Article

Up in the air: Ritualized atmospheres and the global Black Lives Matter movement

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Abstract

How did the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement of 2020 resonate at a global level? And how did the ritual practices of the movement spread internationally? International Relations (IR) has seen increasing interest in the role of rituals in global politics, and the wider literature on rituals often explores their stabilizing effects while noting how rituals function by working on the collective emotions of participants. Yet what particular kinds of emotional processes lend rituals their power? And how do these ritual emotions disrupt prevailing power structures? This article proposes that conceptualizing these experiences as ritualized atmospheres opens up at least two new avenues for research on rituals, emotions, and global social movements in IR. First, ritualized atmospheres are characterized by their viscerally felt yet also intangible and diffuse features. These tensions offer an affective account of rituals' often-noted constitutive dual pull between the materialization of political communities while also constructing them as emotionally charged abstractions. Second, the tensions and ambiguities of ritualized atmospheres can generate new horizons for thoughts and actions. Ambient shifts in collective mood can change what may be thought, said, and practiced within ritual contexts, allowing for new discourses and new forms of political action. The article pursues the question of BLM's global resonance by way of developing these conceptual and empirical arguments.

Keywords

Discourse, resistance, racism, emotions, affect, social movement

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Introduction

Beginning in 2014 with the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson yet spreading internationally in 2020 after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Black Lives Matter (BLM) has become one of the most significant social movements in recent history. The movement has been at the forefront of forcing widespread attention to issues of police violence and systemic racism in Western societies, contending that racism is both a domestic and transnational issue (Shilliam, 2020). Although primarily based in the United States, the movement spread internationally to the United Kingdom, Europe, and Asia.[1] One of the most noted aspects of BLM in its renewed appearance in 2020 was precisely how widespread the movement became (*New York Times*, 2020). Through domestic and transnational organizing across rural towns in the American Midwest to small villages across the United Kingdom to European urban centers to embassies and streets in South Africa and Indonesia, the graphic nature of the video of George Floyd's killing and the primary claims of BLM have spread globally.[2]

International Relations (IR) has recently seen significant rising interest in rituals of global politics (Aalberts et al., 2020; Baele and Balzacq, 2022; Charrett, 2018; Cronin-Furman and Krystalli, 2020; Davies, 2018; Holmes and Wheeler, 2020; Kampf and Löwenheim, 2012; Knotter, 2020; Koschut, 2014; Kustermans et al., 2022; Mälksoo, 2021; Oren and Solomon, 2015; Pacher, 2018; Salgo, 2017; Wegner, 2021; Wong, 2021). The global BLM movement of 2020 vividly displayed many kinds of ritual practices, from the rhythms and reverberations of protest marches to shared and reiterated discourses and symbolic gestures across countries, to the ritual sharing of video and photographs across social media. Yet how did BLM resonate globally? How did these ritualized protests spread internationally across a wide range of audiences and geographical sites? In recent decades, rituals research has largely moved beyond the notion of rituals as overly formalized and "irrational," instead focusing on how rituals help to symbolically constitute the social world (Bell, 2009). Yet to inquire about the symbolic world that the BLM movement helped to constitute and spread suggests examining aspects of rituals that IR scholarship has largely neglected.

This article suggests that the concept of *ritualized atmospheres* can help address these questions about the global resonance of BLM and about some of the crucial but overlooked affective dynamics of rituals more broadly.[3] A concept that attempts to capture the diffuse and ambient yet energetic aspects of collective ritual events, ritualized atmospheres shape behavior in non-determinate ways and can define the character of an experience. Ritualized atmospheres can be understood as the ambient and tonal affective qualities and experiences generated by collectively shared embodied ritual practices. Often looser than discrete emotions, atmospheres (and the related concept of moods) frequently constitute the affective milieu out of which more definable emotions emerge. It is these qualities of ritualized atmospheres—their tensions "between presence and absence, between subject and object and between the definite and indefinite—that enable us to reflect" on how affective experiences which are diffuse can nevertheless have significant effects (Anderson, 2009: 77). The enveloping qualities of ritualized atmospheres were some of the most striking yet underexamined aspects of BLM participants' own articulations of their experiences. Rituals, or following Bell (2009), *ritualizations*, often

generate affective qualities that can define the character of an event, place, or movement and can be transformative of not only participants' level of engagement, but more substantially can foster conditions that bring about affective shifts, leading to new perceived and transformed relationships to dominant political orders. The concept of ritualized atmospheres suggests two novel contributions at the intersection of key contemporary IR debates regarding rituals, emotions, race, and the global politics of social movements.

First, and building upon recent work identifying links between rituals and emotions (Baele and Balzacq, 2022; Wegner, 2021), ritualized atmospheres suggest an affect-based account for the often-noted dynamic of rituals' dual pull of both the materialization of political communities through ritual practices and rituals' production of those communities as emotionally charged abstractions (Aalberts and Stolk, 2020; Kertzer, 1988: 9–140). The dynamics of atmospheres map closely onto this dual pull: just as rituals work to materialize and "ground" communities through concrete practices, atmospheres are viscerally lived and felt as they materialize in embodied experience. And yet, just as rituals also simultaneously produce communities as emotionally charged abstractions (as something larger than individual participants themselves), atmospheres are also felt to exist collectively yet diffusely, larger than any single participant. Communities and movements exist in materially grounded and embodied ways but also symbolically and atmospherically. As a global movement coalescing around identifiable demands, BLM generated visceral atmospheres of anger, grief, and belonging around shared ritualizations, which help to materialize and "ground" BLM as a movement as such. However, people's differing levels of engagement, and different experiences of racism and violence, also produce BLM as an affectively charged symbol. A ritualized atmosphere approach thus offers a novel account of BLM's global emotional resonance and a broader contribution to ritual perspectives on global movements that typically focus on strategic aspects of emotions (Jasper, 2011; Pearlman, 2013).

Second, it is through the tensions produced through diffuseness and ambiguity that ritualized atmospheres can generate new horizons for thoughts and actions. While rituals are often viewed through their ability to allow people to live with ambiguity (Seligman and Weller, 2012), ritualized atmospheres can actually induce ambiguities into dominant discourses, which can open spaces for challenging those discourses. Through ritualized atmospheres, new potentialities become felt into being. As collective atmospheres shift, what becomes "thinkable" or seemingly possible emerges from the cracks of a previous status quo which becomes shaken open. Felt possibilities of new kinds of conversations about race are a crucial example of how BLM has shifted political horizons around race and state violence. Ritualized atmospheres are thus "up in the air" in two senses (Zhang, 2019: 124). As shown below, they are felt to exist "in the air" by participants themselves in major events and online via social media. However, atmospheres are also "up in the air" in terms of the political ambiguities that they bring about and the new political horizons that may induce. Atmospheres can help to crack open dominant discourses and existing power structures. Yet they do not determine which directions these new potentialities may be guided toward, whether progressive, reactionary, or other paths. Indeed, there is nothing intrinsically progressive about ritual atmospheres, as they can be generated in many kinds of political movements. Atmospheres, in this sense, are themselves subject to political contestation for these reasons.

These claims are unpacked in three sections. The next section explores existing IR work on BLM, rituals, and global social movements to suggest that the emotional politics of BLM as a global ritualized movement have been underexplored in IR and that atmospheres address some key overlooked aspects of the affective work of rituals. The subsequent section develops the concept of ritualized atmospheres, focusing on some of their key experiential features and two crucial effects that they produce in collective contexts. The final section illustrates these arguments through empirical examples from the global BLM movements, focusing on the question of how BLM resonated across borders, and argues that the movement's generation of two key effects—the affective dynamics of the dual "grounding" and abstraction of the movement, and new conversations around race—are spotlighted and usefully analyzed through the notion of ritualized atmospheres.

Global social movements, BLM, and rituals

While transnational social movements are increasingly recognized as important forces in contemporary global politics, IR theory has tended to obscure some of their most important features and effects. As Davies and Pẽna (2019: 51, 53) argue, "dominant theoretical perspectives on IR have left limited to no scope for consideration of social movements," and as such have often obfuscated the diverse structures, constituencies, and effects of global movements. Key IR theories often consolidate social movements under broader categories that neglect their specific qualities and effects. Realist approaches traditionally left little room for the "soft politics" of social movements. Liberal approaches sometimes include social movements within their purview, but often under the broader category of "civil society" that includes international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations, and other actors (Price, 2003). Liberal constructivist theories focus on the norm-transforming and democratizing effects that non-state actors can have (Betsill and Bulkeley, 2004; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Risse and Sikkink, 1999) and broadly contend that civil society is often transformative in shifting global governance away from survival pressures of anarchy (Rosenau, 1990). Other work examines social movements from rationalist (Opp, 2009) or historical perspectives (Della Porta et al., 2018; Moghadam, 2013). A common theme is the tendency to focus on how social movements "strategically exploit opportunities," and as a result, this work "tend[s] to eschew the broader and often unintended reactions" they can bring about (Davies and Pẽna, 2019: 4). Strategically exploiting political windows of opportunity is a necessary focus of global movements research, yet other kinds of broader effects and conditions are increasingly transnationally contagious and are underexamined by IR scholars. Examining the overlaps between rituals and emotions in global social movements thus offers a useful spotlight here both because of their underexamined links and because of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the contemporary politics of transnational emotional resonance (Beauregard, 2021).

Recent conceptualizations of ritual move beyond traditional Durkheimian understandings as overly formalized and instead conceive of a spectrum of ritual practices. Durkheim emphasized how rituals perform key integrative functions for societies as they act as symbolic vehicles through which social arrangements are legitimized (Durkheim,

1961). More recent research has broadened the notion to encompass many kinds of social and political practices (Bueger and Gadinger, 2015; McCourt, 2016). Kertzer, for example, defined ritual as "symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive" and moved beyond the focus on rituals' integrative function to explore how they also incite conflict (Kertzer, 1988: 9). Catherine Bell's conceptual shift from discrete rituals and toward more processual notions of ritualization is particularly useful here. Ritualization for Bell (2009: 74) is "a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities." Ritualizations mark off a performance, space, or event as one of a special nature (Bell, 2009: 74). Many social activities that are not conventionally thought of as "ritual" nevertheless bear qualities of ritualization which marks them as significant in particular ways. For example, "public assembly, [and] the repetition of gestures already considered 'ritual tradition' by a community . . . are widespread and familiar methods of ritualization" (Bell, 1997: 277). Rituals are often performed as parts of "social occasions," variations of which can foster either social unity or division (Baele and Balzacq, 2022). More generally, such actions reveal "an even more fundamental dimension of ritualization— the simple imperative to *do* something in such a way that the doing itself gives the acts a special or privileged status" (Bell, 1997: 277).

In IR, recent research has usefully continued many of these same themes to explore rituals of global politics. Much of this work examines ritual activities in many of the formal and institutional spaces of global politics, such as the European Union's (EU) efforts to ritualize its internal processes (Salgo, 2017) as well as the EU's foreign relations (Charrett, 2018), rituals in parliaments (Rai, 2010), regional organizations (Davies, 2018), declarations of independence (Knotter, 2020), and official apologies (Kampf and Löwenheim, 2012). Other work explores rituals outside of formal spaces in broader socio-political and cultural settings, such as the construction of authority (Kustermans et al., 2022), visual politics (Aalberts et al., 2020), securitization (Oren and Solomon, 2015), protests (Russo, 2018), and everyday militarism (Wegner, 2021). Within IR ritual research there are at least two themes that speak to the questions posed above about BLM and the widespread resonance of rituals. One strand of work focuses on rituals of microscale group dynamics, often in diplomatic contexts. Holmes and Wheeler (2020), for example, explore face-to-face ritual dynamics to reveal how personal interactions between diplomats either "hit it off" or "fall flat." Wong (2016) examines how microscale face-to-face diplomatic exchanges communicate intentions non-verbally through gestures and bodily cues (see also Wong, 2021). Similarly, Pacher (2018) examines individual-level rituals in public diplomacy, while Banks (2019) analyses how domestic-level rituals can clash with diplomatic-level norms and practices. In contrast, another strand of work zooms out to explore more macro-level rituals beyond interpersonal settings. Baele and Balzacq (2022) draw together performances and rituals to explore the conditions under which rituals may unite or disunite a community. Mälksoo (2021) examines deterrence as a performative strategic practice with ritual features, while Wegner (2021) analyzes how domestic-level rituals of commemoration help to legitimize militarism beyond state-led efforts.

The diversity of this work illustrates how widespread rituals are in global politics and how IR scholars have developed analytical tools to study them. Yet there remains a

neglect in more clearly understanding and theorizing key questions about the resonance and transmission of rituals across sites and contexts. Both micro- and macro-oriented research point to this need, with some recent work offering suggestive directions albeit without sufficiently addressing it. Some micro-scale work draws upon emotions research to argue that interpersonal dynamics can generate positive or negative valence which can affect diplomatic outcomes (Holmes and Wheeler, 2020; Pacher, 2018; Wong, 2021). Here, emotions in micro-settings are transmitted through ritual behaviors, yet macro-scale resonances are left unexplored. Macro-oriented ritual work, on the other hand, tends to focus on the roles and functions of rituals without specifically unpacking the processes through which rituals resonate more broadly across sites and contexts. Baele and Balzacq's (2022) excellent work, for example, focuses on the emotional impacts rituals have on participants, rather than how ritualizations themselves may resonate and be transmitted via collective affective processes. Bell (2009: 27, 98) herself suggests the importance of collective affects in ritualizations in discussions of "moods" and the "'sense' of ritual" that is impressed upon a "ritualized body," albeit without pursuing these affective dynamics directly.[4] IR's conceptualization of macro-scale ritualizations, then, can benefit by incorporating affective factors to unpack both how ritualizations can help generate collective affective phenomena and how these collective affects can resonate and transmit ritualizations across sites and contexts.

Corollary to this is a parallel neglect of attention to the affective underpinnings of one of rituals' most frequently noted characteristics, which is their dual expression of two seemingly polar phenomena. On one hand, ritualizations may be viewed as more or less formalized, but typically work to "ground" and concretize a community (be it a village, religion, state, social movement, etc.) as material and embodied. Specific gestures, movements, discourses, and spaces practiced in particular ways help to construct a community as a community associated with its particular characteristics and traditions. On the other hand, ritualizations also present and perform those communities as "sacred" and emotionally charged abstractions that transcend the particularities of body and place (Aalberts and Stolk, 2020; Kertzer, 1988: 9–14; Mälksoo, 2021: 59–60; Seligman and Weller, 2012: 102–103). This dynamic is at work in communities that may be seen as more and less material and abstract. A religious community is materially grounded through ritualizations and also symbolically produced as something more than the sum of its members. Similarly, an abstract construct such as the "international community," Aalberts and Stolk (2020: 121) argue, is brought "into existence through discourse, international practices, and ritualized performances." A global movement such as BLM is also constructed along this dual expression, as it is simultaneously produced as grounded movement through specific bodily ritualizations and also as an emotionally charged symbol of race relations with differing emotional meanings for different audiences. As argued below, these key parallel aspects of atmospheres—their visceral and embodied qualities, while also felt by participants to exist collectively and diffusely—map closely onto these dual features of ritual as both materially grounding and symbolically shared. Ritualized atmospheres, in this sense, provide an emotions-based account for how both aspects of ritualizations drive the politics of resonance and affectively and symbolically engage participants within global mass movements.

BLM as a global movement was densely ritualized, and research on global social movements has recently begun to explore their dynamics in terms of rituals. Ritual protests, for example, are ongoing or repeated demonstrations that seek to challenge perceived status quos or air grievances (Blake, 2019; Russo, 2018). Other work shows how rituals within movements also do combined symbolic and affective work.[5] For Gould (2009: 207), a "movement's demonstrations, actions, and other events—its rituals—allow participants to move outside of the everyday mundane . . . and to be transported into a more meaningful existence that holds out potential for self and social change." In Gould's study of the AIDS movement ACT UP, these were often transformative in affectively shifting subjectivities. One of Gould's interviewees, previously dismissive of ACT UP, experienced such a shift upon watching a march: "When ACT UP passed [by] . . . I took one look and said 'I am going to the next meeting of that organization.' There was a sense of power, a sense of action" (Gould, 2009: 242). Regular meetings, marches, and rallies all help to maintain group ties through mutually shared routine burdens and work toward the cause. Specific gestures during such events, such as defiant fist-raising and kneeling, are collectively recognized and shared as symbolic ritualizations.[6] Such rituals can "suggest that you are participating in something bigger than you; you are a part of history, or you are morally sanctioned, or you truly belong to a group" (Jasper, 1997: 192, 194). BLM's orchestration and staging of protest events, placards of "I Can't Breathe" and "No Justice No Peace," the mass rhythms and repetitions of sights, sounds, and movements, call-and-response chanting,[7] specifically stylized and affectively charged bodily performances such as dancing (Bell, 1997: 99; Knottnerus, 2014), sit-ins and "die-ins,"[8] and ritualized sharing of images, videos, memes, and selfies across social media (Van Haperen et al., 2020) all point toward BLM as rich transnational ritualistic context. Such BLM ritualizations are practices meant to be distinguished from other quotidian activities, and the very practices themselves are clearly meant to confer them special status (Bell, 2009: 74, 277).

There are thus some important oversights in these literatures that suggest the need for a concept that accounts for the affective dynamics of ritualizations and that can complement existing accounts of rituals but also focus more effectively on the affective resonance and transmission of ritualizations, which speaks to the BLM case specifically and also to global social movements more broadly. The following section pursues these suggestive points to develop the concept of ritualized atmospheres.

Ritualized atmospheres

Feeling an atmosphere or mood is a common everyday experience. "Is there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and 'felt the atmosphere'?" Brennan (2004: 1) asks. Popular and journalistic accounts of political events frequently refer to collective atmospheres and moods as explanations. Recall major media outlets' reactions to Trump's rise in the United States and the UK Brexit referendum that looked toward populist moods as explanations: either Trump's tapping into moods of economic and racial anxieties, or EU skepticism in terms of general moods against globalization or post-imperial British nostalgia (Closs Stephens, 2019). In a speech to young activists during the Floyd protests, former US president Barack Obama said, "'You have helped to make the entire

country *feel as if this is something that's got to change*' . . . 'You've communicated a sense of urgency. That is as powerful and as transformative as anything that I've seen in recent years" (emphasis added).[9]

The concept of ritualized atmospheres attempts to capture the more fuzzy, ambient, and tonal aspects of affective experience while at the same time viewing these characteristics as intrinsic features of collectively shared ritualizations. Individuals can feel moods, but so can groups, and it is likely that only groups can feel atmospheres.[10] In this sense, atmospheres provide one answer to the task that Hutchison and Bleiker (2014) pose as a key challenge to IR emotions research, that is, to theorize how individual emotions become collective and political. The IR emotions literature has developed a range of useful perspectives for thinking about collective emotions, from intergroup emotion theory (Sasley, 2011), to circulations of affect (Ross, 2014; Solomon, 2014), structures of feeling (Koschut, 2017; Van Rythoven, 2021), the institutionalization of emotions (Crawford, 2014), affective communities (Hutchison, 2016), and neuroscience (Gammon, 2020; Holmes, 2018), to name a few. Other recent work has begun to explore what might be called the "atmospheric" aspects of emotional experience, such as the "sensing" of threats at border controls (Gregory, 2019), "situational awareness" of danger during urban terrorism (Krasmann and Hentschel, 2019), the role of sound in security politics (Weitzel, 2018), and circulations of rumors in conflict zones (McGahern, 2016). Such work often shares claims with recent research on micropolitical approaches to global politics (Holmes and Wheeler, 2020; Kertzer, 2017; Solomon and Steele, 2017), which similarly calls into question the traditional analytical hierarchy of different scales of IR research. Yet a ritualized atmospheres perspective sidesteps, in a sense, the task that Hutchison and Bleiker pose, as it largely rejects the dichotomy between individual and group emotions due to its complication of the notion of subjectivity. Notions of subject and object blur within atmospheres, since they are felt by subjects yet they are not "located" within any one subject (Adey, 2014: 837). Protevi (2009: 4) views such affective experiences as occurring "above, below, and alongside the subject" in terms of ensembles of social structures, somatic experience, and socio-political assemblages that give rise to conditions for different subject formations. Ritualized atmospheres are also behaviorally indeterminate. They shape feelings, perceptions, and the character of a given event, yet do not compel any particular action in direct causal fashion. As such, even if it cannot be claimed that an atmosphere "caused" a specific behavior in a direct manner, they are important spatial conditions that affect not only participants' self-understandings but can also induce expanded senses of collective agency and possibility. In such contexts, an atmosphere "is the orientation of this 'we' towards a feeling of mutual power" (Wall, 2021: 139). As one British BLM participant expressed, it was "an empowering feeling" to participate in a demonstration.[11] Another protestor detailed a similar affective shift: "I'm not so good at engaging in politics, and stuff that happens, this this [BLM] means something. It means something for me, it did something to me. It was important" (Ellefsen and Sandberg, 2022: 1115). Atmospheres can facilitate different forms of the collective "we" due to their often improvised, pluralistic, and everyday practices, which may sit in significant contrast from national or state-led efforts at framing national subjects (Close Stephens et al., 2021). A perspective focusing on

atmospheres thus consolidates this recent IR attention to diffuse affects and further develops these insights into collective affective experience in terms of some of their key effects.

Ritualized atmospheres are conceptualized here as the ambient and tonal affective qualities and experiences generated by embodied and collectively shared ritualizations. Bell (2009) offers a useful conceptual springboard here. While not delving into their specifically affective dimensions, Bell does emphasize situational factors such as the historical weight of ritualizations, annual or cyclical aspects, and organizational dimensions such as standardization and repetition (Bell, 2009: 118). Particular ritual environments and their component activities work to impress upon bodies of participants the events' constitutive scripts (Bell, 2009: 98). These environments are often richly affective. Spotlighting and developing the role of atmospheres thus clarifies how ritualizations are often products of but also generative of the more ambient and tonal qualities that are key experiential aspects to them.

In collective situations, bodily gestures, reactions, and affective practices can spread among participants sometimes without them fully knowing it: "people seem to be fundamentally motivated to bring their feelings into correspondence with others: people love to entrain" (Thrift, 2007: 237). In such situations, the "self-other divide can be seen to be remarkably porous [because] across it constantly flow all kinds of emotional signals" (Thrift, 2007: 237). Collins (2004)—building upon Durkheim's notion of "collective effervescence"—offers a theory of "interaction ritual chains" to explain how emotional energy is built up through such contexts. For Collins (2004: 48), successful interaction rituals—such as mass protests—consist of people assembled together, clear boundaries between insiders and outsiders, a common focus of attention, and a shared mood or emotional experience. Collins offers a useful framework for analyzing collective rituals, yet developing a more specifically atmospheric approach contributes more focused attention to the specific qualities of diffuse collective affects that are often central to participants' descriptions and interpretations of such mass events.[12]

Neither the amalgamation of individual affects nor free-floating phenomena unmoored from participants' everyday worlds, atmospheres in collective ritualizations embody properties that defy simple categorization. Atmospheres are "impersonal in that they belong to collective situations and yet can be felt as intensely personal" (Anderson, 2009: 80). One can "sense" the atmosphere of an event, for example, yet it is often difficult to describe even to those who feel that they are enveloped by it. It is difficult to discursively express, but it is clearly viscerally sensed. Ritualized atmospheres, in this sense, complicate the distinction that has arisen in IR and other fields between emotion and affect. Emotions are often understood as cultural representations of particular feelings with affects conceptualized as sensory embodied experiences that have effects before their representation in language (Åhäll and Gregory, 2015; Leys, 2011; Massumi, 2002). While atmospheres may be predominantly defined by single emotions, they often are characterized by more complex tones and qualities (Closs Stephens, 2016). The atmosphere of a funeral may be one primarily of grief, but also has a more general somber tone where nostalgia, relief, love, anger, or regret shades into one another. Similarly, BLM was not only characterized by a range of clearly definable emotions such as anger, but also more general tones of frustration, grief, and hope. Ritualized

atmospheres, in this sense, can be understood as mediating phenomena between discrete emotions and affect. As Ringmar (2018: 463) explains, moods and atmospheres "are affective states in which things arise—emotions, cognitions, and actions."[13] Not only may more specific emotions arise out of ritualized atmospheres and moods, but more discrete emotions may dissolve into more general tones and feelings, particularly in mass movements where participants likely do not all experience precisely the same emotions yet do share broader atmospheric feelings toward a cause.

Ritualized atmospheres, in this sense, contrast in important ways with recent IR work on rituals and emotions. This work rightly acknowledges the emotional aspects of rituals, yet emotion here tends to play a limited range of roles. Some research, for instance, focuses on how rituals foster emotional solidarity, such as Mälksoo's (2021) examination of how repeated rituals during deterrence interactions produce positive senses of unity and solidarity or Rai's (2010: 289) emphasis on how rituals generate feelings of integration in parliamentary spaces. Other work looks at specifically rhythmic practices of rituals and how these generate mobilizing possibilities (Solomon, 2019) or reproduce affective attachments to militarism (Wegner, 2021). Other research examines how rituals act as affective vehicles for socialization into new identities (Ross, 2014) or explores how rituals may function as both ordering and disordering occasions (Aalberts et al., 2020; Baele and Balzacq, 2022). While this work extends and challenges the Durkheimian tradition of viewing rituals as creating emotional solidarity, they nevertheless do not exhaust the possibilities for how emotion and affect can reconfigure global social movements. Of importance here is that this work neglects one of rituals' defining features: their dual and simultaneous pull between materially grounding communities and producing them as symbolic abstractions. The dual diffuse yet felt aspects of atmospheres offer a novel affect-based account for this core dynamic of ritualizations, and consequently how the key effects of this tension contribute to understanding the wider emotional resonance of global protest movements. Moreover, it is often these tensions in the enveloping qualities atmospheres which can induce shifts in subjectivities themselves (Protevi, 2009), which in turn may foster new perceived horizons of thoughts and actions.

There has been a variety of methodological approaches used to study atmospheres and moods. Public opinion surveys (Claassen, 2020), fieldwork and ethnography (Closs Stephens et al., 2021), and discourse analysis (Yorke, 2020: 8) have all recently been productively used to study different aspects of atmospheres and moods. While the diffuse and ambient qualities of ritualized atmospheres pose methodological challenges, these are similar to the challenges that IR emotions researchers have been addressing for some time (Van Rythoven and Sucharov, 2019). As Hutchison and Bleiker (2014) noted, the lack of long-standing emotions research in IR was partly due to the dominance of positivist/scientific methods and the perceived inability to capture emotions' ephemeral features. Work on atmospheres also rightly acknowledges this important issue, yet is identifying methods appropriate to the challenge that allows research to yield useful insights. One key question regards how to define or name an atmosphere if representation fixes and thereby reduces the phenomenon. As Anderson and Ash (2015: 37–38) suggest, attempts at naming an atmosphere may be more usefully conceived as speculative description that both recognizes the particular qualities of an atmosphere and "evokes something beyond the name and can hint towards how uncertainty inheres in the process

of ascribing an identity to the atmosphere." As illustrated below, this approach is helpful for accounting for how BLM participants frequently attempted to name the ritualized atmospheres which they felt were collectively shared, yet also struggled to pin down precisely while nevertheless simultaneously testifying to the vivid importance and power of the experience.[14]

Precisely because of the centrality of their felt aspects, critical attention to reflexivity is key in researching ritualized atmospheres. Ahmed emphasizes this point in contending that "the atmosphere is already angled; it is always felt from a specific point" (Ahmed, 2010: 37). As such, and following ongoing discussion among IR scholars (Amoureux and Steele, 2016), reflexivity here invites researchers "to interrogate how we can know atmospheres—that is, what personal and cultural resources we draw on to generate understandings and ways of knowing and how these impact what we can possibly know and communicate to others" (Sumartojo and Pink, 2019: 38). An ongoing conversation between data-generating techniques and reflexive attention to positionality and critique is therefore key in producing and sharing knowledge about ritualized atmospheres.

Finally, ritualized atmospheres have at least two crucial effects in collective contexts. First, as indicated above, atmospheres are defined by their simultaneous features of being viscerally felt yet diffuse and intangible. This arises from the fact that atmospheres typically exceed distinct categorizations. They do not originate from individuals, yet individuals are components of them, and while they are often felt to arise from material ensembles, they are not intrinsic only to material objects. Religious practices are a common example. Material spaces regarded as holy and that are usually animated by prayer and related behaviors "signal [that] the experiences at these sites are immaterial (mediated through the material) and transcendent (connect an individual to an otherworldly realm)" (Wanner, 2020: 77; see also Banks, 2019). Religious subjectivities are formed both through these material practices of religion (kneeling, signing, a particular material space, etc.) and through the atmosphere generated by these practices when participants feel like they approach a symbolic spiritual plane. Ritualized atmospheres, then, constitute individuals as subjects of religion and also religious communities themselves through their dual pull between the materialization of the viscerally felt practices and the establishment of the "holy" as an affectively charged sacred symbol. In this sense, these key dimensions of atmospheres of being deeply felt but also diffusely perceived map closely to ritualizations' simultaneous processes of materially grounding and emotional, symbolic abstracting and offer an affective account of these constitutive dynamics of ritualizations.

Second, the tensions and ambiguities of ritualized atmospheres can generate new horizons for thoughts, discourses, and actions. Gould (2009: 26–27) offers a helpful account of this process from within ACT UP during the AIDS crisis:

> Ideas about the need for change and movement toward bringing it about often begin with an inarticulate and inarticulable sensation that something in the established order is not quite right. By signaling that something is awry, that things could be and perhaps should be different, affective states can inspire challenges to the social order . . . The tension between dominant accounts of what is and what might be, on the one hand, and lived experience that contradicts those accounts, on the other, is not always consciously understood; rather it is often experienced

"at the very edge of semantic availability," felt as "an unease, a stress, a displacement, a latency."

At other times, during more exceptional moments of disruption such as Occupy Wall Street or the Arab Spring, political atmospheres foster

> changes in the kinds of behaviours or conversations or thoughts that become newly possible. These are typically not legal, institutional, or material changes . . . but more ambient shifts in the collective mood and consequently . . . in forms of sociality and action. (Zhang, 2019: 132)

Zhang explores how activists of the 15-M or *Indignados* (begun on 15 May, 2011) anti-austerity movement in Spain addressed how to create a particular atmosphere: "the 15-M is not only an organizational structure, but above all a new social climate . . . Now you can see, think, feel, and do other things" (in terms of challenging neoliberal economic orthodoxy) (Zhang, 2019: 133). Just as Occupy Wall Street posed challenges to the prevailing economic order through introducing notions such as "the 99%," 15-M helped to change people's relationship to their perceptions of the problems, which in turn shifted them toward new affects and discourses of economic life:

> Being affected by the atmosphere of indignation means becoming more sensitive to what is actually going on (eg, opening one's eyes to the extent of the foreclosures . . .) and feeling the currently reality differently (as intolerable, feeling the plight of others in the first person . . .). (Zhang, 2019: 137)

Ritualized atmospheres generated by social movements, then, produce tensions and ambiguities—they are "up in the air"—in two senses, both of which can become some of atmospheres' most consequential effects. Atmospheres are often felt to be "up in the air" (Zhang, 2019: 124) by participants themselves, as descriptions of BLM (below), 15-M, Occupy Wall Street, and the Arab Spring often attest. Certain affective experiences are shared collectively yet are shared imperfectly, with different emotions mixing and shading into one another to produce an atmosphere with particular qualities yet without a single definable characteristic.[15] However, ritualized atmospheres are also "up in the air" in the sense of the political ambiguities that they produce and the new political horizons that may be glimpsed as a result of the shifts that they may induce. As Ringmar (2018: 463) explains, atmospheres and moods are indeterminate in that they "can specify a range of different options, but they cannot determine which option in the set will be selected . . . a mood gives us inklings of what something will be and how things will unfold." A new range of options might feel to be newly open to us, as the novelty of the situation in which we find ourselves reveals fresh potentialities. Yet ritualized atmospheres as a phenomenon are politically indeterminate, as they can be generated around progressive social justice movements or reactionary causes. The rally held by outgoing American president Donald Trump and the subsequent insurrection attack on the US Capitol on 6 January 2021 could be considered from an atmospheric perspective in this sense. What specific politics will follow from the ambiguities of the new situation, and

which new potential horizons will be pursued, will be channeled by the discourses and actions taken to shape such contingencies toward some routes and away from others.

Ritualized atmospheres of BLM

BLM began in 2014 as a US-based movement against police killings of African Americans, yet it also long had aims to become transnational via networks across multiple countries (Black Lives Matter, 2020). While the movement had some visibility outside of the United States before 2020, it was the unprecedented attention to the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis that sparked demonstrations around the world. Despite important differences, BLM follows other long traditions and previous movements against racism and state violence, including groups that emerged in the United States after the 2012 death of Trayvon Martin and the earlier Black Power and the Civil Rights movements. It follows a range of philosophical lineages including Black feminism and the Black radical tradition, the prison reform movement, anticapitalist politics, and Black solidarity movements both in the United States and internationally (Duran and Simon, 2019; Ransby, 2018). These transnational dimensions of Black organizing, often stemming from colonial and post-colonial movements, have long been obscured by IR theory (Shilliam, 2015), and the resurgence of BLM as a global movement has lent increasing urgency for the field to recognize the role of racism in the building of modern global order (Acharya, 2022).

Much work on BLM has rightly emphasized the central role of social media in spreading digital images, tweets, videos, memes, and associated narratives (Sorce and Dumitrica, 2022). Other work on transnational movements identifies a number of factors on how movements spread across borders, such as activists' social networks, particular framings of events, and forms of organization, and are increasingly applied to studying BLM (Oliver, 2021). Recent work on BLM emphasizes shifting patterns of organization toward greater connections between the global and the local in online public spheres and how the use of digital technology intersects with often pre-existing activist networks during mobilization events (Sorce and Dumitrica, 2022). A focus on the collective affects of ritualizations—ritualized atmospheres—both complements many of these works insofar as such atmospheres can feature both physically and digitally online and unpacks the affective conditions within which many of these other factors operate that are usually neglected in current work.

BLM spread quickly around the world in the wake of widely shared online video of Floyd's death. The *New York Times* (2020) declared that BLM in 2020 was likely the most widespread social movement in the history of the United States, and large demonstrations were organized in many other countries. Many of the most central features of BLM as expressed by participants were highly ritualized in affective and embodied practices across countries, including common placards, chants and refrains, fist-raising, kneeling, marches, and defacing of public statues and monuments.[16] The global demonstrations recognized the structures of racial violence in the United States that led to Floyd's death, but protests in each country often adapted the language and ritualizations of BLM both for mobilization of local struggles and for global aims at racial equality. In Paris, placards with BLM slogans such as "We Can't Breathe" were carried in marches

commemorating both Floyd and Adama Traoré, who died in police custody in similar conditions to Floyd.[17] In New Zealand, protests coincided with the conducting of a trial run of arming police officers with guns in response to a 2019 White-supremacist shooting at mosques. Black and indigenous people worried that armed police would make them vulnerable to the same violence as African Americans: "we don't want to end up like the United States," one organizer said.[18] In Colombia, protestors marched to the US Embassy in Bogota moved by the deaths of Floyd and young Black man Anderson Arboleda who was killed by police while in custody.[19] In the Philippines, protestors opposing an anti-terrorism bill "took a knee" in solidarity with BLM against police brutality.[20] In Italy, protestors took a knee, raised their fists in solidarity, and demonstrated at the US embassy shouting "I can't breathe."[21]

Adaptation of common ritualizations allowed local groups to connect with a globally visible movement within which their own social and political claims could be woven. In Italy, activists noted that BLM activated latent potential for mobilization within a context of years of increasing right-wing and xenophobic politics, along with the particular conflation of immigration with racism there (Della Porta et al., 2022: 706). As Della Porta et al. (2022: 711) find, the most widespread forms of action were sit-ins, "No Justice No Peace" signage, and accompanying ritualizations such as raised fists adapted from American BLM protests. In Brazil and India, police brutality, especially against minorities, is a significant issue and social media in both countries emphasized the culpability of police in George Floyd's death in ways that connected with local police violence (Shahin et al., 2021). In Canada and Australia, BLM protests were often organized around similar conditions of state violence and dispossession on the part of indigenous and Aboriginal populations (Diverlus et al., 2020; Stansfield, 2021). In Belgium, the worldwide BLM demonstrations spurred local protests spotlighting the country's violent colonial past and locally specific forms of racism.[22]

Dual affective expression of "grounding" and abstracting the movement

As discussed above, one of the most noted aspects of collective ritualizations is their simultaneous expression of communities as both grounded in specific practices and producing them as "sacred" and emotionally charged abstractions (Aalberts and Stolk, 2020; Kertzer, 1988: 9–14; Mälksoo, 2021: 59–60; Seligman and Weller, 2012: 102–103). Ritualized atmospheres offer an emotional account of this constitutive dynamic of ritualization, which was present in BLM's various manifestations. BLM as a transnational movement was viscerally felt by many participants and helped to make the issue of systemic racism more palpable and concrete for many (particularly white participants). At the same time, "Black Lives Matter" was also produced as a diffuse and emotionally charged symbol in itself, representing a range of claims and shifts in collective moods surrounding race.[23] The affective focus of a ritualized atmosphere lens offers an emotions-based account for the efficacy of this dual process.

The tangible and visceral experience of race relations was widely reported by participants with reference to BLM embodied ritualizations in 2020.[24] "The atmosphere at the protest was electric," one UK report observed. "The general vibe was electric because you could literally see that everybody was hurt," said one London protestor.[25] Marching

and "being out in the streets was so empowering and peaceful," said one US woman.[26] Many ritualizations such as marching and kneeling were particularly meaningful. A UK woman explained that "I think we were always conscious that the march wouldn't be enough. We all did a kneel and a few guys started crying. They were so overwhelmed as they had been waiting for this moment to come . . ."[27] "I was completely overwhelmed," said one organizer near London, because even when the weather was bad "no one left. People still marched."[28] "It was a strange and empowering feeling" to be at a protest, one UK woman expressed.[29] Many people of color expressed feelings of direct connection with the movement because of their own experiences of racism or directly witnessing such acts. "I am protesting because I'm tired of all our actions being a powerless scream into the void. All the accumulated stress from each new horror story of inequity is like a wire holding my jaw shut."[30] The atmosphere for them was often one of anger, grief, and frustration born of repeated trauma and lack of societal or political response.

BLM was also experienced as an emotionally charged symbol. Many people's experiences of the movement were felt diffusely through expressions of their differently perceived proximities to the issues at stake and the movement itself. Anderson argues that because of this kind of diffuse intensity, it is "through an atmosphere that a thing, person or site will be apprehended and will take on a specific presence" (Anderson, 2014: 144). For many, BLM "took on a specific presence" not through direct experiences of racism but as an atmospherically charged symbol that represented a widespread shift of collective mood regarding everyday and systemic racism. A UK man reported that while the "feeling and energy was incredible," this was juxtaposed with his own perceived distance from the issues:

> I have always thought of myself as an ally to causes such as Black Lives Matter but I have done this from the comfort of my home in the safety that my white privilege allows. Events in the US have been a wake-up call to do more to highlight the serious issues within our own society.[31]

In Norway, one young woman similarly expressed how at her first protest she felt "it was the boiling point! I would say . . . I was very angry and motivated . . .There was a kind of unity in the air, we were going to stand here together, fighting for a greater cause. It was very motivating!" (Ellefsen and Sandberg, 2022: 1111).

Such narratives were common far from large urban centers, where experiences were often articulated through more general references to perceptions of Black anger and the cultural touchstone of Martin Luther King, Jr.[32] A woman in Colorado said,

> not living in a city especially and living in my very white, privileged world that I live in, it wasn't in my face and I didn't seek it out enough . . . But now with this momentum, I don't know how I couldn't be part of the voice in our community, and everywhere."

A young White farmer in Arkansas said, "people are angry. This has been going on for years and it keeps happening. I understand why people of color are frustrated."[33] A man in Pennsylvania similarly felt that "the anger driving the protests is clearly justified, and no one's ever made the point better than Dr. King: 'a riot is the language of the unheard.'"[34]

In such cases, BLM was felt and experienced more through its atmospheric qualities rather than from specific experiences of racial violence or discrimination.

New horizons for discourses, thoughts, and actions

The political ambiguities produced via the movement's atmospheres helped to generate new horizons for thoughts, discourses, and actions. Gould's account of the surfacing of new potentials within atmospheres is instructive. The tension between dominant narratives and lived experience "is not always consciously understood; rather it is often experienced 'at the very edge of semantic availability', felt as 'an unease, a stress, a displacement, a latency'" (Gould, 2009: 26–27). Participants in BLM often articulated new social and political ambiguities "at the edge of semantic availability" with reference to changed collective atmospheres. "There's a charge in the air . . . The atmosphere has changed. I think people have realized it can't go on like this," as one Houston woman explained "a stress" sensed in the situation.[35] A British man in Portsmouth similarly expressed a kind of "displacement": "I feel like something has now changed. What happened in America has galvanized people."[36] A young woman in Norway was skeptical when first hearing about the demonstrations in the United States, but after seeing protests spark across Europe sensed "there was real change in the air . . . we thought 'this is our chance' . . . this time it reached everyone, not only the minorities, and that made it emotionally really intense for me" (Ellefsen and Sandberg, 2022: 1109).

Such shifts that the movement fostered were often attributed to the power of the embodied ritualizations themselves and their affective effects:

> If you only see protests through the lens of Fox News or whatever sensationalized broadcast, maybe you're only going to see mayhem and violence . . . But when it's kids from down the block who are standing out alongside other kids in your community, that hits in a different way. Having someone local say Black Lives Matter . . . that's powerful because it keeps the most polarizing effects from kicking in.[37]

Some of these shifts were contestations over the changing character of the United States and other countries, but many of these were fluctuating articulations of different communities in relation to the movement and race. An American academic observer, for example, made claims about different groups' shifting relations to BLM:

> While white America is going through its own self-examination, you better damn well be sure that Black America is too. And if you're not, you should be. Don't pretend that the only awakening going on is white people, because Black people are being shaken awake as well.[38]

Similar potentials were realized surrounding the discourse of "defund the police."[39] Starting in the United States but also provoking public debate in Canada, the United Kingdom, and other countries,[40] "defund the police" began new kinds of conversations about the relationships between police and state violence, social care provision, and race relations. An American civil rights lawyer articulated the newly sensed possibilities opened by the movement:

> I think this is unprecedented . . . the fact that we are having a conversation about police-union budgets and police-union contracts, the whole narrative shift[s]. [The police have] had a very, very powerful narrative . . . It may be the most powerful thing that has happened . . . is the unraveling of that narrative.[41]

Bell again offers a useful lens through which to think about such changes. Ritualization "projects an environment that, re-embodied, produces a re-nuanced person freshly armed with schemes of strategic classification" (Bell, 2009: 110). Ritual "environments"—here conceptualized affectively as ritualized atmospheres—transform subjects who perceive the world in new ways. For those felt to be distant from the movement,[42] the ritualized atmospheres that they shared with others helped to more clearly materialize the claims of BLM. For those who felt more directly connected to the movement, shared ritualized atmospheres often amplified their existing subjectivities but also appeared to shift affects regarding what seemed to be possible regarding fraught race relations and existing power structures.

A *Boston Review* essay attempted to capture these still-inchoate potentials of the societal effects of the Floyd protests. "What opens—what is beginning right now in this country—is a profoundly unsettled space. Something might emerge, something better than what we have, something more satisfying, and more caring."[43] The above British man in Portsmouth expressed frustration but a similar sense of opening. "When I've talked about racism before I've always felt like I was banging my head against a brick wall but it feels like more people are now listening."[44] After attending Floyd's memorial in Houston, others attempted to articulate this inchoate but clearly felt change. One man said, "I felt like something had shifted. This was gonna be different. I didn't know how I would participate but I wanted to be part of the change."[45] A woman at the memorial similarly expressed that "there is a lot of anger and sadness. We've been through this so many times before. But I do feel like this time is different."[46] An African American woman reflected on the new discursive horizons being broached by White people: "I have heard more white folks ever in my life talking about how they're having conversations with their own children and family members about race."[47] In Rome, one local organizer pointed to the collective atmospheres surrounding the movement to explain the mobilization of protests in Italy but also how these affects shifted discursive possibilities:

> It is a fact that BLM in the US has created this momentum, the resonance of it, the scope, at the global level, in terms of attention and numbers. But this fact also led people to ask themselves questions about their own country, their own city. We need BLM to say out loud that the problem exists also here, even if we need to contextualize it to Italy. (Della Porta et al., 2022: 713)

A year after the summer 2020 demonstrations, some Bristol residents reflected on this felt shift in discursive possibilities. One man said that after the toppling of the 17th-century slave trader Edward Colson's statue during the protests there, his "conversations with friends and family changed."[48] A Black Bristol woman reflected on how friends began to ask questions about her life, an interest that they had not shown previously. "I had people

that I have known since primary school ask me questions about my life and experiences that they've never done before and I had to learn how to answer them."[49] The inchoate potentials generated by BLM opened up new discursive terrain, and in the process stirred new felt possibilities of challenging existing power structures around race.

Conclusion

Posing a key question about the international BLM protests of 2020, this article asks how did BLM resonate globally? How did these ritualized protests spread internationally across a wide range of audiences and geographical sites? Building on the IR rituals literature as well as research on emotions, the article developed the concept of ritualized atmospheres to help capture the diffuse, ambient, and energetic collective affects often generated during mass ritualized events. Understood as the ambient and tonal affective qualities and experiences generated by collectively shared embodied ritual practices, ritualized atmospheres were some of the most striking yet underexamined aspects of BLM participants' own articulations of their experiences. The concept offers some important theoretical and empirical contributions. First, ritualized atmospheres suggest an affect-based account for the often noted constitutive dynamic of rituals' dual pull of the materialization of political communities through ritual practices and rituals' production of those communities as emotionally charged abstractions. Second, it is through the tensions produced through diffuseness and ambiguity that ritualized atmospheres can generate new horizons for thoughts, discourses, and actions. Both of these sets of dynamics were empirically observed in BLM across countries and offers a novel affective account of these neglected aspects of the movement's global affective resonance.

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Notes

1. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-52967551
2. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/15/us/black-lives-matter-protests-small-towns.html; https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/29/george-floyd-death-fuelled-anti-racism-protests-britain; https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/south-african-opposition-leader-protests-brutality-us-sa-71132701

3. I work with a notion of affect drawn from the International Relations (IR) literature, which often conceptualizes affect as felt but amorphous embodied phenomenon that operates prior to and often outside of their interpretation and definition of specific emotions within language (Koschut, 2020: 80). However, this definition is debated (Van Rythoven and Sucharov, 2019).
4. Bell wrote the bulk of her work before the "affective turn" in the social sciences.
5. Much of the work on emotions and social movements implicitly or explicitly views emotions as a resource for movement leaders to use in a strategic or instrumental manner (Yang, 2007). This literature pays less attention to diffuse affective conditions such as atmospheres and moods (Jasper, 2018: 80). Jasper (2018) also discusses the relationship between emotions and moods (pp. 78–79).
6. Ritualization continues in the online world of digitally mediated social movement actions. The Arab Spring of 2010–2011 was perhaps the first major transnational movement to feature heavily mediated online interaction, while Black Lives Matter (BLM) has been one of the most recent. Even without physical co-presence—previously thought to be vital to social movements—digital activism "can help create, set, and maintain a mood in a protest [and] allow the protest to feel bigger than the location" (Tufekci, 2017: 111).
7. https://www.thecut.com/2022/01/black-lives-matter-religion-spirituality.html
8. https://newrepublic.com/article/122513/blacklivesmatter-breathing-new-life-die
9. https://www.vox.com/2020/6/3/21279759/barack-obama-george-floyd-racism-police-brutality
10. Moods can be understood as individual and collective, but we rarely speak about individual or "interior atmospheres" (Zhang, 2019: 125). Here, atmospheres and moods are both sufficiently publicly oriented that I use them interchangeably (see also Ringmar, 2018).
11. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-52971572
12. Such atmospheres extend to virtual and online spaces. As people experience "entering" online environments where they will encounter others, affects associated with social media are often spatialized (Tucker and Goodings, 2017: 631). Affective atmospheres can "emerge through social media, which exist as the ongoing encounters between bodies," even if not in a physical sense but commonly through images and discourse (Tucker and Goodings, 2017: 631). As Ash (2013) and Lupton (2017: 5) explore, affective atmospheres of virtual/digital spaces often entail sensory and haptic user experiences that such factors are incorporated into product design of smartphones, tablets, and wearable devices.
13. See also Rumelili (2021) and Gellwitzki (2022).
14. The analysis below relies upon media portrayals of participants' experiences, rather than direct interviews. While this raises the issue of studying embodied emotions through representations, this analysis follows other IR research in contending that this can nevertheless yield useful insights. As Ross (2014: 31) argues, "media of various kinds . . . transmit symbols, identities, narratives, and other emotionally significant constructions." Hutchison (2016: 36) similarly argues that media representations "explicitly situate and often re-enact individual testimony, generating wider narratives that position [emotional] events within a social and political context."
15. An ITV news segment captured this well during a BLM protest in London in 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ctbtp8B_ZA4.
16. For further examples from across Europe, see: https://www.dw.com/en/george-floyd-killing-spurs-fresh-protests-across-europe/a-53706536.
17. https://www.euronews.com/2020/06/06/black-lives-matter-protesters-take-to-streets-in-europe-despite-pandemic-restrictions
18. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/
19. See Note 18.

20. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/protest-against-urgent-anti-terror-bill-in-philippines-gets-a-boost-from-taylor-swift/

21. https://www.euronews.com/2020/06/06/black-lives-matter-protesters-take-to-streets-in-europe-despite-pandemic-restrictions

22. https://www.euronews.com/2020/06/08/king-leopold-ii-who-was-belgium-s-colonial-era-monarch-and-why-do-some-want-his-statues-re

23. According to its founders, BLM is an explicitly decentralized movement (Khan-Cullors, 2016). While much of its focus in 2020 was on police violence and racial discrimination, there have long been internal contestations over the movement's driving themes, such as its relationship to the Black radical tradition, gender justice, feminist and queer rights, prison reform, and anticapitalist mobilization, among others. See Ransby (2018) and Taylor (2016).

24. BLM in 2020 occurred simultaneously with the COVID-19 global pandemic. While space constraints preclude a fuller examination here, the atmospheric affects of the pandemic and worldwide lockdowns are likely inseparable from how the movement played out, in terms of both the isolation felt by many and the racial disparities in health access and outcomes that the pandemic made more visible. See Elias et al. (2021) and Purnell (2021).

25. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-52877803

26. https://www.latimes.com/projects/george-floyd-protests-responses/

27. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-53406040

28. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-52971572

29. See Note 28.

30. https://www.latimes.com/projects/george-floyd-protests-responses/

31. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/12/black-lives-matter-historic-moment-protesters-on-why-they-have-been-demonstrating

32. BLM was highly heterogeneous in terms of ethnic, racial, and gender makeup (Pew Research Center, 2020). Different groups reacted to the movement in highly divergent ways. The year 2021 saw a political backlash against BLM and, in many ways, a hardening of racialization—the reactionary uproar over "critical race theory" in the United States and United Kingdom, and the hostility showed by President Donald Trump and his supporters were manifestations of this. Like the ritualized atmospheres of BLM, reactionary atmospheres also sparked the emergence of new discourses, such as the outlawing of "critical race theory" in some US states. Conceptually, the diffuse nature of ritualized atmospheres can facilitate different reactions to the same atmosphere, which allows for the exploration of multiple lived experiences of collective atmospheres (Trigg, 2020: 4).

33. https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/06/us/small-town-blm-protests-trnd/index.html

34. See Note 33.

35. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/george-floyd-memorial-houston-texas-a9555251.html

36. https://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/people/black-lives-matter-hundreds-pack-portsmouths-guildhall-square-protest-against-racism-and-death-george-floyd-28751

37. https://time.com/5847228/george-floyd-nationwide-protests/

38. https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2020/08/george-floyd-oral-history

39. "Defund the police" encapsulates a range of proposals which support decreasing public funding of police departments and increasing other forms of public and community welfare, such as social services. "Defund the police" is observed here as an empirical example of a new discourse that emerged from BLM which circulated internationally. While gaining widespread attention in 2020, there are long lineages of abolitionist thought within the United States and internationally. See Duran and Simon (2019).

40. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/police-protests-countries-reforms/2020/06/13/596eab16-abf2-11ea-a43b-be9f6494a87d_story.html
41. https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2020/08/george-floyd-oral-history
42. The distance from racism claimed by many well-intentioned members of majority groups would be called into question by systemic racism analyses. See Anderson (2020).
43. http://bostonreview.net/race/melvin-rogers-we-should-be-afraid-not-protesters
44. https://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/people/black-lives-matter-hundreds-pack-portsmouths-guildhall-square-protest-against-racism-and-death-george-floyd-2875176
45. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/george-floyd-memorial-houston-texas-a9555251.html
46. See Note 45.
47. https://www.politico.com/news/2021/05/25/white-people-racial-justice-activism-george-floyd-490545
48. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-57337123
49. See Note 48.

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