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# The Black Catholic Movement and Social Movement Continuity Theory: The Civil Rights Movement in Abeyance

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THE BLACK CATHOLIC MOVEMENT AND SOCIAL  
MOVEMENT CONTINUITY THEORY: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN  
ABEYANCE

by

Kevin Winstead

B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2009

A Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts

Department of Sociology  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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Master of Arts  
in the field of Sociology

Approved by:  
Dr. Jennifer Dunn, Chair  
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Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
July 8, 2011

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

Kevin Winstead, for the Master of Arts degree in Sociology, presented on July 8, 2011, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: The Black Catholic Movement and Social  
Movement Continuity Theory: The Civil Rights Movement in Abeyance

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Jennifer Dunn

This work builds on Verta Taylor's theory on social movement continuity to explain abeyance structures within total institutions. The work is grounded in the reinterpretation of Doug McAdam's data from *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (1982) and in new data on the Black Catholic Rights movement from 1968 to the 1990s. Together these cases outline a type of abeyance structure within social movements that holds over the culture, resources, and strategies of a movement by focusing on more narrow oppositional interest. Using the five characteristics of an abeyance structure the research will discuss how the Black Catholic Rights movement became a bridge for future Civil Rights movement work.

## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to younger African American students who are considering graduate school. You are capable of doing it. I am proof.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my parents, Marlene and Gary Winstead, for the constant emotional, financial, and spiritual support. A special thank you goes to Joseph A. Brown, S.J., Tish Whitlock, and the faculty of Africana Studies for helping to provide a path for success. I would also like to thank the department of Sociology and my chair, Jennifer Dunn, for paying special attention to me and doing what was necessary to get me through. Finally, I would like to thank the Sisters of the Holy Family in New Orleans, Louisiana, for providing support and resources and the Black Catholic communities across the United States for letting me tell your stories.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Social movement scholarship has evolved dramatically since the 1960s and the introduction of what once was known as the “new social movements” (Klandermans, 1986) has altered how the field views social movements and their dynamics. Conceptual developments in the literature have created a need for scholars to reexamine previously known social movements and their cycles of mass mobilization for signs of decline and equilibrium for movement activity in nonreceptive political climates (Rupp & Taylor, 1987; Taylor, 1989). This holds true for the Civil Rights movement. The purpose of this research is to examine the Civil Rights movement using social movement continuity theory to explore its “life cycle”. Scholars of social movements typically are focused on the immediate implications of social movement activity and thus often overlook social movements that seemingly are transitioning into abeyance; this is what Verta Taylor conceptualizes as a process by which movements temporarily suspend themselves from major mobilization during times of nonreceptive political environments and provide continuity among two stages of mobilization across time (Taylor, 1989). Because of this, movement scholars have tended to look at movement cycles with an assumption of “birth” and “death”. This limitation, joined with the focus on the beginnings of movements, has the potential to keep scholars from noticing other forms of movement activity.

The question guiding this study is: did the Civil Rights movement, best known through movement activity of the 1950s and 1960s, “die”? The study explores this question by first discussing major movement activity and events during the 1950s and

1960s and exploring when scholars suggest the Civil Rights movement ends. From there the research uses social movement continuity theory to examine abeyance Civil Rights activity as found in the Black Catholic Rights movement of the 1970s and 1980s. The research makes a contribution to social movement continuity theory by articulating an alternative feature of a social movement abeyance organization. Because the study of social movement dynamics is still relatively underdeveloped, this research is significant in that it should highlight how the study of social movement life cycles can help to discover new social movement organizations, activity, and perspective during times of perceived low activity.

After a brief discussion on data sources, the work gives an epigrammatic history of the Civil Rights movement and the work of 1970s and 1980s activists who utilized the essence of the Civil Rights movement to challenge the internal mega-organization they were a part of, as well as subject to -- the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. The contemporaneous slow-down and isolation of the greater Civil Rights movement allowed for the necessary space and resources to allow this subset of movement activists to carry on the mission of the Civil Rights movement in a concentrated and narrowly focused setting. I argue that their form of activism is best appreciated as a social movement abeyance structure. Finally, I explain what roles abeyance structures can play in the transition from abeyance into greater mobilizations. I conclude by exploring alternative abeyance formations and the implications of Taylor's abeyance hypothesis for comprehending the ideological connection between prior activism and the development of later movements.

## CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Social movement continuity theory relies extensively on theories of political process and resource mobilization. But to discuss the role each of these theories plays in the development of social movement continuity is to discuss the general history of the advancements of social movement theory. The classical model of social movements follows a pluralistic view of institutionalized politics, meaning that American political power is diffused among a multitude of contending factions and their leaders, rather than consolidated into any one segment of society (Dahl, 1969; McAdam, 1982). The causal model of classical movement theory relies on the general sequence of events that moves from a structural strain stemming from a flaw in society to a discourse on the effect the flaw has on the psychological state of people of that society. This mental state builds into a critical mass, producing a social movement. This concept is illustrated below:

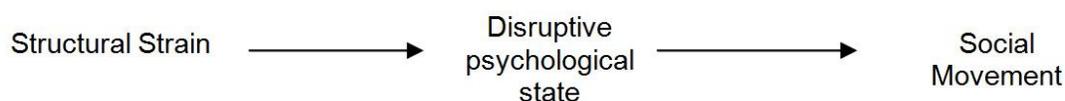


Figure 1.1 Classical Model

Critics of the classical model often criticize the theoretical model for its claims that social movements are a function of systematic structural strain because of the simplicity of the “one-to-one” relationship between strain and protest (McAdam, 1982; Rule & Tilly, 1975; Wilson, 1995), arguing that this assumes that the normal world is

without stress and the stress is what is abnormal. Ultimately what critics suggest as the major weakness of the classical model is a lack of conversation on the greater political context in which insurgency takes place, while characterizing movement actors' psyches as deviant. As Doug McAdam writes, "social movements are not only the product of factors endemic to the aggrieved population. The characteristics and actions of opponents and allies, as well as those of movement groups, must be taken into consideration in accounting for any specific social movement" (1982:12).

Resource mobilization theory follows more of the elite theories of the American political system. This chain of thought is noticeably different from that of the classical theory (Mills, 1969). At the root of elite theories is the understanding that there is a stratification of political power among groups. Unlike the pluralistic view, the elite view holds that the American political arena is a limited alliance held by the powerful and wealthy. From the critique of the classical model's belief concerning the irrational psychological effects of societal pressures, comes the elite theorists' proposal of movement activity as a rational strategic response by those who are seemingly marginalized away from the political arena by the power elite. From this mode of thought comes the social-psychological need to understand the political/organizational dynamic process by which marginalized peoples attempt to gather enough political resources to negotiate successfully with the establishment (Klandermans, 1986; Oberschall, 1973). In addition to viewing grievances as constant, the resource mobilization model also holds that what gives rise to insurgency is the increase in resources. The resource mobilization model treats individuals as political, rational actors; takes into account the role of external groups; and acknowledges the necessity of formal and informal organizations (Leites &

Wolf, 1970; McAdam, 1982).

Unlike the critique of the theoretical process of the classical model, the assessment of the resource mobilization model stems from a lack of empirical support in the literature. Critics of the resource mobilization model have challenged the theory for giving too much authority to the elite supporters of a movement. Advocates of resource mobilization have a tendency to view societal change as “top-down”. McAdam writes, “Change efforts generated by established polity members are likely to involve only limited reforms pursued exclusively through institutionalized channels” (1982:24). The sizeable bargaining power in conjunction with limited goals of the power elite often allows for support of other polity, minimizing change from the status quo.

McAdam offers the next development model for formation and growth of social movements that challenges and builds upon the Resource Mobilization model in the political process model. There are two basic principles at work within the model provided by McAdam. The first argues that, like the critique the resource mobilization model makes of the classical model, social movements are political rather than psychological occurrences. His second principle states that movements represent an uninterrupted process from birth to death, rather than distinct stages of development. The model contradicts the elite perspective and the resource mobilization model by suggesting that elites are not the only ones with sufficient resources necessary to produce movement activity. Furthermore, it suggests that elites’ interests are only in self preservation, which ultimately means they are fundamentally against societal change, and therefore will only undermine movements and use high levels of selectivity regarding the movements they choose to back.

The model itself identifies three major factors that are essential in the development of social insurgency. The first factor includes the degree of organization within the unsettled people; second is the collective perceived chances for a successful outcome among the same people; third is the political alignment of groups within the larger political environment. In summation, social movement actors must be organizationally ready, be collectively conscious, and have the appropriate opportunities. McAdams illustrates the relationship as follows:

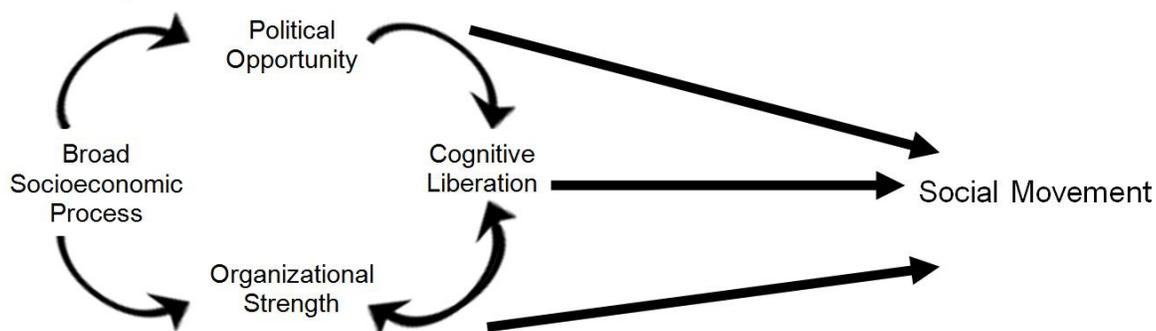


Figure 1.2 Political Process Model

According to this model, *political opportunity* and *organizational strength* are the “structural potential” for the movement, both of which affect *group awareness* (1982:51). Each of the three factors contributes to create the social movement.

The political process model does not go without its criticisms, however. One of the many contributions made by the resource mobilization model was to suggest that movements occurred continuously. However, the model has been critiqued for not being able to make connections between different eras of movement mobilization. Verta Taylor writes, “The overemphasis on movement origins and on new elements of the sixties movements has blinded students of social movements to the ‘carry-overs and carry-ons’

between movements. What scholars have taken as ‘births’ were in fact breakthroughs or turning points in movement mobilization” (1989:761).

Out of Taylor’s critique of the political process model came the social movement continuity model and the abeyance process. The social movement continuity model recognizes the importance of political opportunities, like the resource mobilization model, and a native organizational base, like the political process model. The model critiques the political process model for not recognizing the relationships among one rise in activism and another. While the political process model acknowledges that indigenous organizational readiness contributes to the ability to start a social movement, the continuity model suggests that movement organizations do not always start from scratch - - social movements can retain a collective identity during times of low political opportunity. Through activist traditions, movement organizations can provide the needed activist networks, goals and tactics, and collective identity to future movement actors, which allow them to sustain the necessary organizational bases and commitment to produce movement activity.

According to the social movement continuity model, this period of hold-over from one rise in movement mobilization to the next is known as the abeyance process (Taylor, 1989). In the abeyance process there are several factors that contribute to a movement’s transition into abeyance. Those which are external to the movement include changes in the opportunity structure and lack of status vacancies – which, according to Taylor, forms a collection of marginalized prospective activists. Internally, there are several factors that work to create the abeyance form of the movement including: temporality, commitment exclusiveness, centralization, and culture. Taylor’s contribution goes to explain what

scholars have known but have not conceptualized up to this point (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986; Rupp & Taylor, 1987).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND DATA

To this day, most scholarly accounts of the Civil Rights era give credence to the beginnings of the movement as being either Rosa Parks' efforts in initiating the Montgomery bus boycotts of 1955-1956, or the 1954 U. S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education*, and the end most often starting with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Ph.D., in 1968 (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986; McAdam, 1982). For the purposes of this research, we will examine two main periods of the sublevel Black Catholic Movement, and then discuss the projected third phase of this movement. The first period, generally accepted as the height of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, reached peak mobilization from 1961 to 1965 (McAdam, 1982). Verta Taylor (1989) has argued against the notion of an "immaculate conception" view for the beginnings of a social movement as well as its death. This can cause a bit of a dilemma in setting timeframes for a social movement study. The very nature of bracketing time can give the impression of a birth-and-death view. Instead of using a "birth" and "death" bracket on the timeframe of this research's periods of study, we will highlight phases with reference points that are significant for transition into the next phase. For example, the first phase for this study encompasses the time up to Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. The second phase covers the period of time after 1968 through 1992, the date of the National Black Catholic Congress in New Orleans, which many of those interviewed and the historical record suggest was the peak of the Black Catholic movement (Davis, 1995).

My curiosity about to the conclusion of the Civil Rights movement and its various campaigns for civic equality led to the research described here. There are two reasons for focusing on these specific time periods and organizations. As stated earlier, the Civil Rights movement has been studied extensively, with the consensus being that the movement ended in the late 1960s (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986; McAdam, 1982; 1983). Part of the goal of this research is to begin studying the largely untold stories of the people of the Black Catholic Movement and their part in the larger Civil Rights movement.

With both phases one can argue that the “peak” of the mobilization occurs at an earlier date than the perceived event that transitions us to the next phase of the study. However, I argue that, in various ways, these events changed the culture of the respective movements. Culture consists of meaning and the informal practices that make up a cultural “tool kit” (Swidler, 1986), which can be organized for collective action. The cultural knowledge an actor manages is intimately related to the action itself. In the case of the Black Catholic sub-movement, the research will show how each phase of the Civil Rights movement helped to change the culture, thus noting the phase transition of the movement.

C. Wright Mills writes, “Every social science – or better, every well considered social study – requires an historical scope of conception and a full use of historical materials” (1959:145). Due to the nature of this study as well as the minimal attention paid to the very existence of a Black Catholic “Civil Rights” movement, the data collection process starts with the historical record as told by Black Catholic historians. In addition to these historical records, original documents have been collected from public and private records from some of the major Black Catholic communities across the U.S.,

as well as from the meetings of the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, and the National Black Catholic Congress. In an effort to maintain a high level of validation, the data was triangulated through interviews with members of the clergy, nuns, seminarians, and laity from each of the organizations, including the Black Catholic Bishops' Committee (BCBC), which is made up of the African-American Roman Catholic Bishops. More specifically, from the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC); the National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC); the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association (NBCSA); the Knights of Peter Claver (KPC); and the Institute for Black Catholic Studies, Xavier University of Louisiana (IBCS); as well as the now-defunct National Office of Black Catholics (NOBC). Several challenges to this study arose from the nature of the data. As is true for any study involving human subjects, especially older human subjects, time becomes a scarce resource -- not only in respect to their schedules but as to their health as well.

Archival data include the 1984 Pastoral Letter from African American Roman Catholic Bishops, conference papers from the national conferences themselves (which include the National Black Catholic Congress); the Archbishop James P. Lyke Liturgical Conference, and others held by the separate organizations themselves. Some documents came from the private collections of some of the priests and nuns involved in the movement. The collections of individuals provided an invaluable source of information, not only about organizations, but also about the careers and activities of those in religious life.

The second data source was twelve semi-structured, open-ended, tape-recorded interviews, conducted between 2010 and 2011, with founders, past members, and current

members of the respective organizations. All of the members interviewed are still active within these organizations. Some are labeled as former members, due only to the naturally temporary status of seminarians in training for ordination to priesthood.

Much of this project's empirical Civil Rights movement data is a reinterpretation of McAdam's data in *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (1982). Sufficient research on the decline of the Civil Rights movement can be found within this work. However, Verta Taylor's scholarship calls attention to the limits of McAdams theory (of not drawing much connection to any continued movement efforts). Scholars, including McAdam, have noted the limited work in regards to the study of decline of the Civil Rights movement (Oberschall, 1973; Rupp & Taylor, 1987; Taylor, 1989).

## CHAPTER 4

### THE 1950 TO 1968 CYCLE OF CIVIL RIGHTS MOBILIZATION

To begin discussing the transition from one movement mobilization to the next, it is important to first note the major events that led to the transitioning of the Civil Rights movement into the process of abeyance. Scholars of the Civil Rights movement have broken the movement into four phases: the rise of the movement (1953-1960); the period of organizational expansion and mass mobilization (1961-65); the shift in strategy and early decline (1966-70) (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986); and what we will discuss here, the movement's final transitioning into -- and hold in -- abeyance. The efforts of the Civil Rights era began producing significant positive results as it approached the mid- 1960s, the first of which can be seen as President Lyndon Johnson's signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed overt forms of discrimination against African Americans and women. This included discriminatory voter registration requirements, racially segregated schools, and overt bias both in the workplace and in public spaces.

Such a major symbol of progress did not go without repercussions. On February 21, 1965, Malcolm X, who is still seen as the symbolic figure of the more militant side of the Civil Rights movement, was gunned down while giving a talk on Pan-Africanism (Marable, 2011). March 7, 1965 saw the event known as "Bloody Sunday", where approximately 600 Civil Rights marchers, led by John Lewis of the Southern Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, were brutally attacked by state troopers during their first attempt to march from Selma, Alabama to the state capital. Two days later, a second unsuccessful attempt was made to march from Selma to Montgomery. This time marchers from across the country came in support, but again failed to make it across the Pettis

Bridge, in an incident that eventually led to the death of three white ministers. This caused an international public outcry. The years from 1965 to 1967 saw national waves of riots in cities such as Atlanta, Boston, and Cincinnati, Buffalo, Cleveland, Tampa, Los Angeles, Birmingham, Chicago, New York, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Britain, Rochester, Plainfield, Newark, and Detroit. These years were publicly named years of “The Long Hot Summers” (“Nation: All the Long, Hot Summers,” 1980).

The violent resistance to the movement ironically led to further Civil Rights advancements in 1965. Public outcry led to further support by the federal government. On March 15, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson proposed the Voting Rights Act. On March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 1965, the now historically well-known journey of protestors from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama was ultimately successful, under the attention of national media. Next came the August 6, 1965, signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, by President Johnson. On July, 1967 the National Commission on Civil Disorders, known as the Kerner Commission, became the White House’s attempt to answer three questions about the national eruption of rioting: “What happened? Why did it happen? What can be done to prevent it from happening again and again?” (Wooley & Peters, 1967). Although the suggestions made by the Kerner report were ultimately ignored by Johnson and the federal government, it was the first time in the era that a governmental report laid claim to the injustices made by government, business, and the greater society towards African Americans (Jaynes & R. M. Williams, 1989).

The downturn of the movement began with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. Because the movement always had multiple leaders and multiple goals, after King’s assassination, the vision of its leadership

was more fragmented than ever. Historically, the conflicts between the groups were negotiated behind closed doors, to save the public face of the movement (Garrow, 2004). The efforts and accomplishments of past movement work were no longer bringing the immediate benefits some had hoped for. Younger participants were becoming more radical in their tactics and ideology -- some even promoting isolationism (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986). Organizations that were ideologically and stylistically opposed to the “King approach” (intentional effort and conscious resistance through nonviolence), began taking a more prominent role. This included groups like the Black Panther Party, SNCC, and the Nation of Islam. This is not to say that older organizations were not still around; in fact the NAACP became the *de facto* lobbyist of the movement, even as some of the elders of the organization began to die or retire (Wilkins, 1984). This began the era of the reduction of the mass base for Civil Rights mobilization.

## CHAPTER 5

THE TRANSFORMATION OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISM: DISSIPATION OF THE  
MASS OF THE BASE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

When examining social movement cycles one can almost guarantee seeing a transformation of a social movement, once the movement begins to see major success. This can be attributed to several factors including success itself, internal conflict, and changes in identity solidarity. The deradicalization of society and the decline of the Civil Rights movement left the movement in the hands of the most militant, with increasingly narrow pathways to pursue their political philosophy (McAdam, 1982).

After the acquisition of such advancements as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, movement activity by the four most active organizations of the sixties movement -- the NAACP, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), SNCC, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) -- dropped significantly. The success of the movement left these organizations with no unifying goal. The centralized structure that allowed for the coexistence among the major campaigns of the four main groups had rapidly deteriorated, due to conflicts over the ideological goals of the movement and disagreements as to the best tactical means for achieving those goals. As a result, the movement grew into two opposing pathways (McAdam, 1982; 1983).

The militant wing of the movement was publicly known as the "Black Power" side of the movement. Of the four major organizations, CORE and SNCC became more ideologically opposed to integrationist ideals. They both embraced Black Nationalism: a racial redefinition of a national identity, as opposed to a multicultural identity for the

individual (Essien-Udom, 1995). Ideologically the Black Power faction fundamentally rejected the idea of integration as the foundational objective of the movement. Tactically, the Black Power faction grew more comfortable with advocating violence as a means of self defense – stepping away from King’s reliance on “non-violent resistance”. Stokely Carmichael, former chairman of SNCC and considered to be one of the architects of the Black Power faction, founded the Lowndes County Freedom Organization -- whose symbol of a panther later became the first manifestation of the Black Panther Party in 1964 (and which was later adopted by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seals, two Californian movement participants who had volunteered in Lowndes County) (Carmichael & E. M. Thelwell, 2005; Haas, 2011).

Carmichael and other Black Power leaders transitioned their focus away from the caste system towards issues of class; this meant an emphasis on issues of economic inequality instead of access. This shifted the symbolic target from the racist southerner to the Wall Street capitalist and the economic elite. They focused on actively producing self-sufficient communities, and on organizing focused on the local level. As SNCC and CORE began to decline significantly towards the late 1960s, Black Power organizations with a focus on the local level, such as the Black Panther Party for Self Defense -- the second manifestation of the Panther Party, out of California -- began to take a more prominent role within that side of the movement, thus furthering the radicalization process (McAdam, 1982).

The mainstream side of the movement remained the NAACP and the SCLC. This is not to suggest that the NAACP and SCLC were ideologically in agreement. The NAACP represented the conservative approach to movement activity due to its

longstanding belief in change from within the system. SCLC represented the more radical approach due to its belief in change through public protest. This often led, throughout the early sixties, to conflicts that usually found some form of civil resolution. What they did have in common was an integrationist ideology and a priority interest in non-violent oppositional methods at all cost.

King's assassination in 1968 accelerated the organizational breakdown of the mainstream side of the movement by removing the primary fundraiser and strategist of the last insurgency-oriented organization left in the major Civil Rights organizations. His assassination also furthered the divide between the mainstream movement and the Black Power faction, as he often served in the role of mediator of movement conflicts among the various organizations (McAdam, 1982). Specifically, his death alienated SNCC -- over whom King had great influence as a symbolic figure -- from national movement coordination (Carmichael & E. M. Thelwell, 2005).

In addition to the decline in goal attainment and increasing internal conflicts, the movement also suffered from role expansion. As mentioned earlier, the successes of the movement up to 1965 led to a fracture in the solidarity built over a common interest. As gains were made over the structural obstacles facing the lives of African Americans, movement participation of young people caused them to become increasingly more conscious of their condition. Conflict over the assessment of the African American condition, in addition to the ideological debate over integrationism versus nationalism, led to increased amounts of fragmentation. Traditional strategies of movement involvement often led to the labeling of leaders as "Toms" by Black Power activists. As a result, the Black Power activists became increasingly more isolated from the mainstream

movement, and with no mass-based organizational front like that of the early sixties, radical young activists frequently joined or adopted the Black Power mantra. When the Black Power movement took a significant share of the Black agenda, this limited the objectives and strategies of the movement to those pursued by a younger generation of activists, who were only capable of focusing their attention on the local level (McAdam, 1983).

## CHAPTER 6

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISM FROM 1968 TO 1988: THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT  
IN ABEYANCE

Up to 1965 the focus of black insurgency had almost exclusively been on the issues of integration and access. The same thing cannot be said for the second half of the decade, where the movement's issues began to become diverse -- taking away the solidarity of the interests of the various organizations' bases. The Black Power faction of the Civil Rights movement organizations began taking on more role expansion, which further pushed the movement away from political insurgency and into abeyance. Activists who advocated for justice and equality found few outlets for their cause and became progressively more marginalized from mainstream American society.

Also, the gains made in 1965 marked an end to a trend in American politics that spanned almost thirty years prior. Post-Reconstruction activism from about the 1930s helped to make the American political environment ripe for political insurgency, leading up to the beginnings of the 1950s movement. In 1963 Americans saw the construction of the White backlash countermovement, first articulated in the 1964 Barry Goldwater Presidential campaign. While Goldwater's presidential campaign alone seems of little significance under the shadow of the overwhelming election of President Lyndon B. Johnson, the campaign showed the path to winning Southern states for the Republican Party, which had not dominated the South since the Reconstruction era (1865-1876). Goldwater's campaign was filled with assaults on big government, challenges to the masculinity of the country, and coded racial language (Alexander, 2009; McAdam, 1982; McIlwain & Caliendo, 2011). This is especially evident in the ascendancy of the most

successful political disciple of Goldwater. Ronald Reagan's era of conservatism was based on the issues conservative columnist William Safire calls, "God, guns, and gays" (2008).

The Goldwater strategy successfully cast black insurgency as a political liability and the Democratic Party as the party for African American interests, which had several results for the White political elite. During the 1966 off-year elections, conservative Democrats began "jumping ship" into the Republican Party, resulting in the Democratic Party leaders having to distance themselves from the Civil Rights' increasingly militant, Black Power movement -- which was perceived as threatening the standard of living of the Northern White "Big City" vote. This restructuring of the White Power elite within each party resulted in the removal of liberal incumbents, Governor Pat Brown in California, by Ronald Reagan, and the open crusader for Civil Rights, Illinois incumbent Senator Paul Douglas, by Charles H. Percy, among others. This started a trend of devaluing the Black vote by both parties (McAdam, 1982).

This resulted in the NAACP finding it increasingly more challenging to find solutions through policy and law. Consequently, by 1968 leadership within the NAACP had deteriorated significantly. Students and adult chapter leaders disrupted the 1968 convention, calling for a strategic shift from litigation to direct action and a primary focus on the black underclass. Disgruntled staff within the NAACP resigned after protesting the limitations of working through the courts (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986). As a result, the NAACP moved into the 1970s focusing on maintaining political gains, instead of forging against Goldwater-inspired, Reagan-driven shifts in framing African American

“apartheid” (Alexander, 2009; Bell, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Hall, 2005; Roemer, Lee, & Straeten, 2007).

The stresses produced by the reduced importance of the Black vote, in addition to the ideological and tactical differences mentioned earlier, led to even further fragmentation of the NAACP, SNCC, and the SCLC into three overlapping interest groups, each possessing unique configurations of ideological and tactical beliefs. The increasingly less-concise understanding of Black issues, combined with the lack of political access for all groups, led to the isolation, if not cancellation, of each other’s influence.

As stated earlier, the NAACP, during the second half of the 1960s and 1970s, maintained its focus on advocating goals from within the frames of popular politics, primarily education and employment equality. Of the three above-mentioned organizations, the NAACP had the most political clout and maintained much of its clout by distancing itself from protest, and, during the late sixties, the Black Power movement. Tactically the NAACP maintained its belief in change from within the system (McAdam 1983; Jenkins and Eckert 1986; NAACP 1981).

The SCLC consisted of a network of African American churches, often connecting their own respective church networks. They advocated the end of all forms of segregation. Tactically, the SCLC believed churches should be involved in political activism against social injustice – which, from the beginning, was a point of friction with the NAACP. Historically, leadership in African American communities came from the educated elite: ministers, professionals, and teachers (Du Bois, 1903). These elites spoke for and on behalf of the majority of the black population: laborers, maids, farm workers,

and the working poor. Many of these traditional leaders, like the leadership of the NAACP, were uneasy with the tactics of involving ordinary blacks in mass insurgency activities such as boycotts and marches (Brooks, 1974). The post-1965 movement saw the SCLC and their leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., serve as intermediaries between traditionalists and the militancy of the youth, while being criticized by both sides. The Black Power side of the movement saw SCLC as often too passive; and the NAACP saw SCLC as too radical in their methods (McAdam, 1982).

The third group, SNCC, remained furthest outside the political order. SNCC had always been known for taking the greatest amount of risk, being on the front lines of the “Freedom Rides,” and starting voter drives in the deepest parts of the south. SNCC, and one of its former directors, Stokely Carmichael, became mostly responsible for the upsurge in the Black Power movement. Ideologically, the success of the movement encouraged young activists to become more socially conscious, which helped push the Black Power movement to focus on politically unpopular issues such as the criminalization of urban youth and economic inequality (as opposed to just access to economic opportunity).

After the 1964 Democratic convention, the organization became increasingly more separatist, removing all of its White members in 1965. After 1965, SNCC leaders found it increasingly more difficult to identify with the non-violent strategies of their elders, and in 1969 SNCC changed its name to the SCC, the Student Coordinating Committee. By 1970 much of the leadership of SCC, including Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and Marion Berry, became associated with other Black Power organizations, including the Black Panther Party. In fact, oftentimes, in certain cities, SCC and the Black

Panther Party shared much of the same leadership (Carmichael & M. Thelwell, 2003; Greenberg, 1998; Holsaert et al., 2010).

None of the three groups saw much success in the 1970s. In fact, by the end of the 1970s, SCC was out of existence and the SCLC had lost all of its national influence. Only the NAACP was able to maintain itself through the 1970s. This reflected not only the change in political climate during the 1970s, including internal conflicts, but the increasing characterization of African American insurgency and militant youth as well, at the beginning of the Reagan Era.

When we consider how these declines led to increasing marginality for these organizations and their leaders, we can see that, moving into the 1970s, an array of social forces contributed to the reduction of what McAdam calls cognitive liberation, meaning the liberation of one's mind, typically seen as awareness in regards to a subject. This is often seen through the vacating of status and a growing pessimism and fatalism regarding the prospects for social change. Increasingly, after 1965, African Americans who continued to protest were characterized as deviant (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Gallagher, 2003; Gardner Jr., 2004). Coded calls for the restoration of law and order came as a consequence of the White conservative backlash, which was growing throughout the sixties and seventies (Alexander, 2009). This, in conjunction with the 1968 conservative electoral sweep, sent a transparent message to Civil Rights activists.

In addition to rearticulating insurgency work as criminally deviant, the media and the government worked in partnership with each other to denounce Civil Rights activism and to discredit African Americans who continued to engage in insurgency, successfully ending the mobilization of 1970s insurgency organizations such as the Black Panther

Party (Haas, 2011; McAdam, 1983). Federal government counterintelligence organizations such as COINTELPRO and local police intelligence groups, such as Chicago's Red Squad, actively used movement informants; fed false news information to media giant CBS; falsely incarcerated activists, and carried out assassinations of movement leaders (Donner, 1990; Drabble, 2007; Haas, 2011; Vermeule, 2007; J. E. Williams, 2008).

As a result of the growing pressure, movement organizations found little external financial backing for movement activity during the late 1960s and 1970s. In addition employment rates among African Americans were on the rise. The perceived cost of participation in Civil Rights activism was also at an all-time high. Many of the individuals who possessed enough social status currency to uphold movement work were now middle class, well educated, and employed in professional occupations including law, government, and higher education. In fact, many activists who moved into the higher education profession helped to establish many of the Black Studies programs still in existence today (Marable, 2005). In other words, the lifestyles of activists became increasingly professional, with the time, money, and social resources that could have helped maintain their activist activities; yet these individuals were left with minimal opportunities to effectively engage in insurgency (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986; McAdam, 1982).

To review, continued participation in movement activity during the 1970s came at a great cost to the participants. As the political and cultural atmosphere that previously allowed for insurgency to take place declined, elites in conjunction with the popular press were able to rearticulate the identities of activists as criminal deviants; socially and

politically isolate them; and threaten their freedom and personal safety (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Gallagher, 2003; Gardner Jr., 2004; Haas, 2011; McAdam, 1982). This was not the death of the movement, however, but signaled its transition into abeyance. Below, I discuss Taylor's "dimensions" of social movement abeyance structures, using the Black Catholic's movement to illustrate.

## CHAPTER 7

## DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT ABEYANCE STRUCTURES

In describing the process of abeyance Verta Taylor writes, “The abeyance process functions through organizations capable of sustaining collective challenges under circumstances unfavorable to mass mobilization” (1989:765). The elements of the abeyance process contribute to the maintenance of an organizational practice to retain nonconformist individuals. To date the abeyance process has only been used in the analysis of movement organizations that maintain a degree of resistance to the same external focus. However, my analysis of the Black Catholic Rights movement of the 1970s and 1980s suggests that an abeyance structure can also manifest itself within an already established institution. Within an abeyance formation such as this, the relevant variables remain the same as those of the externally focused abeyance process: temporality, purposive commitment, exclusiveness, centralization, and culture.

Temporality. Verta Taylor conceptualizes temporality as, “the length of time that a movement organization is able to hold personnel” (1989:755). This use of temporality is useful in the analysis of abeyance organizations that fit within a certain type of model that is focused on a structurally external goal or “enemy”. However, this conceptualization of the term is limiting in the study of abeyance structures that are internally focused; that is to say, the structure is focused on internal structural change -- meaning that the goal is to change the participants themselves. Given this limitation, I conceptualize temporality as: the length of time a movement is able to hold individuals to the core principles of the movement. In referencing core principles I do not exclusively mean methodology, although methodology is often a part of the “spirit” of a movement. The act of collective

insurgency can provide a community with a distinct culture that connects individuals to each other and to ideology across time. Additionally, the past culture, style, and ideology of a movement can be appropriated by a new form of insurgency organization to produce an abeyance structure.

This was true for the participants of the Black Catholic Rights movement of the late 1960s. Many of the founding members of the Black Catholic Rights movement had been involved in counter-insurgency work in the Civil Rights movement. During the 1965 protest march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama local nuns, including Barbara Lum, formerly known as Sister Eleanor (in the years before Vatican II, Catholic nuns were required to give up their baptismal names and acquire “names in religion”), Sister Mary Paul Geck, Sister Josepha Twomey, Sister Marie Albert Alderman, and Mary Weaver (formerly known as Sister Felicitas) were involved in the organizing and caretaking of the masses. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., put his nationwide call out for supporters during the second attempt to march, six Roman Catholic nuns, White and Black, became the first responders to his call, including Roberta Schmidt, C.S.J. (Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet); Rosemary Flanigan, C.S.J. (formerly known as Sister Thomas Marguerite); Therese Stawowy (known as Sister Ann Christopher); Christine Nava (formerly Sister Christine Mary); and Antona Ebo (formerly known as Sister Mary Antona), who was nationally noted as being one of the first African American women to enter a Franciscan community, and who became the first African American nun to join the march (Hart, 2006; PBS, 2009). Sister Antona Ebo, however, was not the last African American nun to join the march. She was followed by Barbara Moore (formerly known as Sister Ann Benedict) who traveled to Selma from Kansas City on March 12, 1965; later she and

Antona Ebo became part of the founding members of the National Black Sisters Conference. In Chicago early Black Catholic Movement participants such as Father George Clements and (now-Bishop) Dominic Carmon were also involved in the Civil Rights movement. Importantly, the subjects I interviewed testified to both allowing organizations such as the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party to use their resources for collective organizing.

For these and many other Black Catholics their participation in high-risk activism during the Civil Rights movement exposed them all to the ideology, style, and cultures of that movement, which allowed them to appropriate these resources for their own more specific reasons, especially when the greater Civil Rights movement began losing its mobilization. This exposure also included being exposed to (and helping influence) Black Liberation theology, an interpretation of Christian theology that focuses on using biblical theology to develop the struggle for liberation from unjust economic, political, or social conditions (Cone, 1997). This interpretation of Christianity, which organizations such as the SCLC used in protest against external oppositional forces, became the carryover legacy many Black Catholic priests and nuns held on to after the loss of the mass mobilization events of the Civil Rights movement (Cone, 2000; Cone & Wilmore, 1993; Hopkins, 1999). The theology had such a significant effect on the participants that they began promoting and teaching Black liberation to each other in formal and informal structures -- ultimately leading to the development of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies, established at Xavier University in 1982.

In addition to holding on to the “spirit” of the Civil Rights movement, the Black Catholic movement also had the ability to maintain constant numbers throughout the

abeyance period. African Americans did not have equal access to religious life until the mid 1950s, making the 1960s and 1970s classes of priests and nuns some of the first to be fully integrated into religious life. This allowed for a constant number of dedicated members of the Black Catholic movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

**Purposive Commitment.** In discussing purposive commitment, Taylor calls upon scholars to move away from the traditional method of asking what incentives are provided to encourage activists to initially join into insurgency. Instead, Taylor suggests that we focus on the reasons individuals keep unpopular beliefs over time. In other words, purposive commitment refers to the willingness of individuals to do what is in the interest of the collective, without factoring in the individual returns or forfeits to the self. For the Black Catholic rights movement, their commitment comes from trying to reconcile their dueling identities. Their devotion to the Roman Catholic Church proves itself by their lifelong dedication to serving the people of that larger institution, as well as those of their specific ministries. For those in religious life, that commitment is shaped by their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This commitment to their vows allows them the opportunity to do what must be done to sustain a collective action, even at the cost of personal rewards (Taylor, 1989:766).

However, as many of those interviewed for this project explained, being obedient to the Catholic Church often became a source of conflict with their Black identity. As one priest explains the context, “You have to keep in mind that University of Georgetown, a Catholic institution, was built by slaves.” (Then-Brother, subsequently) Father Joseph Davis, S.M., reflects on his account of what was occurring:

Black and Catholic. For these new Black Catholic organizations, the temper of the times called for unequivocal identification with the needs, hurts, and aspirations of Black people, pride in identifying culturally with Black Americans and with Africa, and demonstration of a willingness to join the ranks of other Black organizations in the frontline struggle...(Davis & Phelps, 2003)

The Roman Catholic Church in the United States prior to the Vatican II was one of long- standing rigid traditions that reflected the moral and ethical values of the era (Doyle, 1992; Wilde, 2007). Father Joseph A. Brown, S.J., explains this conflict in *To Stand on the Rock: Meditations on Black Catholic Identity* (1998):

The irony of such self-mutilating behavior for those African American men who aspire to priesthood and religious commitment within the Roman Catholic Church in the United States rests upon the contradiction inherent in pursuit of a vocation. How can men choose voluntary chastity in a system where the underlying assumption concerning their existence demands that they be judged as promiscuous, licentious libertines whose cultural flaw concern sexual impropriety with women and men of all races and ethnic background? Who of them could choose, voluntarily, to live lives of “apostolic poverty,” when the culture has made them, from the very beginning of American history, economic commodities to be bartered, sold, or exploited in whatever marketplace prevails at the time? How can men of African descent enthusiastically promise or vow obedience to other men who have been taught and conditioned to expect service and subservience from all African American people, who must—by definition—rest at the bottom of all social systems? To choose such restrictions, based as they are on the prevailing myths of racism and oppression that permeate American culture, is to choose a continuous existence of invisibility, impotence, and insanity. (1998:154-155).

The ability to sacrifice for the greater good is a foundational principle these Black Catholic religious base their lives upon. For the first time in their lives, many of the Black Catholic religious had an opportunity to use this commitment to better their own existence. Armed with Black liberation theology, the participants of the Black Catholic movement not only sought to gain access to greater roles within the Roman Catholic Church but also to educate themselves in a theology that allows the healing of these two conflicting identities.

With the blessing of Rome and the synod of Vatican II, the Black Catholic movement was as much about the persistence of bringing Black liberation theology into their religious lives as it concerned anything else. While each of the major organizations had as its focus the immersion of themselves in this theology, the National Sisters' Conference made their primary focus "to initiate, organize and/or participate in self-help programs through which we can educate ourselves and our black people, thereby encouraging the utilization of those resources which are useful to black people" (Davis & Phelps, 2003). As a way of demonstrating the intentional focus by the National Black Sisters' Conference, they and each of the other conferences (the National Black Clergy Caucus, and the National Black Catholic Seminarians' Association) meet regularly and jointly, with the focused intent of maintaining the ideological integrity of their work within the movement.

Their ability to maintain high levels of commitment through placing the best interests of the collective over any self-interest is something invested in them by their vocations. Their lifelong commitment to their vocation functioned as a natural impediment to participation in alternative roles outside of that of a Black Catholic -- as opposed to a Catholic who is Black.

Exclusiveness. According to Taylor the purposive commitment variable is closely related to the exclusivity variable. She writes: "organizations that insist upon high levels of purposive commitment and make stringent demands of time and financial resources cannot absorb large numbers of people. They are, however, good at holding constant those members that they have" (1989:768). This holds true for the Black Catholic movement as well. Exclusivity occurs on multiple levels in the transition into this

particular abeyance structure. At the largest level there is the exclusion of non-Catholics who participated in Civil Rights activism. The next level is within the Black Catholic community itself, with the initial exclusion of the Black laity. The last level is the requirement of Black Catholics to opt into the liberated Black Catholic identity. In this abeyance structure, exclusivity is an important analysis variable, due to the nature of the structure, because the Black Catholic movement serves as an abeyance structure within the larger Civil Rights movement.

At the same time, because this movement appropriates the strategies, culture, and style of the larger movement for a related – more narrowly and structurally internally focused – agenda, it begins taking on features of a distinct movement cycle. However, the research suggests that this is not a distinct movement itself. This will be further explained later in the discussion. What is important to understand here is that exclusivity works, in this example, at two points: 1) Exclusiveness at the level of goals; 2) Exclusiveness at the level of membership.

The Civil Rights movement may have begun its street insurgency against segregationist practices such as that contended within the Montgomery Bus boycott, but it quickly grew to deal with issues of economics, education, and labor, among others, on other fronts. However, as the movement began its transition into abeyance, there began a trend for organizations to take on smaller bits of the collections of goals consumed by the movement, whether it was legal equality (with the NAACP), economic equality (with the National Urban League), or housing and famine (with the Black Panther Party). For the community of Black Catholics in the United States, this led to their focusing on the oppression of a specific institution, the Roman Catholic Church of the United States. The

assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968, spurred action among Black Catholic priests. As a result, Black Catholic priests from across the nation met for the first time in Catholic history at the Sheraton-Cadillac hotel in Detroit, Michigan, in order to discuss the conditions of Black Americans. More than sixty of one hundred and fifty Black priests attended. In the 1968 Statement of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, this new organization articulates this narrowing down of the agenda, writing:

The Catholic Church in the United States, primarily a white racist institution, has addressed itself primarily to white society and is definitely a part of that society. On the contrary, we feel that her primary, though not exclusive work, should be in the area of institutional, attitudinal and societal change (Davis and Phelps 2003:111).

The Black Catholic movement, by the nature of having to be Catholic in addition to being Black, excluded some members from the Civil Rights movement, albeit not intentionally. In addition to the natural exclusion, the Black Catholic movement did not initially include Black Catholic laity at the core of its leadership or focus. This occurred for multiple reasons. First, the purposive commitment needed to sustain the Black Catholic movement was too much to handle for many laity. Much of the work of the early conferences strove to construct a new Black Catholic identity with rituals, customs, and liturgies, something the laity was at that time unqualified to do. Second, the national conferences were held in different locations each time, which had the possibility of causing additional stress to an average poor or middle class Black Catholic's schedule, seeing that the overwhelming majority of the Black Catholic laity was not employed by the Catholic Church. The privileges of time, economic, and intellectual resources, in this case, belonged exclusively to those in religious life.

Even as the groups combined on occasions to show greater solidarity with each other, many of the participants were involved with multiple organizations. Priests and seminarians often spoke at the National Sister's Conference. In fact, as many of the nuns interviewed reported, in the early days the seminarians often met at their national meetings.

The consistency of the membership of the National Black Clergy Caucus and National Sisters' Conference organizations especially guaranteed a pool of activists suited to the needs of collective action. This is not to say the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association was less crucial; however, the nature of the status of seminarians required them to be more focused on completion of the process to priesthood. Once ordained, many of their membership went on to leadership roles within the Black Clergy Caucus.

Centralization. Groups that operate under a single power structure have a tendency to maintain organizational steadiness, synchronization, and knowledge necessary for movement survival (Gamson 1975; Wehr 1986; Staggenborg 1989; Taylor 1989).

Although the use of a centralized power structure maintains some insurgency activity, it also results in the loss of direct-action strategies (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986).

With the development of the various Black Catholic rights organizations from 1968 to 1969, it became evident by 1970 that an umbrella organization was needed to coordinate efforts and share expertise where needed. The U. S. Roman Catholic Church's response to the Black Clergy Caucus' initial accusation of the Church being a "White racist institution" was that of alarm (Davis & Phelps, 2003). The fact that the women religious and seminarians were also organizing in support of that accusation exacerbated

the situation greatly, forcing a response from the Church leadership (the bishops). Each Black Catholic organization appointed a delegate to represent the needs of the collective, with a \$16,000 start-up budget from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to allow the newly formed think-tank – the National Office of Black Catholics --to assess the needs of their people.

At the 1969 National Conference of Catholic Bishops a proposal was set forth for \$500,000 to start the National Office of Black Catholics. The Bishops Conference agreed to \$150,000, causing the group of black delegates to reject the offer outright, claiming they had no need of “white racist money” (Davis & Phelps, 2003), leaving the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in a state of distress and forcing the National Office of Black Catholics to rely on independent financial sources primarily received through donations from the Black Catholic laity. In an effort to maintain its representation of all Black Catholics, the National Office modeled itself on a corporate model, with no personal membership -- placing the responsibility of membership and staffing on the three separate participating groups.

Even though the Black Catholic Movement developed an umbrella organization to oversee the national organizations and their regional affiliates, much authority was deferred to the only Black Bishop in the late 1960s into the 1970s, Bishop Harold Robert Perry, S.V.D. He symbolically became the “Black bishop of the United States,” even though he was only the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans for over twenty years.

Each of the three member organizations had a distinct goal and priority: the National Black Clergy Caucus wanted more Black Bishops; the National Sisters’

Conference wanted to educate African American Catholics with a cultural toolkit consisting of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views; the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association wanted to contribute to the wellbeing of candidates for priesthood and religious life and to promote vocations to priesthood and religious life. Nevertheless, they all came together, under the blessing of Bishop Perry, to focus on the evangelization of African Americans as a central theme around which to organize (Davis & Phelps, 2003).

The utilization of a common singular goal allowed the NBCC, NBSC, and NBCSA to organize under the shield of the National Office of Black Catholics, and it allowed the Black Catholic Rights movement to sustain its efforts through time by focusing on a common strategy that could be implemented by the small, but committed, group of activists who possessed the necessary education and skills.

Culture. Taylor tells us that the culture of a social movement can be found in its collective emotions, beliefs and actions (1989:769). Effective abeyance organizations are capable of inspiring potential activists to assume responsibilities and roles. In times of hostile political environments, these organizations must set forth alternative frameworks to give purpose and precautions for those who chose insurgency. The more highly developed the social movement's culture, the more likely the organization's likelihood of survival (Lofland, 1985).

The use of collective action frames serves a tripartite purpose, including: diagnostic framing, a tool to highlight a particular situation seen as unfavorable as well as assign blame to the appropriate actors; prognostic framing, a tool for communicating an alternative reality and strategies for achieving that reality, and motivational framing, the

social construction and announcement of the identities and motives of the protagonists (Hunt, Benford, & Snow, 1994).

Protagonist Identity Field. The collection of actors, symbols, and organizations that fall within this field are assigned the role of the *activist* through prognostic framing. They are responsible for providing strategies against and alternatives to the unfavorable human condition, as well as the announcement of the personal or collective identity. Black Catholics prior to the late 1960s struggled to resolve the warring conflict between their Catholic identity and their Black identity, a conflict that has its roots in the institutions provided to Black Catholics by the greater church. Prior to the second Vatican Council, known as Vatican II (1962 to 1965), the Roman Catholic Church was already becoming progressively more liberal as the church was moving away from its biblical literalism and neo-scholastic roots. The church found itself struggling to keep up with the modern issues confronting people around the world. It had been the custom of the Church to maintain its Roman identity even as the church was spreading across the world. American Catholic schools and other institutions promoted an atmosphere which cultivated a thoroughly European (mostly Irish, German, Italian, Polish and French) Catholic identity and left no room or tolerance for any exploration of Black culture. For example, according to the strict policies of the Catholic Church, Catholics were forbidden to religiously associate with Protestants or even visit their churches. This kept Black Catholics, especially those who chose to identify mainly with the received traditions of Catholic religious life, separate from much of American Black culture, oftentimes including their own families.

This policy did not keep some members from separating themselves from what was expected by the hierarchy, and learning Black church culture independently from the

Catholic education system. Priests such as Rev. Clarence R.J. Rivers, Jr., and Rev. Joseph A. Brown, S.J., among others, intentionally educated themselves in Black cultural studies, especially Black Protestant rituals and song. After Vatican II, due to the Roman Catholic Church's intention to allow indigenous culture into the Catholic Church, the work of scholars such as Rivers in fact became the standard in the creation of Black liturgy, rituals and song for the Catholic community. After the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., which sparked the gathering that became the Black Clergy Caucus, Rivers became the symbolic figure of Black Catholic culture, due to his immense knowledge of Black religious rituals, his compositions of culturally adaptable music, and his ability to infuse these elements into the emerging Black Catholic community. In addition, the rituals and songs also take on the characteristics of the protagonist field, which is explained best by Rivers' *The Spirit in Worship* (as found in Joseph A. Brown, S.J.'s *Sweet, Sweet, Spirit* 2006):

It is at this special moment in history when many people are coming to realize that the culture of black peoples is a sacrament of the Spirit; and that the soulfulness, the Spirit, the spiritual dynamism always so evident in happenings among black peoples, is precisely the element that is so frequently lacking elsewhere, both within and without the church (Brown and Cheri 2006:viii).

As a symbolic protagonist figure, Rivers engages in the meaning-making process for the collective identity of Black Catholicism, while at the same time diagnosing the ills of the Catholic community. This can also be seen as *boundary framing*, which includes frames that make distinctions between actors in and out of the movement (Taylor, 1989).

Rivers and Brown's interpretation and articulation of Protestant Black culture for the Catholic community creates the symbols and rituals from which the collective derives its black identity. In the case of the Black Catholic Movement, the collective in the

protagonist identity field was responsible for diagnostic framing. The assassination of King spurred action among Black Catholic priests. As we have noted, in the “1968 Statement of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus”, the organization identifies its antagonist in the very first sentence followed by a statement on what it thought the church should be undertaking:

The Catholic Church in the United States, primarily a white racist institution, has addressed itself primarily to white society and is definitely a part of that society. On the contrary, we feel that her primary, though not exclusive work, should be in the area of institutional, attitudinal and societal change (Davis and Phelps 2003:111).

The caucus immediately followed this statement with more specific assessment and redress for Black communities, writing:

Within the ghetto, the role of the Church is no longer that of spokesman and leader. Apart from a more direct spiritual role, the Church’s part must now be that of supporter and learner. This is a role that white priests in the black community have not been accustomed to playing and are not psychologically prepared to play (Davis and Phelps 2003:112).

It was also this collective that first exemplified prognostic framing. In both above-mentioned excerpts, we see a follow-up statement of redress after each diagnostic framing statement. It was the intention of the caucus to not only attack the Catholic Church of which they were still a part, but also to give strategies of redress. Prognostic frames can also redefine already established frames for describing specific events. The Black Clergy Caucus, in its 1968 statement, also articulates the anger of black militancy:

One of these changes must be a re-evaluation of present attitudes towards black militancy. The violence occurring in the black communities has been categorically condemned and has called forth a wide variety of response, from “shoot to kill” to the recommendation of the Kerner Report. Such violence has been specified as “Negro violence,” as though there were a substantial or significant difference between violence in the black community and that which has occurred

consistently throughout the history of the United States and the world (Davis and Phelps 2003:112).

Not only do they call on the U. S. Church to rethink how it sees Black militancy, the caucus also provides an alternative way to view militant protest by going on record as recognizing:

1. the reality of militant protest;
2. that non-violence in the sense of black non-violence hoping for concessions after white brutality is dead;
3. that the same principles on which we justify legitimate self-defense and just warfare must be applied to violence when it represents black response to white violence;
4. the appropriateness of responsible, positive militancy against racism is the only Christian attitude against this or another social evil (Davis and Phelps 2003:112).

The triad of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational processes intimately interrelates to one another. This interrelatedness allows for internal field boundary construction, thus making related-yet-distinct movement organizations within the same movement. This is especially true for movements that are in abeyance (Taylor, 1989). For the Black Catholic Movement, the gendered role-specialization helped to cultivate what Hunt, Benford, and Snow call “turfs” (1994). The National Black Sisters’ Conference followed the Black Clergy Caucus in August, 1969 at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. The sisters developed a position statement in which they too, engaged in prognostic framing, declaring:

We black religious women see ourselves as gifted with the choicest of God’s blessings. The gift of our womanhood, that channel through which the Son of God

Himself chose to come into the human race, endows us with those qualities and prerogatives which are designed for the deliverance of humanity. The gift of our blackness gives us our mandate for the deliverance of a special people, our own black folk. And the gift of our religious vocation makes accessible to us that union with Christ which guides us to the task, strengthens our determination, and sustains our efforts to free ourselves and our black brethren from the intolerable burden forced upon us as the victims of white racism (*Davis and Phelps 2003:114*).

Not only do the sisters frame themselves as empowered by God, they also attribute the victimhood identity to their people through relating it to themselves. The sisters also partake in diagnostic framing, but in a way that is distinct from the Black Clergy Caucus, writing:

The reality in American society today makes it inescapably clear to us that our attempt to free black people must begin with a forthright denunciation of the problem recognizable as white racism. Expressions of individual and institutional racism found in our society and within our Church are declared by us to be categorically evil and inimical to the freedom of all men everywhere, and particularly destructive of black people in America. We are cognizant of our responsibility to witness to the dignity of all persons as creatures of God, and are aware of the fact that failure to denounce white racism, in fact, perpetuates this evil. Moreover, our failure to speak out against this evil exposes us to the risk of miscarrying and betraying that sacred trust which God our Father has seen fit to place in our hands (*Davis and Phelps 2003:114*).

The sisters give the collective the intellectual permission to denounce the Catholic institutions from which they draw part of their identity. In fact, their words suggest a certain obligation in doing so -- which can be seen as motivational framing. Included in the sisters' use of prognostic framing is their identity creation, through speaking truth directly to power, as Sister Thea Bowman said to the National Council of Catholic Bishops, in 1989:

What does it mean to be black and Catholic? It means that I come to my church fully functioning. That doesn't frighten you, does it? I come to my church fully functioning. I bring myself, my black self, all that I am, all that I have, all that I

hope to become, I bring my whole history, my traditions, my experience, my culture, my African American song and dance and gesture and movement and teaching and preaching and healing and responsibility as gift to the church (Bowman, 1999; Brown, 1998:120).

The production of organizational “turfs” within the protagonist field allowed the Black Catholic Movement to have divisions of labor. The Black Clergy Caucus focused on the addition of more Black Clergy to the rank of Bishop. The Sisters’ Conference focused on the preservation and the infusion of Black culture into the American Catholic Church. The Clergy Caucus called for the training of white priests in black neighborhoods; the Sisters’ Conference sought to provide cultural training not only to the white priests but also to the black community. Collectively they all gave attention to fostering new vocations, which is the recruitment of laity into clerical and religious life. Thus, following the formation of the Black Clergy Caucus and the Black Sisters’ Conference, was the formation of the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association, which focuses on “the wellbeing of candidates for priesthood and religious life, with an emphasis on Black American, African, Afro-Caribbean, and Afro-Latino candidates preparing to serve the Church in the United States and its territories” (NBCSA 2003). In an effort to maintain a uniform mission of the movement, a coordinating research and educational body was created in 1970, named the National Office of Black Catholics.

Antagonist Identity Field. In the diagnostic frames shown to us by the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, this research is able to identify the antagonist, “The Catholic Church in the United States, a racist white institution”. This diagnostic frame is especially important in this movement because of the nature of the system that the movement is against. We take note of the fact that the priests and nuns involved in this movement are symbols of

the very system they now are trying to change. For them, the diagnostic frame not only identifies the “bad guy” but also allows the cognitive dissonance necessary to create the “us-versus-them” dichotomy necessary to maintain high mobilization. In addition, the Black Catholic Movement used the diagnostic frame to help, in a sense, give permission for the Black identity to challenge the Catholic identity within the warring self. As

Reverend Lawrence E. Lucas explains in *Black Priest White Church* (1990):

Negro Catholics have been fed a distorted religion that makes it almost impossible for them to identify with or support the black revolution. Because they refuse to see, or cannot understand, that Catholicism has become a pseudo-religious support for the white enslavement of black people, they are torn between their natural inclination to be what God made them and their desire to be what they consider Christian or Catholic (Lucas 1990:181).

It would be unrealistic to suggest that Black Catholics did not see their condition prior to the Black Catholic Movement as problematic; however this diagnostic framing of the antagonist American Catholic Church provides the necessary vocabularies of motives (Mills, 1940) for individuals within the Black Catholic Movement to negotiate their conflicting identities.

The antagonist field also served as a way of boundary maintenance for Black Catholics in the movement. Black Catholics in the movement who were not acting according to the expectations of the collective were cast as acting like the main antagonist, the U. S. Catholic Church. Lucas gives an example of this boundary maintenance in his writing about Auxiliary Bishop Harold Perry’s actions following the Christian burial of Mr. Perez, a lay Catholic who worked to integrate New Orleans Catholic schools:

Bishop Harold Perry...is an intelligent black priest and a bishop. He knows all about public crime, public penalty, public repentance and Christian burial as

understood and taught by the Church. Nevertheless, Perry called the burial of Perez with the Church's full rites something that "should gladden the heart of a true Christian." A white man's act of hypocrisy was described by a black man as "something that should gladden the heart of a true Christian," while six white priests were protesting the same act (Lucas, 1990).

According to Lucas, Bishop Perry did not act in accordance with the expectations of "a black man" and he used him as an example of someone who strove to maintain order within the identity field. For Lucas, Bishop Perry, while to be admired for praising the church for permitting Perez' burial, was incorrect in not publicly and consistently denouncing the system's hypocrisy concerning the racism within the Catholic Church.

Audience Identity Field. The Audience field is considered to be the set of identities that are considered to be neutral. This field contains unattached observers who may act in response to movement activities. For the Black Catholic Movement, the audience field primarily contains Black laity, especially those who felt the church no longer represented them. As one priest described it, the laity is what drives any church politically. The Roman Catholic Church did not want to see a mass exodus from the church and neither did the Black Catholic community. Not only were their opinions valuable to the movement, but their financial resources were also important.

One might ask how Black Catholics are "neutral" to the Black Catholic Movement. First, we have to look at the agency. Black Catholic laity did not have to be primary agents in the movement. The outwardly stated goal of the Black Clergy Caucus was to establish Black Bishops; for the Black Sisters' Conference it was self-education; the Black Seminarians wanted self-preservation. In the earliest days of organizing, no one main objective to reshape the Catholic Church dealt directly with the conditions of Black Catholic laity. More importantly nothing relieved the conditions of Black Catholic laity

faster than leaving the church altogether. Thus, part of the goal of the Black Catholic Movement had to be to develop the emotional investment needed to retain Black Catholic laity, while involving them in collective activities.

Audience framing gives social movement organizations the necessary strategies to determine what future frames will speak to the people and drive movement support. Part of the framing for audience includes cultural symbols, rituals, and narratives. For the Black Catholic Movement, it is this framing for the audience field that drives the future work of its liturgists. This attention to creating rituals that are both “authentically Black” and “truly Catholic” ultimately led to the creation of the Archbishop James P. Lyke Conference and Liturgical Symposium, which is devoted to the production of relevant cultural rituals for the Black Catholic communities (Lyke Conference 2011).

Also included in the audience identity field is the Catholic Church of Rome. The global headquarters of Rome included marginal supporters and powerful elites. The Catholic Church of Rome had come out on record in favor of the autonomy of African American Catholics as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, over 70 years prior to the beginning of the Black Catholic Movement. The indifference of the bishops of the United States to this call from Rome, leading up to Vatican II, in actively redressing the unequal status of the African American Catholic community, played a significant role in the conditions of Black people. It was enslaved Black people who were responsible for building many Catholic institutions such as Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and St. Louis University. It is also Rome that selects all the Catholic hierarchical leadership in the United States. So while the Movement sought to change the attitudes of U. S. Catholics, it also sought to influence the ‘hiring’ process of Rome as well, by sharpening the

awareness of the leadership of the worldwide Roman Church (Davis & Phelps, 2003; Lucas, 1990).

In addition to the framing process, it is important to remember that the Black Catholic movement takes on more of the spirit of the Black Power side of the Civil Rights movement. This can be attributed to several different reasons. First, many Black Catholics prior to the Civil Rights movement already were living in an integrationist environment within the Catholic system. Many of the interviewed religious who lived in White communities discussed how they did not usually associate with other African American religious. For many it was not something that was seen as an issue, just a way of life. As the Civil Rights movement played itself out, awareness of the conditions of Blacks, Catholic or not, changed their perceptions of the quality of life provided by integration (Davis, 1995; Davis & Phelps, 2003; Lucas, 1990).

Second, many of the original activists involved in the Black Catholic movement had previously been involved with aspects of ground insurgency in the Civil Rights movement. Sister Antonia Ebo was one of the first Black Catholics to be seen by much of America in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march (PBS, 2009). Father George Clements and (now-) Bishop Dominic Carmon, SVD, both had experience working with Chicago insurgency organizations. In 1968 Father Joseph Brown, S.J., became a spiritual director, personal advisor, and counselor for several members of the Black Panther Party of Omaha, Nebraska. Father Lawrence Lucas' relationship with Malcolm X in New York was close and significant (Davis & Phelps, 2003; Lucas, 1990). So when the downturn occurred in the Civil Rights movement the style most available to them -- and others like them -- for insurgency was the Black Power side of the of the movement.

## CHAPTER 8

THE CONTINUED ABEYANCE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE  
MOVEMENT CYCLE OF AN ABEYANCE STRUCTURE: THE BLACK CATHOLIC  
MOVEMENT IN ABEYANCE

Since the downturn of the larger Civil Rights movement in the 1970s, the political climate for an upsurge in insurgency has not improved. The political stronghold of Reagan-era politics has shifted America towards a “post-racial” rhetoric, making the climate for Civil Rights insurgency almost nonexistent (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Gallagher, 2003). Organizations such as the NAACP have been tolerated due to their tactics of privileging legal strategies for insurgency. However, they have come under criticism for not being able to keep up with the challenges facing African Americans in a post-Civil Rights context. In the 1990s, the ceiling for the African American middle class had never been so high, while the bottom for the Black poor never was so low. The most well-known NAACP-led effort since the 1980s has been its legal battle against the state of South Carolina over its use of the confederate flag at its government buildings (Burkins, 2001; Hutchinson, 2007).

The SCLC is almost non-functional, therefore, for all practical purposes, nonexistent. Activity for the organization is limited to the southern region of the nation, as opposed to its national efforts of the sixties. Leadership for the organization has changed several times, reflecting the organization’s attempts to place descendants of King in leadership roles, despite their ideological differences. Other leadership has been removed over issues of mismanagement of funds as well.

In contrast, stability has been seen in the Black Catholic Rights movement. The three main organizations have kept their respective structures since their creations. The major change structurally has involved the umbrella organization representing them. The National Office of Black Catholics disbanded in 1987, and the organization was replaced by the restored National Black Catholic Congress, an organization founded in 1889 by Daniel Rudd, disbanded in 1894, and reorganized and appropriated by the thirteen Black Catholic Bishops in 1987. A fundamental difference between the National Office of Black Catholics and the Black Catholics Congress is with how each was -- or is -- funded. As mentioned earlier, the National Office of Black Catholics was funded entirely independently from the National Catholic Conference of Bishops. The Congress, however, receives much of its funding and support externally, from the Bishops' Conference, shifting the opportunity structure.

The Black Catholic movement reached its peak mobilization period at the end of 1980s -- symbolized by the drafting of the Pastoral Letter, "What We Have Seen and Heard". The letter was directed to the Black community by the new collection of Black Bishops. The letter symbolizes the moment of *goal attainment* by the collective, proclaiming:

"We the 10 black bishops of the United States, chosen from among you to serve the people of God, are a significant sign among many other signs that the Black Catholic community and the American Church has now come of age." (Lyke, 1984)

As with any movement, goal attainment can become a source of divisiveness for participating members of a movement (McAdam, 1982). There can become disagreements over whether or not the goal was actually attained, and conflict over the

next course of action needed to be taken. This is true for the Black Catholic Rights movement. The original 1968 Black Clergy Caucus meeting set as its highest priority, “That there be black priests in decision-making positions on the diocesan level, and above all in the black community” (Davis & Phelps, 2003). The Catholic Church responded by allowing delegates from the NBCC to give input as to the selection of additional Black bishops. This relationship continued for the next ten years, up to approximately 1980.

After the number of Black bishops reached a critical mass, the advisory relationship ended, and was replaced with input on the appointment of Black bishops now coming from other Black bishops. In the early days of the 1970s, since there was only one ordinary (in control of a diocese) Bishop in the United States (The Most Reverend Joseph Howze of Mississippi), it was left mainly to the Black auxiliary bishops to gain entry into the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and by doing so, they changed the relational status between Black Bishops and the rest of the Black Catholic faith community. Their effort to gain any further roles of authority granted by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops meant they would have to prove their loyalty to the Bishops -- meaning maintaining the status quo and distancing themselves where possible from the ideology of the Black Catholic Rights movement and Black liberation theology. By the mid-1980s, the ideology and tactics of financial and social autonomy by the Black Catholic movement were being replaced by financial and social dependency.

This had its effect on the integrity of the respective conferences, which still deferred much of their allegiance to the auxiliary Black bishops. The 1992 NBCC convention, seen by many as the height of Black Catholic evangelizing and collective

reflection, is viewed by some priests as the last conference to have the creativity, resources, and autonomy to effectively evangelize the Black Catholic masses. As one interviewed priest explains:

And I would add after the 1992 Congress ... although we have to be creative. We have to be...he [Joseph A. Brown, S.J., the Conference liturgist] taught us that this is one ritual -- and I think we joked a lot about the sweeping and stuff -- but I think that it is something that has held us back... Is that we see one thing and instead of studying and learning and trying to evolve it, we do that until it's played out.

By the mid 1990s, the Black Catholic movement had begun to lose its mass mobilization base. Several of the newly elected Black bishops had begun to not have any affiliation with the Black Catholic community or its organizations. As many of those interviewed reported, Xavier University of New Orleans had removed the autonomous status of the Institute of Black Catholic Studies, assuming control of curriculum and budget.

The Civil Rights movement as found in the Black Catholic movement of the 1970s and 1980s can be considered somewhat of a success. Much of what the Black Catholic community deemed needed to happen, did – to varying degrees. More importantly, the Black Catholic Rights movement left a legacy of activist networks, strategies and goals, and collective identity, for generations of people too young to experience the Civil Rights movement. Sister Antona Ebo (the Black Catholic sister at Selma), among others, served as a symbolic figure for how the incorporation of Black Liberation theology can be used to invoke action in a symbolic fashion.

Because of the legacies mentioned above, the networks created during the 1970s and 1980s by Black Catholics can now be used for mobilization if and when an upsurge

in the Civil Rights movement occurs. Black Catholic religious and laity have been meeting in conference for over 40 years, since the start of the Black Catholic rights movement. To this day, blended generations of African American Catholics meet annually to discuss evangelization, operations, and their own condition. Many of those who were around during the 1960s and 1970s are still around, assisting with the development of awareness of the younger generation of potential insurgents. Many of them have ties to other, non-Catholic organizations, including Black Greek-Letter organizations, the National Urban League, and the NAACP. Also, many of the Black Catholic religious are educators themselves within social science and the humanities in Catholic and secular universities, thus exposing them to another subset of potential activists.

Strategies and Goals. The Black Catholic Movement did not use the threat of violence as a tactic, like the Black Power side of the movement did. The Black Catholic Rights movement did maintain a strategy of financial and personnel autonomy. Since the peak in mobilization of the Black Catholic Rights movement, it has progressively moved towards dependency on the National Conference of Catholic Bishops for its financial and leadership resources and strategies, forcing it ever closer towards the status quo. It would seem logical to surmise that a renewal of the original strategies of autonomy, self-education and financial freedom will be at the forefront of their continued agitation.

The collective identity left for future generations of activism by the Black Catholic Rights movement is centered on Black liberation theology itself. Many of the celebrated liturgists, evangelists, and speakers within the Black Catholic Rights movement position their research and pedagogy within a Black liberation theology

context. Beginning at the time of Vatican II, the Black Catholic religious community's efforts to intermingle with Black Protestants provided opportunities to strengthen each group's bond to the theology itself. This provides room for another call from a person like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to be heard and answered by Catholic religious such as Sister Antonia Ebo; or a challenge from a Muslim minister in the style of Malcolm X that can be accepted by a Catholic cleric after the model of Father Lawrence Lucas.

## CHAPTER 9

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Social movement continuity theory provides the opportunity to draw connections of movement work over longer periods of time than first considered by the field. It also gives the tools necessary to determine whether a movement has linkages to a historical movement or if it is seemingly spawned on its own, as reflected in much of the debate about feminist activism and the Civil Rights movement. However, continuity theory has been applied in a limited amount of ways. What this research attempts to do is first discover a new movement, and then examine its origins to see if there are any connections to any other social movements. Social movement continuity theory is useful in trying to create that bridge.

The limitations of the research can be found in the lack of empirical data upon which the model builds itself. The *social movement continuity model* is based upon a single case, the work of Verta Taylor and her study of the feminist movement of the 1940s to 1960s. However, the work has been utilized a great deal in the field, and, in this regard, still holds a tremendous amount of credibility (Benford, 1993; Campbell, 2002; Hunt et al., 1994; Kim & Bearman, 1997). Even with this considered, any theory built off a single case still has to be called into question (Taylor, 1989). This limitation presents an opportunity for more cases to be built, using continuity theory.

I speculate that the major questions that can be asked as a challenge to this research will be in regards to two points: first, skepticism over the relationship between the Black Catholic Rights movement as an abeyance formation and the prior Civil Rights movement; second, similar skepticism over the claim that the abeyance structure can have

a movement continuity cycle all its own, and yet still be an abeyance structure of another movement. The clue to answering both of these questions lies in determining in which type of movement formation the Black Catholic Rights movement can be classified.

The sheer size and independence of the institution of the Roman Catholic Church qualifies it as a “total institution” – institutions that are in numerous ways insulated from their surrounding social environment (Goffman, 1961; Katzenstein, 1990). However, the Church was not immune to the global uprising of social change happening in the 1950s and 1960s. The effect of having a total institution means two things primarily: 1) Global change will change the Church slowly; 2) Patriarchal systems will dominate their way of existing (for another example see the United States military).

The Second Vatican Council (1962 to 1965) provided the political opportunity necessary to have successful change within the Catholic Church in the U. S. Vatican II ended the traditional Latin mass; sent nuns out from a life out of the public gaze, into the world; reduced mandatory dietary restrictions, confessional obligations, and service attire for the laity; ended the Church's insistence on being the one true church; and formally rejected its claims to power in relation to nation-states (Wilde, 2004). The religious dialogue at the level of total institution opened the opportunity for change, once contact was initiated by the Black Catholic Rights movement.

The Roman Catholic Church's size and autonomy meant that change to the institution had to come from within by a source of people with knowledge, resources, and authority to affect change; in this case, the Black Catholic religious. The insulated nature of the institution also allowed for the movement to gain enough momentum within the confines of the Roman Catholic Church to begin appropriating features of a larger

movement. It would be as if an extraterrestrial got inspired by the Civil Rights movement and took the spirit of the movement to its home planet to enact change. This type of mobilization is what Mary Fainsod Katzenstein refers to as unobtrusive mobilization (1990).

As far as being able to specifically answer the question, is the Black Catholic Rights movement an outright autonomous movement or an abeyance structure of the Civil Rights movement, I propose we start by asking one question. If the Civil Rights movement ever mobilized again what would happen to the Black Catholic Rights movement? The answer to that question is in any individual's hierarchy of identities. If the issues of race are outweighing other significant issues within the Catholic Church I speculate that the Black Catholic Rights movement would begin to lose its mass base for mobilization rapidly, as those with opportunity cost will choose to spend their time, energy, and expertise on the more pressing issues facing them. If, on the other hand, the warring conflict between being Catholic and being Black are successfully negotiated by a generation that benefits from the insurgency of their elders, then they should be ready and prepared to be a larger force within any new social justice movement.

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