

## **Policing Communities of Color: An Historical Examination of Social Control and Protest Management Strategies**

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### Author Biography:

Kenneth Bryant Jr. is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at The University of Texas at Tyler. He earned his BA in Political Science (with a minor concentration in African-American Studies) in 2008 from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio; his Master of Arts in political science from the University of Missouri in 2014; and his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in political science from the University of Missouri in 2017.

The primary motivation behind Dr. Bryant's research and teaching interests are re-examining well-worn conventional thought about historically marginalized communities, as well as exploring new questions on their behavior, attitudes, and development. He believes political scientists' orthodoxy must refine its answers (or lack of answers) to questions regarding intersecting identities, and how racial, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, and ethnic factors do (and will) impact American politics in the coming decades.

**ABSTRACT:**

Law enforcement social control policies over black Americans can be traced back to early policing. From the development of the “patroller” system (established in 1794 to systematically police slaves) to contemporary police militarization, the relationship between black Americans and the police has been defined by bitter conflict that continuously results in outward expressions of discontent and protests. Recent examples abound, including the Los Angeles riots in 1992, the aftermath of the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, as well as the protests sparked by the deaths of Eric Garner and Freddie Gray. Indeed, social, political, and media speculation has placed police behavior under heavy scrutiny. Questions abound regarding the fairness, appropriateness, legality, and legitimacy of police methods, as critics have accused policing agencies of adopting punitive and repressive measures that target communities of color (and act as provocation for rioting). This chapter will use a critical lens to first investigate the historical social control strategies used against communities of color by law enforcement (beginning with antebellum “beat companies” to more contemporary “broken windows” policies). Next, I observe that, in addition to institutional evolution, police behavior (specifically related to community policing and responses to community protests) have accordingly shifted since the nineteenth-century. For example, I discuss the three current strategies of protest management (escalated force, negotiated management, and strategic incapacitation) that have all been embraced to varying degrees with relationship to police response to black community protests. Last, I explore the iterative process of police “command and control” policies and black community protests, noting that these competing forces have “coevolved,” mirroring one another, and feature antagonistic attitudes from both sides.

**KEYWORDS:**

(Please supply up to 6 keywords for your Chapter)

1. Policing
2. African Americans
3. Protest Management

**Main Body:**

In the realm of social control policies, perhaps the most visible of conflicts between the state and its citizenry involve public protests. This has especially proven true as it relates to race in America. Simply put, the history of the United States is permeated with examples of open hostility between agents of government and black Americans. The relationship between law enforcement and black Americans is especially checkered with enmity.

In an attempt to establish and preserve racially disparate policies, federal, state, and local branches of American government have used law enforcement as a tool for socially controlling black American life. Black Americans have responded in “outrage” to these injustices since as far back as slavery. From the slave revolts to early-and-mid twentieth century riots to today’s Black Lives Matter protests, black Americans have made a tradition of outward expression of discontent, directing their ire toward the police, who often directly participate in the cause for the protests. Interestingly, a historical parallel between black Americans and the police explains so much of their relationship today

While examining the history of policing, I find that the very impetus for policing in America was enforcing social control policies against “black criminals.” I note that its existence is rooted in white fear and that the institution has repeatedly been used as a tool to assuage it. I observe that policing (as an institution) has evolved since its earliest form and police behavior (specifically related to community policing and responses to community protests), as well as its policies, have accordingly shifted. Indeed, I conclude that we cannot understand why black Americans and police behave today without a discussion of this history. This chapter explores the following: to understand the dynamics of social control, political authority, and public policy, as it relates to race and police behavior today, we must examine how this relationship and the institution of policing has shifted in the past two-hundred years. From the vantage point of black Americans, I explore their long history of

antagonism with law enforcement. Here, I discuss the earliest iteration of policing in the South (the policing of black slaves), law enforcement's long history of criminalizing blackness, the proceeding black American outrage (often in the form of public protests), and the resulting police response policies (designed to control the public).

### **Historical Antagonism Between Law Enforcement and Black Americans**

In its earliest form, the "institution" of policing was designed to guard against black "criminality." Prior to the corrupted beat squads of the party machine era were antebellum "patrollers" tasked with corralling black slaves and enforcing the apartheid. In fact, socially conscious scholars in police studies have written about the role of early vigilantism and the policing of slaves. Wintersmith (1974), for instance, charges that "slavery and the omnipotent police mechanisms were synonymous." The former, they write, "could not have existed without the latter" (p. 21). Indeed, the following pages will describe a relationship between law enforcement and black Americans that was born from and nurtured through racism, white hegemony, abuse, distrust, malice, resentment, and antipathy. They will explain how centuries of perceived mistreatment have animated black attitudes toward the police and police behavior.

Seventeenth-century slavers had a problem. Their slaves were routinely rebelling and running-away, despite the false characterization of docility. As such, slavers lived in a constant state of paranoia. In the beginning, slavers relied on state and federal militia to respond to a slave revolt or runaway, but the militia's reaction time was far too slow, and news of slave revolts in other counties or states sparked widespread demand for more localized efforts. Consequently, the creation of "Black Codes" were designed to "regulate social intercourse," providing for the "absolute and unlimited control over the life, liberty, and prosperity of slaves by their masters" (Wintersmith 1974, p. 13). These codes forbade

slaves from leaving their designated plantations (unless they were given a “pass” by their slaver), and required any white person to stop, question, intimidate, and sometimes corporally punish slaves discovered away from their master’s property. It was a system designed to make every white person “the law,” while every person of color was inherently a “criminal.”

Wintersmith (1974) notes that “Black Codes” did not temper slaver fear. As such, their fear prompted the development of a “patroller” system to systematically police slaves (p. 17). This is the earliest form of “police” in the United States, whose duties were noted for their brutality and wide latitude. These patrollers were vigilantes with legal sanction, financed by slave poll-tax levies, and were often young, poor, white males. The earliest iteration of this system was in South Carolina in 1690, followed by revisions in 1721, where legislation describes these patrollers as “beat companies” (which is still used today). This system was established in 1794 in North Carolina and became an official county functionary by 1802. By 1833, most Southern states had adopted this “very elaborate military, quasi-military” slave policing system (p. 13). Unsurprisingly, patrollers were only used against blacks, except for white slave-sympathizers, and spent day and night “intimidating, brutalizing, and terrorizing slaves” (p. 20). Most importantly, these patrols were firmly entrenched in the local bureaucracy, establishing official police sanction of violence against blacks.

The marriage of policing and slavery is an argument furthered by Finkelman (1997) and Fehrenbacher (2001), who each argue that slavery and race in America are parallel constructions that influence contemporary tensions between black citizens and governmental institutions like the police. Finkelman (1997) writes, “For Americans, race has always been the central reality of slavery” (p. 5). Furthermore, they assert that the evils of slavery have reverberated across generations, and its impact still exists today. Fehrenbacher (2001) contends, “To this day, aspects of the slaveholding republic’s legacy remain, both in whites unable to fathom the depth of black grievances, and in blacks’ deeply alienated by a long

history of oppression” (p. 343). Per Derrick Bell (2001), “Blacks see their slave heritage more as a symbol of dishonor than a source of pride. It burdened black people with an indelible mark of difference as we struggled to be like whites” (p. 7). Importantly, they also argue that the institution of slavery continues to haunt America’s contemporary criminal justice system. Moreover, because slavery in the United States “was black slavery,” even this long-abolished institution “cannot escape being caught up in the urgency of contemporary black-white tensions” (Finkelman, 1997, p. 5). Indeed, this “bitter harvest [of slavery]” was unhappily promised to continue well into the future (Fehrenbacher, 2001, p. 343). If our discussion is focused on contemporary questions of police-black citizen relations, each of the above passages contains words and phrases that immediately prejudice assumptions: alienation, indelible mark of difference, urgency of contemporary black-white tensions, and bitter harvest, all insinuate an abiding negative relationship between blacks and law enforcement – rooted in social control and political authority animated by white hegemony.

After the Civil War, despite the illegality of slavery, once the North abandoned the South during the Hayes Administration, whites reestablished oppressive codes designed to regulate social intercourse. Furthermore, policing agencies (in the South and North) continued to selectively enforce laws. Former slaves were hunted, jailed, murdered, and mutilated for petty crimes (or for no crime at all), while law enforcement watched or (worse still) participated. From 1880 to the early 1920s, an (as Wintersmith describes it) “Era of Lawful Lawlessness” reigned.

### **Lawful Lawlessness**

By the end of the nineteenth century, white lynch mobs “brutalized African Americans with savage regularity” (Waldrep 2000, p. 75). In 1904 Vicksburg, Mississippi, for example, a black man and his wife were “captured, tied to a tree, and forced to hold out their hands while one finger at a time was chopped off” (Monk, 2002, para. 5). The fingers

were given away as souvenirs. After torturing the couple with corkscrews, the surrounding mob then mercifully threw them onto a fire to be burned to death. The man was being accused of murder. The wife was not. Yet, the punishment was equal. The details did not matter (Terrell, 1904; McDermott, 1999). For many whites of the era, the threat of black “criminals” assaulting white women, murdering white men, and frightening their communities was reason enough to take recourse into their own hands. Again, the paranoia of whites (often ensconced in legal and political protection) precipitated organized brutality against blacks. During the antebellum period, it was the creation of vigilante police. By the early 1900s, it was the advent of organized mobs. In both cases, the role of law enforcement was in direct conflict with black Americans.

The menace of lynch mobs loomed large over the early twentieth-century America. Thousands of black citizens found themselves at the mercy of mob justice, which provided no due process, flimsy reasoning, and a brutal end. Nevertheless, apologists (including local law enforcement) would feign ignorance, denying the existence of lynch mobs. In fact, Ford (1948) claimed that “action by courageous state officers” had *contributed* to overall decreased lynching statistics since the late 1800s (p. 944). But the number of lynching victims *increased* in 1916, and justifications (namely, black criminality) for mob violence were made by these same apologists.

Walter White, leader of the NAACP, was skeptical of reported “decreases” in lawfully lawless mob violence and reasoned that one could only estimate the number of unjust murders of blacks in the South. Importantly, he wanted to include death-by-officer in the official count of lynchings. The Tuskegee Institute, a prominent black school founded by Booker T. Washington, disagreed with White and the NAACP. They preferred to recognize lynching as “an activity in which persons not officers of the law, in open defiance of the law, administer punishment by death to an individual for an alleged offense or to an individual

with whom some offense has been associated” (Waldrep, 2000, p. 75). The exclusion of officers of the law was a major point of contention between the two heavyweight organizations when it came to anti-lynching legislation.

Realizing that local and state officials, including the police, often neglected (and sometimes participated in) these lawfully lawless mobs, anti-lynching advocates argued that Congress needed to get involved. Congressman Leonidas Dyer (1928) claimed, “To bring an end to such deplorable conditions, it is necessary that some authority based upon a broader public opinion should be brought into play” (p. 187). In 1918, Dyer’s anti-lynching bill was introduced in the House, and constitutional debates over federal anti-lynching legislation ensued for more than thirty years, but a bill never became law. For their part, in addition to halting anti-lynching legislation, white politicians, newspaper editors, and local law enforcement focused on black “criminality” to temper public reactions to mob violence (particularly in the South). As a tactic, this was used to convince “white reformers sensitive to the plight of southern blacks” of “the truth of black villainy” (Waldrep, 2000, p. 75). Black crimes, they reasoned, were an assault on entire communities. Thus, the community justified extralegal measures, as they felt threatened. Nonetheless, Wintersmith (1974) writes:

The blatant disregard for the need to protect black communities from both internal and external criminal elements, including the police themselves, moved some black communities to organize themselves for defensive purposes. (p. 45)

Accordingly, by the 1920s, blacks attempted to “develop several strategies to fight institutional oppression” (Wintersmith, 1974, p. 42). Chief among these strategies was the development of “black consciousness.” By the 1920s, a new black cohort of emerging leaders introduced a collection of radical ideas designed to defend against the political, social, and legal constraints of white hegemony. Including the menace of mobs and police mistreatment. The advent of black labor organizations, communist groups, socialist thinkers, and race



leaders brought about a fresh “stream of consciousness” that advocated an updated sense of “blackness.” It was this militant group of thinkers, these “New Negroes,” who emerged between 1915 and 1925 and transcended “the older ideological disputes” (Kusmer, 1976, p. 236). They developed “a more pragmatic approach to the problems that the black community faced” (Kusmer, p. 236). By the 1920s, old guard black leadership, agrarian, “respectable,” and pacifist, in the vein of Booker T. Washington, began speaking to (and for) a “dwindling and rather self-conscious minority” (p. 236). This is in large part due to the Great Migration, when the “Fall of Cotton” forced many Southern blacks into larger metropolitan areas, exposing them to the new ideas of these “New Negroes.”

As blacks adjusted to urban life, and crises mounted regarding poor conditions for black workers, housing, and police mistreatment, the “New Negroes” emerged as a voice for a rising tenor of social militancy, impatience, and political action. These new voices, such as A. Philip Randolph, Cyril Briggs, Marcus Garvey, Angelo Herndon, and W.E.B. Du Bois, among others, did not, however, speak in unison. While some advocated for nonviolent political action, others promoted all forms of protests (violent or nonviolent). Nevertheless, they all called for (and contributed to) a growth in black consciousness, providing an outlet for the disaffected.

Physical protest became a part of black long-term strategies against poor treatment by local, state, and federal government official practices, as well as the two major parties. In his book, *Life for Us Is What We Make It* (2005), Richard W. Thomas cites 1915 through 1945 in Detroit, when “black protest took as many forms as there were incidents of racial discrimination” (p. 229). Members of this generation, many of whom were recent migrants, refused to allow racial barriers to go unchallenged. Influenced by W.E.B. DuBois, the NAACP, publications like the Chicago Defender and Detroit Tribune, as well as Garvey and Randolph, this generation embraced a more hard-edged, radical view of politics and protest.

By the 1950s, Civil Rights movement protests adopted nonviolent civil disobedience measures like marches, sit-ins, and public rallies. But Charles Tilly's (2003) book *The Politics of Collective Violence* also attempts to explain how ideas on (or feelings about) injustice often lead to different forms of collective action (like violent unrest). His concept of "broken negotiation" explains urban black protests in the 1960s to present day, those animated by violent destruction of property and looting, resulting from racialized incidents. "Broken negotiation" is defined as a form of collective action that creates the conditions for rioting. Sometimes threats of violence are made. Sometimes actual damage to persons and property occur. Anger and fear fuel this form of violence (Tilly, 2003, p. 16). Table 1 illustrates select examples of police-related black unrest incidents from the 1940s to 2016. These are examples of violent and nonviolent demonstrations, where they occurred, and their reported provocations.

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It should be noted that selections for Table 1 describing forms of protest are derived from media sources. Earlier protests (pre-1990s) were not covered similarly to later protests (like Ferguson, MO), where multifaceted accounts have been documented. For example, activists from Ferguson, MO have contradicted media coverage of protests on the ground through social media and other mediums. This did not and could not occur in the 1960s. As such, reporting from the "riots" of the 1960s, recorded violent protests, but did not necessarily capture the nonviolent aspects of the protests.

Because of media attention given to various broken negotiation-style demonstrations (for examples, the rioting in Los Angeles and Ferguson) in the past, the public often misperceives movement protests. For instance, even in the absence of violence, demonstrations are seen as violent. Indeed, most demonstrations are conducted through non-

violent means, either through civil resistance measures such as symbolic protests, economic boycotts, political and social non-cooperation, nonviolent intervention, or more traditional political tactics like public demands and electioneering. Both Chenoweth and Cunningham (2013) provide insight on how these forms of resistance look. Consequently, a distinction here is important. Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Civil Rights movement protests were not the urban riots of the mid-to-late twentieth century. While movement activists publicly articulated rage, theirs was a decidedly more strategic and deliberate effort. On the other hand, urban riots, particularly those in the 1960s, were spontaneous demonstrations of angst, fear, anger, as well as outrage, and were relatively commonplace during this period (Waskow, 1966). The police's selective enforcement of the law often prompted these riots. Indeed, black communities were deeply bitter toward law enforcement during times of unrest, as the police were concerned with little else but disarming blacks (U.S. Riot Commission, 1968). Local political apparatchiks were also to "blame." For instance, in 1930s New York City, Mayor LaGuardia ignored the recommendations of a commission he sanctioned because it credited institutional racism as the cause for repeated urban outbursts (King, 2015). Yet, time after time, despite violent and nonviolent protestations, official acknowledgment of police misconduct and institutional racism was (and is) lacking. Ultimately, this begs the question, why protest at all?

### **Why Protest?**

In *Slavery and the Law* (1997), Derrick Bell and Eric Edmonds argue that racism's pervasiveness is a function of institutions that were designed to sustain both the implicit and explicit objectives of white hegemony. In the case of criminal justice and policing, it is an institution rooted in the precept that makes blackness inherently criminal. Because of this system, they argue that blacks can only tangentially effect change. Bell writes, "Despite what

we defined as progress wrought through struggle over many generations, we remain what we were in the beginning, a dark and foreign presence, always the designated “other” (p. 35).

Yet, Bell and Edmonds also argue that there is utility in action and engagement. Edmonds writes, “...engagement alerts the powers that be to the presence of persons like ourselves, who are not only not on their side, but are determined to stand in their way” (p. 38). In other words, the political engagement of black citizens has (at the very least) symbolic power. Thus, public protests may be efficacious activities, even if movement supported policies are not enacted. Therefore, black citizens have used protests for a variety of reasons, including to create awareness around issues, to publicly demonstrate a level of support for issues, as an expression of outrage, and as an attention-seeking alternative, when it was perceived that their elected officials failed to acknowledge their conditions (Bourne, 2011). Not unexpectedly, these protests, whether nonviolent marches or riotous mobs, continuously reawakened the common thread of white fear and paranoia. As such, not unlike “ye olden days” of slave patrollers, police responses (often instigated by white politicians) to these public demonstrations have historically been acrimonious.

### **Police Responses to Protests**

For black Americans, their constitutional right of protest has largely existed in conflict with police “command and control” policies. This is in large part due to police agencies being more inclined to embrace commanding and controlling black protests rather than their first amendment rights. The College of Policing (2013) defines “command and control” policies as follows:

The police service deals with a wide range of incidents and operations that are typically resolved by deploying available resources. There are, however, certain incidents or operations where the police response requires a different approach and it may be necessary to establish a dedicated command structure. Command and control

is the authority and capability of an organization to direct the actions of its personnel and the use of its equipment. (para. 1)

Yet, it is important to note that these competing forces (police and protestors) have “coevolved,” mirroring one another and are driven by an “iterative process” (Oliver & Myers, 2003). This “coevolution” has featured antagonistic early attitudes toward protestors (especially black protestors) who were perceived as disruptive, riotous, and violent (even when nonviolent) (Bourne, 2011, p. 195). Police responded in kind, refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of the protest, and imposing coercive tactics to squelch them. This approach was known as “escalated force.” Nevertheless, it eventually lost favor, as demonstrators (particularly during the Civil Rights Movement) became media savvy and articulated nonviolent strategies. Thus, law enforcement was forced to alter response maneuvers, lest they suffer sustained public outrage and risk local community legitimacy and cooperation. This prompted the adoption of negotiated management and (later) strategic incapacitation policies. Today, police departments vary in approach, often relying on a compromise strategy to command and control protests.

### **Protest Management**

Historically, public protests have been met with counter resistance from law enforcement. In the 1960s, policing agencies were met with their greatest existential crisis (Uchida, 2004). In addition to rising crime, anti-war demonstrations and the Civil Rights movement, riots, and violent protests in cities and on university campuses compelled law enforcement to respond. The highest profile example of 60s-era citizen-police unrest was during the 1968 Democratic National Convention, where the most memorable historical occurrence was not the nomination of Hubert H. Humphry, but Mayor Daley’s police using harsh force against protestors. Furthermore, riots were credited to police involvement in Harlem, Watts, Newark, and Detroit, as traffic stops of black citizens and police raids of

popular African-American establishments, sparked them (Uchida, 2004). Research on law enforcement has confirmed that policing agencies think strategically when responding to public unrest. Police strategies “reflect departmental values, which reflect community values, and attitudes towards the police may influence police policy making and strategy” (Dowler, 2003, 112). Consequently, their conduct is the byproduct of bureaucratic considerations and understanding the wide-ranging perceptual repercussions of agency response within the public sphere (Reicher, et al., 2007; Stott et al., 2008). Vitale (2005) writes, “How police departments choose to handle large demonstrations can have profound implications for police-community relations and the international reputations of the cities they represent” (p. 284). As such, the prevailing level of response to public demonstrations has evolved over the past half century.

### **Escalated Force**

In the 1960s and 70s, police philosophy engendered a policy of “escalated force,” which embraced a mirroring of militancy from protestor to police. The scholarly consensus is that police repression existed at “high levels” (Rafail, Soule, & McCarthy, 2012). Law enforcement would reciprocate any high levels of militancy, violence, or show of force among demonstrators (McPhail, Schweingruber, & McCarthy, 1998; della Porta, 1995; McPhail & McCarthy, 2005). A “tit for tat,” if you will. During this period, demonstrations were a “threat” to the stability of the state, an affront to respected institutions, and an attack on their legitimacy. As such, the “appropriate” response to these incursions was to employ measures that were more repressive, to stamp out rabble rousing, and restore order. Winter (1998) refers to this as the *staatspolizei* period. Here, protests were a disruptive and inconvenient function, which upset the lives of average citizens and needed to be squelched. Crowds were “conceived as potentially riotous and as having the propensity to become

violent” (Bourne, 2011, p. 188). This suspicion and cynicism provided ample rationale for coercive and forceful tactics.

Per Schweingruber (2000), escalated force consisted of five characteristics. First, freedom of speech, expression, and assembly rights were disregarded. Second, intolerance of any obstruction of normal community activities. Third, police infiltration and other intrusive measures were the only means of contact between law enforcement and citizens. Fourth, nonviolent civil disobedience did not absolve individuals from arrests. Finally, physical brutality, the use of batons, tear gas, fire hoses, and such, were used to disperse protestors instead of making arrests (p. 378). Police approached demonstrators with strong-arm force, intent on dispersing their activity and continually escalating until they were successful. Importantly, show of force came before use of force, as police were reluctant to expend resources when unnecessary. Police agencies would use intimidation tactics (using large contingents of officers equipped with visible weapons and riot gear). This was done to scare demonstrators into compliance without needing to use any force. Also, selective arrests (i.e. the biggest troublemakers) and division of the crowd (so it will not grow) were used to coerce demonstrations to cease (Kluchesky & Lohman, 1947), showing that police response was strategic.

Infamous examples of these characteristics abound. For black Americans, memories of Alabama police commissioner Bull Connor’s brutal handling of nonviolent civil rights workers are vivid. In April and May of 1963, Connor’s force against student demonstrations, including first and second graders (he had already ordered the arrests of the adult protestors), were water hoses and dogs. Connor even directed officers to pursue fleeing demonstrators (Bowers et al., 2010). These tactics were designed to intimidate and coerce civil rights workers and are quintessential examples of “escalated force” measures, principally, the lack of acknowledgment (through violence) of speech, expression, and assembly rights. These

were also means toward maintaining the segregated status quo, as the southern establishment could not abide changes to the racial hierarchy.

Law enforcement infiltration and intrusion of movement organizations is best illustrated by the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), a series of covert projects in which the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) monitored “fringe” or “radical” political organizations within the United States. The program began in 1956 and lasted until 1971, under the direct command of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who used COINTELPRO to investigate and manipulate the Black Panther Party, Republic of New Africa, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and groups protesting the Vietnam War, among others. The program’s intrusive techniques included wiretaps, microphone “bugs,” and break-ins. In 1976, the Senate Church Committee concluded:

Many of the techniques used [by COINTELPRO] would be intolerable in a democratic society even if all of the targets had been involved in violent activity, but COINTELPRO went far beyond that...the Bureau conducted a sophisticated vigilante operation aimed squarely at preventing the exercise of First Amendment rights of speech and association, on the theory that preventing the growth of dangerous groups and the propagation of dangerous ideas would protect the national security and deter violence. (para. 4)

Accordingly, COINTELPRO became an infamous example of law enforcement excess and a “top-level” illustration of how police used escalated force maneuvers to suppress movement organizations, protests, and leaders. Despite their tenuous relationship with the First Amendment, escalated force measures continued because political elites had interests in squelching the “social dynamite” of movement protests (Loo & Grimes, 2004, p. 61). They believed there was a public appetite for these tactics (or at least a tolerance), as



“law and order” became a clarion call of racially conservative politicians. Richard Nixon infamously used the phrase to exploit white middle-American fears of black unrest during his campaign for president in 1968. Scholars argue that this white paranoia resurfaced in the late 1960s, amid growing (riotous) outrage within urban black communities (Skogan, 1995; Cronin, Cronin & Milakovich, 1981). From the 1965 Watts Rebellion (sparked by community charges of police brutality) to the April 1968 urban riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King, white America watched with great fear, the outward expression of black American grief and fury, and flinched at the prospect of experiencing it firsthand. Consequently, political calls for “law and order” had a salving effect on white voters, as it intimated that politicians would be “tough” on protesters and demonstrators, as well as protect citizens (and their property) from harm. Furthermore, “street violence” became synonymous with “black criminality,” and establishment politicians like Nixon (as well as antiestablishment firebrands like George Wallace), knew how to exploit this intersection of fear, race, and violence (Witcover, 1997). Even Robert Kennedy, a liberal Democrat running for president called for a “delicate balancing act,” understanding the importance of appearing “tough on crime” without alienating black citizens (at that point an integral part of the Democratic coalition) (Witcover, 1997, p. 174).

Fear of “black criminality” and urban outrage led many white Americans to embrace a punitive criminal justice system, considering it necessary that law enforcement was “tough on crime.” In political terms, these were “law and order” voters, principally white, low-to-middle income, less educated, and most fearful of crime. They rejected any softening posture on the part of law enforcement during times of unrest. They also happened to be the largest and most likely to vote segment of the electorate. Politicians and police departments were certainly cognizant of this reality.

### **Shift in Police Tactics**

By the 1970s, the *staatspolizei* era resulted in growing violence and increased antipathy between law enforcement and citizen activists. Consequently, a steady shift in police response measures began taking shape, because of several developments (McCarthy, McPhail, & Crist, 1999). First, in the shadow of the conflict in Vietnam, each new police-protestor clash became more high profile, creating a polarizing effect on the public (Roberts, 2010). Beginning with the 1968 Democratic National Convention and moving to college campuses all over the country (most infamously on the campus of Kent State University), escalated force measures against war protestors became increasingly unpopular in the media (Priest, 1997). Furthermore, the deaths of nonviolent, white student protestors, at the hands of coercive police officers, turned many moderate whites against violent “tough on crime” tactics and sullied police reputations.

Second, several presidential commissions on the riots of the 1960s were critical of police tactics and began recommending reforms for law enforcement to respond to “civil disorder.” For instance, the Kerner Commission (1967) suggested “special training in the prevention of disorders,” and “guidelines governing the use of control equipment and alternatives to the use of lethal weapons” (Chapter 12, para. 4). It also condemned “moves to equip police departments with mass destruction weapons, such as automatic rifles, machine guns and tanks” (Chapter 12, para. 5). The commission characterized these as “weapons which are designed to destroy, not to control,” and “have no place in densely populated urban communities” (Chapter 12, para. 5).

Third, through a series of decisions known as “public forum law,” the Supreme Court began establishing clearer boundaries against police encroachment of the First Amendment rights of public protestors. Fundamentally, in response to state and local laws banning certain demonstrations on public property, the Court decided that the government could regulate (through permits) protests but must do so with a “compelling” rationale that did not

incorporate biases against certain forms of expression. These decisions were “important in shaping the dimensions of the shift between the two forms of protest policing, setting the stage for negotiated management” (McPhail, Schweingruber, & McCarthy, 1998, p. 58-59).

Fourth, perceptions of the effectiveness (and incentives) of escalated force were altered when thousands of police officers, administrators, and public officials went through a new civil disturbance orientation (SEADOC). (McCarthy, McPhail, & Crist 1999; Skogan, 2004). This federally promoted orientation encouraged (among other tactics), the “use of minimum force required” to maintain “law and order” in protest situations (McPhail, Schweingruber, & McCarthy, 1998, p. 64). The effectiveness of maximum (escalated) force had clearly been undermined on several fronts: first, public opinion soured against the police; second, widespread arrests did little to temper movement activities, but certainly drained police personnel; third, as a result of commission recommendations, federal resources would no longer prioritize these measures, thus, the incentive structure for state and local authorities had to shift accordingly.

### **Negotiated Management**

The aforementioned developments encouraged an evolved philosophy that treated demonstrations as a legitimate part of the democratic process. Since the 1980s, police philosophy transitioned to the *burgerpolizei* period (Winter, 1998), employing a “negotiated management” approach to protests, calling for the “protection of free speech rights, toleration of community disruption, ongoing communication between police and demonstrators, avoidance of arrests, and limiting the use of force to situations where violence is occurring” (Vitale, 2005, p. 286). It was a “more conciliatory” and “amicable” form of protest control (McPhail, Schweingruber, McCarthy, 1998; Rafail, Soule, & McCarthy 2012).

Negotiated management is credited with significantly impacting the relationship between police and protestors during demonstrations (McPhail, Schweingruber, McCarthy,

1998; della Porta & Reiter, 1998; Waddington, 1994). Waddington's (1994) study on London police found that concerted efforts of the police to negotiate with the protestor often increased compliance. Also, the once-derided permit system was used as a way of demonstrating fairness and cooperation, as it engendered a need for public officials and demonstrators to communicate prior to the protest event. Furthermore, the adoption of standardized policing practices provided a roadmap for the management of protestors in public spaces. Also, the training of local police by the federal government inculcated the "principles of negotiated management in police departments around the country and was buttressed by enhanced federal funding" (Rafail, Soule, & McCarthy, 2012, p. 741).

The strategy of negotiated management was designed to improve perceptions of police and their legitimacy, allowing for a de-escalation of conflict between law enforcement and crowds (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Stott & Drury, 2000; Stott & Reicher, 1998). Per Gorringer, Stott, and Rosie (2012), this "dialogue policing" has five characteristics: negotiation, mediation, initiation, communication, and sensing. Essentially, it is perceptive policing, constantly assessing susceptibility for violence and disorder, but also being mindful of prior agreements (between officer and protestors), de-escalation measures, and changes in mood of the crowd. These efforts help to avoid conflict (Stott, Adang, Livingstone, & Schreiber, 2007).

### **Limitations of Negotiated Management**

By the early 2000s, negotiated management's limitations were being debated. Critics of non-escalating tactics grew louder. From hardline police partisans, the invariable charges of "softness" and treachery animated discussions about these strategies within police departments (Gorringer, Rosie, Waddington, & Kominou, 2012; UK Home Affairs Select Committee, 2011). From civil libertarians, skepticism grew about negotiated management's real effect on protest management, as many were concerned that these tactics were not

nonviolent at all. Instead, rather than creating a safer, fairer environment for demonstrators (as advertised), police were simply finding alternative means of coercion (Waddington, 1994; Wahlstrom, 2007).

The 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle saw police organizations alter their strategies when confronting large demonstrations (Vitale, 2005). Relations between the protestors and police broke down because there was little opportunity for negotiation (i.e. the protests were unanticipated and became too large). Consequently, police reverted to “special weapons and other equipment to aggressively disperse protests, resulting in numerous injuries and arrests” (Vitale, 2005, p. 284). Some have observed that this shift back to escalated force tactics was an indication that advocates for “zero-tolerance” police strategies (which were in vogue during the late 1990s with “broken windows” philosophy) were again becoming influential (p. 284). Negotiation was too nonviolent or “pampering,” and with their growing para-militarism and “hierarchical micromanagement of demonstrations” (Vitale, 2005, p. 284); police agencies were seeking alternative strategies aimed at managing large protests without resorting to 1960s-era coercion (Wahlstrom, 2007, p. 397).

Yet despite police agencies’ public denouncement of “coercion” as a tactic, Wahlstrom (2007) notes that many civil libertarians speculated that the “dark side” of negotiated management was the use of dialogue as a means for control (p. 396). Their ethnographic study with police officers in Göteborg and Stockholm over the course of two years unearthed a series of concerns regarding the use of “Dialogue Police Units” and “Psychotactics Units” to employ negotiated management strategies. First, these units were designed to use communication to influence human attitudes and behavior, immediately sparking concerns that police agencies would utilize “psychological warfare” against demonstrators (p. 396). Second, the unequal power positions between the police and demonstrator undermined the efficacy of talking. In other words, as one officer described, his

being “tall,” “sturdy,” and forced to wear riot gear simply scared the people who he was to converse with (p. 397). This “power privilege” (if you will) served as “coercive,” with or without the intent, further alarming watchdogs about the effectiveness of negotiated management.

### **Strategic Incapacitation**

Criticism from the right and left flank of policing policies created yet another opportunity for alternative strategies for protest management. For instance, Noakes and Gillham (2006) identified a new protest control strategy called “strategic incapacitation.” Here, the approach is more offensive, “selectively incapacitating protesters high-risk offenders” (Wahlstrom, 2011, p. 47). These tactics are decidedly up-the-middle, with increased proactivity toward incapacitation and negotiation objectives. Police departments have begun training more specialized liaison officers but have also moved to increase use of these tactics (Wahlstrom, 2007).

Selective incapacitation includes the “establishment of extensive protest zones, the increased use of less-lethal weapons, the strategic use of arrests, and a reinvigoration of surveillance and infiltration of movement organizations” (Gillham & Noakes, 2007, p. 343). Consistent with a broader, more proactive contemporary approach toward crime and disorder control (i.e. Broken Windows policies), strategic incapacitation emphasizes risk-management and preventative measures. It is also beneficial in that it manages police time and effort, focusing on “ring leaders,” rather than en masse arrests (Noakes & Gillham, 2007).

Soule and Davenport (2009) argue that there is a linear relationship between violent demonstrations and repressive police responses. This is “regardless of the temporal period in which a demonstration occurred” (Rafail, Soule, & McCarthy, 2012, p. 739). The autonomy of police departments means that universal abandonment of escalated force strategies cannot be taken for granted (McPhail, Schweingruber, McCarthy, 1998). Thus, while police rely on

negotiated management as a first resort, they have “developed a range of tactics” (Gillham & Noakes, 2007, p. 352).

### **Discussion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the slaver origins of policing, its institutional evolution, and its harsh legacy with black Americans. Furthermore, I have noted rationales for black American protests and how police agencies have adopted (and evolved) responses to protests since the 1960s (from escalated force to negotiated management to strategic incapacitation). While shifts in strategies have occurred, police agencies have not completely abandoned or adopted any one form of protest control (Vitale, 2005). Even as law enforcement embraces more compromised strategies toward commanding and controlling protests, public feelings toward the institution of policing among blacks, whites, and the racial and ethnic issues that animate our national discussion about law enforcement social control policies have shifted little over the past forty years of scholarship.

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## Policing Communities of Color

**Table 1: Select Cases of Police-Related Black Unrest (1943-2016)**

Year	City	Form of Protest	Cause
1943	Detroit	Rioting	Interracial communal disorder exacerbated by brutal police treatment of black rioters.
1963	Birmingham, Alabama	Nonviolent protest	Staged to challenge racial segregation in country's most segregated city. Also, known for its violent police force. <sup>2</sup>
1964	Rochester, New York	Rioting	After an arrest of a young, intoxicated black man, rumors spread of brutal police misconduct (i.e. police dogs attacking a pregnant black woman) which prompted a crowd of civilians to become violent. <sup>3</sup>
1964	Harlem	Rioting	Black youth shot and killed by white police officer. <sup>4</sup>
1965	Watts, California	Rioting	Traffic arrest. <sup>5</sup>
1967	Newark	Rioting	Black cab driver beaten by white police officer. <sup>6</sup>
1970	Jackson, Mississippi	Rioting	Police fire 150 rounds of ammunition at a group of angry black students pelting rocks at white motorists. <sup>7</sup>
1980	Miami	Looting	The acquittal of four white police officers who had brutally beaten a black, handcuffed insurance agent to death with their flashlights. <sup>8</sup>
1992	Los Angeles	Rioting	The acquittal of four white Los Angeles Police Department officers in the beating of black motorist Rodney King in 1991. <sup>9</sup>
1996	St. Petersburg, Florida	Rioting	18-year-old TyRon Lewis had been shot and killed by a white police officer. <sup>10</sup>
2001	Cincinnati	Rioting	19-year-old Timothy Thomas had been shot and killed by a white police officer. <sup>11</sup>
2009	Oakland	Rioting	The acquittal of a white BART police officer in the killing of Oscar Grant. <sup>12</sup>
2014	Ferguson, Missouri	Nonviolent Protests and Rioting	Michael Brown had been shot and killed by a white police officer. <sup>13</sup>
2015	Baltimore	Nonviolent Protests and Rioting	25-year-old Freddie Gray died in police custody. <sup>14</sup>
2015	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Nonviolent Protests and Rioting	23-year-old Sylville Smith shot and killed by black police officer. <sup>15</sup>
2016	Charlotte	Nonviolent Protests and Rioting	Police shooting of Keith Lamont Scott. <sup>16</sup>

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