March Like A Girl: A Case Study of the Women’s Movements in Spain and the United States

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BACKGROUND & MARCH CATALYSTS

This year marks the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage in the United States. As we enter 2020, we must reflect on the movement for gender equality by analyzing both successful and failed techniques.

The catalyst for the 2017 March on Washington was the defeat of Hillary Clinton for president by Donald Trump. Clinton was the first woman in U.S. history to win the presidential nomination for a major party. Trump has consistently shown disrespect toward women through statements and actions.

The catalyst for the 2018 Spanish march was the Supreme Court’s relatively light sentencing in the “La Manada” case, where a young woman was gang-raped at the 2016 San Fermín festival.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The women’s movement is comprised of a huge networks of informal groups. I focus on two dominant organizations within the movement, Comisión 8M and Women’s March, that are the leading actors in fueling protests in their respective countries.

I use three frameworks through which to examine the contemporary organizations. Three factors are consistently linked to success in social movements: framing, recruitment, and organizational structure. With regard to framing, I analyze how 8M and Women's March are formally and informally framed. I also investigate how recruitment is carried out. Lastly, I study the organizational structure of both groups, including leadership, funding, partnerships, anatomy of both national and regional chapters, and degree of power centralization.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Which strategies gave Women's March and Comisión 8M the power to mobilize protestors for an extended period of time?

This study analyzes the tactics of the Women’s March organization in the United States and Comisión 8M in Spain in their respective quests for gender equality.

RESULTS

Protest Data:
U.S. –
January 21, 2017: 4,157,894
January 21, 2018: 1,809,719

Spain –
March 8, 2018: 5,300,000
March 8, 2019: 6,000,000

Strategies:
Framing:
- Inclusive

Recruitment:
- Support from outside organizations
  - US: A variety of social justice & political interest groups
  - Spain: Labor unions
- Social media

Organizational Structure:
- Decentralized nature
- Encouraged grassroots efforts
- Separate national & regional finances

SUMMARY

Based on my analysis, a combination of:
- Inclusive framing
- Coalition building
- Social media use
- Decentralized structure

Have allowed Women’s March and Comisión 8M to maintain high levels of demonstrators even after the catalyst event faded from the center of attention.

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Figure 1.
English translation: Abolish the patriarchy!
Vandalism on the side of a building. Taken in Barcelona on March 8, 2018 during International Women’s Day protests

Figure 2. (Left) The logo for Comisión 8M. (Right) The logo for Women’s March.