SOCIAL CONTROL: JUSTIFYING POLICE VIOLENCE

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

JOSE GUZMAN

Submitted to the Undergraduate Research Scholars program
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as an

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLAR

Approved by
Research Advisor: Dr. Verna Keith

May 2016

Major: Sociology
History
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOMENCLATURE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTIONS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic strategy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Police Violence as Social Control

Jose Guzman
Department of Sociology/History
Texas A&M University

Research Advisor: Dr. Verna Keith
Department of Sociology

Both historically and in contemporary times, police violence against African American social movements has received attention by the media sparking controversy amid the African American community and American society writ large. In the 1960s, non-violent movements such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) challenged the discriminatory White social order through peaceful demonstrations but were met with severely militarized, excessive, and intentional police violence. Presently, the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) has mobilized to fight against institutionalized racial discrimination consequently becoming victims of police violence similar to their predecessors. By examining police violence against the SNCC and the SCLC in the 1960s, as well as instances of police violence against BLM, I posit that police violence and excessive policing is utilized as a form of social control to maintain White hegemonic control. I will demonstrate that through operationalization of the white racial frame, the dominant society deploys police intervention and violence in order to maintain a system of oppression. This research is guided by the following research questions: 1) What are the similarities and differences between police violence against the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s and police violence against the Black
Lives Matter movement in the present decade? 2) To what extent is police violence utilized as a mechanism of oppression to perpetuate the oppression of Black Americans? 3) What racialized stereotypes, images and narratives were used to rationalize police violence against Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Black Lives Matter movements? By studying violence as a form of control we can stop a barbaric and outdated social practice, and move towards a more equal and just society.
DEDICATION

I would like to thank my loving, wonderful, caring, and supportive parents. You have sacrificed so much to give me a better life. You left our home in Mexico, sacrificing years without your family, parents, friends, and culture. You have given me many great values including that of caring for others above myself. You have made me into who I am. Thank you. Los amo más de lo que puedo describir.

My family has truly been a blessing with all the support they have given me while in college. There is absolutely no way I could have done any of this without my entire family. I love you all. Thank you Zinobia Bennefield, not only for your mentorship but also for caring enough to push me to do this project. I have always seen the oppression of all people of color, especially that of my own, but never known how to describe it. Before I took your class, I was lost, not knowing what I wanted out of my education and how to further it. After taking your class I was able describe the oppression and hypocrisy that I saw and decided I had to do something about it. But you went further, even after I finished your class you continued to reach out to me and motivate me in my education. You have been the only instructor to do this for me. I still don’t know what I want to do in life but I know it will be something that helps all people of color and attempts to make the world better. Thank you Zinobia, truly.

Thank you Dr. Keith for allowing the opportunity and trusting me to do this research. Thank you Frank, Mark, and Rebecca for all the help with my research. Thank you for helping me with what am I’m sure are basic questions for you.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Joseph White observed that black people should have a healthy paranoia toward both the police and whites that defend them. In the same spirit and recognition of the very real struggle against oppression I write this, in hope of spreading the word and bringing us closer to the America we were promised. For all my brothers and sisters of color, for all oppressed people around the world, and for all Americans who have witnessed state approved violence from our so called protectors. This is for you.
## NOMENCLATURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCLC</td>
<td>Southern Christian Leadership Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNCC</td>
<td>Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLM</td>
<td>Black Lives Matter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION I
INTRODUCTION

Through overwhelmingly negative rhetoric African American social movements are framed as violent; which enables White society to utilize police violence as a form of social control to disrupt social movements challenging the dominant ideology. If the police are there to protect and serve, why is it that African American are met with such a disproportionate amount of brutality? To begin to answer this question, I will utilize a systemic racism theoretical framework, along with the white racial frame, to examine the ways in which police violence maintains the dominate White ideology when oppressed groups seek to remedy a system of oppression.

Systemic racism incorporates the white prejudices, stereotypes, emotions, framing, and discriminatory practices that are essential to the oppression of people of color living within the United States.¹ It is through a deeply embedded stereotyped knowledge that includes racialized images, understandings, emotions, and narratives in everyday life for Whites, known as the white racial frame; that systemic racism is operationalized. For example, through the white racial frame the dominant society rationalizes racism by changing a peaceful African American demonstration attacked by police officers to an out of control riot using negative and covert racist language like “thugs, looters, criminals, or rabble rousers” to describe demonstrators. In

¹Feagin, Joe. 2010. “Racist America” (Second, revised edition). Routledge
contrast violent police actions used to usurp a peaceful African American protest is characterized with positive framing with words like “line of duty, public hero, or war on cops.”

The positive framing of police violence towards African American movements is important because it reinforces White dominance while making it seem as though the protestors are out of control, adding to the narrative that African Americans are criminals, and therefore in need of policing. This process is called criminalization, which works as a mechanism of oppression by becoming a way for whites to rationalize police treatment of African Americans. For example, in 1962 Albany police officers attacked and jailed protestors, seriously injuring two, because they were going against norms by pushing for integration of African Americans. Admittedly, the 1960s African American social movements experienced this first hand. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) challenged the dominant white ideology and endured violence and intervention from police because they challenged social norms.

These police attacks are not simply racist history; they continue in the present. The New Orleans police department, known for its brutality and corruption, was exposed by a video released October 9th, 2005 to continue that tradition. Officers attacked Robert Davis and then reported that Davis was intoxicated and resisted arrest, but video proves that Davis did not resist. Later

---

the two officers were fired after New Orleans reached a settlement with Davis.⁵ Stories like this are common and need to be addressed. In 2014 after the deaths of many young African Americans like Travon Martin and Mike Brown the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) attempted to do just that. Sadly, due to common rhetoric BLM was met with racial framing and police action.⁶ I contend that the overwhelmingly negative rhetoric that frames African American social movements enables White society to utilize police violence as a form of social control to disrupt the movements.

**Literature review**

*Elite maintenance*

Dr. Feagin argues that elites have created and maintained the societal institutions, interpretive frames, and ideologies that reflect their interests in racial hierarchies.⁷ Feagin begins his book, *Racist America*, by questioning the very notion of democracy within the preamble to the US constitution and the creation of the “first democratic nation” by saying that rich, powerful, racist white men founded America without input from people of color or even the poor.⁸ Feagin’s view of racism is that it is not only as a thing of the past but also as persistent, pervasive, and omnipresent. For example, white politicians often challenged African American social movements through legislation, political speeches, and day to day commentary. “Historically, the right-wing of the elite, a large segment, has been committed to a more obvious racist perspective

---

and has often pressed for curtailment of citizen protests against societal oppression.”

Correspondingly, Vesla M. Weaver used her concept of Frontlash, to illustrate how elite white males in the 1960s changed the story civil rights movements to riots, ghetto revolts, and black criminality. Elite white males, who were on the opposing side of the civil rights movement created a countermovement within politics, mainly affecting crime policy. White politicians criminalized and demonized, peaceful, black social movements. In the 1960s’ many whites saw civil rights movements as a call for violence due to white politicians pushing that notion. For example Weaver states that sit-ins, a peaceful style of protest, were seen as a call for violence and racial agitation. Take the case of democratic Sen. John C. Stennis from Mississippi for example. He argued that high government officials who supported the 1960s civil rights movement “encouraged violations of local law” and “violence.” He continued to attack the movement, of social equality, by saying that demonstrations such as “sit-in, lie-ins, stand-ins, and all other violations of property rights” would lead to “anarchy.”

Many whites and white politicians reproduced this sentiment. The anarchy that he referred to was the disobedience of white authority by blacks. Completely ignoring the reasons for the sit-in and other demonstrations caused by issues and concerns within the black community, politicians instead chose to criminalize these peaceful protests.

White politicians continued to maintenance the criminalization of protests. They argued that African American protestors using the transportation system violated local laws and therefore are

---

criminals. They worked tirelessly to criminalize groups struggling for freedom rather than aiding them in their struggle. If White politicians were so concerned about the violations of laws, why were they not worried about the daily and habitual violation of the almost sacred and holy words in the US Constitution? “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, which among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Because the civil rights movement was by definition a movement for equality White politicians who attempted to counter the civil rights movement, implicitly, said that those truths only pertain to White Americans.

Social control

Social control comes in many different forms like police and social policy, the form in which a society discuss a behavior, or differential treatment in society due to racial hierarchies. Marlese Durr compares today’s police with slave patrols during the 1700s. They were there to manage race conflict in the southern colonies” expressly through the control of slave populations.” The slave patrol’s main duties were to break up slave organized meetings, or in other words break up ways for slaves to get together and combat social injustices. Durr goes further and states that federal military, state militia, and the Ku Klux Klan emerged from disbanded slave patrols to

---

preserve individual and societal control over African Americans and eventually behaved like “newly established police departments.”\(^\text{14}\)

Durr goes further and states that today, African Americans are stuck in a “Nigger moment.” The realization of their social position through a more obscure adaptation of the slave patrols, instituted by municipal governments.\(^\text{15}\) Governments and police departments pass formal and informal policies such as “Stop and Frisk, Racial Profiling, or Driving While Black, but most important is the ‘Speak When I Tell You Law’ that are used to enforce the control of the African American community.

In the same fashion Weaver also speaks about social control in the 1960s through crime policy aimed against African Americans social movements. “So, like its antecedent in civil rights debates, crime was linked to civil rights.”\(^\text{16}\) Except, this time the argument was not to oppose civil rights but to use law enforcement to curtail social movements. “From 1965 to 1969, nearly 100 pieces of legislation made participating in a riot a federal offense with stiff penalties.”\(^\text{17}\)

*Excessive policing*

Excessive policing heavily affected the African American community in the 1960s. Both SNCC and SCLC fought against the overly aggrieve policing in their time period however excessive policing continues to plague the African American community in the present, which led to the Black Lives Matter movement. Matthew W. Hughey argues in *The Five I’s of Five-O: Racial*


\(^{16}\) Weaver, V. (n.d). Frontlash: Race and the development of punitive crime policy. Studies In American Political Development, 21(2), 250

\(^{17}\) Weaver, V. (n.d). Frontlash: Race and the development of punitive crime policy. Studies In American Political Development, 21(2), 250
Ideologies, Institutions, Interests, Identities, and Interactions of Police Violence that whites use the police and the “thin blue line” ideology as a form of social control. He states that police utilize both color-conscious and color-blind ideologies that disproportionately advantage whites, burden people of color with more profiling, arrests, and violence, even if it is counterproductive to stopping crime. Whites have a higher probability of transporting drugs, guns, or other contraband however the police are three times more likely to search African Americans. Hughey asserts that officers target people of color in areas understood as “white space” as a form of social control, disguised as racially neutral appealing to white moral virtuousness as well concerns for safety and space. He goes on to contend that Institutions have a distinct social purpose, formal and informal expected rules of behavior that reproduce social hierarchy. He uses the heavy militarization of police departments to demonstrate that the higher death ratio of African Americans is a form of social control, especially in areas of Black upward mobility and social demonstration. For example, in 1965 Alabama state troopers viciously beat, peaceful, SCLC demonstrators in Selma in what is now called “bloody Sunday.” The height of modern police murder coincided with the 1960s and the push for racial equality under the Civil Rights Movement. In 2014 the police met the BLM demonstrations with military gear such as armored vehicles, tear gas, and military weapons. Another aspect of the police is to maintain the interests economic and social of white Americans.

---

Hughey compared “slave patrols” defending the interests of slave based economic interests to modern police officers defending social and economic interests of whites. For example many whites support active policing of nonwhite communities and persons as a means of social control because they believe that African Americans receive “unearned” economic and social benefits, like affirmative action and political opportunities. It is this belief that leads whites to the unrealistic notion that police officers treat African Americans fairly.  

Identity is another aspect for social control in that it makes clear who the “other” is and who is “us,” in this case it helps form racial identity. Speaking about racial disparities of police violence Hughey argues, “…we are not observing an “effect of race” but a process of social domination that we call “race.” White Americans support police violence because most white people cannot achieve the social superiority they believe should be a natural. Whites view police violence on African Americans as a return to the social order. For example social movements, like Black lives matter, challenge white ideologies and are met by police force to restrain them from damaging the social order. Hughey concludes that, “race’ operates as a systematic process of domination – from laws and policies on the habits and techniques of policing” that allow white supremacy.

**Black resistance**

Even in the face of strong racial oppression African Americans and people of color have fought and struggled against racial oppression. This is constant in American history, it could be as
simple as everyday language, refusal to assimilate into “whiteness”, music, clothing styles, or it can be as complex as a coordinated demonstration. Feagin argues that people of color have long accented the humanity and strengths of communities of color countering negative stereotyped framing, while critiquing white social structures and the morality of whites.\textsuperscript{25} Additionally, Weaver also comments that African Americans organized to challenge the links drawn between blacks and crime. For example within a passage in the Washington post African Americans countered the criminality they were given and declared “crime in the streets is called a slogan to curb Negroes.”\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{Pro-white rationale}

White virtuousness is a theme commonly referred to in order to accent white superiority. For Feagin, that notion came from the white racial frame a concept within his systemic racism theory. Whites frame themselves as virtuous in order to view the world in a positive way with them being superior. “This white-framed perspective is mostly unidirectional, with whiteness and whites in the position of mostly being virtuous and the racial “others” as often unvirtuous. A typical argument of Whites acting under the virtuousness sub-frame would say something along the lines of, “I’ve achieved everything based on my own merit and if people of color can’t it’s because of their culture.” Whites often use biological and cultural deficiency theories to ignore unfair treatment such as police violence, racial discrimination, and past history that has led to great White privilege and current realities for people of color.

\textsuperscript{26} Weaver, V. (n.d). Frontlash: Race and the development of punitive crime policy. Studies In American Political Development, 21(2), 250
Furthermore, this leads to many negative consequences for African Americans and people of color. Such as the assumption that the white worldview is the “natural” order of our society and people of color should assimilate to it. This can be seen in the policing and negative reporting of African American demonstrations. Much of the news towards African Americans movements include denial of racism and its impact, while reporting negatively towards these movements. Both white elites and normal whites use the moral avenue in the white racial frame for denial of racist statements and actions. For example, statements similar to “that’s not racist because I’m not racist, I was kidding, or you’re over sensitive.”27 The white racial frame echoes through the centuries modified and coded by the current language for the same goal, to accentuate white superiority.

*Anti-black rationale*

Anti-black rational is often used by whites to justify differential treatment of African Americans or to rationalize the current poor and harsh realities many African Americans face. Weaver highlights anti-black rationale in political speeches that tied African Americans to crime. In March 1960, Senator Richard Russell used obviously racist and stereotyped language to argue against integration. He stated in a congressional session to the president, that the innate criminality of the Negro race is one of the major reasons why the great majority of the white people of the South are opposed to efforts to bring about association of the races.”28 This was a common tactic used by elite and ordinary Whites. The so called inherent criminality of blacks allowed Whites to rationalize the opposition to the civil rights movements. Skin for blacks, like

---

the star of David for Jewish people during the Nazi regime, became a badge of oppression. Crime became synonymous with black and black with crime, an effect that still persists today. Negative stereotyping of African Americans allows for differential treatment by whites. Black means evil and lower level, while white means good and higher level. Take the biblical story of Noah story for example. “Noah said to Ham: "You caused me that I should not father a fourth son, another one to serve me. May your fourth son [Canaan was Ham’s fourth son, see Genesis 10:6] be cursed by serving the offspring of these greater ones.” Canaan was turned black to mark his curse. This story was used to stereotype black inferiority as a way for white to rationalize the enslavement of African Americans. Other stereotypes include hyper-sexualization of blacks and people of color, immoral, black super strength, and blacks as criminals. The white racial frame is used in everyday situations. It is the way White and sometimes people of color process the everyday oppression of people of color. It helps rationalize racist jokes. Attitudes, and commentaries, and the current realities faced by African Americans. Additionally, it defends white virtuousness, and the criminalization and unfair treatment of African Americans.29

**Removal of leadership and prominent figures**

Another method of intervening or dismissing the plight of African Americans is usually done by removing black leadership or prominent figures. Whites undermine the leadership through social commentaries, threats, and arrests. However, there are little to no comments on lack of white leadership when it comes white movements or crime. Weaver comments of the lack of leadership with her quote from Representative L. Mendel Rivers. “The Nation cries out for leadership; fear permeates the air; insurrections runs rampant; law and order is on the verge of total collapse. ...

---

Now is the time to speak of obligations—not rights.” This rhetoric is often aimed towards BLM, for example Whites news defends violent police actions towards African Americans arguing that they need leadership or by arresting or curtailing the leadership in some form. All of these themes help us understand how White society rationalizes police violence in order to control African American movements.

SECTION II

METHOD

The chosen method for this research is a historical comparative approach; it was chosen in order to discover patterns of similarity and differences between the 1960’s SCLC and SNCC and in the present decade the BLM. The three movements came from different time periods and arose out of a series of events, such as police violence, that is supported by the public in an attempt to control African Americans. One example of the historical comparison approach comes from Ferreira do Vale who used it to compare the emergence of an armed “Islamic State” and a Ukrainian-Russian territorial dispute in different time periods.\(^{31}\) Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers argue that comparative history can be used to demonstrate parallels between history and theory to give order to events or to explain the “historical trajectory.”\(^{32}\)

The data used for this research is print media such as white and African American owned newspapers and magazine articles used to describe activities of SCLC and SNCC in the 1960s and BLM in the current decade. Articles were collected from Cushing’s library at Texas A&M University as well as from public records readily available through news websites. The information collected was organized into reoccurring themes.

The themes most significant towards control of African American movements are excessive policing, elite maintenance, pro-white rational, and removal of leadership and prominent figures.


Excessive policing describes instances when articles talked about fairness or unfairness of heightened police activity as well as heightened surveillance towards African Americans and their social movements. The elite maintenance theme is when those in positions of power such as politicians, police leaders, the wealthy, or those with the ability to reach a mass audience attempt to change, modify, or neglect discriminatory behavior towards African Americans. Pro-white and Anti-Black will be combined as one theme since they serve the same purpose, they serve to benefit Whites. Pro-white rational describes attempts to perpetuate white superiority through virtuousness, morality, leadership. Anti-black rational operates to serve the pro-white rational in that it highlights the unvirtuousness of African Americans. The removal of leadership and prominent figures theme is an attempt to undermine African American social movements by questioning the qualities, morals, or qualifications of leaders in the movements as well as arresting them or curtailing their involvement in some form. As a result these themes will aid in answering the following questions: 1) What are the similarities and differences between police violence against the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s and police violence against the Black Lives Matter movement in the present decade? 2) To what extent is police violence utilized as a mechanism of oppression to perpetuate the oppression of Black Americans? 3) What racialized stereotypes, images and narratives were used to rationalize police violence against Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Black Lives Matter movements?

Through a close reading and analysis of themes found within articles, parallels will be drawn to measure similarities in how police violence and its justification by white news continue a form of
social control. A close reading alongside with the systemic racism theoretical framework and the white racial frame, will be used to examine the ways in which police violence maintains the dominate white ideology when groups seek to remedy a system of oppression.
SECTION III

RESULTS

Dr. King founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and with the help of other brave African Americans carried on nonviolent crusades against the injustice of second-class citizenship. However, White society met him and his group with excessive policing and constant threat of attack even though they challenged White society peacefully. In 1965, “[Lyndon B Johnson] told Martin Luther King Jr. that 1965 would not be the right time for a voting rights act.” This was typical of Whites who did not understand the evils of second class citizenship since they had not felt its sharp sting, Dr. King and other groups could not wait for the daily injustices to end so they peacefully demonstrated, marched, and protested to bring attention their issues. The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) began in 1960 as joint effort of African American Students and SCLC. However due to receiving cold shoulders from politicians and stiff police batons they turned towards more aggressive styles of protesting that greatly challenged White society. This was seen as violent call to arms by many Whites. Police violence, justified by varying kinds of racial imagery, was used against SNCC and SCLC in effort to stop their protests.

Analysis

*Elite maintenance of oppression*

In the 1960s powerful White politicians, business leaders, police, and social leaders led the charge in creating the negative view of SNCC and SCLC which was detrimental to the groups

---

because justified police attacks on the groups. Elite maintenance of oppression is defined as the actions of White political, social, media elites, economic elites, and those who have power over American citizens, like the police, that create and maintain the societal institutions, point of views, and ideologies that maintain racial hierarchies. Elites created and maintained that SNCC and SCLC were criminals, violent, agitator, and anarchists in order to justify policing of the groups, because it continued White control.

Police officers were able to create negative views of SNCC through arrests for minor infractions they related them to criminals. For example, 1962 Daily Defender article titled *Charge Dixie Officials with using Power for Bias*. Police officers arrested members for minor and trivial infractions, which criminalized SNCC, effectively changing the story from a civil rights struggle to one of lawlessness and disorder. For example, “On Feb 1 SNCC Field Secretary Dion Diamond was arrested for trespassing, vagrancy and two counts of disturbing the peace. Later he was charged with criminal anarchy.”

Charles Sherrod another SNCC Field Secretary was charged with disorderly conduct while visiting another member who had been previously arrested. Police officers continued the maintenance of oppression by depicting civil rights demonstrations as unlawful. The actions of police officers maintained the protests as criminal activities.

Judiciary elites saw the protestors as challenging the laws that maintained their superiority, so they criminalized protestors, which allowed for increased police activity against SNCC and

---


SCLC. Correspondingly, a 1963 Atlanta Daily World article demonstrated the links made by police officials’ and other Whites leaders that tied SNCC and SCLC to crime. The article titled *Federal Jury Frees 5 in Mississippi Beating* describes SNCC and SCLC members who were arrested for “disorderly conduct,” the use of a white restroom, and refusal to get off a bus. The arrests reinforced the views of criminal protestors who disturbed the peace. Furthermore the five officers charged for the beating were set free by a federal Jury in Oxford Mississippi. This exemplified elite maintenance of oppression because the police, supported by local and state government, was seen as maintaining law and order while the protestors were portrayed as anarchists. This created the “thin blue” line narrative that argued that the police maintained order and peace and are responsible for stopping chaos, such as protests by Blacks. On the other hand this continued the narrative of “illegal protests” that negated the protesters’ claim of police brutality. The narrative of SCLC and SNCC as violent agitators continued, although not always as straightforward as calling them anarchist. This point of view was passed on to the media who portrayed the protestors as violent while leaving beneficial information out of the news.

The Plattsburgh Press-Republican also maintained the interpretative frames of SNCC as violent. The 1964 article *73 Arrested in Racial Brawls in Atlanta*, recounts a fight that broke out between KKK members and SNCC members protesting outside a segregated restaurant in Alabama. The article fails to say why the fight started only mentioned that one of the KKK member “allegedly” pulled a knife. The article’s language changes from the KKK member possibly having a knife to the protestors definitively being combative and attempting to start a fight. The

---

article states, SNCC members taunted the KKK by saying “ghosts afraid to show their faces.” Police arrested SNCC members and charged them with disorderly conduct. However the article only mentioned that police officers were injured by SNCC member who resisted arrest by going ‘deadweight’ and that some kicked and elbowed officers. It mentioned nothing more of the KKK. Newspapers, especially popular newspapers, maintained negative narratives by describing events in ways that benefitted the beliefs of Whites, especially elite Whites. This newspaper depicted SNCC members as angry, combative, and violent all which justified the violent actions of police officers. In turn, powerful White economic, political, social elites played an essential role in creating the narratives that were used to end protests. Protestors were characterized as violent and police officials used this point of view to garner support to end or not allow protests from taking place.

The 1966 Chicago Tribune article *Carmichael, 5 Others Jailed in Selma Fray: Accuse S.N.C.C. Head of Inciting Riot*, further demonstrates elite maintenance of oppression because it stated that Mayor Joe Smitherman reported that protest as violent, specifically due to its leader. “Mayor Joe Smitherman said he ordered Carmichael [the leader of SNCC] arrested when he ‘lunged at [the] officer beside [him], trying to provoke him into hitting him” The article continued to report that police officers arrested 50 blacks for “clapping” and “singing” and impounded two sound trucks used to “incite” the Negros. The mayor denigrated the methods employed by protestors, and Carmichael’s actions, in order to imply that African Americans somehow “earned” any violence.

---

inflicted on them by the police. Additionally, sheriffs also maintained the interpretive frames of African Americans protests as violent.

The 1966 Chicago Tribune article *Cicero Officials Ask for Alert of Troops: Cicero Seeks Troop Alert for Marchers Sheriff Ogilvie Hints Court Injunction* further represented elite maintenance of oppression. Sheriff Ogilvie, asked for help from State troopers, national guardsmen, and police officers of nearby towns in order to stop a SCLC march. He maintained the narrative of protests bringing anarchy and chaos, worried that the march will cause destruction of peace, life, and property. Elite maintenance created the narrative necessary for the heightened police activity surrounding the demonstration which led to excessive policing. The sheriff, maintained a narrative of destructive protestors and defenseless Whites. He urged citizens to stay inside while the outsiders were there because, “one of [their] biggest problems [was] keeping outsiders from causing violence.”

Although, the sheriff said he would work with the demonstrators and wave the permit required, he later sought a court injunction to stop the march if Dr. King disregarded his pleas to call it off. He stated, “I will do everything in my power to prevent the march.”

Furthermore, his plea related protestors to rabble rousers and agitators. Elites such as police leaders, created the narratives necessary to stop protests from occurring and effectively controlled some African American protests.

The creation of negative narratives was purposely executed by White elites because it created the justification necessary for the increased policing of African American protests. The 1969

---

Chicago Tribune article *Arrest 100 Marchers in Charleston: Dispersal Order is Ignored* also demonstrated elite maintenance of oppression. The protestors argued that it was their constitutional right to protest but police chief Conroy, argued that he “support[ed] all constitutionally guaranteed rights” but said “[the police had] the right to control massive demonstrations. We have an obligation to the peace of the entire community and must have a method a method of complete control.” In this speech he implicitly implied that African Americans were not part of the community and explicitly said they needed to be controlled. Moreover, in his speech he enhanced the rhetoric for control by saying the police required a method of completely controlling the protests. Elite maintenance was enhanced through the use of pro-white rational and anti-black rational because these points of views stirred the necessary emotions in the public. Elites and other Whites attached positive attributes to Whites while relating negative attributes to African Americans that in turn justified police brutality.

*Anti-black rational and pro-white rational*

The pro-white rational perpetuated white superiority by emphasizing virtuousness, morality, innocence, and leadership as inherent traits of Whites. On the other hand, anti-black rational operated to serve the pro-white rational in that it highlighted the unvirtuousness of African Americans. For example, the character traits attributed to Whites were moral and peaceful and Blacks character traits tended to be immoral, violent, and disorganized. As a result of negative labels attached to African Americans, their social movements were also viewed in the same manner. As it followed, substantial police interaction was justified when it dealt with African American movements.

---

SCLC and SNCC were seen as racial agitators and instigators of violence; due to anti-black rational which allowed police officers to treat them as violent criminals. The 1966 Los Angeles Times article titled, *Slow Pace of Progress became Intolerable: The Evolution of SNCC’s Violence* highlighted pro-white and anti-black rational. It depicted SNCC demonstrators as pre-teen agitators, violent, volatile racists, who were not in control of their own actions but instead were controlled by outside forces like their environment. According to the article, SNCC moved from non-violent resistance to an angry Black power resistance. Jack Nelson, the author stated that “the Student Committee [was] no longer a civil rights organization. If the words and actions of Chairman Carmichael [were] to be taken at face value, SNCC [was] a band of agitators dedicated to disrupting this country in the belief that out of the chaos [would] come something better for the Negro.”

This statement discounted the violence of police towards the movements and argued that movements “asked for it” by protesting. Lastly, the article called SNCC racists and made it sound as though whites were the victims suffering from the rioting. Stokely Carmichael, whom according to this article, was as an agitator for racial conflict harassed the police enough to make them attack him. This served the pro-white rational in that it highlighted the old myth many Whites believed, which was that African Americans were violent and need to be controlled. SNCC was continually attacked with anti-black rational, seen as violent, because it created fear among White society that allowed for their policing.

The 1967 article, *SNCC Focuses Mood of Negro Rebellion*, continues to attack SNCC and Carmichael by calling them racial agitators, an anti-black rational. It argued that SNCC’s call for a black revolution was dangerous. According to the article, SNCC previously led the way with

---

positive programs like voter registration drives but changed to only offer advice on how to ruin the American system and way of life. For years the violent African American stereotype was used to oppress African Americans. Furthermore the author Jack London wrote, “because of drop in white financial support [for SNCC,] it is down to about 50 full time members.”44 This served the pro-white rational in that it highlighted White morality in their effort to aid in the struggle of African Americans. In other words he argued that SNCC needed White support to fight racism. Whites continued to depict the protestors as violent in order to use substantial police force on them.

In 1968 the Christian Science Monitor article, Poor People's March to Washington gets under Way: Mass Meeting State Troopers Keep Watch Police also demonstrated pro-white rational and anti-black rational. The stereotype of violent African Americans was pushed during the SCLC’s poor people’s campaign, which accentuated anti-black rational by depicting African Americans as ready to attack the capital with 1000+ blacks. It mentioned that they trained in non-violent resistance but they would still be monitored by the police, who were there just in case things became violent with outside civilians. This created a tone that highlighted the moral and virtuousness of Whites police officers who would protect the protestors. The article further highlights pro-white rational with the gifts given by town officials to protestors. According to the article, town officials were going to give gifts such as outside toilets, water, and electricity. However they were not installed, “because SCLC leaders had taken so long to decide which of the possible sites to accept.”45 This exemplified White virtuousness and anti-black rational in that

---

SCLC was seen as disorganized. However, the water, electricity, and toilets were only gifts in order to limit where the protest could occur. But by highlighting them as gifts it accentuated the pro-white rational.

The 1969 Sun article SNCC Said to Preach War further argued that SNCC became a leading organizer in groups preparing for revolution, according to police officers. But at the same time they argued that the number of members in SNCC [were] minimal in their areas.\textsuperscript{46} This portrayed African Americans in multiple ways. One, it portrays them as disorganized and unable to keep a strong group membership. Two, the idea of a black revolution with SNCC and other groups highlighted anti-black rational because it was seen as violent. Negative stereotypes associated with the Civil Rights groups created the tension necessary in order to diminish support for them as well as a justification to incarcerate protestors.

Another 1969 Sun article Violence Feared in Hospital Strike: 'Fringe Element' Cited by SCLC Aides in Charleston further highlighted the anti-black rational and pro-white rational. The article began in an inflammatory method, by saying that a group of non-professional Negros, had been non-violent, but a fringe element could turn violent. Although, no violence had occurred due to protestors the stereotypes of Blacks allowed for police interaction. “Marches conducted without a parade permit were swiftly and easily turned back by the police.”\textsuperscript{47} Lawlessness, parading without a permit, was related to protesting accentuating the anti-black rational. Furthermore, the article states that no demonstrators were hurt but some police officers were injured, this is similar

to the “hurt while in the line of duty” rhetoric which served the pro-white rational. Protestors in general were criminalized and stigmatized by negative images that allowed for excessive policing. Yet, White society not only depicted protestors negatively they also villainized their leaders.

Removing leadership & prominent figures

White society depicted leaders of the movement with negative attributes in a coordinated fashion in order to remove them from protests through arrests. The Removing leadership & prominent figures theme described an attempt to undermine African American social movements by questioning the qualities, morals, or qualifications of leaders and prominent figures in the movements as well as arresting them or curtailing their involvement. As demonstrated in previous examples the leadership of movements was often questioned on their morals, ability to keep the protest non-violent, hold the movement together and were arrested.

The 1965 Halt March on Capitol in Jackson, Miss 175 Arrested In 2d Day of Racial Protest

Chicago Tribune article demonstrated the police attempting to remove the leadership of the group by arresting John Lewis. The article gave no reason for his arrest but does say he was charged with resisting arrest. The lack of reason for the arrest reinforces that Lewis was arrested in order to end the protest. Lewis’ arrest also criminalized him which would brand him and anyone else who followed him as criminals.

---

Police officers attempted to remove leadership through arrests in hopes that it would end protests. For example, 1966 Chicago Tribune article *Carmichael, 5 Others Jailed in Selma Fray: Accuse S.N.C.C. Head of Inciting Riot* highlighted the removal of leadership and prominent figures theme by demonstrating Carmichael as inciting violence as well as criminalizing him through arrest. According to Mayor Joe Smitherman, “the demonstration broke up shortly after Carmichaels arrest but not before nearly 1000 were attracted to the city hall by a sound truck.”

This article highlights the effects of criminalization on the leadership of SNCC but furthermore it describes what Whites hoped would happen, the end of protest after the removal of its leader. Leaders of African American Social movements were charged with fake and or trumped up charges in order to remove them from their leadership positions. Aside from being arrested leaders often suffered physical violence from officers.

The 1967 Baltimore Afro-American article *King Fears Atlanta Unrest if 'Beating' Cop Kept Working*, further highlighted the removal of leadership. The SCLC aid of Dr. King, Hosea Williams, was beaten by police officer R.D. Marshall. King demanded the suspension of the police officer, but instead he was told that an investigation of William’s claims would take place. The attack was not only an assault on Williams it was purposeful attack on the SCLC leadership. Williams argued that he went to talk to two pregnant women who were being put in the back of a paddy wagon under arrest, when he did this he too was placed under arrest. He was then beat “sadistically” by the officer, which also highlights excessive policing. The officer used anti-black rational to his advantage and charged Williams with drunk, disorderly conduct, and failure to move on. The officer created a negative view of Williams with his “drunk” episode, which

---

justified his arrest.\(^{50}\) The police officer managed to change the story from one where Williams was the victim to challenge the leadership of SCLC with the old narrative of the deviant and criminal African American. Although, morals of leaders were questioned the attack did not stop there. White society further depicted leaders of movements as inciters of violence.

A 1969 Baltimore Sun article titled *Violence Feared in Hospital Strike: 'Fringe Element' Cited by SCLC Aides in Charleston* also demonstrated the removal of leadership theme. According to the article Rev. Abernathy, the leader of the group, led a prayer as he was arrested. Police officers argued that he incited violence among the protestors though the prayer\(^{51}\) However it was not the prayer that inflamed the situation it was the arrest of Mr. Abernathy did nothing other than lead a prayer. His arrest demonstrated that police officers would criminalize any act in order to disperse protests. Using the White racial frame White society used the elite maintenance of oppression, anti-black rational, and removal of leadership and prominent figures in order to criminalize the entire movement which created the necessary narrative to police the entire group.

*Excessive policing*

The most easily identifiable image of police violence during the 1960s Civil Rights movement is police officers attacking protestors, spraying them with fire hoses, or setting dogs on them. However, the policing of African American social movements included much more. Excessive policing is defined by instances of large scale incarceration of protestors, police brutality,


intimidation tactics, and surveillance. This style of policing was used to perpetuate the continued oppression of African Americans by curtailing social movements through the threat or actual use of police force in order to maintain White hegemonic control.

The excessive policing of SNCC and SCLC demonstrated that the disproportionate policing and incarceration was used purposely and tacitly to disrupt or end protests. A 1961 Daily Defender article, *Jail 131st Freedom Rider Mississippi Braces for Another Wave of 'Freedom Riders' As 117th is Jailed*, highlighted police efforts to undermine and stop SNCC’s and SCLC’s protest. Despite the groups’ non-violent tactics, the police incarcerated over a hundred protestors under the charge of “breaching the peace in attempting to desegregate Mississippi.” So they criminalized legal, peaceful protest and allowed to incarcerate the protestors. Additionally violence, initiated by White counter-protestors, often received the attention of local police, but not for the correct reasons.

Police joined White counter protestors who attacked SNCC, rather than stop the counter protestors, in order to end the protest. This is exemplified in the 1961 article by the Chicago Defender, *Miss. Jails 112 Negroes Protesting Segregation*. SNCC protestors attempting to register black voters were arrested after white citizens, whom wanted nothing more than to stop African Americans from gaining political power, attacked them. The article demonstrated police officers attempting to control through violence in that police officers took part in the assault against SNCC. A police officer spoke about the demonstrators, “one was struck as the students

---

Police officers attacked peaceful praying students, attempting to gain political power, in order to halt their demonstration. Additionally, African American protestors were attacked by police officers with batons and attack dogs to stop protests as well as send a message to all Blacks who dared to speak out against White supremacy.

In 1962 Eugene “Bull” Connor, Birmingham Alabama police chief, infamously attempted to stop a protest against segregation. In a speech he said, “[a]ll you gotta do is tell them you’re going to bring the dogs. Look at em run. I want to see the dogs work.” However, this type of style of protest control was not limited to Eugene Connor. The 1963 Cleveland Call and Post article titled *Turn Police Dogs on Negroes* reports a similar violence. SNCC and SCLC protestors were attacked by police dogs although the protesting was once again non-violent. Excessive policing was used disrupt peaceful protest and maintain White superiority. David Gunter President of the SCLC affiliates said, “if the dogs were used properly, they should have been used to disperse the mob that gathered there to harass us.” Like Eugene Connor, police sheriffs were often at the forefront of the war against African Americans demonstrators.

Over and over again incarceration remained a viable tactic to end protests. The 1965 *Halt March on Capitol in Jackson, Miss. 175 Arrested in 2d Day of Racial Protest* Chicago Tribune article highlighted excessive policing methods by stating that SNCC and NAACP protested without a permit. Police officers put demonstrators into trucks and transferred them to a compound inside

---

the state fair, among those arrested was John Lewis the executive director of SNCC, who along with others were charged with resisting arrest, and parading without a permit.\textsuperscript{56} Using “causing anarchy” as a justification police were able incarcerate large numbers of demonstrators effectively weakening the protest. Additionally, Sheriffs who were at the forefront in combating SCLC used both force and “rule of law” to disrupt protests.

Police sheriffs’ attempted to stop African Americans from gaining equality because it was seen as challenging the social order, White control and rule. In 1965 The Chicago Daily Defender article, \textit{71 Arrested in Selma Alabama Voter Drive}, described another scene of excessive policing. The infamous sheriff Clarke, who openly opposed racial integration, arrested Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his SCLC protestors during a voter registration drive. King demanded the immediate release of those arrested. The arrests occurred after King and the other protestors refused to move away from the courthouse in order to register to vote. Police officers arrested and violently abused integrationists in order to curtail the movement. Sheriff Clarke dragged Mrs. Boynton, a protestor, by her collar and clothes then forcefully shoved her towards her arrest. Dr. King called it “one of the most inhumane things [he had] ever seen.”\textsuperscript{57} Clarke attempted to control African American social movements through violent means. In addition to brute violence, police officers continued to incarcerate innocent protestors in order to stop particular movements from gaining strength.


Due to all the negative rhetoric surrounding demonstrators and protests, police officers felt secure that their actions, regardless of violence, would be justified. For example, the 1965 Chicago Tribune article *Jail 50 Rights Aids in Mississippi Sitdown* depicted the incarceration of SNCC members’ who demonstrated against police brutality. The march started in the Black Morningstar church in which the previous week 800 persons were arrested. The demonstration was stopped by a line of police officers, there to frighten off the protestors, but SNCC leaders pressed forward towards the danger. In a display of excessive policing the police line attempted to arrest them all, however demonstrators began to peacefully sit down after the two leaders were arrested. A total of 50 were arrested while some were hurt during the sit down. Furthermore “50 charges of police brutality [were] filed by persons held in the jail compound but probably no more than two or three them had sufficient merit to seek prosecution,” said the police officers who arrested them. The attack in the jail served to threaten and intimidate future protestors, which would be used as a tool as the disposal of officers.

Previous encounters with police officer led to fear of attack and police officers often used intimidation to end protests. The 1968 Christian Science Monitor article *Poor People's March to Washington gets Under Way: Mass Meeting State Troopers Keep Watch Police Stop Bus* further displays this excessive policing fear tactic. SCLC met police officers who wore riot gear, but that not enough to deter them. 100 SCLC members were incarcerated for protesting without a permit. Additional troops were called by police officers. According to the article, “some state troopers –

---

perhaps 20 - were called Wednesday to disperse Negro students and adults … By the time Rev. Abernathy led Thursday’s bus caravan from Memphis an estimated 100 troopers were in or around Marks.” Moreover, the use of both State Troopers and National Guard demonstrates police who attempted to intimidate protestors.60 Both law enforcement agencies made it very clear that SCLC protestors were breaking the law by demonstrating and the full strength of both would be used unless the protest ended. Police officers continued to use fear tactics, like kidnapping, in order to stop protests.

Police officers believed that the threat of incarceration would stop protests but when this fear was not enough, they resorted to kidnapping under the guise of arrests. The 1970 Afro-American article Dad Pressures Top Cop, Son Nabbed Next Day demonstrated and extravagant abuse of power in excessive policing by police officers who kidnapped the son of a SCLC official. After Vice squad members broke a door without cause, the owner William M. Crump, a SCLC official, demanded for the door to be repaired and began to organize a picket of the police headquarters. In response, the police illegally arrested his son on possessions of drugs, three months after the initial stop when the “alleged” drugs were found.61 When asked why the son was arrested so late after the first stop Coleman responded, “I believe the warrant was misplaced.” While one could believe that the police indeed did misplace the warrant, the history of the police activity against

---


SCLC suggests that this arrest was an abuse of power; police used its powers to arrest in order to pressure a SCLC official to stop the protest.

Similarly, in the same year the Washington Post article *161 Protesters Arrested in Miss* highlighted excessive policing of protestors through incarceration in order to stop the protesting. The article further demonstrates excessive policing by the efforts of Sheriff B.C. Shook who though the incarceration of 161 SCLC members attempted to stop a protest. Shook’s lack of reason for the arrests further highlights excessive policing. Excessive policing of SNCC and SCLC did not occur because the groups were violent, nor did it occur because they broke racist laws, rather the substantial policing of SNCC and SCLC occurred because they challenged the social order. They challenged White authority, power, and privilege. The negative narratives of movements maintained by elites, anti-black rational, and the removal of leadership and prominent figures led to the use of excessive policing in order to stop the protests. Therefore excessive policing then underscores an attempt by White society to control the movements.

The struggle for civil rights, largely fought by SNCC SCLC resulted in numerous gains for African Americans and the larger society as a whole. However, those improvements did not bring an end to all racism or the issues SNCC and SCLC commonly organized around. Police brutality, for example, is still an insidious and persistent issue within the Black community. New laws, such as “Stop and Frisk” have put people of color at the mercy of the police. And to combat these social issues, just like in the 60s, new groups have formed to bring attention to,

---

protest, and demand the end of such practices. One such group Black Lives Matter, though different and similar from SNCC and SCLC in many ways, co-opted the approach of civil disobedience and passive resistance. Unfortunately, similar to their predecessors they have been met with police violence and racist characterizations that are meant to prevent them from challenging the dominant White racial hierarchy.

*Elite maintenance of oppression*

Elite maintenance of oppression is the actions by powerful economic, political, and influential individuals maintain if not create the negative narratives, points of view, and racial ideologies that in turn maintain racist institutions. Economic leaders, the police and their leaders, government agencies, and news organizations depict BLM negatively. The narratives created by elites are necessary because they allow for excessive policing of BLM.

Mall owners attempted to change the focus of the protest by insinuating that protestors were a disturbance to the peace This is exemplified in the 2015 New York Times article *'Black Lives Matter’ Protesters Gather; Mall is Shut in Response..* The lawyer for the Mall of America, Ms. Gaertner, spoke of an eighth-grade choir that canceled its planned performance at the mall. “That may not seem like a big deal to a protestor,” she said, “but it was a big deal to that eighth grader.” Her response completely ignores the entire reason for the protesting, in order to maintain White dominance. Additionally, she shifted the subject from protestors fighting discrimination and police violence to protestors disturbing the peace. Although performing at the

---

mall might have been a big deal for the eighth graders, being able to live safe lives free of harassment from officers is also a “big deal” for the protestors. In addition popular news sites also promote a negative image of BLM.

Elite maintenance of oppression by popular news corporations also maintain that BLM is violent. The 2015 Fox news article ‘Who Needs This?’ Police Recruits Abandon Dream amid Anti-Cop Climate, further adds to the narrative that BLM pushes for violence. According to the article “Instead of dialing back the incendiary rhetoric, groups including Black Lives Matter have instead chosen to use more inflammatory language such as, “’[p]igs in a blanket, fry em like bacon.’ Public safety officials fear the net effect has been to demonize police, and diminish the job.”64 Here elite media attempts to demonstrate BLM as calling for violence against police. They change the story from police violence against African Americans to African American violence against police. Additionally, high ranking police officials have also used this narrative. According to Sgt. Delroy Burton of the DC Police Union in Washington “We're sitting ducks. We're in these uniforms, brightly colored cars and there's nothing we can do.” The Sgt. argued that BLM has put a target on police officers, which allows for increased policing of BLM. The rhetoric of violent BLM protestors created by elites allowed the police to treat them like threats and heavily monitor them in order to control them.

Government agencies also create negative views of BLM by surveilling them like terrorists. The 2015 Chicago Defender article, The Watchers: Feds Have Been Monitoring Black Lives Matter Activists since Ferguson demonstrates elite maintenance of oppression because it highlights the

The fact that BLM is considered a terrorist group by the US government. “The Department of Homeland Security is limited to providing situational awareness and establishing a common operating picture for the federal government, and for state, local, tribal governments as appropriate, in the event of a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other man-made disasters…” 65

In other words they, observe and intervene in the case of natural or manmade disasters (ie. Acts of God or terrorism). This then justifies the harsh use of policing tactics on BLM. Similarly, conservative new sites often attack BLM and create the negative images that justify police action against the group.

Right wing news often reinforce the view of BLM as a terrorist group, instead of protestors for equality. The Polistick article Black Lives Matter Terrorizes Mall of America, Force Lockdown; but They Didn't Stop There continues this view point. According, to the author Jennifer Burke, The terrorist ‘protesters’ praised themselves for shutting down the mall, a selfish and dangerous move that jeopardizes the livelihood of business owners and workers, in addition to holding everyone hostage with the need for the mall to go in lockdown mode over security issues.” 66

Burke’s language and tone is able to reach a mass audience that then rationalizes police violence on the movement. Other prominent figures, such police leaders, continue the negative narratives in order to diminish BLM.


Public figures are able to reach a mass audience and therefore are able to strongly reinforce negative opinions of BLM. For instance the African American News article, *Crazy as Cat Shit*, depicts elite maintenance of oppression in that a public figure and Fox News frequent Sheriff Clarke. Who attacks BLM through negative narratives by calling them a terrorist group. Sheriff Clarke tweeted,

The nation had better work to end the ‘Black Lives Matter’

movement immediately as it holds the potential to become a significant threat to America’s internal security. Before long, Black Lives Matter will join forces with ISIS to (bring) down our legal (sic) constituted republic.\(^67\)

In the 1960s African American movements like SCLC and SNCC were also seen as terrorist groups and Sheriff Clarke continues that ‘tradition’ by supplementing that narrative. The racist viewpoint that BLM is terrorist like creates hostility and violence against BLM that in turn allows police officers to violently end the protests. Police officers use negative stereotypes to justify differential treatment of African Americans and use pro-white rational to condone their preferential treatment of Whites.

**Anti-black rational and pro-white rational**

As a consequence of elite maintenance, negative stereotypes of African Americans and positive images of Whites are used to assault BLM. The anti-black rational defines unfavorable views of African Americans as dangerous, immoral, aggressive, disorganized, and destructive all which

---

benefit the pro-white rational. Whites often highlight their own moral, peaceful, and virtuous actions in order to condemn African Americans through pro-white rational.

Negative stereotypes of African Americans are used in order to tarnish the reputation of BLM, which allows White society to rationalize police actions on the movement. The BBC news article *How Black Lives Matter Was Blamed for Killing of US Police Officers* depicts Whites attempting to highlight White virtuousness while at the same time focusing on the supposed unvirtuousness of BLM. The article argues that White pundits assert that BLM is violent while at the same time making a stand to defend the “defenseless” police officers.68 Deana Rohlinger, a professor of sociology at Florida State University, was interviewed and spoke about the rhetoric surrounding BLM. “This is a stereotype, that activists are engaged in violence, activists being people who don't want to work...It becomes shorthand way of stereotyping a cause and those who are trying to push it forward.”69 By ascribing negative caricatures to protestors White society is able to explain police violence against protestors as necessary and just. Protests are characterized with negative stereotypes even if they are not substantiated, in order to justify police intervention.

Through criminalization of protestors White police officers are able to intervene whether or not there is any need for intervention. Another example of protestors being characterized as violent can be seen within the Intercept article *Why it’s Scary that the Mall of America can Crush Dissent*. The article demonstrates how the Mall of America depicted the protestors as violent with the broadcasted loop that was played when they entered the building. “Mall of America is

---

now going into lockdown. Seek shelter in the nearest store, and follow employee instructions,” The broadcast played. Although it was a peaceful protest the mall’s broadcast uses anti-black rational to frighten shoppers and create an image of violence. At the same time police officers who wore riot gear were seen as saviors. This image is contrasted by the statement of BLM organizer Miski Noor, “They [police officers] showed up in riot gear when you’ve got people here with their babies in strollers chanting and singing Christmas songs.” Her view of intimidating police officers, is reciprocated by other protestors, differing much from that of White society because of anti-black rational and pro-white rational.

Due to the white racial frame, deeply embedded stereotyped knowledge, White society views incidents of excessive policing differently than African Americans. The pro-white rational implies that actions of officers are seen as virtuous, even when not, because the actions are African Americans are seen unvirtuous. African Americans and Whites, as demonstrated in the 2015 Guardian article *The Men Who Shot at the Minneapolis Protesters Want to Scare All Black People* hold conflicting views of society. White society argues that BLM calls for violence, while at the same time rationalizing violence on the group, although BLM calls for peace. This can be seen in the statement by Thrasher, who argued that he was not surprised by the violent actions of the Whites who shot at a peaceful BLM protest. He stated,

> In the modern era in a country with more guns than people, there remain civilian enforcers of racist terrorism, but Black Americans still fear members of local law enforcement. More than 1,000

---

people have been killed by American police this year, and black people killed are twice as likely to be unarmed as the whites.\textsuperscript{71}

Police officers however did not meet the truly violent counter-protestors with the same force they met BLM protestors. It seems as though historically and presently, police violence is only a viable tool if used to end African American protests. Yet, even when officers are off duty they still reinforce White rule though violent actions and anti-black rational.

Although, not always voiced out loud or as prominently, police often use anti-black rational and pro-white rational to end protests. The 2016 Chicago Defender article Minnesota Police Officer On Leave For Allegedly Urging Drivers To Run Over Black Lives Matter Protesters depicts pro-white rational and anti-black rational by an off duty police officer who offered advice on how to run over BLM protestors without getting in trouble. His advice demonstrates that he understands that Whites, through the white racial frame, will let Whites behave violently towards African Americans. He gave very specific instructions on how to get away with a hit and run on protestors and afterwards stated, “[n]ow, these idiots could try and sue you in civil court, but remember that it will be jury trial so most likely it will come out in your favor.”\textsuperscript{72} He assumed that due to a “group think” like mentality the jury would also hold the same negative images of African Americans and positive images of Whites, and would let them off. He explicitly called for violence to be done on BLM in order to end the protest. Additionally, this article demonstrates the mentality of police officers have towards BLM. Yet, as a result of negative


stereotypes of Blacks, society creates and reproduces the rationales necessary to justify the actions of police officers. White society depicts prominent figures and leaders of BLM as “boogeymen” like figures, which allows for police action against them.

**Removing leadership & prominent figures**

In the past SNCC and SCLC had a clear and organized leadership structure but in the present BLM does not. However, police officers undermine the presence of prominent figures in to end the protest. Although the language and style used to do so is different from the past it still serves the same purpose, to maintain white hegemonic control. The Removing leadership & prominent figures theme describes an attempt to undermine African American social movements by questioning the qualifications and qualities of leaders and prominent figures, curtailing their involvement, or incarcerating them with more severe punishments.

The Atlantic article *Conservatives Are Missing the Point of Black Lives Matter* describes Conservatives who attempt to undermine BLM through questioning Shaun King’s race. King, a prominent figure responded, “The reports about my race, about my past, and about the pain I’ve endured are all lies.” He continued, “Not only that, but the truth is that @GlennBeck & @TheBlaze & Breitbart DON’T GIVE A SHIT about my race. They just want me to shut up.” Conservatives believe that by removing him that movement will stop. Conservatives do not actually care about the Leaders rather they care about undermining their legitimacy in hopes that it will have an implosion effect on the group. The attack on King demonstrates that Conservatives do not understand the point of the movement nor the movement at all. The

---

removal of King will not stop the movement since it does not have traditional leaders, instead they are more like prominent figures. If one falls others will fill that role. Additionally, Whites also use the legal system is also to curtail the involvement of prominent figures or leaders in order to weaken the movement.

Furthermore, White society utilizes the judicial system to undermine involvement of prominent figures in protests. The New York Times article Judge Bars Black Lives Matter Organizers from Mall Protest demonstrates how a restraining order was used to halt three demonstrators from taking part in the protest. A Minnesota judge allowed the Mall of America to place a restraining order against three of the organizers Michael McDowell, Miski Noor, and Kandace Montgomery from participating in the protest. However BLM responded over twitter, “@mallofamerica's latest over the top waste of tax payer $ to silence free speech has failed miserably. See you tomorrow. #MOASueMeToo.” Regardless of the mall’s restraining order, the three protestors went and were arrested by police. This is an example of using the police to remove protestors by arrest and as a result they are clearly attempting to control the group’s actions and leaders.

Moreover, incarceration of leaders and prominent figures is used in order to weaken the movement.

The 2015 Dailydot article #BlackLivesMatter activists arrested, journalists charged in Ferguson underscores the lack of leadership theme by depicting the arrest of prominent figures in a protest. The article highlights a woman protestor, Johnetta Elzie, a prominent figure within BLM. Four homeland security officers arrested her during a protest outside a federal courthouse. Before the

---

protest occurred Elzie took to twitter stating that “[if] I'm arrested today please know I'm not suicidal. I have plenty to live for. I did not resist, I'm just black” after she was released from jail she tweeted about her experience and treatment. She stated “[w]alking out with bruises and arm hurting from the twist is really fucking me up. I didn't go in there battered or bruised.” In the 1960s leaders of SNCC and SCLC also suffered mistreatment inside jails and as Elzie’s bruises demonstrate that mistreatment continues. This is not simply negligent police officers or “bad apples” the mistreatment of protestors and prominent figures is purposeful because it serves as a warning to others who would follow their example. Police purposely use violence, no matter how severe, in order to control the movement through fear. Additionally, police often accuse prominent figures of inciting violence and racial agitation.

Beyoncé, the famous singer, songwriter, record producer and actress, demonstrated her support for BLM in the 2016 Super Bowl halftime show. Her support drew immediate criticism from police officers. Her performance had images of police action against African Americans that quickly gained her prominent figure status. Coincidently, Whites and police officers alike immediately criticized her. The removing leadership and prominent figures theme is demonstrated in the 2016 CNN article Police Union Calls for Law Enforcement Labor to Boycott Beyonce’s World Tour because it highlights how she was criticized almost immediately for her performance. According to police Sgt. Mullins "She made a statement and now law enforcement is making a statement. What's clear is that no one in the country is trying to resolve the issues

---

between communities of color and the distrust of law enforcement... The officer’s rhetoric claims that Beyoncé, now a prominent figure and supporter of BLM, has incited violence on police officers. He continued, “the smartest thing for everybody to do is to find a table and sit down and to create an atmosphere and programs that benefit children and police officers, to rebuild trust and change a culture that is now in existence.” Here the police officer attempt to appease the moral aspects of Whites, however that is the very thing BLM attempts to do. Yet they are met with constant police action every time they attempt to voice their ideas on how to reform the police system. Additionally, it highlights aspects of control, because he implies that police should be able to tell BLM what changes are necessary. The maintenance of oppression by elites, the anti-black rational, pro-white rational, and the removal of leadership and prominent figures was orchestrated by White society and police in order to allow for excessive policing and control of BLM.

**Excessive policing**

Presently, BLM faces militarized police who use tanks, automatic weaponry, and military tactics against African American citizens in order to end protests. Police use of war like tactics depicts a war on African American social movements and the use of excessive force in order to control the movement. BLM encounters excessive policing by militarized police, surveillance, violence, increased police activity surrounding their demonstrations, and incarceration of protestors. Often BLM receives substantial policing from militarized police during protests who use excessive methods that resemble those used by police in the 1960s. For example, the 2014 Chicago Defender article *Ferguson Police got Surplus Military Equipment* highlights the war...

---

like aspect of excessive policing. The article states that after the death of an unarmed African American teenager angry protestors took to the streets to demonstrate against police violence. However, police officers “wore riot gear and deployed tear gas, dogs and armored vehicles.”

Police officers met demonstrators protesting police violence with more violence in an attempt to get them to end the protest. Because the actions of protestors did not merit the use of tear gas, tanks, nor dogs the actions of the police must be for social control. The use of dogs, tanks, and tear gas do not maintain public safety, rather they maintain the dominant White social order. In turn fear is caused due to the harsh tactics used by police.

Presently the over militarization of police creates a sense of security for whites when African Americans challenge the social order. However, it causes an intense fear for African American protestors. The 2015 Huffington Post article *Black Lives Matter 'Will Not Be Intimidated' by White Terrorists* captures this fear by depicting the views of BLM towards the police. Stephen Thrasher wrote,

"I certainly don’t fear ISIS. I fear the police and their tanks and their tear gas and their guns and the very real possibility that white men who look like them and walk around brandishing guns with impunity could start shooting…White supremacy has always been violent to peaceful protest by blacks."

Unless, police officers are fighting a war against BLM protestors there is no need for tanks to be used against protestors because BLM does not have tanks. Excessive policing is utilized, as it

---


was in the past against SNCC and SCLC, in order to frighten and attack protestors for the goal of ending protests.

The USA Today article *Black Lives Matter Protest Snarls Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport* describes, “[h]eavily armed police, trying to stem the arrival of protesters, [who] eventually assembled at the rail arrival platform to keep people from entering the terminal.” While some may believe the police is indeed there to ensure the safety of citizens, the history of police interaction against African American movements suggests that ‘riot geared’ police officers were there to intimidate the protestors. Police officers met African American protestors as opposing enemy soldiers. On one side the police fights to maintain White ideology while on the other BLM protests to bring a more equitable future to all of the African American community and the US as a whole.

The 2016 Slate article, *The Militarization of the Police*, describes the actions of militarized police, which further exemplifies excessive policing of BLM. The article states:

> The most striking photographs from Ferguson, Missouri, aren’t of Saturday’s demonstrations or Sunday night’s riots; they’re of the police. Image after image shows officers clad in Kevlar vests, helmets, and camouflage, armed with pistols, shotguns, automatic rifles, and tear gas. In one photo, protestors stand toe-to-toe with...”

---

Baton-wielding riot police, in another, an unarmed man faces several cops, each with rifles at the ready.80

Because the police does not meet predominantly White protests with the same force nor do the actions of unarmed protestors merit the extreme response, militarized police force then becomes a method of control specifically for African American protests that challenge White society. Other than militarized force, BLM also faces heightened surveillance by law enforcement agencies.

Government surveillance is used as a form of control because it causes fear of being branded something other than a protestor. A 2015 Intercept article titled *Exclusive: Feds Regularly Monitored Black Lives Matter since Ferguson* describes excessive policing through heightened surveillance. In the 1960s SNCC and SLCC along with other minority movements were watched by federal sources, now in the present BLM is watched by homeland security in order to provide situational awareness. Baher Azmy, a legal director at the Center for Constitutional Rights, argues that this “providing situational awareness” is just another word for surveillance and control of legal events. She stated, “[w]hat they call situational awareness is Orwellian speak for watching and intimidation”81 White society has determined that BLM must be continuously monitored in order to maintain control. Furthermore, Police officers additionally attempt to intimidate protestors through incarceration.

---


Incarceration of protestors by police is used in order to weaken the strength of protests, additionally mistreatment in the jail is used to deter would be protestors. The 2016 Laist article, *Black Lives Matter Protesters Spent Christmas Eve Alone in Jail Cells, Attorney Says* further describes excessive policing. Black Lives Matter L.A.’s lawyer, Nana Gyamfi, told LA Weekly that the protesters were “all placed in solitary confinement, and that the men who had been arrested were handcuffed and had their legs shackled. She believes the reason the protesters were arrested was to "intimidate" and "bully" them.”82 The police not only criminalizes the movement by incarcerating, peaceful, protestors, the police also effectively weakens the demonstration.

**Discussion**

In order to better understand police violence against African American movements the following research questions were asked: 1) What are the similarities and differences between police violence against the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960s and police violence against Black Lives Matter (BLM) in the present? 2) To what extent is police violence utilized as a mechanism of oppression to perpetuate the oppression of Black Americans? 3) What racialized stereotypes, images and narratives were used to rationalize police violence against SNCC, SCLC, and BLM? With this in mind, newspaper articles from the 1960s and articles from the present decade were used to answer those questions. Newspapers were specifically chosen because, although not interpersonal discussions, they are a reflection of society. This along with the historical comparative approach; allows us to find patterns of similarity and differences between the 1960’s movements and BLM in the present. Five different themes were discovered. These

themes explain how White society responds and retaliates to African American movements that challenge the social order.

The themes: elite maintenance of oppression, anti-black and pro-white rational, the removal of leadership and prominent figures were used to justify excessive policing of the movements in both decades. Elite maintenance of oppression is defined as powerful Whites utilizing their resources to control ordinary citizens along with media elites who used their influences to create the narratives necessary for the police to enforce the subjugation of African Americans. Anti-black rational and pro-white rational were used to accentuate the supposed “differences” between Whites and Blacks; Whites were depicted in terms that benefitted them while Blacks were portrayed negatively. This was followed by the removal of leadership and prominent figures in which the character of leaders were attacked or they were removed from protests by various means. All of these themes supported heightened police activity, surveillance, violence, incarceration, or in other words the excessive policing of BLM, SNCC, and SCLC. Furthermore, excessive policing became the chosen mechanism to combat the movements and continue the oppression of African Americans.

While there were some differences in the interactions between the police and activist groups in the 60s SNCC & SCLC and in the current decade BLM there were also numerous similarities. The most striking similarities were in aspects such as incarceration, surveillance, violence, and heightened police active surrounding their activities. Although both groups did suffer, a very unjust, violence from the police, BLM encountered a more militarized style of policing. It seems as though White society learned from its encounter with the groups from the 1960s and applied
those lessons to the present. Nevertheless, police violence became the chosen method to end African American protests regardless of time period.

Moreover, violence from police officers was justified by characterizing protestors as “boogey men” out to terrorize White society. SNCC and SCLC were described as criminals, violent, and racial agitators similar to the way in which BLM is portrayed presently. Additionally, SNCC and SCLC were described as anarchists, people who believe in, advocate, or promote… violent means to overthrow the established order. Similarly, BLM is described as a terrorist group, or people who use violence or threat of violence in order to achieve their political goals.

Subsequently, by understanding the past we can take a mental “step back” and look at the present with increased perception, compassion, and realize police violence is being used to control African American protests.

In conclusion, during the 1960s the police was excessively violent against Civil Rights demonstrations but they were protected by societal leaders who used the police in order to maintain White control of most aspects of American life. Additionally, negative language and narratives of the 1960s were used against SNCC and SCLC to spur violence against them. Because this is reoccurring in similar fashion, as demonstrated in the data, then we can make the same exact conclusion in the present. There is no need to wait for a long period of time before we understand, as a nation, just how necessary BLM is in our time. As a society we need to understand that these protests are not spontaneous nor are they made up of false beliefs of oppression. Rather, they are a legitimate response to very real problems faced by African Americans. Since, history is cycling, we can take a step forward towards justice, as America did in the 60s, by ending institutionalized and widespread racism. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther
King Jr, from his famous *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* “Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.”

We need to say no to the police who attempt to stop the protestors. We need to say no to the racist attitudes that allow for the police to intervene. And we need to say no to racism all together. In doing so, we can stop a barbaric and outdated social practice, and move towards a more equal and just society.

---

SECTION IV

CONCLUSION

This study was interested in understanding the relationship between White control of African Americans movements through the use of police violence. By examining news articles from the 1960s and the present we were able to examine how police violence was purposefully by the dominant power structure. Through a close analysis I demonstrated how police violence was called upon by White society. This research demonstrates that police violence was justified by narratives and stereotypes through the use of elite maintenance of oppression, anti-black rational, pro-white rational, removal of leadership and prominent figures, and excessive policing. These findings suggest that police violence was not the result of a few “bad apples” rather it was caused by a racist belief that protests of African Americans would lead to anarchy and chaos. However, this has not been the case. Furthermore, the United States was founded on the belief that every single American should live without fear of tyranny from government and society, and in order to remain true to those ideals it becomes the duty of every American to support African Americans in their struggle towards equality.
REFERENCES


In American Political Development, 21(2), 250


February 3, 2016 (http://chicagodefender.com/2016/01/19/minnesota-police-officer-on-leave-for-allegedly-urging-drivers-to-run-over-black-lives-matter-protesters/).


