Civil Rights Movement Imagery, Collective Memory, and Group-Based Emotions

Martha Ramirez
David Stamps

The current case study critically examined imagery of the Civil Rights Movement, collective memory and intergroup emotions. Adopting content analysis, we examined a sample of civil rights images (N = 55), to illustrate the potential for recall and group-based emotions related to perceptions of the social movement. Findings included themes related to recall and subject matter focused on collective action efforts, including racial hostility, brutality, non-violence, and celebrity. Each theme posited that a range of Civil Rights Movement imagery may cement a visceral and thought-provoking collective memory and, as such, as the potential to contribute to distinct emotions among audiences.

Keywords: Civil Rights Movement, collective memory, intergroup emotions, imagery

Introduction

Scholars have noted that media imagery often impacts individuals' collective memories, specifically when audiences lack direct engagement with high-profile events (Halbwachs & Douglas, 1980). Images, such as the social unrest during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, garnered a collective memory of struggle, triumph, and conflict, which is often related to audiences' emotional responses (Harris, 2006). For example, during the Freedom Rides of 1961, college students from the Congress of Racial Equality rode buses from Washington, D.C., to Jackson, Mississippi, to protest racial segregation on interstate buses. The groundswell of support from the freedom riders was attributed to the media's dissemination of Civil Rights imagery that captured the brutality that took place in Jackson, Mississippi (Buchanan, 2014). We argue that media imagery from the 1960s Civil Rights Movement may buttress collective memories among audiences and from a selection of images, examined themes relevant to the recollection based on artifacts and events that coincided with the time the images were taken. Moreover, we offer the groundwork that the imagery has the potential to contribute to a range of group–based emotions (Clayton, 2018; Hume, 2010).

The current study adopted tenets of collective memory (Halbwachs & Douglas, 1980) and intergroup emotions theories (Mackie & Smith, 2015) and critically discussed the potential for Civil Rights Movement imagery to provoke recall and emotional responses based on what was capture in each image. We do not aim to test, by means of participant influence, the application of theory but more so to engage in a critical conversation that suggests that society at large may acquire knowledge from visual imagery of the Civil Rights Movement, which may provoke affective responses.

Collective Memory Theory

Collective memory theory proposes that an individual's exposure to the media and other artifacts (e.g., physical monuments) may be related to remembering past events with which individuals often lack direct contact or intimate association (Halbwachs & Douglas, 1980; Lyons & Kudrnac, 2018). People's collective memories often depend on their engagement (or lack thereof) with an event. Individuals with

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Martha Ramirez (MA, Louisiana State University) is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Cincinnati. Her primary research examines how Latinx communities interact with each other within digital spaces and the effects of these interactions throughout society.

David Stamps (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara) is an Assistant Professor at Bentley University. Their research aims to understand the psychological and behavioral effects of identity-focused interpersonal interactions and individuals' exposure to and engagement with mass media, including digital, news, and entertainment media. Address correspondence to the author at dstamps@bentley.edu.

direct contact with high-profile events may not need imagery to recall an event. Instead, people may rely on personal experiences to remember significant episodes. However, individuals who lack direct engagement may rely on imagery to recall important incidents (Coman et al., 2009). The collective memories of high-profile events are important because communal recollections often shape the narrative of historical moments, including the attitudes toward the events and support (or lack thereof) for circumstances related to those incidents (Hirst & Fineberg, 2011).

Collective memory occurs on two levels. The first exists at the individual level, which refers to how people's beliefs and exposure to artifacts impact if and how they remember a past event (Olick, 1999). The second occurs as a collective memory among a population whereas groups may recall and agree upon the recollection of an event (Halbwachs & Douglas, 1980). The group-based collective memory has suggested that group membership is a salient determinant of how people may recall an event (Lyons & Kudrnac, 2018). Group membership may drive recall and feelings, particularly when specific identities are intertwined with the event (Gensburger, 2016). For example, the Civil Rights Movement took place in America, thus impacting the way of life for many Americans, as a group identity. Equally, collective memory may be impacted by systems, one example being the media, which may contribute to affective outcomes among the group (Jackson, 2021).

Collective memory is an appropriate tool for studying phenomena in communication studies (Edy, 2011; Gensburger, 2016). Jackson's (2021) work noted that news programming has often shaped the collective memory of Black activism and collective action. They argued that Black people's engagement with advocacy was related to widespread commemorations of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, which correlated with a shared collective memory of pride and admiration among Black audiences. The media enabled audiences to "identify with the experiences of people who endured certain events" and created a shared recollection of persons, accounts, and narratives of these high-profile occasions (Berkowitz, 2001, p. 14). Wasilewski (2019) explored images within far-right media outlets such as blogs and websites and recognized how content dislodged US mainstream collective memory of social movements and the advancement of non-White and other groups (e.g., ethnic and sexual minorities) among audiences. No matter the spectrum of recall (e.g., positive or negative), media imagery has the ability to impact the collective memory of audiences (Florini, 2015). Media, including mainstream, alternative, and digital forms–work to meet the expectations of their target group, and one way to do so is by cementing the collective memory of salient activities (Wasilewski, 2019).

Collective Memory and Media

The media can actively shape and curate audiences' collective memories (Sheffi, 2011). If the media (e.g., newspapers) consistently display images of an event, the images may shape attitudes and cement the significance of the occurrence (Bourdon & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2011). For example, imagery from the media reinforced the world's collective memories of Germany during WWII, and scholars have noted that imagery of Nazi Germany still "constrains German foreign and domestic policy" (Olick, 1999, p. 334). Researchers have recognized that journalists (including photojournalists) have the strongest influence on how audiences remember events due to the authority to select imagery presented in media outlets (Neiger et al., 2011). Journalists' influence on the selection of imagery and their authority as storytellers allow for interpretative freedom in framing narratives and, thus, may help shape collective memories (Meyer, 2009; Harris, 2006).

Research that has adopted collective memory theory has overwhelmingly demonstrated its utility in how visual forms of mass media often derive an audience's recall (Bourdon & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2011; Jackson, 2021). Hariman and Lucaites (2003) studied the infamous photograph 'Napalm Girl," an image captured during the Vietnam War that depicted then nine-year old Kim Phuc Pan Thi running toward a camera in agony from the napalm burns covering her body. The authors argued that this image was a powerful emotional resource for that shaped the collective memory of the Vietnam War among US audiences (Hume, 2010).

Scholars have pondered why certain images are ingrained in audiences' subconsciousness and impact recall regarding an event. For example, hundreds of images circulated the graphic instances of violence in Vietnam, including murdered prisoners of war. However, the 'Napalm Girl' image was embedded in people's memories despite "many, many press reports and a number of striking photos that would suffice as evidence for any claim that the United States was fighting an immoral war" (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003, p. 40). The authors drew attention to the emotion and noted that the little girl was directly facing the lens, looking straight at anyone who looked at the photo. The photograph conveyed pain, and the image may have evoked emotions among spectators. Hariman and Lucaites (2003) stated that the image influenced audiences' collective memory due to its ability to activate emotions "including pain, fragmentation…betrayal, and trauma" (p. 40). The potential for images to drive emotional responses highlight a unique relationship, whereas collective memory can be deeply ingrained in the emotional response of individuals. To aid in the understanding of emotional response, we provide a discussion of intergroup emotions theory.

Intergroup Emotions Theory

Intergroup emotions theory (IET) conceptualized that emotions are a product of life created by shared moments and collective understandings of events, people, and situations (Mackie & Smith, 2018). Emotions are often linked with identities (e.g., being an American), and IET has suggested that emotions can be experienced at the group level. Groups of individuals often experience emotions from shared experiences. Moons and colleagues (2009) found that exposure to salient group-focused information impacted group-based emotions (i.e., we feel this way) compared to individual-level emotions (i.e., how I feel). In particular, an individual's emotional response is not isolated but often shared by group members as people often experience moments using communication channels, such as media (Mackie & Smith, 2015; Stamps & Mastro, 2020).

The addition of IET in the current study is not to assess the individual outcomes related to emotion but to critically discuss how audiences' encounters with 1960s Civil Rights Movement imagery, which may aid in collective memories of significant events, may also derive emotional responses. Harris (2006) demonstrated that the formation of collective memory and group-based emotions (e.g., anger) contributed to engagement in the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the aftermath of Emmett Till's murder. Griffin and Bollen (2009) found that the collective memory of civil rights events (e.g., The March of Washington) was related to individuals' emotional responses and a shift in attitudes on race relations and racial policies. Duffy and Besel (2010) noted that imagery of civil rights era activism served as a source of emotions, such as inspiration during the movement and ongoing advocacy post the movement. Images of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement may contribute to audiences' collective memory and potentially evoke emotional responses at the group level (Harris, 2006).

Collective Memory, Media, and the Civil Rights Movement

The 1960s Civil Rights Movement aimed to combat racial oppression and encourage the basic freedoms that Black Americans were systemically denied. The movement began in response to the Jim Crow laws that perpetuated racism and upheld race-based policies and practices (Clayton, 2018). During the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, Black individuals (and non-Black allies) countered violent racial oppression, often through organized collective action efforts. One outcome of the actions was to garner widespread news coverage (Clayton, 2018). Hundreds of images exist of the Civil Rights Movement. However, some images have been ingrained in the collective memory of US audiences. The iconic and notable images have a certain "stickiness"–a factor that draws viewers in (Dover, 2011).

Images presented in news coverage played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement as activists believed it was a "promising new medium through which they could prevent the world from turning a blind eye to violence against Black people" (Ruff, 2020, p. 38). Mamie Till understood the value of media imagery when she allowed newspapers to publish graphic images of her deceased son, Emmett Till, who

was brutally tortured and murdered by white supremacists. This intentional act demonstrated how imagery could have a persuasive influence on individuals. Thousands of Americans were unaware of how commonplace lynchings and racial injustice occurred in certain geographic locations (Mace, 2014). Media imagery of the Civil Rights Movement aided in creating a collective memory and emotional-centered response for many audience members (Jackson, 2021).

The Current Study

Theoretical assumptions rooted in collective memory theory and IET suggest that thematic elements from images of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and a range of emotions may exist. In particular, images of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement may be related to distinct collective memories and align with distinct group-based emotional responses. Research has suggested that media imagery has remained important to the construction and preservation of a collective memory as the stories of the past are visceral (Edy, 2006). Accordingly, we examined a selection of media imagery of events during the Civil Rights Movement and, from this integrated perspective, explored the following research questions:

RQ1: What themes are present among 1960s Civil Rights Movement imagery that may be deem relevant to collective memory?
RQ2: What are some relevant artifacts presented among 1960s Civil Rights Movement imagery that may have contributed to audiences' collective memories of that era?
RQ3: What are examples of emotion(s) that might be derived from 1960s Civil Rights Movement imagery?

Method

Procedures

Researchers in recent years have utilized content analysis as a method to analyze images from diverse types of mainstream media (Mucchielli, 2002; Rose, 2001). A content analysis is a systematic process that isolates and investigates substantial properties of content that may escape ordinary mindfulness or inspection (Rose, 2001). Scholars often use content analysis to study media memory phenomena, particularly content centered on Black identity and race-focused imagery (Stamps et al., 2022). Frazier (2020) conducted a content analysis of Black-orientated magazines Jet and Ebony coverage of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment and its relationship to Black individuals' collective memories of the Tuskegee incident. Clayton (2018) utilized content analysis to examine the New York Times' coverage of the Black Lives Matter and the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Schwalbe, Silcock, and Keith (2008) conducted a content analysis of US mainstream media images and analyzed the emotional effects of viewing the images, such as 'shock and awe.' Following the established methodology of previous research (Stamps et al., 2022; Frazier, 2020; Clayton, 2018; Schwalbe et al., 2008), the current study adopted content analysis and examined media images of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. We offered a discussion of select images, their potential impression on collective memories, and the prospective group-based emotions that may arise from audiences.

Data Collection, Coding and Analysis

The lead author collected images of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in January and February 2021 from various archival websites and media outlets that included the All That is Interesting (ATI) gallery, the Afro-American Newspaper, The New York World Telegraph & Sun, The Life Images Collection, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives and Records Administration. The collection of images concluded once the same imagery continued to appear in online searches. To avoid bias in selection criteria, once images began to reappear in the online search, we stopped data collection

and examined the total number of documents ($N = 55$). Our total number of images is not exhaustive and does not represent all the documented images from the movement. This method of visual analysis is not era free or complete in avoiding bias but provides a notable form of interpretative investigation (Knoblauch et al., 2008). Appropriately, we recognize that lexical ambiguity exists, and thus our analyses of the data is one of the multiple interpretations (Stamps, 2023).

Hariman and Lucaites (2003) explained that a "photographic image is capable of directing attention across a field of gestures, interaction rituals, social types, political styles, artistic motifs, cultural norms, and other signs as they intersect in any event" (p. 38). Social science scholars have developed diverse and numerous types of methodological techniques for 'reading' and analyzing visual materials (Glăvan, 2014; Mucchielli, 2002; Rose, 2001). In line with previous research, a codebook was created by both authors to analyze the randomly selected media images (Cowart et al., 2016). We followed the approach of Glăvan (2014) to create adequate codes that were exhaustive, exclusive and enlightening, resulting in codes that allowed us to analyze the images in an "analytical and coherent" manner (p. 90). We ensured that our codification relied on our research questions and theoretical framework to accurately inform our findings.

The images were coded following traditional grounded theory directives (Charmaz, 2014). The codes specifically focused on the surroundings showcased in each image, the actions of the figures in the image, the facial and bodily expressions of the individuals portrayed, and the presence of signs or text (see Table 1 for descriptions). Each image was examined regarding its potential influence on audiences' collective memories of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the probable emotional response related to the image. The second author provided a member check regarding the analysis of each image in accordance with the codebook. Discrepancies between the image and analyses were discussed until both authors agreed on the themes, relevance of artifacts, and potential emotions that may have derived from each image.

Table 1

Code and Definitions of Each Code

Code(s)	Definition/Description
Surroundings	The background or surroundings in each image (e.g., individuals engaging in protest or the presence of law enforcement).
The event taking place	The event happening at the moment the image was taken (e.g., persons sitting at a Woolworth lunch counter or attending the March on Washington).
The actions taking place	The actions or activities happening in the moment the image was taken (e.g., segregationists attacked protestors during Bloody Sunday).
Facial expressions/Body positioning	The individuals pictured in the image, if applicable, and their facial expression (e.g., anger, passion) or body positioning (e.g., pain, anguish).
Presence of signs or text	The presence of signs (e.g., protest signs) and the visible text, if applicable, (e.g., "I AM A MAN") presented in each image.

Findings

Previous research that has explored media imagery and collective memory has denoted a sanitization of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement (Jackson, 2021). This is noteworthy as Yazdiha (2023) eloquently noted, "The danger of a sanitized reading of the past [Civil Rights Movement] is that this selective memory evades social reality and enables the maintenance of white supremacy" (para. 11). The images of the Civil Rights Movement are open to audience interpretation, but our collective memories are often situated in documented history. Meaning that we can fact check if the language, symbolic figures, and imagery of historic people and settings were misappropriated or counter to the realities presented (Hill, 2017). Our findings suggest a complex discursive environment where various narratives may have correlated to collective memories and emotional responses related to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement imagery. Below we discuss the themes associated to the selected images, themes included racial hostility, racial brutality, non-violence, and celebrity. Below we provided a description of the image, an analysis based on the codebook (e.g., noted artifacts or facial expressions), relevant media coverage surrounding the event represented in the image (i.e., evidence), and descriptions of historical events that occurred that may have prompted the image and thus contributed to collective memory.

Racial Hostility

Amid the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, the racial integration of education institutions that resulted from the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision heightened racial hostility (National Public Radio, 2011). Scholars noted that depictions of the Little Rock Nine–particularly that of Elizabeth Eckford walking alone through a screaming mob of white people–launched the realities of racial injustice and racial hostility into the living rooms of individuals who were not on the frontlines of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement (Lebeau, 2004). Elizabeth Eckford was one of nine Black students to integrate Little Rock Central High School on September 4, 1957. The integration of Little Rock Central High School garnered news attention due to the circumstances surrounding racial hostility and the notable individuals on both sides of the argument. The governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, a segregationist, ordered the National Guard to form a blockade around the school to keep Black students out of the school. A group of NAACP lawyers, which included Thurgood Marshall, challenged Faubus' actions in court, and a judge ordered the National Guard to stand down. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reached out to President Dwight D. Eisenhower and urged him to protect the incoming Black students, and Eisenhower deployed 1,000 paratroopers to assist in the integration of Little Rock Central High School (Bennett, 2020).

The National Public Radio (2011) reported that news cameras and photographers were largely present during the Little Rock Central High School integration events. However, the image of Eckford, with her back to an advancing, angry, white crowd, who is seen collected and posed amid the chaos, is a visceral contrast to the angry mob that surrounded her. Additional images of Eckford walking to school that day exist; however, none showed the majority-white crowd surrounding Eckford, nor did most media images showcase the crowd's hostility and the potential threat that Eckford and other Black individuals endured.

Racial Hostility and Emotions

Collective memory scholars have established that images can evoke emotional responses from audiences (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2009; Hariman & Lucaites, 2003). The image of Eckford suggests that emotional responses, including worry, anger, or horror, due to the presence of the mob and the treatment of a fifteen-year-old may have occurred. Individuals who were geographically distant or lacked direct engagement with the Civil Rights Movement may have gleaned knowledge about racial hostility related to education desegregation and created collective memories of heightened hostility from images like this example.

White women had a large hand in perpetuating racism and hate; however, it was rare that images captured the reality (McRae, 2018). The image of Eckford, which also portrayed white women who actively protected and upheld white supremacy, may have tapped into audiences' emotional recall. The range of emotions related to images of racial hostility may have varied from sympathy toward the 1960s Civil Rights Movement to shame or guilt by viewing persons behavior, or pride or adulation, as segregation was coveted by groups who contested desegregation efforts (Griffin & Bollen, 2009; Kennington, 2020). The image, depending on the positionality of audience members in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, may trigger memories related to education integration and a range of emotions.

Racial Brutality

Throughout the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, protests and demonstrators were subject to brutality. Media imagery of police brutality, specifically images that captured protestors mauled by police dogs and attacked with batons and fire hoses by law enforcement, was a mainstay (Bryant, 2013). One such notable image taken on May 4, 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama, showed three Black individuals sprayed by high-pressured water hose by law enforcement as they protested against segregation practices. The three Black demonstrators were dressed in what was recognized as their "Sunday Best," or attire deemed news media friendly (Kerrison et al., 2018). During the clash between the protesters and police, a white crowd watched the conflict ensue and again showcased the indifference to collective action that resonated with the Civil Rights Movement. Multiple images captured the demonstrations throughout the deep South, including in Alabama. Other images from the data included the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and the marchers clash with police, also known as Bloody Sunday. Many of our images depicted Alabama as a key location due to the depicted racial brutality.

Alabama has a sordid history of harsh treatment toward Black US citizens (Kihlström & Kirby, 2021). Throughout Alabama, Black citizens were subjected to lynchings, church bombings, and attacks by white supremacist groups. Alabama's history of racism can be traced back to its ties with slavery, including the Confederacy's formation in 1861 in Montgomery (Kennington, 2020). Dr. King Jr. visited the city of Birmingham to support Black citizens as the city notoriously refused to hire Black individuals for blue–and white-collar jobs, and the Black community faced discrimination and segregation regarding access to educational and social facilities (Levingston, 2020). The news media often covered the racial brutality in Alabama because of the constant presence of key figures like Dr. King Jr., which often resulted in numerous media images.

Racial Brutality and Emotions

The images of brutality would undoubtedly have triggered various emotional responses among viewers. Persons without proximity to the depictions of racial brutality may have conjured feelings of anger, disgust, or outrage due to the open display of this action against protestors and the visuals of onlookers who displayed delight or indifference toward the cruelty. Similar emotions, such as sadness or shock, may have also surfaced. The mistreatment of individuals is often justified if persons are deemed criminal or violent; however, the images from our data collection did not showcase these traits. The images captured demonstrators who engaged in non-violent behavior, and their style of dress countered the stereotypes often attributed to Black people (Stamps & Mastro, 2020). The images also provided compelling evidence of violence against Black individuals and may have solidified heightened emotions in response to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement.

Non-Violence

During the height of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, eight days before the March on Washington, over 1,300 demonstrations in 200 cities took place between May and August 1963 (Bryant, 2013). Many protests occurred in the deep South, where explicit forms of racism and racial violence were

common; however, protests took place in Northern cities in the US. Our data included imagery from locations that included Brooklyn, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Chicago, Illinois. One example was an image of a young Black woman thrown into the back of a police truck by three police officers in Brooklyn, New York. The woman was depicted protesting in her "Sunday Best," and the respectable style of dress and non-confrontational engagement was the centerpiece of the image. The women pictured showcased behavior aimed to counter the narrative of the angry and violent Black individual (Richardson, 2019). An expectation of nonviolence was commonplace among participants who engaged in collective action during the Civil Rights Movement, but these narratives were restrained in media coverage that aimed to delegitimize the movement (Jackson, 2021).

An example from the data included an image of Sarah Jean Collins in a hospital bed recovering from injuries that resulted from the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing by Klu Klux Klan members. The bombing, one of many, took place on September 15, 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama and the media image depicted Collins' battered and bruised face. Collins had two large bandages that covered her eyes, and the visible skin on her forehead, cheeks, nose, and lips was swollen, blistered, and burned. Collins was 12 years old, and the bombing led to 22 individuals injured and the death of Collins' sister, Addie Mae Collins, and three girls, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Denise McNair (Trent, 2020). Before the attack, civil rights leaders, including Dr. King Jr. and Fred Shuttlesworth, used the 16th Street Baptist Church as a meeting center for their campaign to desegregate Birmingham (Levingston, 2020). This was the third bombing in 11 days in Birmingham and the first that resulted in death. Life Magazine published the image of Collins and "the photograph…helped the nation find its humanity" having exposed US audiences and reinforced the collective memory of the hostility of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement (Trent, 2020, p. 1).

Non-Violence and Emotions

The array of emotions due to the juxtaposition of peaceful and respectful protestors and the repeated narrative of the angry and threatening presence of Black people may have been perplexing for audiences. Feelings such as confusion or frustration may have resulted as individuals often view themselves as blameless or non-racist (Stamps & Mastro, 2020). The images that captured Black individuals who defied expectations of aggression or intimidation by showcasing civility were now seen in contrast to the brutality of law enforcement. With intention, the collective memories of the Civil Rights Movement were to decenter narratives that were often false and disingenuous regarding Black people.

The non-violence and the victims who embodied non-violence may have ignited a range of raw and unfathomable emotions in response to the atrocities that impacted non-violent individuals, specifically, children. Children are often viewed as innocent, although this is not always applied to Black children (Goff et al., 2014). The atrocity of Collins's wounds displayed in the image may conjure feelings of helplessness, sadness, sympathy, and distress. Likewise, the collective memories of the Civil Rights Movement may have cemented a harshness afforded non-violent individuals, which may be correlated to individuals' remembrance of an overarching narrative of non-violent collective action (Clayton, 2018; Griffin & Bollen, 2009).

Celebrity

The involvement of Dr. King Jr. and many well-known activists, such as Reverend James Lawson, helped garner news coverage and provided ample images of the Civil Rights Movement. One example of imagery included the "I AM A MAN" protests in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1968. In response to the death of two Black sanitation workers crushed by garbage trucks, individuals protested the injustice inflicted on the families. The city of Memphis' sanitation workers comprised only Black men and the public works department denied compensation to the families of the deceased. Over 1,300 Black men walked off their jobs in protest of the incident, along with the documented horrendous working conditions and abuse from the city (Brown, 2018). A protestor recalled that the demonstrations were a way for Black

men to remind society that "we were human beings…[and] to demand the same dignity and courtesy as any other citizen of Memphis" (Brown, 2018, p. 1).

Before the demonstration, a march in Memphis that involved Dr. King Jr. and Rev. Lawson turned violent and resulted in the shooting of a 16-year-old protestor; protestors were teargassed, and demonstrators were beaten with batons by police officers (Brown, 2018). In response to the actions, the mayor of Memphis, Tennessee, declared martial law and called in the National Guard. As a result of the presence of National Guards, the referenced image depicted a group of predominately Black men marching in the middle of the street in a single file line and the explicit war-like presence of the National Guard. The demonstrators are sternly focused and dressed in collar shirts, suit jackets, and hats. Each of the protesters wore a sign that read, "I AM A MAN." Contrastingly, in the same image, the National Guard and riot police are lined up to the left of the protestors, with military tanks to the right side.

Celebrity and Emotions

As with many of the images of the Civil Rights Movement, a barrage of emotions from audiences may have resulted, and exposure to each image may have cemented distinct collective memories. Feelings of confusion, outrage, or astound may have resulted from the contrast of calm and aggression between Black individuals and law enforcement. Nevertheless, the "I AM A MAN" image challenged such narratives (Dixon, 2017). The image demonstrated how the US "demands a certain kind of performance from a Black man every time he leaves his home [as] he must affirmatively demonstrate–to the police and the public at large–that he is not a threat" (Butler, 2017, para. 32). The imagery of Black people before, during, and after the Civil Rights Movement has challenged the expected norms of social groups and organizations such as law enforcement (Lyle & Esmail, 2016).

The argument that specific themes derived from visuals may contribute to collective memory has aligned with previous research (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). Scholars have noted the relationship to themes such as racial hostility, racial brutality, and location, and its correlation to individuals' shared memory (Schwalbe et al., 2008). Harris' (2006) work drew attention to the imagery of Emmett Till's massacred body, its role to ignite audiences' awareness of racial hostility, and cement the collective memory of his death as the impetus of the Civil Rights Movement. Ghoshal (2013) noted that moral valence often contributed to the richness of recall, and this was prevalent to the collective memory of racial brutality during the movement. Griffin's (2004) work recognized how geographic location impacted audiences recall of the Civil Rights Movement and noted a difference based on region regarding memory. The current work aimed to contribute to the timely dialogue of imagery and the role of collective memory regarding significant events.

Conclusion

Media imagery of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement helped solidify a collective memory of distinct topics and although not tested, may contribute to a range of diverse emotions. The widespread imagery of the protests in Selma, Alabama, such as Bloody Sunday, exposed the reality of police brutality, and images of collective action in Northern US cities, laid bare the reality of injustice and racial issues outside of the deep South. Documented scholarship has noted that depictions of the movement augmented individuals' emotional response and thus shifted collective action efforts, and others were dismayed and disapproved of law enforcement practices in response to protests (Kohut, 2020). Equally important, public support for civil rights, the work of demonstrators and civil rights groups, and activists, many of whom were captured in media, helped pass key legislation like the Voting Rights Act. Prolific imagery played a key role in cementing the collective memories of the Civil Rights Movement and tapped into the emotional response that may have swayed the public's attitudes toward racial justice (Griffin & Bollen, 2009).

We did not aim to test the application of IET, but rather to foreground how emotions may derive from imagery, particular images situated in racial identity and collective action (Stamps & Mastro, 2020).

Holmes (2009) explained that with the help of imagery, which included burning buses and bloody attacks, people across the US were emotionally driven to engage in sit-ins and bus rides to challenge racial inequality. The Freedom Rides of 1961 are a testament to the role of imagery that may have prompted emotional responses. An appropriate next step in exploring exposure or consumption of imagery and its relationship to audiences' emotions may include qualitative inquiries such as focus groups or one-on-one interviews were differing populations can speak to derived emotions from consumption of Civil Rights Movement imagery. Likewise, correlational and experimental examinations may also speak to the relationships.

The examination of the Civil Rights Movement's images, collective memory, and group-based emotional responses was not without limitations. First, the data collected, which yielded 55 images, does not demonstrate an exhaustive account of the data. Future research may seek to collect and examine a larger data sample. Second, the discussion of themes from the data included images chosen at random. However, memorable images such as Ruby Bridges, one of the first children to desegregate schools in Louisiana, and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee, are examples of imagery that could further solidify the narratives that contributed to the collective memories of the Civil Rights Movement. A more robust discussion would help strengthen the initial argument, but page constraints limited the number of images we could reference. Third, the application of critical analysis proved useful in determining salient themes from the sample of data. Survey or experimental research that explores the impact of such images or assesses the potential emotional responses from a sample population would strengthen the application of collective memory and intergroup emotion theories. We hope that the current work helps to foreground continued investigations. Finally, the current work utilized a systematic approach to examine media imagery according to an established codebook. However, additional codes such as the presence of different genders, drawing attention to intersectional identities, or the presence of non-Black persons, with a focus on allyship, may be helpful to further understand the role of collective memory and emotional responses from varied audiences.

Despite the limitations, the current study drew attention to the role of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and their contribution to collective memory and intergroup emotions. The role of collective action and images that capture influential moments have contributed to the salience of racial justice and policy accountability, and this is no small matter. Current movements, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, continue to illustrate the role of images in generating collective memories and accompanying collective action efforts.

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