

A Content Analysis of Hillary Clinton's and Donald Trump's Stances on Black Lives Matter Movement (2013-2016)

تحليل المضمون لمواقف هيلاري كلنتون ودونالد ترامب بشأن حركة حياة السود
مهمة (2013-2016)

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Abstract:

Drawing on the content analysis theory, this paper seeks to explore the American governmental stance on the Black Lives Matter movement that emerged in America in 2013 as a response to the death of a 17-year-old African American Travon Martin who was killed by the American George Zimmerman, and this latter was acquitted. To this aim, excerpts from interviews or debates conducted with Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton about the matter were taken as samples to be analyzed. The findings confirm the existence of anti-black racism as a controversial issue in the United States.

Keywords: Anti-black racism; Black Lives Matter; Content Analysis Theory; Donald Trump; Hillary Clinton.

ملخص

بالاعتماد على نظرية تحليل المحتوى، تسعى هذه الورقة إلى استكشاف موقف الحكومة الأمريكية بشأن حركة "حياة السود مهمة" التي ظهرت في أمريكا سنة 2013 وذلك بسبب مقتل ترافيون مارتن الذي كان يبلغ من العمر وقتها 17 سنة على يد الأمريكي جورج زيمرمان الذي تمت تبرئته. وللإجابة عن هذا السؤال، تم اختيار وتحليل مقتطفات من مقابلات أو مناقشات أجريت مع كل من دونالد ترامب وهيلاري كلنتون حول هذه الحركة. تؤكد نتائج البحث أن العنصرية ضد السود في أمريكا مازالت قضية مثيرة للجدل.

كلمات مفتاحية: حركة السود مهمة؛ دونالد ترامب؛ العنصرية؛ نظرية تحليل المحتوى؛ هيلاري كلنتون.

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1- Introduction

Blacks' status in America was susceptible to constant transitional change: from mere slaves, to free individuals, to segregated minorities, then to fully American citizens; Blacks fought heart and soul to defy any opposition that aimed to keep them marginalized and persecuted. Consequently, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in 1964 and 1965 respectively, Blacks could have access to diverse fields to enjoy their new experience as African Americans. However, On February 26, 2012, a 17-year-old African American Trayvon Martin from Miami Gardens, Florida was fatally shot by the American George Michael Zimmerman who was acquitted one year later. Following his acquittal, the hashtag black lives matter appeared on social media as a start of a new movement that condemned police brutality, considering it as a racist act addressed to people who are deemed to be American citizens as well. When the movement permeated the United States after similar incidents in 2014 through protests and demonstrations, undoubtedly, it propelled the government to take action or at least to reveal its stance regarding the matter.

While reading about the movement, it has been noticed that previous studies focused either on the movement as a whole or on the role of social media. To illustrate, Nikita Carney from the University of California and Alvin Tillery from Northwestern University, Evanston conducted studies entitled "All Lives Matter, but so Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media" and "What Kind of Movement is Black Lives Matter? The View from Twitter" respectively to examine the role Twitter played in shaping the national discourse about race (Carney, 2016; Tillery, 2018). Their findings revealed that social media broached the issue of racism and contributed in a great deal to the dissemination of the movement (Carney, 2016; Tillery, 2018). Dewey M. Clayton from the University of Louisville, however, tackled the matter differently by undertaking a study to analytically compare between the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement and the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) of the twentieth century. He concluded that the CRM was more successful than the BLM Movement and that the latter should learn from the former (Clayton, 2018). Subsequently, since the governmental stance was overlooked, this paper inquires into it. In other words, it aims at examining the way the government reacted to the movement's message; mainly in a period where the fight against anti-black racism is thought to be over. Hence, in the upcoming lines, the content analysis theory will help either confirm or deny the following hypothesis: since Blacks have long been integrated into the American society, reviving another fight against racism would be unnecessary; thus, the government took a neutral stance by emphasizing that not only Blacks' lives matter but also whites'.

2- Black Lives Matter Movement

As its name implies, the BLM Movement denotes that lives of Blacks are precious and not subject to any kind of racial discrimination. What happened in 2013 in America arouse the anger of the black community that was manifested in a post on Twitter. Indeed, a year before in 2012 an unarmed African-American teenager called Trayvon Martin was visiting his father in Florida. Tragically, the visit ended up by Martin being dead out of a shot by a local resident George Zimmerman. Forty-four days after the shooting, Zimmerman was arrested and the case started being examined. Yet, the Court's verdict was not in the favor of Martin's parents, and Zimmerman was acquitted. The moment judge Nelson Debra Nelson declared, "You have no further business with this court" (Luscombe, 2013) cheers and anger prevailed in the place. While Zimmerman's parents rejoiced at the victorious moment, Martin's supporters burst with indignation about what they believed to be an unfair trial (Luscombe, 2013). In his book *The Making of Black Lives Matter: a Brief History of an Idea* Lebron insinuated that racism is firmly embedded in the American society. He insists, "[Martin's] only possible crime seemed to be walking while black...Despite [his] younger age, weight, and size disadvantage...if Zimmerman suspected him, he must have been suspect worthy" (Lebron, 2017, p.xi).

Consequently, overlooking the matter by the African Americans seemed out of the question. Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opel Tometi launched the movement via a post on social media, demanding justice and reforms. Garza emphasized that the hashtag black lives matter was a call to action for black people and a reminder of the death and failure of the American justice system (Lebron, 2017, p.xi). The movement escalated and became more popularized after same events took place in 2014, including the deaths of Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Therefore, what started as a social movement became political and economic one, asserting that Blacks do not only merit a fair trial, but also have total right to be treated as full American citizens in all domains, and that skin color should no longer be deemed as a reason for unequal treatment. Graza affirmed, "What black folks are fighting for in this moment ...is citizenship like dignity." (Thomas, 2019, p.14). Being thus, a national force for remarkable change, the movement stood up to violence and discrimination by creating an initiative called "Campaign Zero" that targeted the police policy. It suggested increasing the use of body cameras to record the interaction of police officers with citizens and spot any kind of bias or unnecessary violence (Thomas, 2019). Moreover, it insisted that the officers should be well trained, mainly when it comes to the way conflicts are supposed to be resolved (Thomas, 2019) In the same vein, some individuals embarked on their own projects to back up the movement's cause. Samuel Sinyangwe, for instance, created the *Mapping Police Violence* to track information about police shootings. He helped form an

organization that developed digital tools to support the work of the movement (Thomas, 2019). This activism was driven by the aim of stirring the government up to provide satisfactory solutions.

3- Methodology

3-1 Content Analysis Theory

Content analysis is a technique that helps researchers indirectly study human behaviour through the analysis of their communications which can be written, visual or oral (Fraenkel & E.Wallen, 2009). It, therefore, enables one to extract what is between lines and to reveal individual's or groups' attitude, beliefs, and ideas mainly if the material being studied is large to be contained in an allocated period of time. By using this technique properly, categories and scores will be engendered to be compared and then interpreted to conclude a pre-set research question. It is worth mentioning that this technique has two general types the conceptual and the relational types. Yet, due to the nature of this work and the research question, the present paper focuses solely on the conceptual analysis in which concepts are chosen for examination and the analysis is based on either the frequency of their presence or their existence.

By the same token, the conceptual analysis, like any other method, is accomplished through different steps. Before the selection of concepts, a specific question should be determined, so that the remaining steps will be undertaken accordingly, including the selection of the appropriate material to be analyzed. Then, the researcher is supposed to reduce the text by coding it into meaningful categories and the coding plan can be in the form of words, phrases or sentences. Furthermore, he should define the exact number of concepts to code for, and whether he should base his analysis on the existence of the concepts that serve his aim or on the frequency of their presence. Not only that, the meaning of the concepts should be taken into consideration by deciding whether to code them for their implicit meaning or explicit meaning, because the same concept may send varied messages according to the context. The refore the use of a reliable dictionary is crucial to the credibility of the process and the consistency of the results. Finally, the researcher decodes his data and interprets them to draw his conclusion.

3-2 Applying the Conceptual Analysis

As it was explained before, the first step is to define the research question. Therefore, the present paper endeavours to explore the government's reaction to the BLM Movement by focusing on Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump for both of them do not only belong to different political parties but also share the same skin colour, i.e. white Americans. Albeit the BLM Movement was brought into existence during the presidency of Barack Obama (2009-2016), this latter does not figure in the study to avoid the slightest possibility of subjectivity since he is African American. By the same token, BLM Movement was at its peak during the presidency of Trump who entered the 2016 presidential

race as a Republican and was elected over the Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. Therefore, understanding their stances will offer insights into the status quo of anti-black racism in America. To reach this aim, excerpts of some of the interviews conducted with the two figures were chosen, taking into consideration the total number of words they contain. Trump's answers include 578 words, and Hillary's, 575. Crucial to the consistency and credibility of the work, the number was made sure to be approximately the same because both figures participated in different debates and interviews; therefore, the present work makes sure to treat them equally.

In the same vein, the coding type plan took the form of words and phrases extracted from the samples. With the help of dictionaries, codes were not only extracted but also classified and grouped into categories and themes in a meaningful way. As far as the concepts' coding limitation is concerned, the number of coded concepts was between 10 and 11 to ease the task of handling the samples of the study. Finally, relying on the frequency of concepts, calculations were made to first decode the results and then analyze them in order to determine who was siding with the BLM movement and who was against.

3-2-1 Donald Trump's Stance

To analyze Trump's reaction, his answers about BLM Movement were extracted —with the help of the Veed.io software— from the following interviews: "Donald Trump on the 'Black Lives Matter' Movement" (CNN, 2015), "Donald Trump discusses Black Lives Matter" (News, 2016), and "Donald Trump: African-American Communities in Worst Shape 'Ever'" (News A. , 2016). The table below demonstrates the categorization of his answers.

Table 1. Categorizing Trump's Answers about BLM Movement

NW	Coding Plan	FO	PF	Categories	Themes	With blacks	Against blacks
578	our country	4	0.69%	Community	Unity		(-)
	our African American	1	0.17%				
	communities	2	0.34%				
	police	5	0.86%	Enforcing Law	Instability		(-)
	tremendous	3	0.51%				
	job	2	0.34%				
	allowed	1	0.17%	Violence	Racism		(-)
	calling death	2	0.34%				
	maniacs	1	0.17%				
	shooting	1	0.17%				

NW= Total Number of Words FO= Frequency of occurrences PF=Percentage of frequency

According to the above table, the coding plan contains eight words and two phrases. They were contextually read to create the three implicit concepts that are presented in the categories column. Every category sends a message which is shown in the themes column. It is worth mentioning that the creation of themes would be impossible if the concepts in the categories were not defined, in the first place, using the online Cambridge Dictionary. The definitions are as follows:

- Community refers to the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality (Community, n.d.).
- Law Enforcement is defined as the activity of making certain that the laws of an area are obeyed (Law Enforcement, n.d.)
- Violence refers to actions or words that are intended to hurt people (Violence, n.d.)

It is noticed that the explicit meaning of the three concepts in the three samples alludes to positivity; yet, when contextualizing them, it appears that Trump aimed to unify the country by virtue of Blacks' role in creating division and igniting violence. Thus, he insisted upon enforcing the law and letting the policemen do their job.

3-2-2 Hillary Clinton's Stance

The same steps were followed to explore Clinton's stance on the BLM Movement. Excerpts from the following two samples were used to be analyzed: "Hillary Clinton on Hard Truths about Race and Justice" (Examiner, 2015) and her answer during the debate between Democratic candidates in 2015 in Las Vegas, Nevada (Democratic Candidates Debate in Las Vegas, 2015). The table below demonstrates the categorization of her answers:

Table 2. Categorizing Clinton's Answers about BLM Movement

NW	Coding Plan	FO	PF	Categories	Themes	With blacks	Against blacks
575	Incarceration	6	1.04%	Violence 2.43%	Racism	(+)	
	Premature death	1	0.17%				
	Something wrong	3	0.52%				
	out of balance	2	0.34%				
	violence	2	0.34%				
	Race and justice	2	0.34%	Enforcing Law 1.56%	Instability	(+)	
	Reforming criminal justice	5	0.86%				
	Body cameras	2	0.34%				
	community	5	0.86%	Community 1.73%	Division	(+)	
	divides	3	0.52%				
	Far from	2	0.34%				

NW= Total Number of Words FO= Frequency of occurrences PF=Percentage of frequency

As the above table displays, four words and seven phrases appear in the coding plan category. Through their implicit meaning in the text, the three concepts have been created. However, their themes differ from Trump's as Clinton tried to dispatch other messages. Community, for instance, means unity, according to the definition provided earlier; but Clinton implied the opposite. She reckoned that Blacks were still subject to racial treatment and this in turn divided America, a matter she pled for its healing.

4- Results and Discussion

The present study was carried out to explore the governmental stance on the BLM Movement that emerged in 2013 and flourished later to defend Blacks' status in America and to condemn police brutality. Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton were the center of the study. Samples of the answers they provided about the movement while being interviewed or while taking part in a debate were put under scrutiny to reveal their reactions and the possibility of any action to be taken in future regarding the matter. Choosing them was a non-random act based on different reasons, including their high positions in the American government which could affect the course of the American policy-making and their skin color that denotes their origins which are, obviously, not African. The table below compares between the found results:

Table 3. Comparing Results of Trump's and Clinton's Answers about the BLM Movement

Categories	Donald Trump		Hillary Clinton	
	PF	Themes	PF	Themes
Violence	0.69%	Racism (-)	2.43%	Racism (+)
Enforcing Law	1.90%	Instability (-)	1.56%	Instability(+)
Community	1.21%	Unity (-)	1.73%	Division (+)

(+) supporting Blacks (-) against Blacks

The outcome indicated above elucidates that though both figures are white Americans, their stances differed drastically. Albeit both of them converged at keeping America a unified entity by the use of the word community (News A. , 2016; Democratic Candidates Debate in Las Vegas, 2015), they diverged on the issue of Blacks' behavior. Trump provided racist remarks attributing violence and instability to the black community when he emphasized that policemen were doing a tremendous job and described Blacks as maniacs (News A. , 2016; News C. , 2016). Clinton, however, accentuated the opposite. She asserted, "There is something wrong when a third of all black men face the prospect of prison during their lifetimes." (Examiner, 2015). She proceeded, "I will do everything I can to heal the divides — the divides economically, because there's too much inequality; the racial divides." (Democratic Candidates Debate in Las Vegas, 2015). Unlike Trump, she believed in the existence of racism that embedded every treatment of Blacks. Furthermore, both figures accentuated the importance of enforcing the law and reforming the criminal justice. Yet,

Trump associated the situation of instability to Blacks' deeds and behavior; whereas, Clinton, to mistreating Blacks. Therefore, themes in the table differ from being either positive or negative albeit they are similar, and the statistics are approximately the same. This is, certainly, due to everyone's racist views and the ability to accept the other as a part of the whole.

5- Conclusion

To conclude, Black Lives Matter Movement brought to the forefront the issue of anti-black racism which appeared to be a latent in the American society. Seldom had racism been broached as it is thought to be over by the considerable achievements of the twentieth century's Civil Rights Movement. Yet, the results of this study elucidate the opposite and deny the hypothesis set earlier. In fact, the BLM movement itself and the striking difference between the stances of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump demonstrate that anti-black racism is still a debatable issue and the government did not take a neutral stance. While Hillary Clinton endorsed Blacks' cause and insisted upon backing them up to secure their equal treatment; Donald Trump disagreed, believing that all lives matter and Blacks were just igniting violence and instability. Moreover, the only potential action that was mentioned was to reform the criminal justice and to enforce laws to eschew violence and instability.

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