their job more effectively and be better equipped to deal with the citizens they serve. The current training received by police officers in many states does not teach proper protocols for interactions with citizens which would help to prevent unnecessary injuries and deaths. The states that have passed legislation to increase and improve training for police officers are Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The major cities that implemented legislation regarding an increase and improvement in training for police are Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver, Honolulu, Louisiana, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, Oakland, Orlando, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

#### 4.3.1.7 End For-Profit Policing

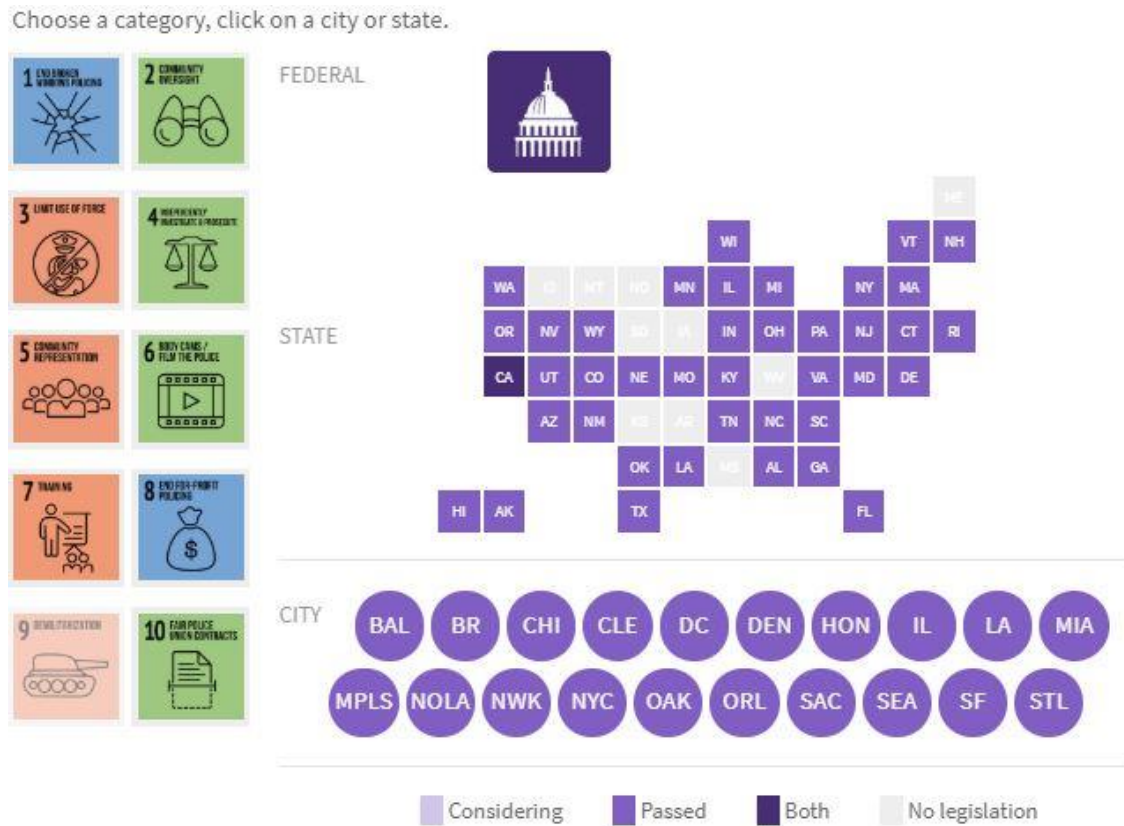
Figure 68 Campaign Zero States with Legislation to End For-Profit Policing



The legislation proposed to end for-profit policing is in order to increase commitment to police doing their jobs well and penalizing people only when absolutely necessary as opposed to doing the opposite and unnecessarily penalizing people in order to increase fines, tickets, arrest and incarceration which profits those in power. They seek to do that by ending quotas for tickets and arrests and limiting fines for low-income people amongst other solutions. The states that enacted that legislation are Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Arkansas, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Philadelphia, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The major cities that adopted legislation to put an end to for-profit policing are Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver, Honolulu, Louisiana, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, Oakland, Orlando, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

### 4.3.1.8 Demilitarization

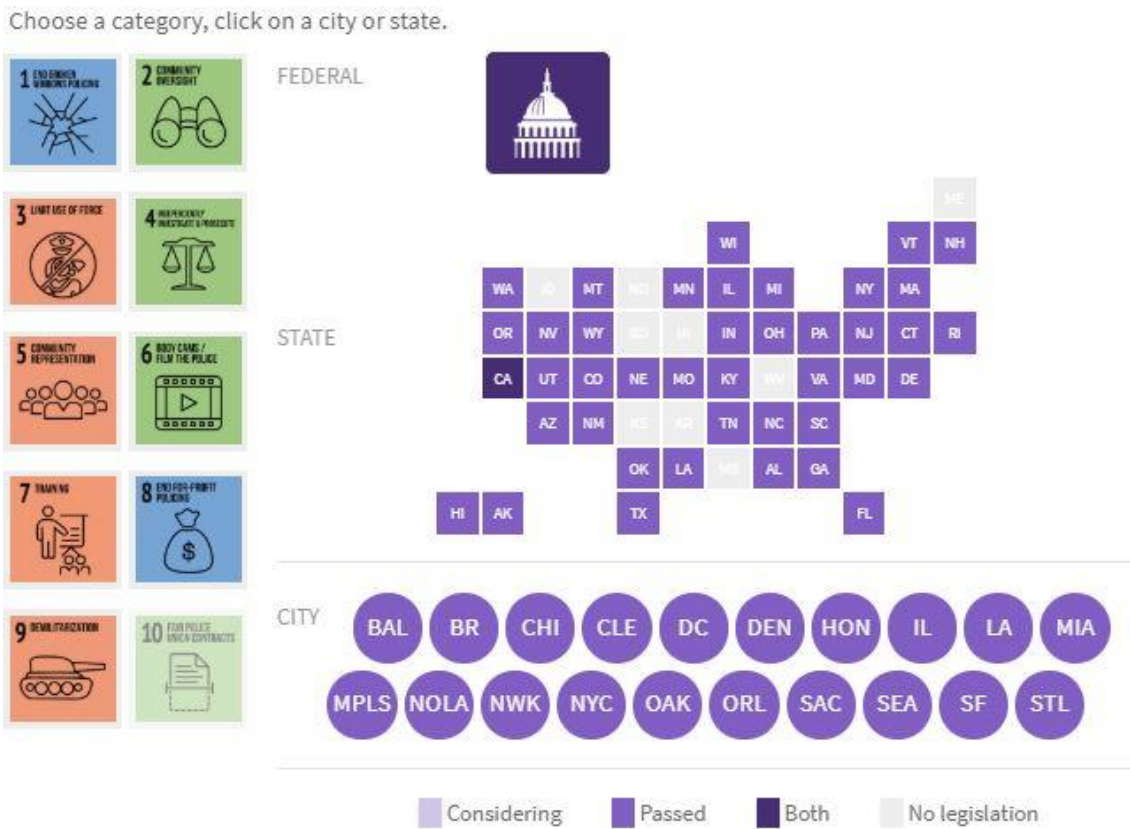
Figure 69 Campaign Zero States with Legislation for Demilitarization



The legislation for demilitarization seeks to decrease or eliminate the use of military weaponry to terrorize, scare, and quell communities by the local police departments. The legislation is meant to specifically address the Federal Government’s 1033 program which makes military weaponry accessible and available to local police. It also seeks to restrict the purchasing of military weaponry by local police departments as well as the execution of raids particularly by SWAT teams unless there is an emergency situation. The states that implemented the legislation are Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minneapolis, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The major cities that implemented legislation for demilitarization of the police force are Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver, Honolulu, Louisiana, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, Oakland, Orlando, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

### 4.3.1.9 Fair Police Union Contracts

Figure 70 Campaign Zero States with Legislation for Fair Police Union Contracts



The legislation for fair policing calls for the government to implement fair police union contracts with the aim to decrease the cases of police unions unfairly protecting police officers who need to be prosecuted and sometimes lose their privileges or job. The police are protected under their contracts with local, state, and federal government as well as in the statewide Law Enforcement Officer’s Bill of Rights. With fair contracts, the police would no longer be invincible under the rule of law and would be held just as accountable for their actions as normal citizens. The states that implemented laws relating to fair policing are Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Arkansas, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Montana, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The major cities that adopted legislation regarding fair policing are Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver,

Honolulu, Louisiana, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, Oakland, Orlando, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.

#### 4.3.1.10 Federal Laws

There have been at least 3 laws that have been considered to be passed on a federal level which is the highest level of government and would ensure that all states would have to abide by the rules within the law. One of the three laws proposed through Campaign Zero relating to Limiting the Use of Force has been passed while the other two are still being considered.

i) H.R. 1447- Death in Custody Reporting Act of 2013 (PASSED)

This law was passed in congress on December 11, 2014 and its purpose is “to encourage States to report to the Attorney General certain information regarding the deaths of individuals in the custody of law enforcement agencies and for other purposes.” (govtrack.us) This will prevent states and police departments from covering up and burying deaths that occur in order to avoid proper prosecution or consequences from those in power. When these incidents occur, the government will investigate and prosecute accordingly as opposed to having the states shoulder the responsibility of doing that.

ii) H.R.158- Corey Jones Act (UNDER CONSIDERATION)

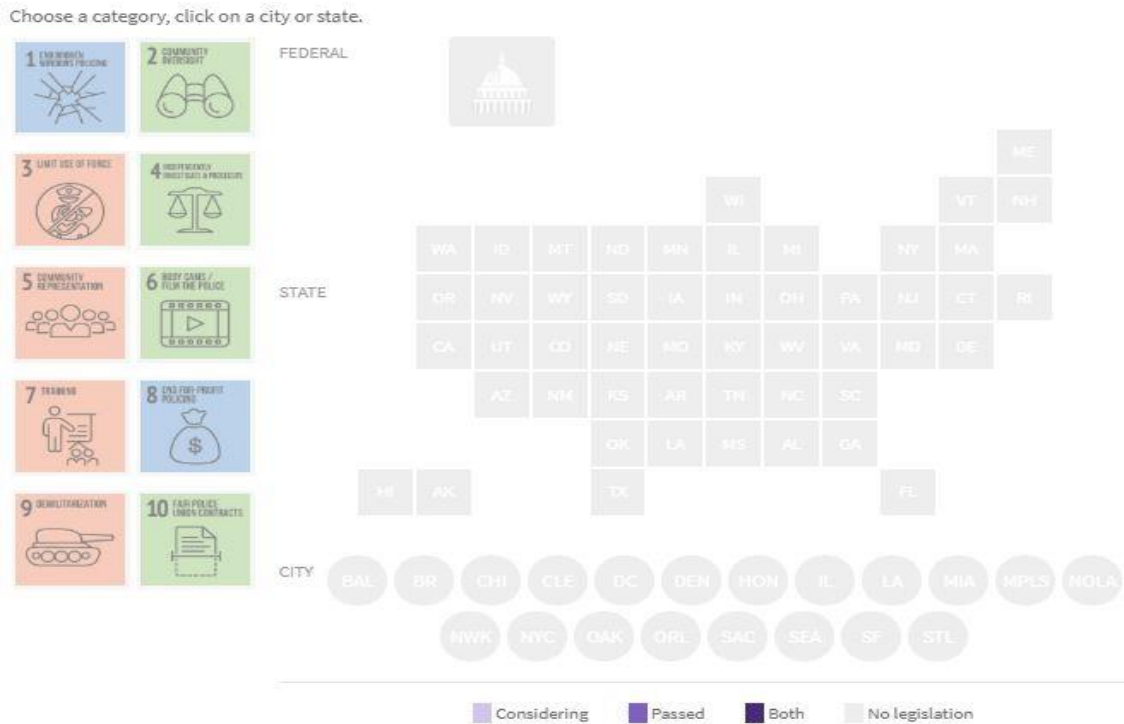
This law falls under the Limit Use of Force category in Campaign Zero’s proposed legislation. The bill was introduced on January 3, 2017 and it aims to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 in order “to impose certain additional requirements on applicants for Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants, and for other purposes.” (govtrack.us) The law seeks to ensure that both the public and those in law enforcement are safe during incidents including officers in plainclothes and unmarked vehicles.

iii) H.R.124- Camera Accountability Maintenance and Transparency in Policing Act of 2017 (UNDER CONSIDERATION)

This law falls under the proposed legislation regarding Body Cams/Filming the Police. The legislation includes the creation of a grant program which would be used to fund body cams and “provide for the acquisition, operation and maintenance of body-worn cameras for law enforcement officers, and for other purposes.” (govtrack.us) The bill would amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. It would also set up a task force in the Department of Justice which would provide valuable and needed recommendations on community interactions and policing in an attempt to facilitate best practices for transparency and accountability.

### 4.3.1.11 USA Legislation Related to All of the Categories

Figure 71 This is a graphic showing which states have passed laws in every single one of the categories

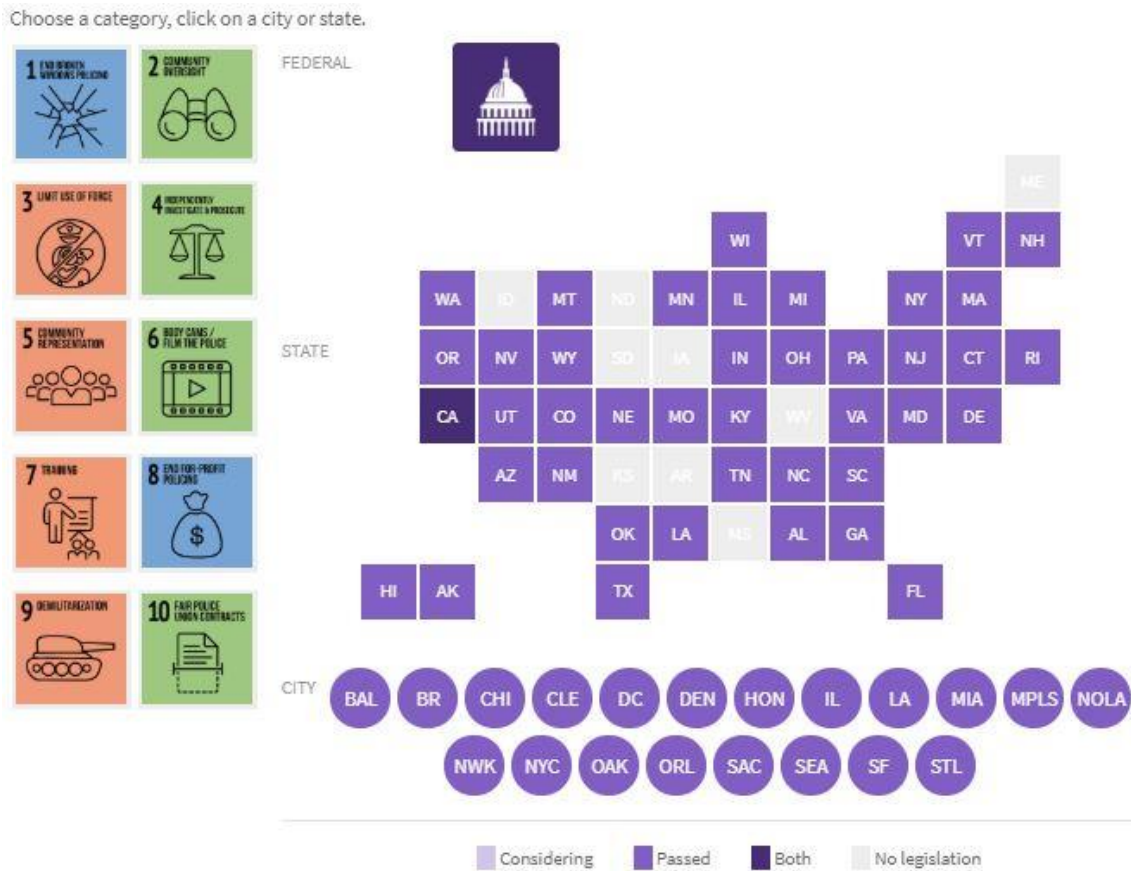


In this image, no states are highlighted even though all of the categories on the left are selected because it was found that there were absolutely no states in the US that adopted legislation for every single one of the 10 categories of laws proposed by Campaign Zero in order to hold police officers more accountable, keep all citizens safer and ensure justice for those who have been murdered or wronged. Along the same lines, none of the major cities have adopted legislation from all of the categories either. This shows that Campaign Zero still has a lot to do and work towards because their aim is to have the legislation from each of the 10 categories passed in every single state in the US as well as every major city there so that all citizens everywhere in the country will be protected.



#### 4.3.1.12 Which states have passed legislation from the categories?

Figure 72 States that Passed At Least One Legislation Proposed by Campaign Zero



The states that have passed legislation in at least one of the ten categories proposed by Campaign Zero are Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, Minnesota, Missouri, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, Alabama, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The States that have not implemented any of proposed by Campaign Zero at all are Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Maine. All of the major cities in the United States have implemented at least one piece of legislation related to the categories proposed by Campaign Zero. They are Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington DC, Denver, Honolulu, Louisiana, Miami, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, Oakland, Orlando, Sacramento, Seattle, San Francisco, and St. Louis.



## 4.3.2 Analysis of Black Lives Matter Legal Research

### 4.3.2.1 Analysis of End Broken Windows Policing Results

From Figure 61 about the law to “End Broken Windows Policing”, it is seen that 38 out of the 50 states in the US adopted this proposed legislation in relation to the proposed amendments. Also, impressively, 19 out of 20 of the Major Cities adopted the legislation as well. The states that did not adopt the legislation are Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, Main and Rhode Island. The only major city to not adopt this new legislation was New York City which is interesting in particular because the State of New York did adopt the legislation and New York City is one of the major cities there.

### 4.3.2.2 Analysis of Community Oversight

For the laws concerning Community Oversight proposed by Campaign Zero, 41 out of 50 states enacted new legislation in relation to it and 12 out of 20 major cities adopted legislation relating to it. The states that did not adopt new Community Oversight legislation were Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Maine. The major cities that did not adopt the legislation relating to community oversight are Denver, Honolulu, Miami, New Orleans, Newark, Oakland, Seattle, and St. Louis. This is all shown in Figure 62. It has been observed that while the majority did adopt the legislation there are still nine that did not, and it would be interesting to know why.

### 4.3.2.3 Analysis of Limit Use of Force

Figure 63 shows the States that adopted legislation to “Limit Use of Force” as suggested by Campaign Zero. 39 out of 50 states adopted the legislation however those that did not were Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, West Virginia, Alabama, Virginia, and Maine. 15 out of 20 major cities adopted some or all of the proposed legislation relating to limiting the use of force. The 5 that did not were Baltimore, Brooklyn, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Orlando. This is also interesting

especially in the case of Chicago because it is the capital city in Illinois which did enact the legislation but Chicago as a city did not itself do the same.

#### 4.3.2.4 Analysis of Independently Investigate and Prosecute

For the legislation proposed to “Independently Investigate and Prosecute” as shown in Figure 64, 39 out of 50 states made changes according to the proposed laws and impressively all 20 out of the 20 major cities also adopted legislation regarding independently investigating and prosecuting. It would be interesting to find out why this piece of legislation was so successful and also helpful for those seeking to propose new legislation in the future. The states that did not enact the legislation were Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Mississippi, West Virginia, New York, and Maine.

#### 4.3.2.5 Analysis of Community Representation

Campaign Zero’s proposal to enact legislation relating to Community Representation was also very successful. A whopping 41 out of 50 states passed laws relating to the proposal and all 20 out of 20 major cities once again passed the law. This category proved to be the most successful in terms of the numbers of states and major cities that adopted the legislation. It is tied only with one other category in terms of success. The states that did not apply the new legislation are Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Maine. Once again, it should be reiterated that it would be helpful to know why this legislation in particular was so successful because it could help in understanding what is needed or what must be changed for the other legislation proposed by Campaign Zero that was previously unsuccessful, in order for them to be successful in the future.

#### 4.3.2.6 Analysis of Body Cam/Film the Police

Legislation for the implementation of Body Cams and also encouraging and giving citizens the right to film the police was proposed as number 6 for Campaign Zero (shown

in Figure 66). This one had one of the lowest amounts of success in terms of states but a fairly high amount of major cities passed legislation. The States that did not pass the legislation were Idaho, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Vermont, Massachusetts, Delaware, Maine, and New Hampshire. The major cities in the United States that did not pass legislation in this category are Washington DC and Southern Illinois.

#### 4.3.2.7 Analysis of Training

For the proposed legislation regarding increasing training for law enforcement officials, 39 states out of 50 agreed to pass legislation pertaining to the laws proposed while all 20 out of 20 major cities passed and implemented the legislation in their respective areas. It is pretty interesting that the numbers of states passing legislation was not higher given the fact that all of the major cities passed relative legislation. The states that did not pass the legislation are Alaska, Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maine.

#### 4.3.2.8 Analysis of End For-Profit Policing

Regarding the proposals to end for-profit policing given to each state by Campaign Zero, there was a fair amount of success in terms of adoption of the legislation. Figure 68 shows that 36 out of the 50 states in the US adopted some or all of the legislation while every single one of the 20 major cities listed adopted the legislation as well. Once again, based on how many major cities adopted the legislation, one would think that more states would have adopted the legislation as well however this is one of the lowest amounts of success for the proposed laws. The states that rejected the legislation or have not decided to incorporate the new laws are Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, Michigan, West Virginia, and Maine.

#### 4.3.2.9 Analysis of Demilitarization

Figure 69 pertains to demilitarization and was the second most successful proposed legislation passed with 40 out of 50 states passing the legislation and all 20 of the major cities passed the legislation. These results were unsurprising because as expected, there was quite a lot of support for the proposed laws regarding demilitarization nationwide not just by Black Lives Matter members but by many citizens of the US, some of whom did not even support the movement. Additionally, the cost of military equipment is very expensive so getting rid of the equipment or opting not to buy more would save a lot of money. The 10 states that chose not to pass the proposed Demilitarization laws were Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Maine.

#### 4.3.2.10 Analysis of Fair Police Union Contracts

The legislation that was proposed to implement or increase the fair police union contracts which would serve to increase fair policing and accountability in the US as proposed by Campaign Zero was tied as the most successful by obtaining the same amount of legislation adopted by the states and major cities as the Community Oversight legislation. 41 out of the 50 states adopted the legislation and all 20 out of 20 of the major cities adopted the legislation as well. The states that decided not to implement the legislation were Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, Arizona, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Maine.

### 4.3.3 Legal Ramifications for the Catalan Independence Movement

#### 4.3.3.1 Resulting Legal Ramifications of the Movement

There are not any concrete legal changes that were obtained by the Catalan Independence movement but there were several legal ramifications and consequences that occurred as a result of the movement. And while there was a failure to achieve the main goal of the movement, which was to change the laws regarding regional autonomy for Catalunya and

obtain independence from Spain, there were many political and legal repercussions that must be mentioned because of how they impacted both the movement and the entire region. The first main consequence that will be discussed is the application of Article 155 and the impact that had on the region. The second will be the imprisonment of politicians and activists because of their involvement in the Catalan Independence Movement and advocacy against the Spanish government for independence. However, before getting to that, there must be a clear understanding of the events leading up to the application of Article 155 and subsequently the imprisonment of Catalan leaders. 4.3.3.1 Resulting Legal Changes in the Catalan Independence Movement

Figure 73 A Timeline of the Significant Events Resulting from the Catalan Referendum



Source: <https://www.ednh.news/separatism-has-come-to-an-end-madrid-envoy-to-catalonia/> on June 10, 2020

The figure shows that after the referendum took place on October 1, 2017, there was a regional strike in Barcelona on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to protest the violence shown by the Spanish military against voters and the response of the Spanish government to the referendum. Two days later, scores of companies and banks changed their headquarters to locations outside of Catalunya resulting in a serious financial hit. On October 6, all of the votes had

been counted and the results were that a little over 90% of voters had voted for independence. Two days after that on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, several citizens against independence protested for unity with Spain. A couple of days later, Carles Puigdemont, the regional president at the time, signed a proclamation of independence which was shortly followed by the Spanish government's rejection of the proclamation and the Catalan government's suspension of the proclamation on the 10<sup>th</sup> although they were still in favour of independence. A day later on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Rajoy threatened to apply Article 155 if the Catalan government continued to attempt to obtain independence and told them they had until the 19<sup>th</sup> to decide. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, two activists were arrested (this will be discussed further on), and on the 17<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of thousands in Barcelona protested their arrests. Then on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the deadline given by Rajoy, there was still no response from Puigdemont indicating that the Catalan government was unrelenting which resulted in confusion from both regions as to how to proceed.

Finally, after two days of unfruitful discussion and increased tensions nationwide, Rajoy invoked Article 155 on October 21 and a demonstration attended by half a million people occurred in Barcelona. Even after the application of Article 155, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, 2017, the parliament of Catalunya voted to declare independence which resulted in the Spanish government unseating the Catalan government, disbanding the parliament, then calling for elections to be held on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December in order to replace them. In the next several days, some ministers of government were arrested and Puigdemont who was relieved of his office along with for other former ministers of government fled the region to Belgium where they would be safe from prosecution and avoid being imprisoned, and turned themselves in willingly to the Belgian police officers in lieu of the warrants for their arrest in Spain. They remain in Belgium in exile to this very day.

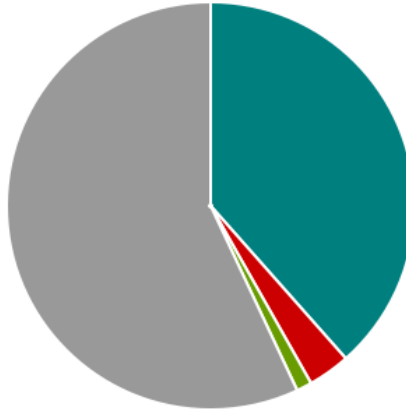
As was shown, the concrete impact of the movement and the legal ramifications all started when the Catalan government decided to move forward with the referendum on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. And to reiterate, while these were not the results that the movement wanted, these events were what resulted as a result of the movement for independence.

The results of the vote were as follows:

Figure 74 Results of the Referendum on October 1, 2017

**Result of Catalan referendum 1 October 2017**

- Voted for independence
- Voted against independence
- Blank/spoiled ballots
- Didn't vote



Catalan Government figures



Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41584864> on June 9, 2020

In the referendum which took place in Catalunya against the wishes of the Spanish government and in spite of the violent opposition of the Spanish military, 43% of eligible voters cast their vote (57% of eligible voters did not vote); and approximately 90% of the voters who cast their votes, voted for independence.

Once the vote took place, the Spanish government applied Article 155 which states that:

Figure 75 The English Translation of Article 155 from the Spanish Constitution

**If a Self-governing Community does not fulfil the obligations imposed upon it by the Constitution or other laws, or acts in a way that is seriously prejudicial to the general interest of Spain, the Government, (...) may, following approval granted by the overall majority of the Senate, take all measures necessary to compel the Community to meet said obligations, or to protect the abovementioned general interest.**

Spanish Constitution – Article 155



Source: <http://watsupeurope.com/news/article-155-spains-nuclear-option-to-stop-catalan-independence/> on June 9, 2020

This is the English translation of Article 155 in the Spanish Constitution. In a nutshell it states that if a territory of Spain is deemed by the Spanish government to be acting ineffectively or inappropriately, the Spanish government has the right and ability to do whatever is necessary, including re-taking control of the territory, in order to rectify the situation and restore the region to a satisfactory place. Rajoy had warned citizens that if the referendum took place, he would have no problem applying Article 155 and dismissing the Catalan government; he also made threats by saying that if they had the referendum they would be participating in illegal activity and therefore have to face the consequences. The Catalan people, including the government officials, were fully aware of what was at risk and the possible consequences of having the referendum but a significant portion of them went ahead with it anyway through allowances made by the local government and they had to suffer the consequences when article 155 was applied and they were removed from office. These consequences will be discussed further in this section.

The major implications of Article 155 are as follows:



Figure 76 Implications and Consequences of the Application of Article 155

catalangovernment.eu

**2'**  
In two minutes

Art. 155 was an instrument to **quash Catalonia's self-government and a coercive imposition of the state**

**#245**  
November 2018  
XII legislature

### EFFECTS ON GOVERNMENT ACTION

**SUPPRESSION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT**

- 234 dismissals: president, ministers and public employees
- Annulment of the Generalitat's right to defend itself before the courts
- Elimination of agencies
- Suspension of collaboration agreements
- Bureaucratisation of the Generalitat
- Overturning of the Catalan government's strategy and planning
- Closing of websites and damage to the Generalitat's image abroad

**ECONOMIC BLOCK AND LOSSES**

- Cancellation of financial capacity and budget implementation
- Blocking of the Generalitat's bank accounts
- Blocking of investments, purchasing of services and supplies
- Blocking and delay of funding, subsidies and grants, particularly serious for vulnerable groups
- Economic impact of bureaucratisation of administration
- Indirect economic effects on companies, agencies, associations and organisations (difficult to measure)

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### ART. 155 IN NUMBERS

**€1.8B** economic impact on the Generalitat's budgets due to losses, blocked funding and delays  
**// €130M** of direct loss **// 234** public employees dismissed **// €15.5M** blocked funding for care services for children and adolescents **// 1057** social agencies affected by freezing of subsidies  
**// €250M** allocated for promotion of social housing: frozen **// 46** legislative initiatives stalled

**€11.9M** in subsidies in the social sphere not executed **// €1.3M** for closure of delegations abroad  
**// 60,000** teachers affected by suspension of Permanent Training Plan **// €25.5M** lost from ERDF Operational Programme Catalonia  
**// €16.5M** for social services programme contract with local agencies: frozen **// €30M** from transfer of INCASOL to Catalan Housing Agency for exercise of right of first refusal: delayed **// €164M** of university and research grants: frozen **// €24M** for renovation, enlargement and improvement of public schools: delayed **// €24M** allocated to National Pact for the Digital Society: delayed  
**// €15.6M** for projects in Digital Transformation of Social Protection: delayed **// €20M** for technology centres: frozen  
**// €10.9M** for Catalan Ministry of Agriculture: lost due to unavailability of budgetary appropriations  
**// €843,366** for prevention and treatment of drug addiction: not authorised

### REVERSION ACTIONS

CANNOT BE REVERTED	REVERTED	YET TO BE REVERTED
○ Budget for 2017 and 2018 has been lost.	○ Control of agencies and bodies: regained.	○ Due to adjustments to new time scenario.
○ Impact on hours worked by public employees.	○ Ability to defend Catalonia's interests: regained.	○ Matters that depend on agreements with third parties.
○ Everything frozen that had to be executed within that period.	○ Legislative initiatives and strategic plans.	○ Due to unavailability of budgetary appropriations.
○ Damage to the institution's image and failure to meet commitments.	○ New delegations.	○ Due to changes in the new government's strategic focus.
	○ Agreements and publication of grants.	

Generalitat de Catalunya

Source: <https://catalangovernment.eu/catalangovernment/in-two-minutes/322433/art-155-was-an-instrument-to-quash-catalonias-self-government-and-a-coercive-imposition-of-the-state> on June 10, 2020

Based on this document from the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalunya), the application of Article 155 suppressed Catalunya's ability to self-govern through the job termination of at least 234 government officials including the president, ministers, and public employees. It also led to the dissolution of the government's right to defend itself in front of the courts. It caused the termination of government agencies; made the government a bureaucracy; interrupted plans made by the government; and significantly harmed the reputation of the Catalan government both locally and internationally. Through the application of Article 155 the region also suffered severe financial consequences as well. The implementation of the regional budget was discontinued; funding to the government was frozen; the ability to purchase needed items was restricted; the ability to invest and receive investments was prevented; there was either a cease or suspension in funding principally for vulnerable groups; and of course, due to all of this the local economy and businesses were also affected. The total financial loss due to Article 155 is estimated as 1.8 Billion euros which is further broken down in the image in addition to a breakdown of both irreparable and rectifiable consequences.

This list is not exhaustive of all of the social, political, and financial impacts of the application of Article 155; there were several other significant effects that took place and are still affecting the Catalan society currently. One major effect was the imprisonment and exile of Catalan government officials and independence movement leaders; some of whom remain in jail to this very day.

*Figure 77 Catalan Movement Leaders in Prison or Exile*



Source: <http://www.avantguarda.cat/es/> Accessed on June 10, 2020

Three political leaders were exiled and remain in exile. For those who stayed in Catalunya, an oral trial took place beginning on February 12, 2019 (up until then the leaders were imprisoned without a trial) in the Supreme Court of Spain. Several judges tried the cases and twelve leaders were tried in total. The leaders pictured above, and their consequences and/or charges are:

1. Carles Puigdemont; previously the President of Catalunya. He has been exiled and currently resides in Belgium to avoid prosecution of the Spanish government since a European Arrest Warrant was issued for him (it was later withdrawn) and a National warrant was issued from Spain. On July 2, 2019 he was elected as a Member of the European Parliament and still serves in that position.
2. Oriol Junqueras the previous Vice President of Catalunya who was charged with rebellion, misuse of public funds, criminal organization, and sedition, then found guilty of sedition and misuse of public funds and sentenced to 13 years in prison as well as a 13 year ban on holding office.
3. Jordi Turull, who was previously the Minister of Presidency (“conseller” in Catalan) and a spokesperson for the government, was charged with rebellion, misuse of public funds, criminal organization, and sedition. He was found guilty of sedition and misuse of public funds and sentenced to 12 years in prison as well as a 12-year ban on his ability to hold office.
4. Raül Romeva was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Institutional Relations, and Transparency. He was charged with rebellion, misuse of public funds, sedition, and criminal organization. He was found guilty of sedition and misuse of public funds and sentenced to 12 years in prison as well as a ban on holding office for 12 years.
5. Toni Comín was previously the Minister of Health for Catalunya. He has been exiled and is currently living in Belgium to avoid prosecution by the Spanish government. He was elected as a Member of the European Parliament for Spain in 2019 and still holds that position.
6. Josep Rull was the previous Minister of Planning and Sustainability. He was also charged with rebellion, misuse of public funds, sedition, and criminal organization. He was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to 10 years and 6

months in prison and also banned from holding public office for the same period of time,

7. Dolors Bassa was the Minister of Social Welfare, Employment and Family for Catalunya. She was charged with rebellion, misuse of public funds, sedition, and criminal organization. She was found guilty of sedition and misuse of public funds, and thereby sentenced to 12 years imprisonment and a 12-year ban to hold office.
8. Lluís Puig has been living in exile in Belgium since October 2017 to avoid persecution from the government of Spain. He previously served as the Minister of Culture of Catalunya.
9. Meritxell Serret previously served as the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Food for Catalunya. She is also exiled in Belgium to avoid prosecution from Spain.
10. Clara Ponsatí was a Minister of Education for Catalunya before being exiled to Scotland where she lives to avoid prosecution by the Spanish government. She is now a member of the European Parliament which makes her exempt from arrest in Scotland.
11. Joaquim Forn was Minister of the Interior. He was charged with rebellion, misuse of public funds, sedition, and criminal organization. He was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to 10 years and 6 months imprisonment as well as a ban on his ability to hold office for the same length of time.
12. Jordi Sànchez's arrest in particular caused a lot of public outrage because he was one of two individuals arrested that did not hold any governmental position and therefore was not directly responsible for the events, or at least was not any more responsible for the events than every other Catalan citizen. He was simply a leader of the Catalan National Assembly and it is believed that the Spanish government charged him and imprisoned him to make an example of him. He was charged with rebellion, misuse of public funds, sedition, and criminal organization. He was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to 12 years in prison as well as a 12-year ban on holding public office.
13. Jordi Cuixart, similarly to Jordi Sànchez and like him, being half of who are frequently referred to as "Los Jordis" (the Jordis) or "Los dos Jordis" (the two

Jordis), was also not a member of the government but an activist and President of Òmnium Cultural. It is believed that the Spanish government wanted to make an example out of him as well to discourage anyone else seeking independence. He was charged with rebellion, misuse of public funds, sedition, and criminal organization. He was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to 9 years imprisonment and a 9-year ban on the ability to hold public office.

14. Carme Forcadell was the President of the Parliament of Catalunya and she was charged with rebellion, sedition, criminal organization, disobedience, and misuse of public funds. She was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to 11 years and 6 months in prison as well as a ban on holding public office for the same period of time.
15. Marta Rovira was the parliamentary spokesperson of the pro-independence coalition Junts pel Sí and is currently the general secretary of Esquerra Republicana. She resides in Switzerland where she has been exiled and has limited access to travel because she is wanted by the Spanish government and her arrest warrants may be activated outside of Switzerland.
16. Anna Gabriel was a member of Catalan parliament and former leader of the Popular Unity Candidacies (CUP). She also resides in Switzerland where she is under self-exile for fear of prosecution by the Spanish government. She was charged with disobedience, the lesser of all charges brought to the group.

#### 4.3.3.2 Analysis of Social and Legal Effects of the Catalan Independence Movement

As mentioned, the movement for independence was unsuccessful in achieving and changes in the law, however, it resulted in many cases of application of existing law that are important to mention because they resulted from the movement, strengthened the movement, increased the resolve of the people, and also caused significant social change. Success can sometimes be fluid and many times there is not 100% success when it comes to social movements. In the case of the Catalan Independence Movement, based on the research, it is evident that the movement was at least successful in increasing awareness worldwide and also in increasing unity within Catalunya.

The arrests and exiles of the Catalan leaders prompted several subsequent protests that continue to occur throughout the region and have convinced the citizens even further that

they are not valued by the Spanish government, are not treated fairly by them, and therefore must continue to fight for independence. Due to this, viewing the rejection of the Spanish government regarding the declaration of independence (which was a brief success for the movement), as a complete failure, is not entirely correct. The movement failed to achieve independence, but only for this moment. And while there are many people who have lost hope or given up on the movement or have been convinced that the consequences are not worth the fight, there are many more people who are more convinced and convicted than ever.

The fight and activism continue to release the prisoners and allow those exiles to return home. There are posters and paintings with their names and faces all over the region, people are still flying their Catalan flags proudly from their balconies, citizens are wearing their yellow pins in support for independence and regional pride is at an all-time high. That in and of itself constitutes some level of success.

## **4.4 Interviews**

### 4.4.1 Transcripts of Interviews

#### 4.4.1.1 Transcript of Interview with Angela Davis

(AD) interview with Rachel Brown (RB) on October 10, 2017 in person in Barcelona, Spain.

**RB:** What is one advantage that Black Lives Matter has as a movement?

**AD:** Women are in the leadership of Black Lives Matter all over the country. They've given them leadership positions.

**RB:** Women Started it

**AD:** It's always women. There are a couple of men that you see but Black Lives Matter is a women's movement and a queer movement. It's not only Black women. Its queer Black women. It's really a shift and it's also as I said before, a different concept of leadership. The notion of leadership that we've always worked with is the single Black, male, charismatic figure; the Malcom X, the Martin Luther King, the Marcus Garvey,

WEB Dubois but the notion of leadership is a collective leadership. That's why you don't see just one individual representing the movement. And that is unfamiliar so many people think that there is no movement because otherwise there would be a Malcolm X or a Martin Luther King or somebody like that.

**RB:** There is a backlash against Social Media Activism as slacktivism which means it doesn't require much work or sacrifice. Do you as an activist feel that they have been as effective as they can be, or as effective as traditional movements perhaps during the Civil Rights Era and what can they do to be more effective?

**AD:** I think that there are some problems and certainly Social Media Activism allows us to mobilize in ways that were never before possible within a short period of time. But it often does not create a sense of community. And from my perspectives, with Patrice and Alicia who are the leaders of Black Lives Matter that I know best, they use Social Media to mobilize and they emphasize the importance of people being together in the same space. That actual bodies come together to create modes of unity. So I think that they are very much aware of the pitfalls of Social Media Activism. I work with another organization that is under the Black Lives Matter rubric which you know there is the movement Black Lives Matter and there's the organization Black Lives Matter. The movement embraces many other organizations. And I work with this organization; I'm on the advisory board, of a youth organization that's called Dream Defenders in Florida and I learned a lot from them because they use social media in a very upfront way. But at the same time, they have developed critiques of social media. At one point they took a vacation from social media for about a month because they said that people were getting very confused and they were equating likes with organizing. The fact that all you had to do was click "like". And so, they had to stop and re-evaluate the way in which they were using the technology. Because it can be deceptive. Everybody who is your friend is not your friend. And so how does one translate that into organizing? And so, I think that there are people who are thinking deeply about that.

#### 4.4.1.2 Transcript of Interview with Janette McCarthy

JM interview with Rachel Brown (RB) on June 10, 2019 via videocall.

**RB:** What is your job position?

**JM:** I am the Deputy General Counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

**RB:** Are you familiar with the Black Lives Matter movement?

**JM:** Yes

**RB:** How do you think Black Lives Matter has affected the law in general?

**JM:** I think Black Lives Matter the movement has raised the consciousness of everyone in terms of the respective rights, especially as far as Black people's rights. I can't say specifically how it has affected the law, but I do believe that the criminal justice system has changed, and people now understand that there are disparities. Black people get harsher sentences than white folks typically. I think it is also about environmental injustice for example in Flint, Michigan which is predominantly Black, they have unsafe drinking water. So I definitely think it has raised the consciousness of people in general. Many people don't agree with what Black Lives Matter is saying but at least now they are part of the conversation. They are very open.

**RB:** Are you familiar with Campaign Zero which is a branch of Black Lives Matter?

**JM:** I am not unfortunately. I'm sorry.

**RB:** They are a branch of Black Lives Matter that specifically targets law changes. So they have been sending in legislation to different states for them to have them implemented and they have been successful in many cases.

**JM:** Great

**RB:** What are the main similarities you see in the Black Lives Matter movement and the Civil Rights Movement of the 50s, 60s and 70s?

**JM:** I see a lot of similarities. The civil rights movement was largely propelled by young people. I think Martin Luther King was in his 20s when he started this journey. I didn't realize this till I went to the Birmingham Civil Rights museum and I saw pictures of him, and a lot of the marchers were children, young people and college students. I think it's the same energy that can be found in Black Lives Matter. These are youth who are using their voices and their political power to affect change. So I think there are a lot of similarities.



**RB:** Thank you. Do you think the NAACP is very supportive of the Black Lives Matter movement or is it neutral? Or is there a disagreement?

**JM:** I think they are very supportive but again this is just my opinion. I think they are very supportive. We understand that there is room at the table for everybody, for all voices. And I think we work hand in hand. And at a lot of protests, you will find Black Lives Matter. So, I don't think that we're against to each other; I think that we're very supportive to each there but again that's my opinion.

**RB:** How much activism and work is done by the NAACP on social media?

**JM:** I'm not a big social media person but I know that we have our own division of youth in colleges. We have our social media presence and we are ramping that up. For example, we called for a travel advisory, not a boycott, on American Airlines and that was largely fueled and disseminated on Social Media and it got a lot of traction. So, I do believe we use traditional methods, but we also use social media. The percentage I can't really say.

**RB:** Do you think Social Media Activism is helpful in terms of bringing about changes in the law?

**JM:** I think so. Because the law changes when people use their voice, right? Social Media is a way to use your voice. And then for example, with *Brown v. Board of Education* it was a change in the law, but the change began with people saying, "we're not going to go to segregated schools." The change began with people protesting segregating schools and the fairness of having segregated schools. And the fact that separate but equal is not equal. So, I think social media is a really good way to get people involved and effect some change. Specifically in your generation and my son's generation, that's where people are getting their information and so even the most apathetic person might be watching *CNN* or reading the *New York Times* or reading *The Crisis* which is our African American NAACP paper; they are on social media. And you know, certain people say racism hasn't really changed but now people are taking pictures of it, they're recording it, they're posting it, and its right in your face. So, I think there is a strong room for social media in effecting change.

**RB:** How do you think our use of Social Media could be more effective in bringing about legal changes?

**JM:** I think it is pretty effective now, but I think more targeted audiences would help. More targeted toward people in colleges. And I don't want to be elitist and say its only

directed toward people in college but also to just the youth in general so it can be more widely disseminated. I also think that there is an issue that a lot of people don't address and that's that a lot of people in our community don't really have access. And so, they don't have access to computers, so they won't be able to learn about what's going on through social media. I think that's something that needs to be addressed also; the lack of access to computers and phones (which is now your computer).

**RB:** Do you think that the online activism in Black Lives Matter has been just as effective as the in-person protests or do you think one has been more effective than the other?

**JM:** I think both are equally effective. I definitely think social media activism might be more effective because I might not be able to go to the march on Washington if I'm a person in Chicago but I can read about it and I can learn about it through social media and I can do something with my community. So, I think it's very symbiotic, but I do think it may possibly be even more effective. But we need marches, we need folks that can go to the street and say, "this is unfair, we're not taking it".

**RB:** Thank you so much for your time!

#### 4.4.1.3 Transcript of Interview with Pere Franch

(PF) interview with Rachel Brown (RB) on March 4, 2018.

**RB:** What is your current occupation?

**PF:** I am a journalist and a studies coordinator in the journalism department. I teach international journalism, radio journalism and international relations. And I am also the director of the master's degree in international journalism.

**RB:** What caused the push for independence and a referendum in 2017?

**PF:** You must be aware of the context. In my opinion we have to go very far back. It all started in 2000 when the popular party government led by Jose Maria won the elections by a landslide. Those four years when they were in power, they did not show any sensitivity to the different nationalities in Spain; mainly Catalan and Basque political organizations. His policies were not at all sensitive to the reclamations requested by Catalunya and the Basque Country. Then in 2003 there was a change of government in

Catalunya and this new government is called the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya government led by Pasqual Maragall. The laws governing Catalunya adopted according to the needs of the Spanish congress and the ambitions of the first draft were reduced. It was approved by the Spanish courts and the Catalan people in a referendum in 2006 and approved by the King of Spain. But the popular party filed a complaint against the Spanish Constitutional Court. This complaint was resolved in the 2010 and it was most of the statute which was a note (at least most parts of it). There were 14 articles that were suppressed and there were another 14 articles that had to be interpreted as the Spanish constitutional Courts said. Then here in Catalunya, we have done things according to Spanish rules and now this law that we voted for in a referendum is not accepted. That's where it all began.

The new Catalan government led by Artur Mas said he would ask the Spanish government to collect all the taxes in Catalunya and give a part to the Spanish government then administer the rest by ourselves. And when he went to them in Spain, Rajoy did not say "not now, we are in an economic crisis", he said "not now, not ever." Because the Spanish constitution does not allow it. Then a movement in Catalunya began; first in the small towns in which people asked if they wanted to be independent or not. The Catalan government organized the consultation, not the referendum, for November 2014. The Spanish constitutional court suppressed it but then the Catalan government said that it would not be abiding and that it would just be an opinion poll to see the opinion of the Catalan people.

Then since the government had not been able to do a formal referendum, it called for a preliminary election. In November 2014 there were election in which the proposal was parties for or against independence to see who would win. In those elections the majority of the seats for an independentist government who finally forced by the most radical CUP decided to hold the referendum. And even thought the Spanish government did not allow it the Catalan government said they were going to do it as well with the help of thousands of people and they did it. After the elections in September 2015, those called by the Catalan government had the aim to see if the majority wanted independence. The problem was that the majority of seats was clearly for independence 72 out of 135 but it was only 48% of the population that voted and then there was the problem "what do we do now?" Then the government said, "ok we have the majority in the parliament", but as we don't

have the majority in the streets, we are going to hold the referendum”. They always said they wanted to negotiate the referendum, with the Spanish government.

I am pro-independence and, in my opinion and in the opinion of some law experts, the current Spanish constitution could allow a kind of referendum in Catalunya. So, if the Spanish constitution was taken very strictly a referendum, is impossible but if it was understood with an open-minded position it was possible. In my opinion and the opinion of other experts. So, the Catalan government with a majority of 6 saying they had a mandate from the people, decided to go on to hold the referendum and that brings us to October 1.

**RB:** Do you use Social Media?

**PF:** I use Twitter and WhatsApp. Not Facebook.

**RB:** Did you use it to participate in the events for the Catalan Independence Movement?

**PF:** Not really. I am more than anything else an observer of it and If I used it, I used it to retweet something I agree with or to spread information. I used Twitter as a tool to spread information I find interesting and to echo something I want to be heard. Not really for writing or expressing my own opinions, I am very moderate with that.

**RB:** Were people using Facebook quite a lot for organizing or voicing opinions based on whatever you observed?

**PF:** I think I can't answer because I do not use Facebook, but I know that in those days all social media platforms were used very actively relating to the referendum and the other news. I know that some people used Facebook to spread news, pictures and give information. But that was not the case for me.

**RB:** What would you say was the most popular social media platform used?

**PF:** Twitter and WhatsApp. Especially on October 1 the day of the voting and the day before when the first clashes began, the way people were disseminating information and saying “look at what is happening in Barcelona, etc.” was through WhatsApp. A lot of information was on WhatsApp. I wasn't looking at Twitter, but a lot of the WhatsApp messages were links to Twitter. From 8:30am to 11am I saw so many people saying they received a WhatsApp and if you belonged to many groups you could see that the messages were being circulated in the different groups.

**RB:** How useful has Social Media Activism been for organizing protests?

**PF:** Quite useful but it was also useful to follow mainstream media because a lot of people were also listening to the radio and following TV news and for example; if there was a demonstration against the political prisoners, the Catalan mainstream media like TV3 and Catalunya radio and the local newspapers were also spreading a lot of information about that. Social media was useful because it was reproducing content from mainstream media as well.

**RB:** Do you think social media was more effective than mainstream media in creating awareness of the situation here?

**PF:** It is difficult to say. Not for because I am 58 years old. When I was young my only sources of information were mainstream media. And now, while I follow social media the main source of information is radio mainly, newspaper (digital like *La Vanguardia* y *El Pais*) and the *New York Times*. As a journalist and professor of journalism I follow many streams of media. For me, what was important in order to get information on that was more mainstream media than social media. However, people who are 20 years old got all their information from Social Media (Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter). So, if you ask in my case, I would say about 50/50 to answer the question.

**RB:** How useful has Social Media Activism been in creating social change amongst the Catalan people? Have there been any social changes that you have recognized because of the movement?

**PF:** I think that the Social Activism has mobilized people. Social Media has helped in that the participation in demonstrations has been huge. If this has provoked social change? Not yet in my opinion. I am skeptical about the impact of social media on social change. In my opinion there has not been social change due to the use of social media. It has heled a lot to mobilize people. That is unquestionable.

**RB:** What were the most popular hashtags this time around that you know of?

**PF:** #1OCT #Votarem #Referendum #Catalonia I did not really pay attention to the hashtags since I don't tweet much.

**RB:** How has the movement affected the law? Has it changed anything legally that you know of?

**PF:** The movement has provoked an interpretation of the law by the Spanish government which is very narrow minded. In Spain in October/November, just before the elections

there was a change in the rules of the constitution. The constitutional courts before this, only had an arbitral role and in October 2015 they changed the rules in order to give it executive power meaning you would have to comply with their decrees. They could then freely order the Catalan government and prosecute them if they did not comply. On October 22 when the Catalan Parliament proclaimed independence which in my opinion was just a declaration; the very same day the Spanish government approved the application of Article 155. In my opinion that was a change in law. In Catalonia the new government or parliament that has come from the December 21 elections has the right to change the law in order to allow the president to be able to take office from abroad in order to allow for Puigdemont to be president but it did not work. In terms of legal changes from the movement, it has been mostly negative. The movement has provoked a narrow interpretation from the Spanish authorities on how to apply Spanish laws. They are not applying them in a progressive manner. They are reading the constitution and the laws in the way that most go against the independence movement.

**RB:** Overall, do you think Social Media Activism is helpful in bringing legal changes?

**PF:** Yes of course. Of course, I do.

**RB:** How do you think it could be more effective in bringing legal changes?

**PF:** I think that seeing how things are going on, it would be more helpful to set up a system to avoid fake news and hate speech. It's so easy to spread fake news through social media that it hurts its credibility.

**RB:** What were the main differences that you observed between the movement of 2017 and past movements for Catalunya?

**PF:** I saw the movement in 2017 as more enthusiastic and more militant as well as more active than before but I think this was because all of the circumstances that led up to what seemed like a real success. We did not get independence, but it all led to a big confrontation and we saw that if we pushed really hard we were unsure how the Spanish government would react. Would they allow some kind of negotiation? I would say that in former movements there was less enthusiasm and more indifference. A lot more people also participated. In my entourage, most people I know that years ago felt sympathetic to independence became much more effective.

**RB:** Do you think this last October was more effective than previous times in bringing Catalunya closer to independence?

**PF:** The movement was much more effective. There were much more people behind it, and it was much stronger. If you are asking me about social media, I would say that two years ago social media was less effective because less people were using it and now everyday more and more people are on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter.

**RB:** So, do you think that the increased usage of Social Media contributed to the success of this movement? Is that part of the reason that it was more successful?

**PF:** Yes, for sure. I am totally sure of that.

**RB:** Do you think Social Media Activism has been as effective as in person protests? Or do you think it's more effective, less effective, or needs to be combined with traditional protests? Is Social Media Activism like typing or writing or liking something online as effective as marches or demonstrations? Or do they need to work together?

**PF:** In my opinion it is more effective to march on the streets and do huge demonstrations because on Social Media you can be anonymous, and you can say whatever you want. Like when they say we are a trending movement and we have thousands of tweets, but it is not relevant. Instead if you go to the streets and see one million people marching then this is more effective. What helps is mobilizing people and getting them into the streets. Social Media helps mobilize the people. But if you ask me, I think that the in-person protests are more effective. It is better to get people into the streets.

**RB:** Perfect, that's it! Thank you for your time.

**PF:** Thank you and sorry for my English

#### 4.4.1.4 Transcript of Interview with Marina Serrat

(MS) Interview with Rachel Brown on July 15, 2018.

**RB:** How do you think Social Media Activism has affected the Catalan Independence Movement in term of its effectiveness, changing minds, or organizing within society and how impactful has it been on the law? Firstly, how effective has it been on advertising?

**MS:** Social media here includes TVs and Videos as well as social networks of course which when all combined together have been very useful. The ballots for the referendum and organizing the votes this year was only through WhatsApp, but it was organized

through that medium. Voting was organized through that medium and they managed to cheat the Spanish government making them believe that they were not going to put own their names and instead stay home, but at that time they were actually planning to go out and vote through social networks. At that time to hide from the government, people had many secret groups and that's how they managed to buy the ballots which they were able to buy online through Alibaba. They had to go to France to look for it and everything was organized through social networks. It is actually quite impressive. In that sense I think that yes, SMA contributed clear influence on the Catalan position. Currently people are taking more initiative and think it is more important to organize in the movement.

**RB:** How effective was Social Media (mainly speaking about Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other Online platforms) in creating awareness of the situation here in Catalunya?

**MS:** I think that maybe they were not the main medias. Manly because in Catalunya, the main source of media is the Catalan TV station, TV 3. That is the most effective media and the one that has the most influence in my opinion. For other media like Facebook and Twitter above all but not Instagram, people could organize themselves through the networks or the social media. Those were the media that were most accessible around the world regardless of the situation, but I think that TV3 was the most effective media in order to mold and create awareness.

**RB:** For creating social change, like actual social change within the society, do you think that social media was an effective tool, particularly Facebook or even WhatsApp?

**MS:** I think they are effective because of course here in Europe the Internet is open and people from any type of background and any kind of situation; if you are rich or poor, no matter your social conditions, you have access to internet. And for the younger generations that is the main tool to move and create awareness for every single topic. That is what I think. For younger people, internet is much more effective to influence them or be acknowledged especially when compared to television or other traditional media.

**RB:** My next question is what do you think were the most popular hashtags for the movement for Independence?

**MS:** Oh, I have no idea, I'm sorry.

**RB:** That's okay. Is there another word for hashtag in Spanish or is it the same? I don't know.



**MS:** I don't know. I really don't know anything about that, or which ones were used.

**RB:** That's fine. How do you think the movement for independence, particularly the activity taking place on social media, affected the law? I know you are a lawyer so did it create any legal changes that you could see or did the laws remain the same?

**MS:** The laws remained the same. And here I don't think they made any achievement in the law. As far as I know the laws didn't change because of the media influences.

**RB:** Alright, thanks for that as well. I was wondering if I missed something. As a lawyer do you think that Social Media Activism could be helpful or is helpful for bringing about legal changes?

**MS:** I think it might be helpful but of course social media is not the only source. Also, legal changes or changes in the law general require a long period of time and a lot of support. This is opposite to social media where you live in the moment. So, if social media really wants to be useful and help to make good changes in the law, it cannot be a momentary thing with a hashtag moment and then finish. They have to keep influencing and I think that is one thing that the internet does not have because everything is very immediate and operating under short periods of time. Right time everything is just short periods of time "ready for this or ready for that right now" and it does not persist. I think that if anybody wants to achieve something only through internet, they have to think and work in a different way. And they have to focus it from another point of view or so but of course internet is not the only source to change a law.

**RB:** Exactly. Okay you answered my next question which is "could social media be more effective in bringing about legal changes" and your response is that it can but only through persistence and consistency, right?

**MS:** Yes, definitely.

**RB:** Awesome: So, my next question is "So this Is not the first time that people have protested or advocated for Independence in Catalunya, right?"

**MS:** Correct. Well it has been something we have been seriously advocating for since 2012.

**RB:** 2012 ok. What was the difference between the advocacy last year in 2017 and the times before? I was not here the times before and last year was my first time seeing anything like this. I'm not sure what it was like before but to you, what were the main

differences as an observer and as a lawyer that you saw between the movement this time and the times before?

**MS:** Maybe before in 2010 -2012 the independence movement was quite calm, and people really were not thinking about independence. It may be because we were living in a bondage before with the crisis of 2008 and some people were okay and very few people who were pro-independence from a long time ago were the only ones supporting that cause. But nobody was doing it and due to a number of different reasons, and serious reasons, in 2012 the independent movement began to grow greater until it became massive. And from the 2012 movement until right now, for the 11<sup>th</sup> of September which is the Catalan National Holiday, massive demonstrations were brought on the streets. I think that from 2012 until right now, the independence focus really achieved a lot of support and funding support because without money I think that you cannot change anything. And every year the distances between the demonstrations were shorter from one to another and they were more massive than the year before. I think that maybe there was a crescendo in the movement which really brought together at least half of the population or maybe a little less but that is it. They could not go beyond that number, they reached the “what was the expression? The crystal ceiling?”

**RB:** The glass ceiling

**MS:** Right the glass ceiling and I think that that’s it. From 2012 or before. And right now, I think that the only difference is the period of time before the demonstrations, there are more movements and organizations. People are more organized because the little groups have not stopped. I think that you know the CDR’s?

**RB:** Yes

**MS:** The movement now consists of a lot of different little groups. And research that didn’t exist before. And in 2017 it was now or never so it was that we had to do as much as we can to achieve it or to achieve the maximum that we can and I think that is the main difference. But I am not sure.

**RB:** So, this time in 2017, Puigdemont actually declared Catalunya independent for the first time even though it lasted for a short time. Do you think that this 2017 movement for independence was more effective than the movements in the past or were the results about the same in your opinion?

**MS:** I think this one was more effective than the ones in the past because I feel, if I'm not wrong that in the Spanish republic or the Catalan republic or something like that was also changed even though it lasted only 2 hours or a few days. At that time, interactions did not exist as much, so I think that only a few people were able to feel it or live. However, right now, people are much more aware of it.

**RB:** Do you think that an increase in social media usage contributed to it being more effective this time around?

**MS:** Yes, I think so. Absolutely.

**RB:** Last question: do you think that social media protests are just as effective as in person protests (for example las manifestaciones aqui)? Do you think it is less effective or more effective or do you believe that they need to be used in tandem or together?

**MS:** I don't know for sure, but I think they need to be used together. I think that if you want to change something online, and you use a webpage you can achieve anything. But if you want to create something or change something in reality you need to be present in both. If they are also combined with the right purpose or organization and people organize something or whatever they can do in the real world and the classical way, it will be effective.

**RB:** Thank you so much for your time!

**MS:** This was great! Thank you!

#### 4.4.2 Analysis of Interviews

##### 4.4.2.1 Overview of the Interviews

These interviews were much needed qualitative research from professionals in the fields of activism and law. Each interviewee provided very valuable insight and understanding of the movements and the events leading up to the movements which helped to shape the overall context of the research and comprehension of the researcher. Many significant points were made but some of those most pertinent to the research will be highlighted below and analysed in terms of their significance with the rest of the research.

#### 4.4.2.2 Analysis of the Black Lives Matter Interviews

##### Black Lives Matter Interviews: Angela Davis and Janette McCarthy

Both of these interviews were extremely helpful and clear in terms of the Black Lives Matter movement's success and needs for increased success in the future.

Angela Davis' main points on the Black Lives Matter movement and its usage of Social Media as a tool were that the movement is doing extremely well, is very similar to the civil rights movement in the past and certainly has unlimited potential in terms of achieving change and success. She believes in the movement and participates actively as an advisor for them. She believes that Social Media is a great tool for activism particularly for mobilization and that movements need to utilize it to their advantage in order to increase success. Ms. Davis also is of the firm belief that both traditional activism and online activism must be combined in order to receive maximum success and neither can operate independently and obtain the same results.

Janette McCarthy's main points were that the most significant impact Black Lives Matter has had is that it has raised consciousness of people locally and internationally which would certainly be classified as a significant social change. Also, she highlighted the fact that the movement relies on youth and that they have played a vital role in the success of the movement thus far. Additionally, a very interesting point she made was that in-person mobilization is also particularly important especially due to the fact that many people in the United States still do not have access to social media. As a result of that, to achieve maximum results it is important to combine both traditional activism and online activism. It was also interesting that she was unaware of the legal changes achieved by the movement including Campaign Zero (which seems to be the case with the majority of people in the US who are familiar with the movement).

Both interviewees for the Black Lives Matter portion agree that the movement has been successful in creating social impact and has been successful generally to some extent but that work is necessary because the problems the movement seeks to eliminate still exist in large quantities. Both agree that the movement has caused increased accountability of law enforcement but that the main change it has brought about is consciousness amongst the people of the problems faced by minorities, especially Black citizens relating to inequality and unjust treatment particularly by law enforcement in every State.

#### 4.4.2.3 Analysis of the Catalan Independence Movement Interviews

##### Catalan Independence Movement Interviews: Pere Franch and Marina Serrat

Interviews with esteemed, credible, and experienced members of the Catalan Community provided invaluable perspective relating to the movement and also the history of the movement. That helped the researcher to understand not just the “what” and the “how” but also the “why”.

Pere Franch had a very interesting perspective on social media usage and was very honest about his thoughts and experiences. In his interview he gave a lot of background on the movement and his main points were that Facebook was not as heavily used for the movement as Twitter. It was also noted that he himself does not use Facebook. He believes that for the Catalan Independence Movement the main platforms were Twitter and WhatsApp. He also believes that a big factor in what mediums are used is age, and that many participants in the Catalan Independence Movement are older and do not use much social media like Facebook or Instagram. He however believes the movement has improved due to the usage of Social Media especially regarding organization and ensuring participants are on the same page.

Marina Serrat was very helpful in terms of the combination of her perspective as both a lawyer at one of the oldest Catalan law firms, and also a Catalan citizen. One interesting viewpoint that she had is that she considers traditional media and technology like the television (news, etc) to be social media. However, this research disagrees with that because while they are “media”, they lack the “social” aspect. She provided a lot of needed background on the movement and the laws pertaining to the movement as well as the Spanish and Catalan governments and their roles in the views and desires of the people over the last several years. When clarifying the difference between traditional media and social media based on the perspective of this research, she stated that in her opinion, traditional media played a much more important and impactful role than social media. However, she still believes that social media was very helpful in improving the movement particularly in terms of awareness, organization, and mobilization. She thinks that the use of social media has improved the success of the movement especially in terms of participation.

#### 4.4.2.4 Main Differences in Opinions of Interviewees

The interviewees for the Catalan Independence Movement believed that for that movement mainstream and traditional media were more instrumental in achieving success within the movement whereas the interviewees for the Black Lives Matter Movement were of the opinion that Social Media played a larger role in the success of the movement. Additionally, Pere Franch and Marina Serrat were a bit more sceptical of the impact social media has had on the success of the Catalan Independence movement while the acknowledged the benefits of using it, while Angela Davis and Janette McCarthy were certain that Social Media Activism had an impact on the success of Black Lives Matter. Those for the Catalan Independence Movement, particularly, Marina Serrat believe that in-person protests are more important and effective than online activism while Jannette McCarthy and Angela Davis believe that in-person protests and online activism are equally important and effective. Lastly Serrat believes that one of the downfalls of Social Media and reasons it has not been very effective is because it is instant, whereas, Davis in particular believes that the quickness of Social Media has actually helped movements because it allows them to reach more people much faster and therefore organize and execute much faster.

#### 4.4.2.5 Main Similarities in Opinions of Interviewees

All of those interviewed for this research believe that the power social media holds to organize, mobilize, and engage citizens is incomparable. For Black Lives Matter, both interviewees are hopeful for the increased success in the movement and admire everything the movement has achieved thus far. They both believe that in-person protests are very important and should not be replaced by social media, but instead should work alongside it to ensure that maximum results are obtained in every facet of the movement. This sentiment was also echoed by those interviewed for the Catalan Independence Movement. Both interviewees for the Catalan Independence Movement think traditional media were instrumental in achieving change which is perhaps pertinent to this specific movement because many of the traditional news sources were pro-independence and aided in the organization of the activism with announcements and reports. All interviewed also agreed that social media led to a significant increase in participants in each of the

movements. They also acknowledged the fact that social media has helped increase the number of young people who are involved. Everyone that was interviewed is also of the belief that social media usage helps in the achievement particularly of social changes and also that when utilized in tandem with in-person protests can cause, affect, or, lead to legal changes as well. All interviewed believe that both online and offline activism must be combined to obtain maximum success for a movement.

## **5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Discussion of the Literature**

#### 5.1.1 Overview

After coming to a conclusion about why social movements begin, and in thoroughly analysing the Black Lives Matter movement and Catalan Independence movement to see if they could be held to the same standards and elements that have been previously used, it was found that their cases are strikingly reflective of the research that has been formerly done on these movements.

The Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence movement are social movements that have managed to achieve various levels of success and much of that success is due to their usage of Facebook amongst other social media platforms. In keeping with what was discussed by Tyler and Smith (1995), the movements were birthed from frustration with the current situations and the decisions that a change was necessary. The simple existence of both movements was a response to a social problem the likes of which was discussed by Salman and Assies (2017), and Della Porta and Diani (2020), and supported by this research. Social movements are the people's way of responding. As has been shown, through participation, more and more people can add their voices to the response and strengthen its effects. This research has demonstrated that people participate in social movements because they believe their participation will make a difference. It agrees with the work of Talpin (2015) which infers that no social movement would ever begin if the participants did not have a fundamental belief in democracy and the power held by the voices of the people.

The research concurs with the notion of the need for both collective and personal identity within social movements as explored by Polletta and Jasper (2001). Black Lives Matter has managed to establish and maintain their collective identity through the shared experiences that participants possess and that was shown through the fact that the survey participants all had similar reasons for participating and that those reasons were connected to the fact that they were personally affected by the issues. When the founder of the movement posted #BlackLivesMatter for the first time, the movement started shortly after because many people shared the experience of feeling like they were not treated as such. The shared experiences of the participants in the movement were the reason behind the



movement becoming a movement and not just a post or hashtag. The same idea of collective identity is seen in the results of the analysis of the Catalan Independence where participants were quite united with their responses and reasons for participation.

The notion of a need for engagement with those in power as asserted by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) also arose many times in the course of this study as asserted by participants who made it very clear that one way for their respective movements, in both cases, to be more successful, was to increase contact with those in office or with the ability to make the changes desired. The research also shows through the success of Campaign Zero who has directly proposed laws to the different governmental organizations, that this tactic is indeed effective in bringing about change. As such, in order to increase their impact, more movements need to be intentional about increasing and maintaining contact with their antagonists and governmental organizations with the power to change things on a whole.

In terms of the age breakdown of social movements, the research showed mixed results. While other authors have found that social movements consist mostly of youth (Earl, Maher, and Elliot, 2017; and Van Ness and Summers-Effler, 2018), when analysing the ages of the movement participants in the surveys, this research found that the ages were evenly distributed. People both young and old were taking part and also affected by the issues. However, those interviewed for the purposes of this research also stated that movement participants were youth, and as such there was a bit of contradiction in the results, but the data (which was gathered from the surveys) does not lie. It would be helpful to further analyse the age of participants in social movements of this nature so that future movements will better know who their audience is likely to be and therefore be better able to target them directly. Regardless, one inarguable statistic concerning the age of participants is that the majority of users on social media are youth, therefore, in terms of social media activism, they should be involved as much as possible because they are the most experienced with the tools. Where the research does agree with authors like Earl, Maher, and Elliot, 2017; and Van Ness and Summers-Effler, 2018, is in the fact that young people are in fact interested and invested in politics which indicates that not only are they impacted by politics and therefore involved in politics, but that they can serve as weapons or tools in transforming politics and making the future better through their involvement.

### 5.1.2 Discussion of Social Media Activism

In terms of deeming social media as an effective tool for activism, this research, in agreement with Poell (2016), has found that social media is indeed effective and as proof, it has been used effectively in both Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence movement. This research has also shown that these movements have used the tools to organise and mobilize as suggested by Ahuja, Patel, and Suh (2018) in the varying methods that movement participants stated that they participated in activism online. Specifically in cases where it is difficult or impossible for physical contact to occur (Turley and Fisher, 2018), or in cases where participants have varying reasons for being unable to participate such as those listed in the survey results, social media has been proven to be very useful.

There are a few things that do help in making movements more useful; the first of which has been highlighted by authors like Iskander (2011) who say that social media usage must be combined with traditional forms of activism at least until a way to use social media in activism that is equally or more effective than traditional activism has been discovered. Movement participants in both movements were found to agree with this sentiment. Also, due to the fact that Campaign Zero exists outside of social media and has been an integral part of the success of Black Lives Matter, there is further evidence to support the view that a combination of online and offline activism is necessary.

### 5.1.3 Discussion of Slacktivism vs. Activism

As was inevitable due to the nature of this research, there were many conclusions and epiphanies on slacktivism and what distinguishes it from activism. Above all, it was noted that modern day movements need social media and in fact have been successful because they have used social media (Skoric, 2012). This research revealed that many movement participants engaged in a variety of activism online on behalf of their respective movements and also participated offline which was contrary to the beliefs of many authors who expressed that those participating online engaged in slacktivism, and were not committed enough to their movement to make sacrifices like the ones required by participating in person (Skoric, 2012; Kristofferson, White and Pelosa, 2013; Chan-

Olmsted, Cho and Lee, 2013; Freelon, McIlwain and Clark, 2016; Hoffman, Granger, Vallejos and Moats, 2016; Howard and Parks, 2012). Along those lines and consistent with the research of Mulcahy (2017) one very significant finding was that slacktivism, in spite of its bad reputation, still has the potential to have a positive impact as has been shown in the low risk and low cost efforts put forth by the movement participants that they believed still contributed to the success of the movement and in some cases qualified them as activists.

Their actions and intentions for participation, under the microscope of theories developed by Harlow and Guo (2014), Morozov (2009) and Gladwell (2010), would in fact tend to classify them as activists because most movement participants surveyed were participating online and offline, and also participated because they had a desire for change and were affected by the problems that their respective movements addressed.

In keeping with that train of thought, another conclusion that coincided with the literature is that many people who are participating in so-called “low-cost” and “low-risk” activities which would previously be identified as slacktivism, are actually engaging in an effective and evolved form of activism (Lee and Hsieh, 2013) which needs to be studied and accepted in order to increase effectiveness of social movements.

#### 5.1.4 Discussion of the Use of Facebook as a Tool in Social Movements

The main ways Facebook has been an asset to social movements have been the amount of flexibility it has as a tool particularly in the way it provides for privacy and specificity of communication particularly through the fact that particular audiences can be selected and targeted for specific messages (Ahuja, Patel, and Suh, 2018). This research found that Facebook is perceived as an asset not just by movement leaders but by participants and experts in the field.

From the results of the Google Trends data which complimented the research of Gomez-Carrasco and Michelon (2017), it was found that Facebook and other social media tools serve as the fuel needed for the fire of movements that might be dying down and allows them to spring back faster and stronger than ever. When a movement has died down, all that needs to happen is a related event which will prompt people to participate and post

online which ends up having a snowball effect and ultimately revives the entire movement.

#### 5.1.5 Discussion of the Black Lives Matter Movement

One discovery about Black Lives Matter which was also in line with previous research is that the movement has many forms (Byrd, Gilbert and Richardson, 2017; Freelon, McIlWain and Clarke, 2016; Byrd, Gilbert, and Richardson, 2017) which each play a role in the movement. Black Lives Matter, #BlackLivesMatter, and BLM exist co-dependently and are used according to the platform or need, as was indicated by the participation studied. Also, branches like Campaign Zero operate as their own organization within the movement with their own missions and goals but work in tandem with Black Lives Matter. The research found that it can be very beneficial for a social movement to be multi-faceted and ensure that different branches and parts of the movement can work together to achieve its different goals.

#### 5.1.6 Discussion of the Catalan Independence Movement

Through the analysis of Google Trends, a commonality was identified through the fact that like Sánchez, De la Casa, and Pérez (2016), and (Kwon, 2016) stated in their research, with each failed attempt for independence traditionally the movement has not only grown but has subsequently increased its chances at independence on the next try. This suggests that the probability of independence is increasing as time goes on and the movement is improving with its strategy to achieve independence especially through the help of Social Media. The survey results also show this through the fact that participants are still of the opinion that the movement has had success to some extent and are continually adamant about engaging in activism in order for there to be change. The research also shows that through their experiences with the movements, they have identified weaknesses that will most likely be worked on in the next time around and likely improve the movement and its chances at success.

As was indicated in the interviews and shown in the literature Balcells Padullés and Padró-Solanet, (2016), social media allowed for a space where debate was conducted

online between both sides of the movement which increased everyone's understanding and perhaps made the activism and events more peaceful. Social Media provides a safe space for discussion and differences of opinions and allows people to talk out their frustrations instead of fighting and becoming violent.

The research conducted in this thesis and that from previous literature like Kwon (2016) also revealed that while collective action affects individuals, the individuals also affect collective action, and as such, for movements like the one for Catalan Independence, it is imperative that they act in tandem and reflect each other. Participants perception of their impact as well as how they are affected by the issues addressed will determine their actions and then their perception of the actions taken by the movement will also determine their perception of how they have made an impact.

#### 5.1.7 Takeaways from the Literature

Based on the literature review the main finding is that there has not been much research on Facebook specifically as a tool in social media movements because many articles focus on all social media or Twitter. The findings strongly suggest that there needs to be more research on Black Lives Matter as a movement and on what online strategies have contributed to the success of the movement thus far. It is also important that more research be done on the participation of youth in social media activism and social movements in general. It was found that the combination of online and offline activism is the best and most efficient way to achieve success as a social movement. Additionally, it was concluded that the main uses of social media within a social movement are to organize, communicate, mobilise, and establish an identity. Lastly, one of the biggest realizations from the literature review was that slacktivism needs to be re-defined. Actions can be low-cost and low-risk but still count as activism and have huge potential for an impact. The main distinguishing factor based on this research seems to be the intent of actions and not the actions themselves. Also, the existence of slacktivism in a movement is not a death sentence because that slacktivism can be transformed to activism simply through an understanding of social media activism by the movements, acceptance and intentional strategic usage of social media within the movements, an establishment of both collective and personal identity within the movements, creation of a way for social media to work

in tandem with traditional activism by the movements, and lastly, consistency of usage accompanied by an appropriate and necessary evolution of social media usage in social movements.

Another significant discovery was that there is still a dire need for research on the topic of social media activism because there are still many unknowns and uncertainties which could be affecting the success of current social movements (Murthy, 2018; Foote, 2019; Burke and Sen, 2018).

In spite of these gaps in previous research, it was found in this research that social media activism has been very beneficial to movements through the way that it empowers protestors and movements particularly, as mentioned, in increasing public awareness of issues (Tufekci, 2012), increasing visibility of the movements (Uldam, 2018), increased engagement (Ahuja, Patel, and Suh, 2018), freedom of speech on platforms (Tufekci, 2012), flexibility and variety of activism (Yang, 2016), increased capacity to make change (Wilkins, et al., 2019), data mining for participants which will enable movements to tailor activities towards them (Poell and Van Dijck, 2016), and organization within the movements (Treem and Leonardi, 2012).

The research highlighted in the literature review, and the original research done in this PhD essay complimented each other well and showed more similarities than differences.

## **5.2 Discussion of the Methodology**

### **5.2.1 Overview**

The use of Google Trends in this research was extremely helpful in terms of showing participation levels as well as the increases and decreases over time. It helped in the demonstration of success of the movements in terms of which terminology, sites and wording prompted the most participation over time.

With the trends research on Black Lives Matter, it was very easy to gain access to an accurate and immediately obvious visual representation of some of the problems faced by the movement. One of the best parts was how it highlighted the relationship and correspondence of different terms.

For Google trends with the Catalan independence movement one of the biggest advantages of using the tool was to be able to see the popularity in the posts overtime. It also helped to highlight longevity of the movement as well as any inconsistency that was immediately visible.

In terms of the use of Google Trends for both movements, the main benefits were the ability to see the different increases and decreases in participation overtime, the impact of other related events on the movement and participation levels, and also to show how the movements have grown overtime in terms of quantity of participants, increase in tools used, and growth in the range of the movement.

The surveys were a very useful tool in terms of gaining insight into the perception of participants which ultimately helped in understanding how and why people participate. Data was not only easy to understand, but quantifiable as well which significantly helped in its analysis.

The main advantage of using this tool for Black Lives Matter was that surveys allowed for in depth self-analysis of the participants and also for understanding of their perception of activism. Many people participate in the movement but not many people are aware of the reasons why they participate which makes it even more difficult for someone analysing their participation to understand why; which is very important to understand for the future of social movements. The survey as a tool allowed for an increase in consciousness of movement participants and allowed for the researcher to see the motives behind participation which will ultimately aid in helping other movements to motivate participants just the same.

Likewise, for the Catalan Independence movement, the surveys were very helpful in determining motivation of the participants as well as what hinders them from participating. The surveys were crafted in a way that was really beneficial in terms of gaining insight into participants' feelings about the movement and what can be done to improve it. The question asking about how they participated also provided valuable information about how best and how specifically to involve movement participants online.

The surveys were an extremely important mixed-methods part of the research because the qualitative component helped to shape the narrative of why people participate in social movements, how they can participate, which will ultimately help in showing awareness

of the participant, and also what movements can do in the future to ensure increased participation. On the other hand, the quantitative part helped show the profiles of those who have been participating, how they have been participating and how much influence certain factors have on participation.

The research on both social and legal changes helped to show the actual impact of the movement and indicate whether or not the movements were successful in achieving their goals. (For the Catalan Independence Movement, it was more about the legal ramifications/ impact as opposed to the changes)

Campaign Zero's success and continued work has not received much attention which made it even more important for this research to highlight the success of that branch of Black Lives Matter. There needed to be research done on the legal changes obtained by the movement because that is part of what determines success since the movement was ultimately seeking to make legal changes to achieve their goals.

The same can be said for the Catalan independence movement and although there were no legal changes of note obtained by the movement, there are very significant legal ramifications of the movement and it was imperative to include that in understanding how the movement has affected Catalan society and the world as a whole. Impact is a measurement of a movement's success and while the movement did not achieve the success it sought, it certainly had a huge impact worldwide and was therefore partially successful.

Showing the combination of legal changes and comparing those received by both movements was helpful especially in showing the dichotomy of the movements where one was at least partially successful in achieving the legal changes it desired, and the other was successful in implementing or causing legal ramifications. These ramifications still served as a result of the movement and as stated earlier had a significant impact which constitutes some level of success.

Interviews were necessary and valuable because they helped in providing context and understanding from industry professionals with a lot of experience. It was important in planning the interviews to find people who not only had experience as activists but had experience in terms of the impact that these movements seek to make which would have been a social and legal impact in the case of Black Lives Matter. Choosing to interview Angela Davis was very helpful because she is such a prominent civil rights leader and



choosing to interview Jenny McCarthy was also extremely helpful because of her legal prowess and involvement with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

The interviews for the Catalan independence movement were also extremely beneficial in terms of shaping the context of the research and in choosing who was going to be interviewed it was also very important that someone with significant experience within the movement be chosen and then someone with significant experience with Catalan law also be chosen. Interviewing Pere Franch was an excellent choice because he provided a contextual and honest opinion on the movement and its effects and also the situation within Catalan society as a whole. Because of his background with journalism and social media, he also served to reveal vital information about how social media was used. The interview with Marina Serrat also proved to be quite helpful because it helped to show how the law in Catalunya is affected, how it can be processed, how it can be changed, and also how much control Spain has over the law.

### 5.2.2 Limitations in the Methodology

The limitation of using Google Trends was the lack of specificity of the participation online, in that, it was not clear exactly what platforms and tools were used to increase participation. Instead, it simply mentioned how much participation there was, what platforms were used and where they were used. A breakdown of how much each was used to participate would have been helpful.

The limitations of using the survey were mainly the presence of human error. People find it hard sometimes to analyse themselves and be completely unbiased. As such there were inconsistencies in the research. However, it was still very insightful and did not hinder the results significantly.

The limitations of the legal research were that for Black Lives Matter most of the legal changes occurred quite recently, and it is difficult to tell or distinguish what contributed to the legal changes because it is impossible to separate the online activism from offline activism in terms of determining effectiveness because they work in tandem. For the Catalan Independence movement, the limitations were that there were no legal changes

observed or obtained that the movement required or desired and as such it was difficult to determine the legal impact in the way that the research was framed.

The main research limitations in terms of the interviews were the fact that those who were interviewed were not unbiased; they had clear opinions about the movements and were on clear sides. As such the information they gave might have been slightly skewed and/or reflective of their opinions, however, it was still helpful.

A general limitation of the research is the inability to distinguish between the effects of in-person participation versus online activism because they worked in tandem within both movements. As such it was difficult to highlight the effectiveness of each individually. Regardless the important thing is that we know they work well together and are most effective when used in tandem.

The mixed methods approach was very helpful in providing a very holistic analysis of the movements in question. The inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative research methods helped to show not only statistical impact and statistical implications of the movement but also the societal impact on, feelings towards, and perception of the movements. In general, the tools that were used complemented each other quite well and were effective and simple in obtaining the information. The specific use of the research tools was helpful in answering the research questions and confirming hypotheses as well.

## **5.3 Results**

### **5.3.1 Google Trends Results**

One of the major and adamantly evident issues facing the Black Lives Matter movement is the lack of consistency in movement participation. There are periods of surges and large amounts of participation and then periods of time when participation levels are almost at zero. The movement will be able to achieve more success if participation both online and offline are more consistent. It was also observed that participation in the movement increased significantly when a popular and related issue occurred. Based on the trends results, if the movement is able to maintain attention and participation in those moments between the highly publicized events, they will be much more consistent. One positive conclusion is that the hashtag and activism surrounding Trayvon Martin has been sustained for the last 8 years and as such it would be good to analyse that part of the

movement in particular to see why and how it has been sustained for so long. Another interesting observation was the international impact and participation that the movement had. It was seen that participation levels all around the world were high and that regardless of the fact that the movement was started in the US and focused specifically on US cases of police brutality, it was relatable and therefore able to be used and adopted in other parts of the world. This shows that it is crucial that social movements be relatable, and that success can be increased if the issues addressed are universal.

With the Catalan Independence movement, once again participation was proven to be quite inconsistent. Some people might argue that consistency is an indication of commitment but based on this research, consistency comes more from motivation. There were many increases and decreases in participation over the years and just like the Google Trends for the Black Lives Matter movement there were significant increases in participation in relation to events happening around the theme of the movement. Another interesting observation was that levels of participation also seemed to be directly proportional to levels of emotional engagement, passion, and fury. This indicates that movements should seek to engage participants emotionally and keep them invested in the need for the changes in order to increase or at least maintain participation.

Through an analysis of the Google Trends results for both movements, the main conclusions are as follows:

Firstly, the main problem for most movements and for both of these movements was and is consistency. The participation levels varied drastically over time and one can only assume that those with the power to make the changes requested by the movements will take the movements more seriously and be under more pressure to make the changes if the movements are consistent. If the movements are inconsistent, however, they will be unlikely to take the movements seriously.

Secondly, a big part of what leads to an increase in activism and participation is the occurrence of related events. This leads to the conclusion that in order for movements to maintain participation and be more consistent, they need to create opportunities for consistent participation.

The third conclusion is that events and occurrences causing outrage tend to garner more participation, and therefore movements must target the emotions of participants in order to gain their participation and commitment to the movement. As such, to summarize,

based on all of the Google Trends research, in order for a movement to be successful particularly in terms of participation and engagement, there needs to be consistency; and in order to do this, movements must create consistent opportunities for participation and appeal to the emotions of the movement participants.

### 5.3.2 Survey Results

The Black Lives Matter survey results concluded that contrary to popular belief, the majority of participants engage in activism both online and offline instead of just online as believed. Also, along these lines, very few participants only participated offline which brings us to the conclusion that participants are using social media regardless, so it would be beneficial for movements to invest in ensuring that the participation is directed and effective. In addition, while liking posts was the most common form of online activism, only a small percent less of participants also changed their profile pictures and shared posts as well. A little less than half of the people made personal posts suggesting that movement participants may not necessarily have the initiative to lead a movement, but they will participate once material is made available. This finding indicates that movements and content creators should make effective and useful online material readily available for movement participants. Another very indicative result is that the main reason people participate in Black Lives Matter is because of some sort of connection to and emotional involvement with the movement. The majority of participants said that they, or someone that they know including family or friends were affected by the issues addressed by the movement, and that was why they participated. This response shows that to gain participation in a movement, those within the movement should target the people who are directly affected by the issues in question. It was also found that trends and friends have less influence over participation than previously believed in terms of the common misconception that most people will participate simply because their friend are participating. This shows that personal connection to a movement is a much stronger influence for participation than the participation of friends. Another significant conclusion was derived from the reasons why people decrease or stop their participation. It was found that most people stopped or decreased participation in the movement because they got busy and/or they believed the issues had been resolved. This leads to the conclusion that it is important for movements to find ways to communicate clearly that

issues have not been resolved, and also provide simple ways of accessing the movements and doing work on behalf of the movements that can be effective and reasonably achieved even by busy people. Lastly, in terms of participant perception, most of the participants in the Black Lives Matter movement believe the movement has been successful in achieving both social and legal changes at least to some extent. They also believe that their involvement in the movement has contributed to the success of the movement and believe it constitutes them as activists. This shows that movement participants do not participate just to participate; they truly believe in the changes the movement is trying to make and believe that their input and participation is making an impact. In terms of how to make the movement more successful, the participants suggest that there be more in-person activism and better organization of the movement. This leads to the conclusion that participants, contrary to popular belief, do see the importance of traditional modes of activism and also that movement organization is vital for success.

For the Catalan Independence movement, the most popular mode of participation was also liking posts but the amount of people that changed their profile picture was only a little less. Over half of participants also created their own posts which contradicts research stating that those who participate online are unlikely to engage in activity online that requires more effort. The results led to the conclusion that those participating online are actually participating in activity that is more demanding. Additionally, to show that participants are committed to the movement and invested enough to make sacrifices in aid of the movement, it was shown that most participants also participated offline. Personal involvement and effects were once again the main reason for participation which affirms what was stated earlier in the results from Black Lives Matter. Over half of participants also stated that they participate because they are passionate about the movement which confirms the need for emotional involvement in participants in securing participation. Most people were once again found to decrease their participation because the issues had been resolved and also importantly because they had lost hope. This again places the onus on movements to ensure awareness of changes made or lack thereof to consistently motivate participants to continue to fight for changes and also keep hope alive that changes can be made if they continue to work towards them. To further affirm that people online do in fact not only participate offline but understand the importance of traditional forms of activism, the participants in the survey regarding Catalan Independence also stated that they believed the movement could be more effective with

more in-person participation in addition to more participation from celebrities, and more meetings with those in power. For this movement, one difference was that the participation of friends was more prevalent, which was to be expected. Also, in terms of movement success, over half believed the movement had achieved its goals at least to some extent and the majority believed they had contributed to that success. This shows once again that people participate because they think their participation is effective, and that in doing so, they are helping to make a difference.

The main conclusions coming from the surveys are thus that participants in social movements online, also participate in the movements offline. Secondly, emotional and personal involvement is a significant, if not the most significant factor in obtaining and maintaining participation in a social movement because the majority of people will advocate for changes that will positively affect them and their loved ones. Lastly, in social movements, the participants will take part in the movements because they believe that the movement has the potential to be successful and that their participation will enable the movement to achieve that success. The participants in both Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence movements think the movements have been successful at least to some extent and that movement success is due to their participation in the movements.

### 5.3.3 Legal Research Results

There have been hundreds of legal changes made in states across the United States as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement especially through Campaign Zero. A great current example of this is all of the legal changes that have been made since the protests for George Floyd's death in Minnesota in the United States. Several states since the protest over about 2 weeks have made many changes and have even defunded some of the Police Departments. These changes show that these movements do have an impact and also that social media has played a key role in the organisation of the movements and therefore the success of the movements in general

For the legal and social successes of the Catalan independence movement there was a bit of unconventional data to analyse. The movement was not successful in achieving the legal changes that it wanted. However, it did result in many legal ramifications which have affected the movement and the participants. The social changes have been evident in terms of how the society has reacted to the movement and overall awareness. Based on

the fact that part of the desire of the movement or goal of the movement was to spread awareness, and the Catalan independence movement has become a global news item, the movement has been partially successful. This shows that sometimes movements achieve things that they did not set out to, but however end up being very beneficial. It could also be stated that based on the progress that they made this time around with the movement, it is very likely that eventually they will be able to obtain independence if they continue to fight for it and apply the lessons learned from their mistakes this time around.

Both movements have been able to achieve success both socially and legally to some extent. However, neither of them can claim to be finished with the work they are doing because they have not achieved everything that they set out to. This means that the movements will have to continue to work and engage in activism in order to achieve their goals. As social media, knowledge, and experience increases they will be more likely each time around to achieve what they have set out to. Therefore, both movements have achieved at least some sort of success legally and socially, but they still have more to accomplish based on their objectives.

The results from both of these movements show that social movements, particularly through the usage of social media, have an impact on society and many times can be successful in achieving legal changes especially through the use of social media platforms like Facebook which increase awareness, self-expression, and provide direct contact with those who have the power to implement the changes desired by the movement.

#### 5.3.4 Interview Findings

The main conclusions drawn from all of the interviews were that social media is a necessary tool for activism in today's day and age, and that it has helped significantly in the formation, maintenance, and success of social movements. Additionally, it was found that it cannot serve currently as a substitute for in-person or traditional forms of activism and as such should be used a necessary form of activism instead of as the only form of activism.

## 5.4 Conclusions

### 5.4.1 Overall Conclusions

The main conclusions from the research portion are as follows:

- i) There needs to be increased consistency in social movements in order for them to be more effective. Most movements currently are inconsistent in terms of participation levels and the quantity of participation only increases when a related event occurs. Movements need to find ways to fill and bridge the gaps in participation, so they are taken more seriously and not seen as trends.
- ii) A significant role that Facebook plays in social movements is its role in mobilization, organization, and communication. It does this in ways more effective and efficient than any means of communication existing before now. This is particularly due to the large amount of access to users who are constantly accessible because of their constant usage of the platform and connectivity.
- iii) Both Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence movements have been successful in some regards but neither have achieved all of their goals. They both serve as excellent examples of how social media use can benefit a social movement.
- iv) A large part of why movements like Black Lives Matter and the Catalan Independence movements have been successful is the quantity of participation they possess as well as the quality of participation. It is therefore important to understand how to gain participation. Social media use is a great way to accommodate this need because it is extremely effective in engaging participants; particularly young people who are the main ones involved in activism.
- v) One of the best ways to engage participants is to ensure that they are emotionally invested in and tied to the changes that the movement seeks to obtain. They can therefore establish a personal identity within the movement and match it with the collective identity that all social movements should establish particularly in shaping the movement online.
- vi) Social Media Activism is not necessarily slacktivism and has proven to be very effective in helping to achieve success for social movements.
- vii) Slacktivism is not always ineffective and can still make a positive impact on social movements.



viii) The main distinguishing factor between social media activism and slacktivism is the intentions of the participants and not the ease or risk at which they do the actions.

ix) In order to avoid slacktivism, movements must accept social media as a tool that can be very beneficial. They should be intentional about creating strategies for its usage and ensure that usage is aimed at including participants online; particularly those who do not have access to participation offline.

x) If more research and studies are done on movements and the impact of social media activism, particularly Facebook, on these movements then they will ultimately be more successful in the future. As time goes on, more social media will be available with more uses and more features, and social movements will be able to use those tools to their advantage then undoubtedly achieve more success.

#### 5.4.2 Answers to Research Questions

a) Has the use of social media (Facebook in particular) as a tool in the Black Lives Matter movement been effective, and if so, how?

Yes. Through organization, mobilization, establishing a collective identity within the group, the establishment of individual identity through the group, increasing awareness of the movement globally, and facilitating communication which helped to mould, shape and transform the movement. This ultimately played a crucial role in the legal changes obtained and increases in participation. Activity online, particularly the activity on Facebook therefore can and has had an impact on the Black Live Matter movement's success in real life.

b) Has the use of social media (Facebook in particular) as a tool in the Catalan Independence movement been effective, and if so, how?

Yes, but in an unconventional way. Yes, it has been effective particularly regarding the goal to increase awareness, unite citizens, and ensure that the referendum actually took place. However, no it has not been effective in terms of achieving the main goal of the movement which was to gain independence because that did not occur. Facebook was instead beneficially and effectively used as a space for debate, self-expression, definition of identity, unification, spreading awareness of the movement, mobilization,

communication within and organization of the movement. Most importantly, however, the usage of Social Media and Facebook in particular, empowered citizens to take action and ensure the continuation of the movement even without the leadership of the movement.

c) Based on the research done, how could social media usage (Facebook in particular) be more effective in helping social movements to achieve success?

The main ways that Facebook and social media in general as a tool can be effective in helping social movements to achieve success is through:

- i. Utilizing the tools as an efficient and effective means of establishing individual identity within the movement and the collective identity of the movement.
- ii. Organizing and sharing unified and accessible content from and about the movement.
- iii. Facilitating content managers who will serve as liaisons for movement participants and ensure movement message unity which will increase the flow of communication between participants.
- iv. Empowering participants to act both with the group and independently within the guidelines of the group.
- v. Providing more opportunities for engagement with politicians and those in power.
- vi. Expanding opportunities for celebrity participation, and also by
- vii. Exponentially increasing the global and local awareness of the movement.

In order for these things to happen, first social media activism needs to be embraced and be made more inclusive. It must also be intentionally viewed and used as a tool to achieve change within social movements. This can be accomplished if more research is done on how to use social media most effectively as a tool within movements. Also, since consistency is key, social media must be used consistently and as a way to increase consistency of movement participation. And lastly, in order for it to achieve maximum effectiveness, the movement should combine social media activism with offline activism and/or traditional forms of protest.

### 5.4.3 Closing Remarks

This research was not only extremely insightful as a researcher attempting to understand the place that social media has both in activism and in the world. It helped to reveal how beneficial the use of social media could be if used correctly and increased my desire to learn more about it as an extremely powerful tool.

Most times, people do not take social media or what occurs on the platforms seriously, and many may think that Facebook in particular is beginning to get outdated and will be replaced with platforms like Instagram. However, when it comes to usage and versatility of uses, Facebook is unmatched, particularly in the realm of more serious events and needs. Facebook now has fundraiser tools, events, groups, chats, meeting spaces, vending spaces for businesses and groups, and more in addition to the original uses of the tool. As time goes by, more and more tools have been added which have made it less and less replaceable by any other platform. It has managed to stay around so long because it has evolved with the times and with the needs of the people. In movements like the Black Lives Matter movement and the Catalan Independence movement that have significant needs to engage their audience, increase participation, organize what is happening on the ground, and at least significantly increase awareness of their movements, Facebook has been the near perfect tool for activism. People already use the platform and already feel comfortable and in control of what takes place on the platform; and for this reason, movements need to stop seeing Facebook as a threat to effectiveness and the legitimization of the movement, and instead see it as a tool that could be extremely advantageous even if it is used unintentionally, and especially if it is used intentionally in order to obtain change.

This research has revealed that the potential that Facebook and other social media platforms have to aid in movements achieving their goals is not just limitless; it is revolutionary.

There needs to be more research done on the use of Facebook as a tool in Social Media activism in particular because most research currently focuses on Twitter or all social media platforms whereas a focus on Facebook would be beneficial because in understanding it better, the many different elements it possesses could be used better to

increase success in movements like Black Lives Mater and the Catalan Independence movement.

It would also be very beneficial to have updated research on slacktivism and what it consists of as well as how the term should be re-defined especially because older ideologies are no longer applicable within a modern concept of social media.

Further research should also be done on what strategies prove to be the most effective in achieving impact through participating in activism online since it is imperative that movements stop resisting the uses of technology and embrace it as a tool that can be used for good.

A great addition to the field would also be research on cases like the Catalan Independence movement that have an impact other than intended on the law and society in order to become aware of reasons for and possibly solutions to those types of occurrences.

While social media cannot be viewed as a panacea to the challenges facing social movements, the effectiveness of social media in advancing the causes of social movements in modern day societies cannot be denied.

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