A Sociological Perspective: the Black Lives Matter Movement

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Abstract: This article comments on the Black Lives Matter movement from the perspective of symbolic interactionism, discusses the relationship between this sociological perspective and the BLM movement and its specific manifestations from three aspects: double consciousness, the symbols of race and interactionism. By analysis, white elites through the ALM movement and African Americans through social media, both of which have intensified social contradictions. The racial prejudice in social interaction became more and more obvious, the differences between races were intensified, the black race was marginalized, and the social movement was politicized. The symbolic sense of race is growing stronger, and the bias in the interaction is becoming more obvious.

1. Symbolic Interactionism and BLM

Among the three sociological perspectives, this article chooses to comment on the Black Lives Matter movement from the perspective of symbolic interactionism. Compare with two other sociological perspectives: functionalism and conflict theory. Symbolic interactionism can provide a more detailed explanation of this social problem. Under the theory of symbolic interactionism, this paper is divided into three aspects to comment on the relationship and the specific performance between this theory and the Black Lives Matter movement, they are double consciousness, racial symbolism and interactionism. First of all, the double consciousness. In the race issue, a person's identity will have a sense of division due to race, which further affects self-consciousness. The second aspect is the symbols of race, which are different from race itself. Symbolic interactionism believes that the symbols given to a race are the main cause of racism.The final aspect is interactionism, which deals with how people define their own race and the race of others. At the same time, the interaction between members of the dominant group leads to the formation of racial prejudice, which deepens the stereotype and discrimination of racial culture.

The Black Lives Matter movement has been going on for nearly 10 years now, briefly sort out the causes of the whole movement.The Black Lives Matter movement began in 2012 when *George Zimmerman* (Awhite police officer) shot and killed 17-year-old *Trayvon Martin* (A black boy) in Florida. The acquittal of a white police officer on murder charges in July 2013 was a defining moment in the United States race relations (Jelani, 2017).[1]Over the process of the Black Lives

Matter movement, blacks and whites were assigned different identity symbols. Black people are often labeled as African American, innocent, gunned down. White people are given symbols of police, violent law enforcement and racism. Since then, symbolic interactionism has been closely associated with the Black Lives Matter movement.

2. Double Consciousness and BLM

Under the influence of the Black Lives Matter movement, some Americans' identities and self-consciousness are divided by different symbols for different races. The main symbol is skin color. Again, it's mostly black and white in this social movement. For the blacks, the people who produce this kind of double consciousness are mainly the black people who have roles and status in the society, they might have been famous, successful, excellent people. Like black stars, black police chiefs, even black presidents in America.For example, some black stars from the NBA, like *Lebron James*. They also played an active role in the Black Lives Matter movement, wearing Black Lives Matter slogans on the field, exposed to flashing lights, and refused to attend games. All of these can be explained by the double consciousness under symbolic interactionism.These people have achieved successful status and high social class in the original social environment, they are already adapted to and praise such ideology, their identity and status can help them avoid being hurt by racism. But, as black people, they may have been subjected to racism in the background, which is inevitable.Therefore, the outbreak of the Black Lives Matter movement made some black NBA players begin to question their own identity. They were also black, and they suffered from unequal treatment in the American society. Their compatriots were killed by the police. They want to use their star power to advocate for the importance of racial equality, but by standing up for it, they are dividing their self-consciousness. On the one hand, their successful identity and status is established in a white-dominated society. On the other hand, their self-identity as black people suffers from hardships while their fellow citizens are bullied. This does not reassure them, but forces them to act.

For white people, this double consciousness is often found in racists. Today, both elite and ordinary white Americans continue to demonstrate massive resistance to contemporary black protest movements (Jozie, 2019).[2]In the white dominated mainstream media and the white public, many commentators continued Black Lives Matter protests. They repeatedly called for fairness, justice, and the legalization of structural reform of the police and other aspects of the racist criminal justice system.As a response to Black Lives Matter, many white people claim All Lives Matter, trying to eliminate or marginalize the systematic racist discussion that appears repeatedly in society. In this movement, "Black Lives Matter" does not mean that all lives are unimportant. On the contrary, Black Lives Matter has been trying to convey an inclusive message, but many people believe that their message is exclusive, especially the anti-police (Dewey, 2018).[3]This is a manifestation of the politicization of the Black Lives Matter movement. They did not oppose the police, and they recognized the difficult role of the police in maintaining social order. What they opposed was bad policing practices, preferring to suspect (shoot) African Americans. However, some white people use the sentence All Lives Matter to fight back. Although it seems reasonable, they use a secret way to eliminate racial issues from the interaction. By broadening the scope of the issue to include Asians and Latinos, black dominance in the movement was weakened. This statement is disguised as a bright and packaged light, but underneath it is a deliberate ignorance of the past and present of American racism.White public opinion has not been uniformly mobilized to support Black Lives Matter, because the topics related to Black Lives Matter are less than those related to All Lives Matter tags, which are more closely intertwined with the views of conservatives (Marcia, 2018).[4]The self-consciousness of white people is affected and challenged by Black Lives Matter. When the identity of white people is divided, they fight back against Black Lives Matter through All Lives Matter, so as to defend and protect their superior social interaction identity and status.

3. The Symbols of Race and BLM

This part mainly analyzes how the symbols of race become racism and finally bring racial prejudice to society, causes social problems. And how words are used to describe different races in the symbolic interaction theory. In the Black Lives Matter movement, the debate broke out on the social media (Facebook and Twitter) of youth of color plays an active role, and Black Lives Matter entered the mainstream ideology as a controversial symbol. Social media has become the basic tool of social movements in the 21st century, expanding information while promoting the strengthening of movements (Karen, 2018).[4]Social media enables every citizen to directly interact with the social movement, and such interaction is convenient and simple. Colored youth are traditionally marginalized groups in American society (Nikita, 2016).[5]However, the emergence of social media has helped them play a central role in national discourse on race. They use social media to express their experiences and concerns and challenge the mainstream ideology of race. Therefore, social media can be regarded as a new public sphere for constructing symbols, and meanwhile, the discussion on race can be carried out.

As a new public sphere, social media has become an important platform for discussing racism and police violence in Black Lives Matter. Internet users have become interactive social subjects rather than passive audiences. Social media has traditionally been classified as vulnerable groups because they do not have the power to directly influence national decision-making. However, this explosive expression of opinions in Black Lives Matter has raised the general awareness of the society on racial issues and organized protests to put pressure on the country. Although social media is far from being able to solve public problems, it does create a new form of access, attracting many people who could not participate in the discussion of public issues, and forming their ideology -- Racism.

At the same time, most social media allow users to use a special symbol (#) to index and tag content so that other users can find it. From a sociological point of view, the importance of an index is that it represents a collective, creating categories in an unordered set through symbols. If a user introduces a tag that others think is helpful, the tag can connect similar content. Then they can create a community of like-minded people, maintain their interaction, and even organize activities offline. In other words, social media breeds possible racial prejudice and brings together people who share similar views. Some users will post # BLM, others will post # ALM. This is how it works, the formation and antagonism of the two camps is formed. Through social media, racial symbols form racism, and finally lead to racial prejudice. Therefore, social media plays a more important role in the intensification and solution of social problems.

4. Interactionism and BLM

In interactionism, prejudice, stereotype and discrimination come into being with the process of how people define their own race and the race of others. This kind of ideological deviation between races is reflected in the relationship between American police and citizens in the United States. Some law enforcement police will have prejudice against blacks, while some citizens are unwilling to cooperate with the police's requirements, or even make resistance. That's the expression of society, and also the problem. The stereotype of young black men, especially those from low-income communities, has been deeply rooted in American society under meritocracy. This may be the "legal" reason why the police will use violence against unarmed black men. Many people subconsciously normalize some stereotypes and slowly accept their wrong perceptions, forming a false reality. As a result, some policemen insisted that their judgments were correct and did not involve racial differences. On the contrary, for blacks, these stereotypes and acts of violent law enforcement are just part of racism in the United States, and also the fuse of Black Lives Matter movement. However, in interactions, the fault cannot be placed solely on the white police officers who enforce the law. If black people choose to cooperate and calm down when confronted by the

police, the tension between the two sides will always be eased. In the final analysis, this is a conflict brought about by cultural differences, which is an inevitable problem in a country of immigrants, and it is also an urgent problem to be solved. Effective and positive interactions should be based on mutual respect and trust.

This country has a history of public security management based on prejudice against African Americans, which can be traced back to the era of slavery .The Black Lives Matter movement framed the problem on racial prejudice in the American criminal justice system. Many white Americans believed that the police were public servants who protected them from harm. However, many people in the black community have different experiences with the police. They believe the list of people killed by violent policemen, mainly white policemen, will only continue to grow. In this vicious interaction, prejudice, stereotype and discrimination between black and white people will increase and deteriorate. The radicalization of racial differences and the politicization of social problems. Make more radical differences in discourse strategies in inter-ethnic communication and interaction.

5. Discussion

Why the relationship between the police and black people in the United States is so bad. Discussions of the BLM often cast black people as the vulnerable party, but the safety of police lives also needs to be addressed. Police should be a respected profession, fighting crime to bear a high risk of life, which requires the police to maintain a state of caution at all times. The threat to the police, given America's liberal approach to gun control, has escalated the situation into tension. The issue of gun control may be one way to analyze this issue. The other point is about the movement towards misdemeanour. The increasing instability in the social population due to the bail system is also a factor that increases the pressure on the police.

6. Conclusion

By commenting on the Black Lives Matter movement from the perspective of Symbolic Interactivity, the American elite and the white government and society treat the problem of double consciousness, and fight back through the All Lives Matter movement to defend the racial superiority of white people. On the one hand, social media has become a voice tool for black people, but on the other hand, it has become a space for deepening the formation of racism. However, in the interaction between people in American society, the sense of racial symbol is becoming stronger and stronger, and the prejudice in the interaction is becoming more and more obvious. This is because the Black Lives Matter movement has been politicized and the differences between races have been radicalized. However, the black race is being marginalized, which not only does not solve the racial problem, but intensifies the contradiction. The identity symbols related to race should be gradually diluted in the interpersonal communication of the United States, such an immigrant country. Reduce ethnic tensions and pursue a more equal multi-ethnic society.

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