

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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While much has been written about why people join social movements in general, little has been written about why people specifically join either militant or nonviolent social movements. Using the Black Panther Party as an example of a militant social movement and the mainstream Civil Rights Movement as an example of a nonviolent movement, we see why people joined both types of movements. Six categories of reasons emerge and explain why people choose to join either militant or nonviolent social movements. Comparing the reasons people joined the Black Panther Party with the reasons that people joined the mainstream Civil Rights Movement we find that people do not join militant social movements for the same reasons that they join nonviolent social movements. The largest difference is that while it was common for Civil Rights Movement members to speak of a religious obligation when explaining why they joined the nonviolent movement, this type of language was not use by Black Panther Party members. Therefore we can conclude that nonviolent social movement leaders should try use religion as a tool not only when they are recruiting new movement members, but also to keep current members from becoming frustrated.

Militant and Nonviolent Social Movements

by

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

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Introduction

Throughout their history, the modern Olympic Games have produced many memorable images, from the joy of Kerri Strug standing on one leg after a gold medal gymnastics performance in 1996, to the horror of a masked terrorist on the balcony of a hostage filled building in Olympic Village in 1972. Perhaps the most memorable of all, however, came from the 1968 Games in Mexico City. It was there that Tommie Smith and John Carlos stood on the podium, medals hanging around their necks, heads bowed, black-gloved fists in the air. Even though Smith and Carlos were giving the black power salute, they were not members of the Black Panther Party. However, many Americans were outraged by the display, believing that Smith and Carlos were showing allegiance to the Black Panthers.

Although Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers receive a majority of the attention when the Civil Rights Movement is discussed, many other groups were involved in the struggle. The Black Panthers are one of the more interesting smaller groups. Why would people forgo membership in Dr. King's following and instead join the more militant Black Panthers? By looking at two case studies, we will not only be able to answer this question, but also the larger question of why people choose to join any militant, rather than nonviolent, social movement. We will see that there are six major reasons why people choose to join the Black Panther Party, as well as the mainstream Civil Rights Movement. While most of the reasons are similar, we will see that while religion was often a significant factor in one's decision to join the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement, no Black Panthers discussed religion when explaining why they joined the

Party. This fact will lead us into a broader discussion of the role religion plays in one's decision to join either a militant or nonviolent social movement.

Before we draw any conclusions about the larger question of why people choose to join militant and nonviolent social movements, we will review the literature on why people join social movements. Next, we will look at two case studies. The first case study will highlight the six most common reasons why people joined the Black Panther Party (BPP), an example of a militant social movement. Following our study of the BPP we will turn our attention to the mainstream Civil Rights Movement (CRM). Led by Dr. King and John Lewis, among others, the mainstream Civil Rights Movement was dedicated to using nonviolent tactics. For this reason, it fits our purpose of studying why people join nonviolent social movements.

Why This Study is Important

Although there is enough research on the Civil Rights Movement and social movements in general to fill an entire library, the question addressed here is important enough to justify another addition to the literature. Perhaps the most obvious contribution this research can make is as a guide for current civil rights leaders. Before leaders can effectively recruit people in their movement, they must know what draws people to movements in the first place. Furthermore, if leaders of nonviolent social movements wish to persuade people to join their social movement instead of a more militant movement, those leaders must know what causes people to join militant social movements. With that knowledge in hand it may be possible for nonviolent social movement leaders to reframe their message in such a way that it appeals to people who have traditionally participated in militant social movements. Additionally, there has

simply been little to no research on the reasons why people choose to join either a militant or nonviolent social movement, as we will see as we move into the literature review.

Methodology

Research for this paper can be divided into two groups: research for the literature review and for the case studies. The literature review was assembled by looking through books and scholarly journal articles written by some prominent social movement scholars. While not every theory could be covered in this paper, the most popular theories in the literature have been included.

For the case studies, a variety of sources have been used. When trying to understand why people joined a certain social movement, the best resource to use is the movement members themselves. Most of the evidence cited in this case study is personal quotes from members of either the Black Panther Party or the mainstream Civil Rights Movement. I have chosen, when possible, to let the members themselves tell the reader why they joined either of the movements. My role has been to compile the testimony, organize it into broad categories, and then draw conclusions from the evidence.

In both case studies, the reasons that people joined their respective movement have been grouped into six categories. During the research stage of this project, whenever I found a quote or passage explaining why people joined either of the movements, I wrote it down. After the research was complete, I looked over the notes and tried to find connections. This is how I came up with the six reasons. With the BPP, there were clearly six common reasons why people joined. Upon reviewing my notes on

the mainstream Civil Rights Movement, I found that six clear reasons why people joined this movement emerged as well. While some people had one clear motivating factor that caused them to join one of the two movements, others appeared to have multiple reasons for joining.

A note should be made here about definition of terms. What constitutes membership in the BPP is fairly obvious; members participated in BPP functions, lived in BPP housing, and wore BPP uniforms. The “mainstream Civil Rights Movement” is more ambiguous. For the purposes of this paper, a person has joined the mainstream Civil Rights Movement when they have participated in nonviolent civil rights events. While this is still a fairly broad definition, almost all of the examples from this paper are people who participated in a large organized event, such as a sit-in, bus boycott, or march. For example, we will see quotes from members of organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Montgomery Improvement Association, as well as in events such as Freedom Summer and the Montgomery bus boycott. We will also see examples of people who did not join a specific organization, yet still participated in nonviolent action.

The definition of a militant social movement should also be discussed here. Calling the BPP a militant social movement is not intended to suggest that the Party advocated or supported murder. Opinions vary on exactly how violent the BPP actually was. It is evident, however, that the BPP wanted to give the impression that they were willing to use violence in self-defense. The fact that Panther members often armed themselves and marched through the streets and followed police officers warrants categorizing them as a militant social movement. To point out just one example, on May

2, 1967 Bobby Seale, co-founder of the Panthers, led a group of Party members and supporters armed with rifles and shotguns into the California Capitol building.¹

Additionally, as well will see in the case study, some members joined the BPP because they wanted to antagonize and harm white people. For all of these reasons, regardless of whether or not Panthers were instructed to harm other people, the BPP should still be considered a militant social movement.

Social Movement Theory Literature Review

With so much having been written about why people join social movements, only some of the most influential theories will be addressed here. Considering his influence on social movement scholarship, Doug McAdam's research is a reasonable place to start our review. In his article, "Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism," co-written with Ronnelle Paulsen, he discusses why he believes people join social movements. Two of the best predictors of individual movement involvement, the authors acknowledge, are "knowing someone who is already involved in social movement activity" and having membership in an organization.² Clearly not everyone who knows someone involved in a social movement, nor everyone that belongs to an organization, has joined a social movement, however. For this reason McAdam and Paulsen argue that those two predictors are insufficient in determining whether an individual is likely to join a social movement.

¹ Pearson, Hugh. 1994. *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America*. Reading, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, p. 130.

² McAdam, Doug and Ronnelle Paulsen, "Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 99 Issue 3, p. 644.

According to McAdam and Paulsen, a better way to predict if someone will join a social movement is to see if four “limiting conditions” have been met. These limiting conditions are: first, “the occurrence of a specific recruiting attempt”; second, the formation of a successful link between joining the movement and the personal identity one will gain by joining the movement; third, support for the link between movement and identity from parents, friends, religious groups, civil rights groups and other volunteers; and fourth, a lack of strong opposition from these same people and groups.³ Generally a person who joins a social movement will satisfy each condition in sequence, in the order given here.⁴

For clarification purposes, these conditions should be elaborated upon. The first condition is fairly intuitive. A person must find out about a movement in order to join that movement, and recruiters are an effective way of distributing information and raising awareness of a cause. After being informed of the details of a movement, an individual will then consider if joining the movement is consistent with the self-identity the individual has, as well as the identity others have of him or her. That is, an individual’s relationships depend upon him or her being a certain type of person, and if joining a given social movement alters this already established identity, the individual will be less likely to join.⁵

How does a person determine if joining a given movement will change their identity in the view of others? Simply put, the person gauges whether or not those people who help sustain the individual’s identity (relatives, friends, religious organizations, etc.)

³ Ibid., p. 647.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 646-647.

believe it will.⁶ If the individual finds that this group of people confirms a successful link between joining the movement and his or her identity the individual will join. Contrarily, if there is strong opposition from this group, the person will not join the movement.⁷ Again, McAdam and Paulsen argue that all four of these conditions must be met before an individual will join a movement.

Another important figure in social movement theory is Sidney Tarrow. Tarrow takes a related, yet distinctly different, approach to explaining why people join social movements. Several factors encompass Tarrow's explanation. According to Tarrow, people are not drawn to social movements by persuasive recruiters or a close friend who has already joined. Instead Tarrow believes that "it may be the appeal of expressive and disruptive collective action itself that leads people to support a movement".⁸ This means that perhaps simply being able to participate in a collective action is enough to cause someone to join a social movement.

There are other reasons that people join social movements as well, according to Tarrow. Before most people will join a social movement they have to have been the recipient of some kind of injustice.⁹ Simply being the target of an injustice is not enough, however. Tarrow states that people will join a movement only if they are shown that there is an "agent" which created the injustice.¹⁰ Typically, an agent will come in the form of a corporation or the government. Without the possibility of abolishing the injustice people will be unwilling to expend the time and energy or take the risk that

⁶ Ibid. p. 647

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Tarrow, Sidney. 1989. *Struggle, Politics, and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements, and Cycles of Protest*. New York, Cornell University, p. 21.

⁹ Tarrow, Sidney. 1998. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 111.

¹⁰ Ibid.

joining a social movement can entail. Therefore there must also be a possibility of movement success before people will join.¹¹ As the collective action expands and the injustice becomes more openly recognized, more potential movement members are likely to join.

Terry Moe addresses the topic from a different angle. His theory uses the idea of “solidary” and “purposive” incentives.¹² Although Moe was writing about people joining interest groups, his work is still applicable to social movements. Moe argues that one reason people join a collective action is because they receive a solidary benefit from doing so. These benefits include things such as “friendship, status, [and] social acceptance.”¹³ If one is more politically motivated, purposive incentives are more likely to be the reason he or she joins a collective action. Purposive benefits include any “ideological, moral, or religious” reward one anticipates receiving upon joining a movement.¹⁴ For example, an individual that finds the death penalty repugnant on either moral or religious grounds may join an anti-death penalty movement for inner-peace or a free conscious. Moe also suggests that a person who joins a collective action out of a sense of responsibility is joining for a purposive benefit.¹⁵

Anthony Oberschall’s work on social movement theory is an extension of Moe’s theory. Oberschall begins his approach by asking a question. Why, Oberschall wonders, do people join social movements when they will receive the same end benefit of a successful movement whether they join or not. For example, if members of the environmental movement persuade a corporation to stop using a chemical that

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Moe, Terry, “Toward a Broader View of Interest Groups,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 43 Issue 2, 1981, p. 536.

¹³ Ibid.

contaminates the air, all people will receive the benefit of having cleaner air whether they participated in the movement or not. Oberschall claims that most people understand this and thus have a natural tendency to be free riders and not join a social movement.¹⁶

There are several ways that people can be induced to join a social movement instead of merely being free riders. One common way is by offering potential members some tangible benefit if they participate, what Oberschall calls a “selective incentive.”¹⁷ This type of benefit could be a free mug, magazine, or a variety of other “gifts.” A belief in the cause of the movement and a selective incentive are often sufficient to get a person to join a social movement.

For various reasons, many social movements do not offer free gifts to potential members (i.e. this attracts members that are not dedicated to the cause; it is not financially feasible) yet people still join these social movements. Why? Oberschall argues that, absent a tangible benefit, there are things that attract people to social movements. First, and most obviously, potential members are attracted to the cause that the movement is fighting for.¹⁸ Frequently movement members will say that they felt some sort of moral obligation to join a movement and fight for a cause that they believe is just. The second reason people will join a movement is closely tied to the first. People also join social movements because they are attracted to the movement’s message.¹⁹ On top of the fact that potential members might believe a movement’s cause to be just, movement organizers will frame the movement’s message in such a way that it compels

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 540.

¹⁶ Oberschall, Anthony. 1993. *Social Movements: Ideologies, Interests, and Identities*. New Jersey and London, Transaction Publishers, p. 20.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

people to join. Third, people will join a movement because they desire to be able to work with other individuals that share the same beliefs and have the same goals that they do.²⁰

This point acknowledges the role of collective identity in causing people to join movements. Finally, the more likely it is that a movement will be successful, the more likely an individual will want to become part of the movement. This is because most people will be reluctant to put forth the time, energy and other resources that participation in social movements can require if there is little chance of the movement actually accomplishing its goals.

In his essay, “Knowledge for What? Thoughts on the State of Social Movement Studies,” Richard Flacks gives a simpler explanation as to why people join social movements.²¹ There are two basic reasons that people join social movements, according to Flacks. The first reason is that an individual receives a threat to his or her rights or lifestyle from a “particular human agency.”²² Additionally, the person must believe that the movement has a chance to either “stop or alleviate the threat.”²³

A second, less commonly discussed, reason that people join social movements is for “liberation.”²⁴ If a person is being denied an opportunity or a right that the person believes he or she is entitled to, that person may join a social movement. Typically, the people who join a social movement that fall into this category have been denied the particular right for a long time, but eventually gather a sufficient number of people and

²⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

²¹ Flacks, Richard. “Knowledge for What? Thoughts on the State of Social Movement Studies”. *Rethinking Social Movements*. 2004. Eds. Goodwin, Jeff and James M. Jasper. Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, pp. 135-153.

²² Ibid. p. 148.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 149.

seize an opportunity to create or join a movement.²⁵ While Flacks' explanation of why people join a social movement is simpler than those discussed previously, its simplicity may also make it more applicable in case studies.

One common explanation for why people join social movements has not been discussed thus far. Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper touch on this explanation in their essay "Collective Identity and Social Movements."²⁶ In their essay, they discuss what is referred to as a "moral shock."²⁷ According to this theory, a specific event, picture or story is so emotionally powerful that it will cause people to join a movement. For example, a video clip of a man clubbing a baby seal may be enough of a moral shock for a person to cause him or her to join Greenpeace.

Another reason that people join social movements is related to the moral shock explanation just discussed. This theory, included in Aldon Morris' essay "Reflections on Social Movement Theory: Criticisms and Proposals," states that "transformative events" often cause many people to join social movements.²⁸ Morris describes transformative events as events that cause "radical turning points" in collective action movements.²⁹ The Montgomery bus boycott is an example of a transformative event from the civil rights movement. Its success and widespread media coverage showed people around the country that the civil rights movement could foster important change, causing more people to want to join the movement.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Polletta, Francesca and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 27 Issue 1, 2001, pp. 283-305.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 291.

²⁸ Morris, Aldon. 2000. "Reflections on Social Movement Theory: Criticisms and Proposals". *Rethinking Social Movements*. 2004. Eds. Goodwin, Jeff and James M. Jasper. Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, p. 245.

²⁹ Ibid.

While all of these scholars have put forth interesting and persuasive theories on why people join social movements, a hole is apparent in all of their work. None of the theories just discussed distinguishes between militant and nonviolent social movements. Common sense alone suggests that there would be different reasons why people join militant, as opposed to nonviolent, social movements. This paper will not provide any definitive answers on this subject, but the analysis at the end of the paper will highlight some of the key differences regarding why people join militant and nonviolent social movements.

Civil Rights Movement Literature Review

Before we begin the case studies, a few scholars' work that addresses why people joined the Civil Rights Movement will be looked at. The same will not be done with the BPP because it does not appear as if any scholars have written extensively on why people joined the BPP. This is by no means a comprehensive overview, but rather is intended to give a general idea of what scholars have already written on the issue.

In his book *Freedom Summer*, the previously mentioned Doug McAdam looks specifically at why people participated in Freedom Summer, a 1964 nonviolent project headed by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). McAdam found people gave a variety of reasons to explain their participation in Freedom Summer. A sense of idealism and a desire to change the world was frequently cited by members.³⁰ Others' "primary motivation for applying" to be a Freedom Summer participant represented "a simple extension of their occupation roles or future career plans."³¹ These

³⁰ McAdam, Doug. 1988. *Freedom Summer*. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 45-47.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

people were usually teachers or students studying education.³² McAdam also discovered that a volunteer's religious beliefs were sometimes an integral part of his or her decision to participate.³³ As we will soon see, the case study presented here gives more credence to the argument that idealism and religion were important factors in motivating people to join the CRM.

Another scholar, James Vander Zanden, took a more psychological approach to the situation. Vander Zanden, writing in 1963, was particularly interested in the reason that people were drawn to nonviolence. He believed that nonviolent resistance "offered a strong psychological appeal" to blacks. According to Vander Zanden, "On the one hand, there exist among [blacks] considerable undercurrents of resentment toward whites and the southern racial structure. On the other hand, [blacks] have been socialized generally in a tradition calling for the suppression of hostility and aggression toward whites, and also in a religious tradition stressing Christian love and tabooing hatred."³⁴ The collision of anger and love, stemming from oppression and Christian doctrine respectively, caused blacks to join the nonviolent CRM. Furthermore, joining the CRM offered "certain rewards to a people weighed down by a sense of inferiority, powerlessness, and insignificance. In fusing oneself with a social movement external to the self, one can acquire the strength which the individual self lacks by becoming part of a bigger and more powerful whole."³⁵ Interestingly, as we will see in the discussion, it was much more common for BPP members than CRM members to say that they joined for an increased sense of strength and importance.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 48.

³⁴ Vander Zanden, James W. "The Non-Violent Resistance Movement Against Segregation," *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 68 Issue 5, 1963, p. 546.

Writing in 1969, Maurice Pinard, Jerome Kirk, and Donald von Eschen describe the results of a survey that they gave to approximately 500 participants in a sit-in. The respondents' answers to the questions helped the authors make several conclusions. They found that "the lower one's socioeconomic status (the higher one's deprivation), the more active one has been in the movement."³⁶ This led them to conclude that low socioeconomic status caused some people to join the CRM. The denial of equal rights was also determined to be an important factor in one's decision to join the sit-in movement. This was evident considering that while blacks only made up "8.6 percent of the population in the census regions from which the participants were recruited [...], they constituted 36.4 percent of" the authors' sample.³⁷ Like the other scholars, Pinard, Kirk and von Eschen also found radical ideology to be an important factor in one's decision to join the CRM.

The Black Panther Party

Having provided a discussion of the literature on why people join social movements in general, and the CRM in particular, the case study of the Black Panther Party can now be examined. After a short overview of the Black Panther Party, six reasons why people joined the BPP will be explored.

In California in 1966 Bobby Seale and Huey Newton founded what was first called the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.³⁸ The original mission of the organization was for armed members of the group to follow police and make sure that

³⁵ Ibid., p. 549.

³⁶ Pinard, Maurice, Jerome Kirk, and Donald von Eschen. "Processes of Recruitment in the Sit-In Movement," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 33 Issue 3, 1969, p. 358.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 360.

they did not abuse their power, particularly when dealing with blacks. A ten-point platform was also written, which consisted of various demands of the government.³⁹ The BPP was slow to grow at first, but eventually grew into one of the largest, most notorious, Black Power organizations during the fight for civil rights, with approximately 5,000 members at its peak.⁴⁰ The most common six reasons that people joined this sometimes criminal, sometimes giving, sometimes violent movement will be discussed now.

One common reason that people joined the BPP was because the Party offered them some sort of personal benefit. There was a wide range of benefits to joining the BPP, depending on one's needs. Looking at the testimony of the members themselves, personal security appears to be the most important personal benefit offered by membership in the BPP. During this time period, many blacks feared that white police officers would harass them, or even worse, physically abuse them. As Regina Jennings, a BPP member, stated, before she joined the BPP she had seen "police do a 'Rodney King'" on black people on many occasions.⁴¹ For her, joining the Party was necessary to ensure her safety from the police.

Larry Powell joined for the same reason. His experiences prior to joining were even more extreme than Jennings', however, as he had actually been the victim of repeated police beatings.⁴² Even Bobby Seale, one of the Party's co-founders, expressed

³⁸ Pearson, p. 112.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 109-110.

⁴⁰ Umoja, Akinyele Omowale. "Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party". *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*. 2001. Eds. Cleaver, Kathleen and George Katsiaficas. New York and London, Routledge, p. 7.

⁴¹ Jennings, Regina. "Why I Joined the Party: An Africana Womanist Reflection". *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*. 1998. Ed. Jones, Charles E. Baltimore, Black Classic Press, p. 257.

⁴² Pearson, p. 182.

security as one of the main reasons that he created the Panthers. He believed that he would be much safer from racist police officers if he was a member of a group like the BPP.⁴³

Many blacks were made aware of the threat of police brutality and the safety that the BPP would give them after Denzil Dowell, a young black man, was killed by police officers. The top story in the very first issue of *the Black Panther*, the BPP's newspaper, was about Dowell's murder. Realizing that they could be the next Denzil Dowell, young blacks in California sought protection, and the BPP offered them just that.⁴⁴

Racist white police officers were not the only thing to seek protection from, however, especially in the case of black women. According to Kathleen Cleaver, whose husband Eldridge was the BPP Minister of Information, women at this time were suffering "hostility, abuse, neglect, and assault."⁴⁵ Some of these women found refuge from this in the BPP. For example, Afeni Shakur claimed that the period after joining the BPP was the first time that men did not beat her.⁴⁶ It should be noted that while some female members of the BPP did make this claim, Pearson and a host of other authors argue that the BPP was a sexist organization, where women members were disrespected, treated as sex objects, and occasionally raped.⁴⁷ Despite these arguments, it cannot be contested that some women did in fact join the BPP for protection from male abuse.

⁴³ Seale, Bobby. 1978. *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale*. New York, Times Books, pp. 158-159.

⁴⁴ Pearson, pp. 128-129.

⁴⁵ Cleaver, Kathleen Neal. "Women, Power, and Revolution". *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*. 2001. Eds. Cleaver, Kathleen and George Katsiaficas. New York and London, Routledge, p. 126.

⁴⁶ Abu-Jamal, Mumia. "A Life in the Party: An Historical and Retrospective Examination of the Projections and Legacies of the Black Panther Party". *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*. 2001. Eds. Cleaver, Kathleen and George Katsiaficas. New York and London, Routledge, p. 43-44.

⁴⁷ Pearson, pp. 179-180.

Two other personal benefits were discussed that give insight as to why people joined the BPP. The first of these is a sense of empowerment. It is not a stretch to suggest that at least a few of the people who joined the BPP did so because by doing so they were handed a firearm and given an excuse to commit crimes.⁴⁸ For once, the young black man would be holding the weapon and the police officer would be the one that was worried. Another form of empowerment is evident in the words of Regina Jennings when she describes her reasons for joining the BPP. Jennings said the BPP allowed her to “fully be my Black revolutionary self.”⁴⁹ If a person felt that they were a revolutionary and wanted to fight the racist system, the BPP certainly provided an opportunity to do so.

A final personal benefit that may have caused people to join the BPP is a tangible benefit. BPP members had a uniform, which consisted of black leather jackets and berets. Herbert Haines argues that the Panthers’ style was an important factor in causing people to join.⁵⁰ To many young blacks, the Panthers simply looked cool and attractive in their outfits.

The second broad reason people joined the BPP was because they were impressed either by the Panthers’ leaders or by their ordinary members. Throughout the Party’s history, Seale, Newton and the rest of the BPP’s top leadership spent a significant portion of their time (when not incarcerated) speaking on street corners, at rallies, at conferences, or wherever anyone would listen to them. This was not only a chance for the BPP to spread their message, but also to demonstrate who made up the Party: what the leaders looked like, where they came from, what they represented.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 192.

⁴⁹ Abu-Jamal, p. 44.

⁵⁰ Haines, Herbert H. 1988. *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream, 1954-1970*. Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, p. 57.

Bobby Hutton, the first person to join the BPP, joined because the founders impressed him. When hanging around Newton and Seale he would comment on how “bad” and tough they were.⁵¹ Eldridge Cleaver, who would become one of the most important members of the BPP, was also impressed by Newton and Seale’s toughness. Before joining the BPP, Cleaver had wanted to start a radical, militant movement of his own, similar to the one led by Malcolm X. After seeing Newton boldly confront armed police officers with a shotgun of his own Cleaver knew that he had found the movement for him.⁵²

The BPP leaders impressed future members with more than just their toughness. When Regina Jennings saw a gun wielding Seale marching with other armed Panthers she knew that she had found her calling.⁵³ Jennings was only one of many whom joined after seeing the Panthers on the march. The BPP leaders found that they were able to garner many recruits when the marching Panthers stopped and talked to them, so impressed were they with the display.⁵⁴ Sometimes marching was not even necessary. One time after the police “justifiably” killed a black man, the Panthers sent 20 armed men to the community, covering every street corner. According to Seale, nearly every man that walked by and talked to the Panthers that day ended up joining the Party.⁵⁵

Many Panthers reported joining the Party after hearing one of the leaders speaking in public. Membership in the Party “snowballed” in 1968 after a rally was held with

⁵¹ Seale, p. 167.

⁵² Pearson, pp. 124-125.

⁵³ Jennings, p. 258.

⁵⁴ Hayes, III, Floyd W. and Francis A. Kiene, III. “All Power to the People: The Political Thought of Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party”. *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*. 1998. Ed. Jones, Charles E. Baltimore, Black Classic Press, p. 161.

⁵⁵ Abron, JoNina M. “Serving the People: The Survival Programs of the Black Panther Party”. *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*. 1998. Ed. Jones, Charles E. Baltimore, Black Classic Press, p. 180.

featured speakers Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and James Forman.⁵⁶ Seale and Eldridge Cleaver were able to induce Mary Kennedy and her husband to join the BPP after speaking at a predominantly black church.⁵⁷

Other people may not have joined the actual BPP after listening to the leaders, but still participated in Panther sponsored activities. For example, a white lady named Shirley Lee went with her friend to see Huey Newton while he was in prison after being convicted of killing a police officer. After speaking with Newton, Lee remarked that Newton “has true beauty, strength and charisma” while her friend compared him to “Lenin and Christ.”⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, upon leaving the jail both women decided to begin participating in “Free Huey” rallies.

The third overarching reason that people joined the BPP was because certain important, widely publicized events drew them to the Party. Foremost among these events was the imprisonment of Huey Newton for the aforementioned killing of a police officer and the events leading up to it. Earlier in the day, approximately 4,000 demonstrators had been viciously attacked by police officers, enraging not only black participants but the white radicals that were there as well. While driving after the demonstration, Newton was pulled over by the police. An exchange of gunfire ensued, during which one police officer was killed, and Newton and another police officer were wounded.⁵⁹ Newton was arrested while lying on a gurney in the hospital, an image that was captured by a photographer and displayed in newspapers across the country.⁶⁰ In response, the BPP created the Free Huey movement, which brought national prominence

⁵⁶ Pearson, p. 176.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 173.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 167.

and a huge increase in Party membership. Newton's imprisonment not only caused people unaffiliated with any movement to join the Panthers, but also members of other groups. Kathleen Cleaver, who left SNCC to join the BPP after hearing of Newton's arrest, was one of the more prominent people to do so.⁶¹

Not long after Newton was imprisoned, police killed Bobby Hutton, the first BPP recruit, after he engaged in a gun battle with them. Hutton was seen as a martyr in large portions of the black community, which resulted in more sympathy for the Panthers and more people willing to join the movement.⁶² If Newton and Hutton were not enough, BPP members Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were also killed by police officers, further inspiring people to join the BPP.⁶³

Aside from the police killings of BPP members under suspicious (to the Panthers and much of the community) circumstances, the most important event in causing people to join the BPP was the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Even though BPP leaders had criticized Dr. King on numerous occasions, his death was seen as the last straw for many blacks. After Dr. King was assassinated membership in the BPP grew steadily.⁶⁴ The murder of the most well known nonviolent civil rights activist seemed to be a sign to many blacks that perhaps the BBP provided the best hope of winning the battle for civil rights.

⁵⁹ There was not enough evidence to charge Newton with the officer's murder, but he was convicted of voluntary manslaughter.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-147.

⁶¹ Cleaver, pp. 123-124.

⁶² Pearson, p. 155.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁶⁴ Shoats, Russell. "Black Fighting Formations: Their Strengths, Weaknesses, and Potentialities". *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*. 2001. Eds. Cleaver, Kathleen and George Katsiaficas. New York and London, Routledge, p. 133.

Winning the battle for civil rights brings up the fourth, and quite possibly the most common reason, that people joined the BPP: they were attracted to the message, the purpose of the movement, and its prospects of creating change in society. An important point should be made before beginning this discussion. Much of the reason that people were attracted to the BPP's message and felt that it represented the best chance for success was due to the perceived failures of the BPP's predecessors. According to Tracye Matthews, by the middle of the 1960's, many blacks "were growing weary of civil rights leaders telling them to turn the other cheek so that they could 'overcome someday'."⁶⁵ Additionally, many blacks did not believe that any of the legislation that had already been won was helping them, considering that they were as poor as ever. Nonviolence was seen as an obsolete tactic.⁶⁶

With so many people thinking that the old strategies of civil rights leaders no longer worked, a niche was created for a new group with a new message to step in. Newton and Seale gladly stepped in and created a message that these disenchanted civil rights advocates clung to. Although "young black Americans from all walks of life were attracted to the symbol of defiant militancy presented by the Party," most leaders and members of the Party were what the Panthers called "brothers off the block."⁶⁷ Brothers off the block were poor blacks, usually from the ghetto. These "brothers and sisters on the block" joined more frequently than other blacks because "the Panthers spoke to the

⁶⁵ Matthews, Tracye. "No One Ever Asks, What a Man's Place in the Revolution Is: Gender and the Politics of the Black Panther Party 1966-1971". *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*. 1998. Ed. Jones, Charles E. Baltimore, Black Classic Press, p. 267.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Pearson, p. 165.

issues that were most relevant to ghetto residents,” primarily police brutality and financial inequality.⁶⁸

Emory Douglas, the primary artist of the Black Panther newspaper during the BPP’s peak, is an example of a brother off the block attracted to the BPP’s message. For Douglas, the BPP’s “message of aggressive self-reliance and revolutionary action” was much more persuasive than Dr. King’s nonviolence. By “valoriz[ing] an image of hardcore, militant, virile, and invincible black manhood” and combining it with a justification for “street violence,” the Party was speaking “specifically to the social reality of [Douglas’] urban life.”⁶⁹ Mae Jackson believes that many young blacks in New York City left SNCC and joined the BPP for a similar reason, suggesting that they were attracted to the Party because Bobby Seale “was their blood” and “spoke their language.”⁷⁰ It is evident from these examples that the BPP provided a clear message that resonated with poor urban blacks, while the message of Dr. King and his supporters fell on deaf ears.

This is not intended to suggest that all of the members of the BPP were poor blacks. Harry Edwards, a professor at San Jose State University, was an example of a black man with a high social standing that joined the BPP. He believed that more blacks like him needed to “go down to the grassroots to join [the Panthers] since they can’t join

⁶⁸ Haines, pp. 56-57.

⁶⁹ Doss, Erika. “‘Revolution Art is a Tool for Liberation’: Emory Douglas and Protest Aesthetics at the Black Panther”. *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*. 2001. Eds. Cleaver, Kathleen and George Katsiaficas. New York and London, Routledge, p. 180.

⁷⁰ Pearson, p. 158.

us.”⁷¹ Because nonviolence had not worked in Edwards’ opinion, the way of the Panthers seemed like the only way.

White radicals also gave support to the BPP in significant numbers. Support was given by individuals, as well as by groups, such as the Peace and Freedom Party, Whites for the Defense of Huey Newton, Honkies for Huey, and at times SNCC.⁷² Much of their support of the BPP stemmed from their own experiences with violent police officers. Although white radicals may have been frequently protesting different things than the Panthers, they still were often harassed and beaten by the police. When the white radicals saw the Panthers defiantly returning the favor by harassing the police, the Panthers soon became the “darlings of the white radical establishment.”⁷³ As the BPP was still a fledging movement it gladly accepted the approval of the white radicals, who in turn appreciated the efforts of the Panthers to curb unnecessary police violence.

The influence of friends and family is the fifth reason that people joined the BPP. The role that this reason played in causing people to join the BPP can be explicitly seen in an interview of BPP member Jimmy Slater. When asked why he joined the BPP, Slater responded that he “learned about the Black Panther Party from friends and other people who were familiar with the organization.”⁷⁴ Once he did a little investigation into the Party, he decided to join. Larry Powell’s wife provides an even clearer example. After Larry Powell joined, the BPP realized that they could use help with office work. He asked his wife to join the Party and be a secretary; she obliged.⁷⁵ This shows that

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 156-157.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 149-153.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 142-143.

⁷⁴ Jones, Charles E. “Talkin’ the Talk and Walkin’ the Walk: An Interview with Panther Jimmy Slater”. *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*. 1998. Ed. Jones, Charles E. Baltimore, Black Classic Press.

⁷⁵ Pearson, p. 183.

sometimes a simple request to join from a loved one was enough to make someone join the Party.

More than anything else, what the Party was probably best known for, especially to the white middle-class, was its violence and anti-white racism. Exactly how violent and racist the BPP was is debatable, but it is clear that its members were widely perceived as having these characteristics. How many people joined the party because of their desire to antagonize or harm whites is not precisely known, but some definitely did join for these reasons. Thus, the sixth and final reason people joined the BPP was to antagonize or harm white people.

The clearest example of a person joining the BPP for this reason is Regina Jennings. When Jennings first entered a Panther Headquarters she was asked why she wanted to join the Party. Her response was clear and blunt: “I wanna kill all the White people; that’s why.”⁷⁶ Jennings is a good example of the type of person who Pearson says joined the BPP simply because they were “ruthless.”⁷⁷

Jennings’ statement is somewhat atypical in the sense that while many people joined the Party because they hated whites, not many appeared to want to kill all of them. Peter Solomon, a newspaper writer, said that for people on the outside of mainstream society, mainly poor blacks, “anything that scared the white establishment was good.”⁷⁸ When one considers that members of other black organizations were scared of the Panthers, it can be seen that joining the BPP was a logical decision for people looking to scare the white establishment.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Jennings, p. 259.

⁷⁷ Pearson, p. 192.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 116.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 120.

We have now explored the six reasons why people joined the Black Panther Party. First, we saw that some people joined in order to receive a personal benefit. Second, some joined the BPP because they were impressed by either the Party leaders or Party members. Third, some people joined the BPP after a transformative event. Fourth, others joined the BPP because the Party's message and goals were appealing to them. Fifth, family and friends influenced some people to join the BPP. Sixth, others joined because they wanted to antagonize or harm white people. Now we will look at why people joined the mainstream Civil Rights Movement.

The Mainstream Civil Rights Movement

As we now turn our attention to the reasons why people joined the mainstream Civil Rights Movement, a few things should be pointed out at the outset. Just as in the BPP case study, after examining existing research, the reasons people joined the CRM will be divided into six categories. As we will see, in some of the examples the movement members' testimony will sound almost identical to that of BPP members. Other times, while the testimony falls into a category similar to one used in the BPP case study, it sounds very different. And as one would imagine, some of the reasons are completely different.

Similarly to the BPP, some people became movement members because it offered them a personal benefit. The attraction of receiving a personal benefit is the first reason that people joined the CRM. These benefits varied, but in general were quite different than those offered by the BPP. In fact, none of the benefits mentioned in the literature were tangible.

Several members of the CRM joined because it seemed exciting. According to John Lewis, who served as the chair of SNCC for a time, some SNCC members believed whites participated in Freedom Summer “as a way of injecting some spice, adventure, and meaning into their otherwise safe, bourgeois lives.”⁸⁰ The testimony of Peter Orris, a white Freedom Summer participant, supports this belief. He freely admits that one of the reasons that he participated in the event was because it looked exciting.⁸¹

Other potential personal benefits that caused people to join the movement were more practical in nature. For some people, joining the movement was even an indirect consequence of pursuing a seemingly unrelated (in their mind at least) goal. For example, Melba Pattillo Bates, one of the nine black students involved in the integration of the Little Rock high school, only went to the school because her mom had always taught her about the importance of education.⁸² The white school was better than the black school, so she attended it, indirectly joining the movement in the process as she helped to fight segregation. Charlayne Hunter Gault and Hamilton Earl Holmes provide a similar example. They were two of the first black students to attend the University of Georgia, helping to desegregate it. It was not the “prospect of making history” or the chance to fight segregation that caused them to enroll in the school, however. Rather,

⁸⁰ Fairclough, Adam. 2001. *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000*. New York, Viking, p. 284.

⁸¹ Orris, Peter. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 186.

⁸² Beals, Melba Pattillo. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 39.

they “were aroused by the prospect of superior facilities for premed study and a course of study for journalism.”⁸³

A final example of a person who joined the CRM in part for practical reasons is Patricia Blalock, the woman previously mentioned who was the director of the Carnegie Library. Blalock says that she believed desegregation was inevitable, so it was in her to desegregate the library on her own terms. With this in mind, she gathered the library board members together and created and instituted a plan that ended segregation in the Birmingham library system.⁸⁴ While Blalock may not have received a tangible benefit, or even an obvious emotional benefit like some of the members mentioned above, her example highlights the diversity of benefits membership in the CRM offered potential members.

The second reason people joined the CRM is also similar to the BPP. This category includes people that joined the CRM because they were impressed by the example of others. Those who joined the movement because they were impressed by Dr. King’s actions or message are the most obvious examples in this category. However, this category includes not only the example of outspoken leaders, but also friends, family and the average civil rights worker.

Perhaps surprisingly, members of the CRM only infrequently credited one of the prominent leaders (e.g. Dr. King) of the movement as having a great influence on their decision to join. One person who was in attendance at the first meeting of bus passengers who would become involved in the Montgomery bus boycott makes clear Dr. King’s

⁸³ Gault, Charlayne Hunter. “Heirs to a Legacy of Struggle”. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*. 2001. Eds. Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin. New York and London, New York University Press, p. 77.

ability to rally support for his cause when she says, “You had to hold people to keep them from gettin’ to him. Reverend King was a God-sent man.”⁸⁵ This type of statement, although assuredly accurate, is rare in much of the civil rights literature.

Much more common is members giving credit to other, not so prominent, civil rights activists when speaking about why they joined the movement. Students involved in a sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina inspired Bob Moses to join the movement. Moses remembers seeing a picture of the students and recalled that, “The students in that picture had a certain look on their faces, sort of sullen, angry, determined. Before the Negro in the South had always looked on the defensive, cringing. This time they were taking the initiative. They were kids my age, and I knew this had something to do with my own life.”⁸⁶

In turn, Joe McNeil, one of the four students who partook in that sit-in at Greensboro, credits earlier activists with his decision to sit-in. McNeil states that he “was particularly inspired by the people in Little Rock,” referring to the students who been the first blacks to attend the newly integrated schools in Little Rock, Arkansas.⁸⁷ McNeil believes that many other kids his age felt the same inspiration to become involved because of the Little Rock students, saying, “We knew what they were going through was not easy, but somehow many of us wanted to make a contribution and be a part of

⁸⁴ Graham, Patterson Toby. “Public Librarians and the Civil Rights Movement: Alabama, 1955-1965,” *The Library Quarterly*, Vol. 71 Issue 1, 2001, p. 17.

⁸⁵ Jones, Donie. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 24.

⁸⁶ Zinn, Howard. 1967. “SNCC: The New Abolitionists” in *The Civil Rights Reader*. Ed. Leon Friedman. New York, Walker and Co., p. 54.

⁸⁷ McNeil, Joe. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 56.

something like that.”⁸⁸ It is clear from these statements that the courage of the early civil rights pioneers was so impressive that it influenced many people to join the movement.

Other people were drawn into the movement by more intimate relationships. Although his earliest involvement predated the CRM, Herbert Aptheker first became involved in civil rights activism when two of his friends asked him to participate in an organizing event.⁸⁹ He would stay involved in the movement for decades. Many activists credited their parents with their decision to join. One man became a radical and participated in the March on Washington because of the example his parents had set.⁹⁰ Another “credited his mother’s activism in the NCNW [Nation Council of Negro Women] and the church with helping him to construct and accept meanings and identities that encouraged him to become a civil rights activist during the early 1950’s.”⁹¹ Whether mother or friend, activist or leader, the example set by others was a significant factor in many people’s decision to join the CRM.

In the case of some people, one particular event pushed people past their tolerance point, causing them to join the CRM. Just as in the BPP case study, these events can be called transformative events. People joining CRM in response to a transformative event constitute the third reason that people joined the movement.

The most common type of transformative event that led to people joining the CRM was a violent attack by whites against blacks. Although these were frequently assaults or murders, sometimes they were violent attacks on property. As Dr. King

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Aptheker, Herbert. Interview in *White Men Challenging Racism: 35 Personal Stories*. Eds. Thompson, Cooper, Emmett Schaefer, and Harry Brod. 2003. Durham and London, Duke University Press, p. 17.

⁹⁰ Yalowitz, Nat. Interview in *White Men Challenging Racism: 35 Personal Stories*. Eds. Thompson, Cooper, Emmett Schaefer, and Harry Brod. 2003. Durham and London, Duke University Press, p. 65.

⁹¹ Williams, Johnny E. “Linking Beliefs to Collective Action: Politicized Religious Beliefs and the Civil Rights Movement,” *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 17 Issue 2, 2002, p. 213.

became increasingly involved in the movement, he was increasingly the target of threats and acts of violence. One night, in an attempt to intimidate Dr. King and his followers, some white people bombed his house. However, as Rufus Lewis, a founder of the Montgomery Improvement Association, noted, “It did just the opposite of intimidating. It roused the Negroes in the community to stand up, not to run and hide.”⁹² The very next day there “was a mass of people in the streets”; the bombing alone had caused many locals to join the movement.⁹³

A similar response occurred after Z. Alexander Looby’s house was bombed. Looby was a black attorney who represented students who participated in the sit-in movement. As one student who was an active participant in the movement noted, ordinarily organizers “would have to cajole people” into participating in marches.⁹⁴ After Looby’s house was bombed, however, a great number of people willingly joined the marches.⁹⁵

More commonly, a spike in the number of people joining the movement occurred after violence against blacks. Sometimes the violence came at the hands of white police officers; this was the case in Birmingham, Alabama. As one author states, watching blacks “chased by police dogs, then drenched and pounded by high-pressure fire hoses” was enough to inspire the observers to move into action.⁹⁶ In Selma, Alabama there was

⁹² Lewis, Rufus. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 28.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Lillard, Leo. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 65.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Fairclough, p. 274.

a clear indifference to Dr. King's efforts to register blacks to vote. At least until rural whites in a nearby county killed a black man, that is, which created a wave of support.⁹⁷

One of the more widely known transformative events involving violence is the case of Emmett Till. Till was a 14 year-old black boy who was mutilated and murdered by multiple white men. On an intimate level, Till's death caused his mother, Mamie Bradley to begin traveling around the United States, giving speeches for the NAACP.⁹⁸ The influence of Till's death extended beyond just his relatives though. As Myrlie Evers, wife of Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers, said, "[...] sometimes it takes those kinds of things to happen, to help a people become stronger and to eliminate the fear so that they have to speak out and do something."⁹⁹ For many people, Till's death did just that. It is not coincidental that the Civil Rights Movement began to pick up steam shortly after Till's death in 1955.

Considering that the CRM was intended to end segregation, increase equality for blacks, and make America more just, it is not surprising that the desire for freedom and equality was one of the most commonly occurring reasons that people joined the CRM. According to James Vander Zanden, as blacks began to realize "that the Jim Crow structure [was] not a final and inevitable reality," that freedom and justice was a possibility, they began to join the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁰⁰ People joining the movement to increase freedom and equality for blacks constitutes the fourth reason people joined the CRM.

⁹⁷ Cashman, Sean Dennis. 1991. *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990*. New York and London, New York University Press, p. 189.

⁹⁸ Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. New York, Bantam Books, p. 14.

⁹⁹ Evers, Myrlie. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 15.

The Montgomery bus boycott was one event people could join in order to fight for freedom and justice. Watching the Montgomery bus boycott successfully unfold, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. remarked how “majestic” it was to watch men and women “suffer and sacrifice for their freedom and dignity.”¹⁰¹ One participant in the bus boycott surely spoke for thousands of others when she simply, yet beautifully, summed up her reasons for her participation, saying, “I wanted to be one of them that tried to make it better. I didn’t want somebody else to make it better for me.”¹⁰²

Many people who participated in the various sit-ins staged around the country also did so in an effort to increase freedom and equality for blacks by fighting Jim Crow laws. Sit-ins were seen as an effective way to nonviolently fight and expose unjust laws.¹⁰³ Leo Lillard, who joined the movement by participating in a Nashville sit-in, saw his participation as his chance to correct the problems blacks had in Nashville.¹⁰⁴ Particularly among students, there was an overall sense in the sit-in movement “of commitment and belief in justice.”¹⁰⁵

Sometimes people joined the movement in order to fight for specific rights denied to blacks. Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer’s decision to join the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) signaled her entrance into the movement.¹⁰⁶ Her reason? She wanted to work to register blacks to vote because she had been fired for registering

¹⁰⁰ Vander Zanden, p. 545.

¹⁰¹ King Jr., Martin Luther. 1967. “Stride Toward Freedom” in *The Civil Rights Reader*. Ed. Leon Friedman. New York, Walker and Co., p. 38.

¹⁰² Nesbitt, Gussie. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, pp. 25-26.

¹⁰³ Cashman, p. 146.

¹⁰⁴ Lillard, pp. 60-61.

¹⁰⁵ Riches, William T. Martin. 2004. *The Civil Rights Movement: Struggle and Resistance*, 2d ed. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 55.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

herself.¹⁰⁷ Patricia Blalock, who was director of the Carnegie Library, joined to fight for a different right. While she was against segregation as a whole, a hope of ending segregation in public libraries helped push her into the movement.¹⁰⁸

The desire to fight for freedom and justice was not unique to blacks. Many white people who joined the CRM also cited this as the reason that they joined. Upon his entrance to Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, Craig Rains supported states' rights to maintain segregation. However, after the school was integrated and Rains witnessed firsthand how poorly whites treated blacks, he became a supporter of integration. He became compassionate and decided black students had the same right to an education that he did.¹⁰⁹ One white man worked to strengthen the Fair Housing Act as a matter of "ordinary humanity and justice."¹¹⁰ To him, it seemed ridiculous that any person would be prevented from living in a regular neighborhood.

Related to the fourth reason people joined the CRM, some people simply had grown tired of being denied basic freedoms. These people had been pushed to the limit and in response joined the movement. This is the fifth reason people joined the CRM.

Perhaps the most well known example of a person joining CRM for this reason is Rosa Parks. Parks was arrested for refusing to stand and give up her seat on a bus to a white man. While Parks' actions had been carefully planned, they nonetheless signaled her entrance into the nonviolent movement. As she would say later, Parks would not give

¹⁰⁷ Hampton, p. 178.

¹⁰⁸ Graham, p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ Rains, Craig. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, pp. 43-44.

¹¹⁰ Branscombe, Art. Interview in *White Men Challenging Racism: 35 Personal Stories*. Eds. Thompson, Cooper, Emmett Schaefer, and Harry Brod. 2003. Durham and London, Duke University Press.

up her seat because she had grown tired of giving in to racist laws.¹¹¹ Parks' response to a police officer who asked her why she did not give her seat up on the bus exemplifies the attitude of many blacks at this time. Instead of answering the question, Parks asked one of her own: Why do you push us around?¹¹²

The Montgomery bus boycott emerged after Parks arrest, and fittingly many participants echoed Parks' reason for joining the movement. One woman member of the boycott who, like Parks, was arrested said, "This new generation had decided that they had just taken as much as they could."¹¹³ Speaking of the makeup of the entire movement in Montgomery at the time of the bus boycott, Jo Ann Robinson stated that it was made up of "the masses of [the] town, who are tired of being trampled on."¹¹⁴ Parks shared this view, observing that people joined the boycott because they had simply had enough of segregation.¹¹⁵

Outside of Montgomery, the sit-in movement also saw people join because they had grown tired of the status quo. James Bevel, who would become one of the top leaders of the sit-in movement, decided to become involved in the sit-ins because he was "sick and tired of waiting" for something to happen.¹¹⁶ He had grown tired of segregation, which caused him to become proactive and participate in the sit-ins. Other

¹¹¹ Branscombe, Art. Interview in *White Men Challenging Racism: 35 Personal Stories*. Eds. Thompson, Cooper, Emmett Schaefer, and Harry Brod. 2003. Durham and London, Duke University Press.

¹¹² Parks, Rosa. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 20.

¹¹³ Gilmore, Georgia. Interview in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*. Eds. Hampton, Henry and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn. 1990. New York, Bantam Books, p. 29.

¹¹⁴ Riches, p. 48.

¹¹⁵ Parks, "Tired of Giving In", pp. 66-67.

¹¹⁶ Morris, Aldon. "Black Southern Sit-In Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization". *Social Movements: Readings on Their Emergence, Mobilization, and Dynamics*. 1997. Eds. McAdam, Doug and David A. Snow. Los Angeles, Roxbury Publishing Company, p. 104.

students had grown so frustrated with their inferior place in society that they decided to join the sit-in movement.¹¹⁷

Rosa Parks was not the only prominent CRM member to support this view of why people joined the movement. An early civil rights leader, James Farmer joined the Civil Rights Movement by helping to form the Congress of Racial Equality. He had grown tired of the legalism that was being used to combat segregation and believed the tactics that would later be used in the CRM would be a more effective way of garnering equality.¹¹⁸ Dr. King also incorporated this reason into his speeches and writings. Speaking about those who had joined the Montgomery bus boycott, Dr. King said that “their souls were tired, tired of exploitation and injustice.”¹¹⁹ From the words and actions of the famous Dr. King and Rosa Parks, to the actions of the less celebrated members of the bus boycott and sit-ins, it is clear that many people joined the CRM because racist laws and segregation had pushed them to the limit.

The sixth, and final, reason why people joined the CRM that we will look at was the most prevalent reason in the literature. A large number of activists, when asked why they joined the movement, discussed feelings of obligation. These people felt as though they had a moral responsibility to join the movement. Also, some people shared a related view, saying that they felt joining was simply the right thing to do. As we will see in the first part of this category, often this sense of moral responsibility is directly tied to religious beliefs.

¹¹⁷ Riches, p. 55.

¹¹⁸ Lomax, Louis F. 1967. “The Negro Revolt” in *The Civil Rights Reader*. Ed. Leon Friedman. New York, Walker and Co., p. 52.

¹¹⁹ King Jr., p. 42.

It is a well-known fact that Martin Luther King, Jr. was not only a civil rights activist, but also a Baptist preacher. Aside from providing strong leaders to the CRM, black Christian churches also fostered a sense of responsibility in church members that caused them to join the movement. Church ministers were one of the keys to developing this feeling among church members. The very fact that many ministers were heavily involved in the movement helped to develop “a movement conscious and culture.”¹²⁰ Some ministers, such as Negail Raleigh and J.C. Crenshaw, went beyond just setting an example and explicitly tied joining the CRM to theology.¹²¹

Churches connected joining the movement with religion in more ways than just theology. Participation in the Montgomery bus boycott came to be seen as going “hand and hand” with Christianity.¹²² Church members would join the movement because they believed it was their duty to attend the mass meetings held to organize the boycott.¹²³ John Lewis observed that in time organizational movement meetings became “an extension of Sunday services.”¹²⁴ When church leaders instructed church members that they had “political responsibility” to join the Montgomery bus boycott, sufficient pressure was applied to cause them to join the movement.¹²⁵ Johnny Williams summarizes the general atmosphere when he states that many church members said “their interpretation of church culture content led them to believe that they were obligated to participate” in the CRM.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ Williams, p. 217.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, p. 129.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

¹²⁵ Morris, “Black Southern Sit-In Movement,” p. 96.

¹²⁶ Williams, p. 214.

Other members of the movement were persuaded to join the movement not by the church or its leaders, but by their own religious beliefs and relationship with God. For some, religious texts provided inspiration to join the movement. While one movement member quoted passages from Exodus and the Gospel of Luke that seemed to obligate one to be active in the fight for civil rights, another cited the overall example Jesus set in the *Bible* as doing the same.¹²⁷ Religious texts that caused people to join CRM included more than just the Bible, however, as evidenced by one-time chairman of SNCC Charles McDew's assertion that he was inspired to participate in a sit-in by the Talmud.¹²⁸

John Lewis' decision to participate in his first sit-in came from his own definition of what it meant to be a Christian. Lewis cites his "Christian conscience" as the reason that he participated in the Nashville sit-ins.¹²⁹ Another person said he joined the Young Democratic Voters Association because he believed Christians were "supposed to be an example" and should lead "by precept and example."¹³⁰

One's relationship with God could also result in joining the movement. A firm belief that "God put me here to help develop this earth" mandated one person to join the movement.¹³¹ Another connected joining the movement to serving God. To him, the difference between verbally supporting the CRM and becoming an active member is the same as the difference between praying and "praying and getting up and doing something about the prayer."¹³² As these examples have shown, whether a religious leader inspired it, or a religious text seemingly demanded it, it is clear that the moral obligation many people felt to join the CRM had a direct connection to religion.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 213.

¹²⁸ Zinn, p. 45.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

¹³⁰ Williams, p. 214.

Religion was not the only contributor to the sense of obligation to join the movement. Some people expressed similar sentiments to those just described, but without reference to religion. For example, Leo Lillard said, “I felt I had clear obligations, clear reasons to put my body on the line” at the Nashville sit-ins.¹³³ One of the most common responses by movement members when asked why they joined was “I just had to do it.” This was a particularly frequent explanation given by students. As one student described it, “Your relationship with the movement is just like a love affair. You can’t explain it. All you know is it’s something you *have* to do.”¹³⁴ One author suggested that this inexplicable feeling of obligation to join the movement was common among whites. She states, “In every march, there seem to be a number of white participants from out of the state who come with only the fuzziest comprehension of the issues but with a strong conviction that civil rights is a good thing to walk for.”¹³⁵ These examples serve to illustrate another source, aside from religion, from which movement members developed a sense of obligation to fight for civil rights.

Now we have completed our study of the six main reasons why people joined the mainstream Civil Rights Movement. First, we saw that the offer of a personal benefit enticed some people to join the CRM. Second, some joined the CRM because they were impressed by the leaders and members of the movement. Third, others joined the CRM after a transformative event. Fourth, people joined the CRM because they wanted to help gain freedom and equality for black people. Fifth some people joined the CRM because

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 216.

¹³² Ibid., p. 215.

¹³³ Lillard, pp. 60-61.

¹³⁴ Riches, p. 55.

¹³⁵ Adler, Renata. 1967. “Mississippi” in *The Civil Rights Reader*. Ed. Leon Friedman. New York, Walker and Co., p. 99.

they had grown tired of giving in to the unjust status quo. Sixth, many people joined the CRM out of a sense of moral or religious obligation.

Literature Discussion

Now that the six main reasons that people joined the Black Panther Party and the mainstream Civil Rights Movement have been established, how well the theories discussed at the beginning of the paper fit with these reasons can be examined.

Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen's theory of the four limiting conditions explains the reasons that people joined the CRM better than the BPP. The conditions suggest that people who join social movements are first recruited and then form a link between joining the movement and their personal identity, a link that receives more support than detraction from important groups. While most Panthers were recruited either directly (from relatives or members patrolling the street) or indirectly (from conferences featuring BPP leaders), considering that many Panthers were kicked out of their home upon joining the Party, the last condition does not seem to apply to the Panthers. Mainstream Civil Rights Movement members, on the other hand, were more likely to receive support for their decision to join.

Sidney Tarrow stressed the importance of perceived injustice in the decision to join a social movement, as well as an agent that created the injustice. This theory helps to explain why people joined both the CRM and the BPP. The perceived injustice was the same in both cases: members felt blacks were being denied basic rights. Those who saw nonviolent protest as an effective way to draw attention to this and create change joined the CRM. As for the BPP, the white establishment was a clear perpetrator of the

injustice and, based on the perceived inadequacy of previous movements seeking to gain civil rights, many blacks felt that the BPP was the best chance for success. Richard Flacks' theory that people join movements to either protect their current rights or to fight for recognition of previously withheld rights seems equally applicable to those joining both movements.

Terry Moe's theory of solidary and purposive incentives provides insight as to why people joined each of the movements. In the case of the BPP, solidary benefits are more applicable. While people joined the BPP because they had a desire to have the status that went along with being a Panther, they did not appear to join for an ideological, moral, or religious reason. Members of the CRM often did join for these purposive benefits, but did not seem to be influenced to join by solidary benefits.

Anthony Oberschall explained that the offer of tangible or intangible benefits enticed people to join a movement. Both Panther and CRM members were much more likely to join for the intangible benefits that Oberschall discusses. Most people seemed to be attracted to the movements' messages and their belief that the movements could create beneficial changes to society.

The two theories articulated by Francesca Polleta and James M. Jasper, and Aldon Morris, stated that people join social movements because of moral shocks and transformative events, respectively. Morris' theory of transformative events is more applicable to both movements than Polleta and Jasper's theory. Transformative events, such as Huey Newton's arrest and the bombing of Dr. King's house, were one of the six main reasons that people joined the BPP and the CRM. While one could argue that these events were moral shocks, they seemed to be better thought of as transformative events.

Blacks and white radicals knew from their own lives that there was racism in the country and that police often used unnecessary violence. The transformative events simply provided a clear example of this that caused people to rally together.

When looked at collectively, the theories on why people join social movements do a fair job of explaining why people joined each movement. Although many of the reasons people joined each movement are covered by at least one of the theories, none of the theories gives a comprehensive explanation.

Does the research that focuses specifically on the CRM fare any better? Doug McAdam's work is well supported by this case study. Idealism and religious responsibility both clearly were important factors in one's decision to join the CRM. Although no one here tied their decision to join the CRM to their desire to be an educator, this is likely just because of the nature of the Freedom Summer program. As a program that focused on civil rights education, it was more likely to draw in people interested in education than a sit-in, for example. However, recall that some of the participants in school integration were doing so in order to enhance their education, which does fit with McAdam's argument.

James Vander Zanden's arguments are not as well supported by this case study, as they seem to better reflect the BPP case study in some ways. While he does incorporate religion into his explanation of why people joined the CRM, he also discusses the appeal of increased security and self worth, which were found here in the BPP case study, but not the CRM case study. Maurice Pinard, Jerome Kirk, and Donald von Eschen's article is better supported, as we saw that idealism and a desire to fight against segregation did contribute to people's decision to join the CRM.

Analysis

Now that we have examined the most common reasons why people joined the Black Panther Party and the mainstream Civil Rights Movement, we can look at their similarities and differences. Overall, both movements share all but two of the major categories. In the case of the mainstream CRM, the desire to antagonize and harm whites was not one of the major categories, while BPP members did not cite a moral or religious obligation as their reason for joining that particular movement. Before we look at these large differences, we will look at the shared categories.

The most similar reason for joining the two movements is the category of transformative events. In both movements, transformative events consisted of violence and acts of injustice targeted at blacks and committed by the perceived opposition. It is interesting that in their early stages both movements were able to gain a large number of new members after prominent arrests. For the BPP, the arrest of Huey Newton was one of the most important transformative events the movement experienced, while the same could be said of Rosa Parks' arrest and the CRM.

There are a few slight differences in the nature of the transformative events that are worth mentioning. Several of the violent attacks that caused people to join the CRM did not result in injury to people, but rather destroyed property, such as the bombing of Dr. King's house. Contrarily, all of the violent attacks mentioned by BPP members involved personal harm. Also, all of these attacks (save Dr. King's) were committed against BPP members. Many people joined the CRM, however, after non-activist blacks were assaulted or killed. The murder of Emmet Till is an example of this. While these differences do exist, they do not do much to distinguish why people join either militant or

nonviolent social movements. At most they suggest that a transformative event might need to be slightly more extreme (i.e. murder of a member as opposed to bombing of member's home) in order to convince people to join a militant social movement.

Another reason why people joined the BPP and the CRM that was similar was the influence of leaders, activists, friends and family. The leaders of both movements were able to persuade people to join their respective movement, whether it was their dynamic personality, their willingness to confront authorities or their ability to deliver an enticing message. Even the language supporters used about the most famous leaders of each movement was sometimes similar. Recall that one man described Dr. King as "a God-sent man," while a supporter of Newton compared him to Christ.

There is also a similarity in the way the example of other movement activists caused people to join, although this was much more common in the CRM. In both movements, members made themselves very visible in the community. For the BPP, this involved following police officers and marching through the streets. The CRM made its presence known by having large-scale marches and, more generally, by being involved in newsworthy events. Whatever the nature of the activities, some people were impressed enough with what they saw to join the movement themselves.

The influence of friends and family is apparent in both movements. Some members from each movement stated that they joined after being told of the movement by a friend, or even directly invited. Family also played a role in causing people to join both of the movements, albeit the roles were not the same. Many CRM members joined because of the example their parents had set for them. As a movement made up primarily of young people, this did not happen in the BPP. More common in the BPP were wives

joining the movement after being asked by their husbands. Despite this difference, as well as those discussed above, it has been shown that leaders, activists, friends and family all played an important role in causing people to join both the militant and nonviolent social movement.

As should be expected, the desire to fight for a cause and create change was also an important factor in people's decision to join both the BPP and the CRM. Members of both groups explained that they decided to join their respective movement because they believed doing so was the best way that they could fight inequality. While the two movements clearly used different means, they were both working towards the same end: freedom and equality for blacks. Those who chose to join the more militant BPP generally did so because the Panthers' message of militancy and the justification of violence was more in tune with their reality. For many of them it was hard to support a nonviolent movement when they so frequently witnessed white violence directed towards them. Even though they were certainly exposed to the oppression and violence of racism, this reality was not as extreme for many CRM members, particularly the white members.

It is also important to note the effect that chronology likely had on the appeal of each group's message. The Black Panther Party emerged soon after the peak of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement. While admitting that the nonviolent tactics of the mainstream CRM had helped blacks in some areas, many blacks who would join the BPP did not see any change in their personal lives. Having grown tired of waiting for the nonviolent CRM to improve their lives (as was mentioned in the case study, most members were poor, urban blacks), these people looked for a more militant, more demanding movement to solve their problems. A militant social movement was an

obvious solution to many with this mindset. If nonviolence has not helped us, they might think, then maybe we should try a more militant approach.

Obviously because the CRM preceded the BPP this relationship cannot have gone both ways. However, people who joined the CRM did have the same mentality. Remember that one of the six reasons that people joined the CRM was because they had grown tired of giving in and had been pushed to the limit by segregation. This was a primary reason students became pro-active and were involved in the sit-ins. Also recall that James Farmer helped found CORE because he was tired of waiting for civil rights to be won through the legal system.

From this we can infer that one's decision to join a particular kind of movement may be based on one's perceptions of what has or has not worked in the past. When people grew tired of waiting for the battle over civil rights to be won in the courtroom, they became actively involved in a movement that used demonstrations and nonviolent protest. When people grew tired of waiting for nonviolent protests to improve their lives, they joined a movement that was more militant and attempted to use the threat of violence to attain equality. At least in the case of civil rights, the militant social movement appears to clearly attract members who have become convinced that nonviolence will never solve their problems.

The final reason that was cited by both members of the BPP and the CRM is that of personal benefits. All of the benefits received for joining the BPP were unique to that movement, while the same is true for the CRM. The appeal of person protection was the most attractive personal benefit to many BPP members. They felt that by joining the BPP they would be safe from whites, particularly racist police officers.

Considering that several prominent members of the mainstream CRM were murdered, this clearly was not a personal benefit of joining the CRM. Rather, one was probably safer not joining the CRM. This presents an interesting contrast. While people joined the BPP to increase their safety, people joined the CRM at the expense of their safety. Whether or not this holds true in other militant and nonviolent social movements would be an interesting question for further research.

The other personal benefits offered by the BPP that appealed to recruits were much more tangible than the benefits people gained for joining the CRM. Once one joined the BPP he or she received a uniform, which was a definite appeal to some, particularly the younger members. Wearing the uniform of the Panthers became a status symbol, and some young blacks wanted that status enough to join the movement just to have it. This shows that even in a militant movement, sometimes a free reward is enough to entice people to join.

When people joined the CRM for a personal benefit, it was not because the CRM offered them the benefit, but rather that having the benefit made them de facto members of the movement. This was most evident in the case of the students who helped desegregate the University of Georgia, not so much in order to help earn freedom for all blacks, but more because it offered better programs than the black university. It appears that in the case of this nonviolent movement, one did not become an active participant in order to get a tangible reward, perhaps because it would not be enticing enough or because no reward of this nature was ever offered.

We will conclude this discussion by looking at the two reasons stated at the beginning of this section that were exclusive to their particular movement. No discussion

is needed to explain why no one joined the nonviolent mainstream CRM in order to harm whites. It is interesting, however, that people did not say they joined the BPP out of a sense of moral obligation, religious or otherwise.

There are several possible explanations for the lack of religious language used by BPP members. First, many of the leaders of the CRM were ministers and other religious figures. This helped create a close tie between the movement and religious ideas. These leaders were used to incorporating religion into their speeches, and so it was natural for them to use religious language and ideas when trying to convince people to join the movement. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were not religious leaders before they formed the BPP, and so they did not tie the BPP and Christianity together. With religion left out of the movement's message, it made it unlikely that people would decide to join the movement out of a sense of religious obligation.

More importantly for our discussion of militant and nonviolent social movements as a whole, however, is that the idea of using violence for social gain does not mesh well with Christian theology. It is easy for a nonviolent social movement to incorporate Jesus into the movement's message, because he was a strong advocate of nonviolent resistance.¹³⁶ It does not make much sense, on the other hand, for a militant social movement to use the language of Christianity to appeal to potential members when that religion's central figure taught his followers nonviolent tactics. Because most mainstream religions advocate nonviolence in their writings, one would imagine that this would hold true outside of Christianity as well.

¹³⁶For more information on Jesus and nonviolence, see: Wink, Walter. 2003. *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press.

Lessons for Nonviolent Movement Leaders

With these differences in mind, how then might nonviolent social movement leaders attract more people to their movements and keep members from becoming frustrated? As we have just seen, religion could be an effective tool, especially in a country like the United States with such a large number of Christians.¹³⁷ By drawing parallels between the nonviolent action that the given movement is taking and the nonviolent movement that Jesus led, leaders can make a direct appeal to Christians. This may be an especially effective way of soothing frustrated members that are tiring of waiting for nonviolence to work. Furthering the connection by showing how poverty-stricken and oppressed peasants rallied behind Jesus' message could help persuade even those most inclined to join a militant social movement to instead join a nonviolent one. The use of religion to attract people to nonviolent movements need not be confined to Christianity. There are plenty of examples of people outside of Christianity participating in, or leading, nonviolent social movements in part because of their religious beliefs, Mahatma Gandhi being just one.

A more difficult problem is how nonviolent movement leaders can attract people to their movement that are not persuaded by religious appeals. Having a well spoken, persuasive leader is important. The CRM case study shows that capitalizing on transformative events may be one way for leaders to do this. Another may be to simply illustrate how effective nonviolence has been in the past, with the CRM being a good example. By showing that given time, nonviolence has often worked in the past, perhaps movement members will be less likely to look for alternative movements that promise more immediate results. As the BPP case study seems to suggest, however, for a variety

of reasons, some people will always be more attracted to militant social movements, no matter what nonviolent leaders do to try and attract them.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this analysis, many of the broad reasons why people joined the militant and nonviolent social movements under study here are the same. However, even when members of each movement give the same broad reason for joining, more careful probing shows that there are different reasons under each of these categories. This research has only looked at two social movements, fighting for the same goals, over two decades, however. If we are to better understand why people choose to join militant or nonviolent social movements, the findings of this research will need to be tested outside of the realm of civil rights. Until then we cannot be certain if these findings are unique to civil rights movements, or if they can be applied more broadly.

¹³⁷ See also Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's., "An Experiment in Love: Nonviolent Resistance."

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