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"BELIEVE IN SOMETHING, EVEN IF IT MEANS SACRIFICING EVERYTHING."
(COLIN KAEPERNICK)

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A case study analysis on modern civil resistance movements in the United States

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Abstract

Populism has recently been gaining influence in Western societies, founded on deep-rooted struggles between dominant majorities and inferior minority groups. Minorities have consequently engaged in civil resistance movements to change existing social structures. In Europe, the influx of refugees in 2015 spawned the rise of right-wing minorities; in the USA, acts of police violence encouraged African-American protests against racial discrimination through forms of norm contestation. The latter will be analysed in this case study, based on the theoretical assumptions of the Structure-Agency-Debate and on Giddens' Structuration Theory, where structures and agency are mutually dependent. Here, the US-American law enforcement system is the superior structure, while agency is displayed by civil resistance movements led by Colin Kaepernick and Black Lives Matter. By examining the extent that the two movements meet the conditions of spread, consistency, and level of contestation, it is concluded that success depends on the movement's internal organization as well as the public reception and reaction. It is found that both movements lack internal organization in terms of consistency and accountability and are strongly objected by the predominantly white majority due to perceived inappropriateness or violence. In Europe, however, the former populist minority in the UK has largely overcome these constraints and has taken office, while the right-wing minority in Germany still struggles for social acceptance and power as the majority's backlash remains strong. However, with recurring efforts of minorities to oppose dominant majorities, more conflicts will arise in which the desired social change may ultimately occur.

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1 Introduction

Through centuries and decades, different societies all over the globe have been shaped by human life. Today, there are around 200 countries with unique systems in place and yet, the world is still evolving. Especially in the light of developments such as globalisation, new technologies and climate change, all societies try to adapt to these new challenges and opportunities through social change; with different levels of success. Social change is not only induced by technological advancement, but often through human action from within the population, as every society is formed by a complex network of political, economic and social structures. Within those, power is often distributed disproportionally among the population and there is commonly a strained relationship between those who have power and those who do not. This division of social power habitually leads to dissatisfaction about the (perceived) injustice within the powerless groups and eventually, those citizens will create, develop and share ideas on how their society should look like instead. Every so often, these ideas evolve into actions of civil activism and resistance. Recently, Western societies such as the United States of America (USA) and several European countries have experienced a surge in civil unrest, pursued by minorities aiming at challenging the existing power structures. This brings to question, however, how can these structures be changed? Do individuals or groups have the power to influence or encourage the change, and what is necessary in order to sway the odds in their favour?

Throughout time, minorities and majorities have risen and fallen as a result of social change. However, there are distinct forms of changes: Firstly, change in any set of structure can occur as a natural product of time, not through social action. According to Tivel, this so-called sociocultural evolution is the "process by which structural reorganization is affected through time, eventually producing a form or structure which is qualitatively different from the ancestral form" (2012, p. 89). Secondly, there are (social) revolutions, which Huntington defines as "rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change[s] in the dominant values […] of society, in its political institutions, social structure [and] leadership" (2006, p. 264). This kind of change is often initiated by disadvantaged minorities; a well-known example for this is the French revolution, were civil resistance against the monarchy erupted into violent protests and eventually led to fundamental political overturn and power system change.

Lastly, there is a third form of change that lies in between those previously mentioned. Here, time is also a significant factor as change occurs over medium-term, but contrary to sociocultural evolution, it is inspired by civil engagement. However, it is distinguishable from social revolutions as it has a non-violent character at the core and usually aims at changing one particular power structure instead of establishing an entirely new type of rule. Examples for this are the continuous struggles for gay rights or gender equality in Western societies. A more general definition is given by Randle:

> "Civil resistance is a method of collective political struggle based on the insight that governments depend […] on the cooperation, or at least the compliance, of the majority of the population, and the loyalty of the military, police and civil service. […] It operates by mobilising the population to withdraw that consent, by seeking to undermine the opponents' sources of power, and by enlisting the support of third parties." (1994, 9 ff.)

The focus of this thesis lies on this last variant, as civil resistance is essentially provoked by a disbalance of power between a dominant majority and an oppressed minority seeking to improve their social standing. Gillion describes this struggle as a "debate regarding whether the silent majority, nonprotesters, is influenced by the loud minority, the activists on the streets" (2020, p. 7). In the last

decade, several Western societies have experienced this debate first hand, as minority groups have prominently started civil resistance movements. A prime example of the underlying conflict and eventual clash of majorities and minorities is the recent escalation of (right-wing) populism in both the USA and Europe. Populism is a complex theoretical concept with no singular definition. Nevertheless, at the core of this narrative there are some common features.

First and foremost, populism is anti-elitist, which implies a strong juxtaposition between 'the people' and a perceived elite (e.g. a political elite, big companies or a social class) that is allegedly corrupt, self-serving or serving the interests of others (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013; Macaulay, 2019). At the same time, populism is characterized by anti-pluralism: populists claim that they alone are the morally good and righteous 'people'; while their opponents are clearly portrayed as part of the immoral elite (Müller, 2017). Müller also claims that populism is "always a form of identity politics" (2017, p. 3): Based on the construction of a certain national identity, populists reject those who are different and exclude them from this conceived identity (Béland, 2020). This mentality of 'Us, the people' versus 'Them, the others' can be based on national, ethnic or religious grounds and commonly, the 'others' are embodied by minorities that are perceived as a threat to the cultural identity and status of 'the people' (Béland, 2020). These ideologies are often organized in populist groups and parties, which are regularly spearheaded by a charismatic leader (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013). Populism is not bound to any political direction. Left-wing populism is commonly directed against a perceived economic elite, such as corporations or capitalism itself (Macaulay, 2019). On the contrary, right-wing populism is generally objecting a political elite that allegedly favours ethnic, religious or racial minorities and ignores the needs and demands of their own people (Béland, 2020). As the latter is "grounded in ethnic nationalism" (Béland, 2020, p. 164), the conflict lines run between the natives and others, distinguished by their origin, race or social class. Populist parties seek polarization between these opposing sides by emphasizing the identity contrast: The 'others' are demonized as a threat to the identity, security and social standing of the supposedly good 'people' (Berlet & Lyons, 2000). By constructing opposing social identities and fomenting anxiety and fear, populist parties often successfully mobilise their supporters to take action (Bos et al., 2020). As social and political structures are diverse in Western societies, these features are shaped to varying degrees and based on different cultural or social cleavages:

In Europe, the populist narrative has been strongly connected to immigrants that are frequently depicted as 'the others' due to cultural, religious and ethnic differences (Schellenberg, 2013). With the recent waves of immigration, the self-proclaimed 'people' grow feelings of rejection and a "mounting public discontent over the status quo. […] Some are uneasy with societies that have become more ethnically, religiously and racially diverse" (Roth, 2017). According to Human Rights Watch, these attitudes are corroborated by the belief that political elites ignore the growing public concerns about globalization, terrorist attacks and the feeling of being left behind by technological advancement and global economic uplift (Roth, 2017).

In the USA, populist ideology runs along the lines of partisanship as well as ethnic and racial differences (Gillion, 2020). The latter roots in ancient habits of racial separation, and has throughout history led to a sense of white superiority within the American population (Berlet & Lyons, 2000). Therefore, the distinction is made between what is perceived as 'the American people' (white, heterosexual, Christian) and the 'non-American' minorities (immigrants, African-Americans, LGBTQ, Muslims) (Berlet & Sunshine, 2019). Recently, a large proportion of Americans has felt threatened by those

minority, and their anxieties have been exploited by populist narratives (Béland, 2020). At the same time, people felt like their fears and needs were neglected by the liberal Obama administration: the Pew Research Centre found that 55% of whites disapproved of his performance as president, while even 61% of white men felt dissatisfied (Pew Research Center, 2016, p. 55). One of the major reasons for this was the alleged favouritism of 'the others', and their social empowerment, which was perceived as a threat to the 'American' identity the people had defined for themselves (Béland, 2020). This included immigrants as well as African-Americans, a minority that has been historically framed as inferior, dangerous or even "parasites" (Berlet & Sunshine, 2019, p. 486).

Populist leaders often use those perceived fears about cultural and social identity to gain support from the population. In both Europe and the USA, these conflicts between a perceived majority and a perceived minority, defined by their deviant ethnicity and race, have recently led to civil unrest. However, the underlying social mechanisms are highly complex and diverse. In order to draw conclusions from one case to another, it is crucial to look thoroughly at the cases and try to locate the similarities as well as significant differences between them.

Throughout its development, the European Union has defined certain social values that it seeks to represent; and it expects its member states to do the same: "The EU values are common to the EU countries in a society in which inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination prevail." (European Union, 2020). However, recent waves of immigration have unveiled the severity of cultural and social identity conflicts in Europe: with an increasing influx of refugees and asylum seekers from non-EU countries, their otherness caused fear and anxiety within national populations (Meidert & Rapp, 2019). Large portions of these immigrant flows stem from Southeast Europe (Syria, Afghanistan) and Africa (South Sudan, Yemen), in an attempt to flee from war-like situations, famine and poverty (UNO Flüchtlingshilfe, 2020). As they originated from countries so fundamentally different from Western European culture, especially in social and religious matters as well as mere appearance, their presence is increasingly unsettling to some. While a majority of Europeans still sticks to helpfulness and openness, there is a (growing) minority of people with xenophobic and anti-Islam feelings (Schellenberg, 2013). As those minorities fear the loss of their perceived cultural identity, they increasingly challenge and resist the social structures of openness in place. Virtually all EU-countries have been confronted with this struggle; yet, some of them had more successful minorities than others. Because not all countries can be illuminated thoroughly within the scope of this thesis, only a brief look will be taken to two cases that show major differences: Germany and the United Kingdom.

Led by chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany claimed responsibility early on and epitomized a culture of openness and solidarity (Engler, 2016). However, the challenge of integrating the immigrants into the German social and economic structure gave rise to right-wing ideologies (Schellenberg, 2013). As more and more people became concerned about the grand mass of immigrants, populist parties such as the AfD (Alternative for Germany) and the PEGIDA movement (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident) used this momentum to effectively frame a mentality of 'Us, the Germans' versus 'Them, the foreigners' (Art, 2018; Decker, 2015). Especially the AfD, who was founded in 2013 as an originally anti-European party, has benefitted from the refugee crisis (Art, 2018). Even more so, its electoral success can be largely attribute to it: since almost all other grand parties supported the open border policy, people that disagreed turned to the AfD which seemed to addressed their political and social dissatisfaction more appropriately (Art, 2018; Decker, 2015; Reinl & Schäfer, 2020). On that ground, the party managed to enter the state parliament in 11 out of 16

states, as well as the European Parliament in 2014 (Engler, 2016). Their party program represents a classic right-wing populist ideology, as they advocate for strict immigration law, the categoric rejection of Muslims and they label themselves 'alternative', pointing to an underlying anti-establishment, anti-elite attitude (Decker, 2016). Supporters for their cause were easily found, as insecurity and anxiety about "deprivation in wealth, […] cultural alienation [and] the loss of a familiar social order [by] migrants that supposedly lack any sort of affiliation with the national community" (Decker, 2016, p. 11) increased drastically. These feeling were not only expressed in the elections: the Pegida movement emerged rapidly and initiated numerous rallies and demonstrations with up to 25,000 participants in January 2015 (Dostal, 2015). The same year, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) counted 924 violent attacks against refugees, including arson attacks on refugee shelters (Engler, 2016). Ultimately, it became clear that the immigration issue had at this point evolved into a pressing political and social issue, which caused parts of the population to feel culturally and socially threatened. Consequently, the support for right-wing ideologies intensified and was expressed by the civil resistance of the right-wing minority both in elections as well as on the streets.

In the United Kingdom (UK), these societal tensions have been instrumentalized and escaladed in an unparallel way. In the Brexit referendum from June 2016, roughly 52% voted to leave the European Union (Gietel-Basten, 2016); the result of a political and social debate that revolved majorly around the issue of immigration. Over the last decades, immigration to the UK has steadily grown, while a study by Wadsworth, Dhingra, Ottaviano, and van Reenen found that "EU immigrants are more educated, younger, more likely to be in work and less likely to claim benefits than the UK-born" (2016). At the same time though, there was a "growing pool of electorally marginalized, politically disaffected, and low-skilled white working-class voters" (Ford & Goodwin, 2017, p. 20) that did not see their needs and demands met by the political elite. These developments unsurprisingly caused many UK natives to perceived immigrants as a growing threat to their own cultural identity as well as their social and economic standing (Wadsworth et al., 2016). Based on this, right-wing populist parties such as the UK Independent Party (UKIP) thrived early on, and public concern over immigration surged drastically when the refugee crisis hit the European mainland, eventually leading to massive support for Eurosceptic parties with anti-immigration agendas (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017). The UKIP (among others) then build on these pre-existing anxieties and offered to be "taking back control" (Gietel-Basten, 2016, 678) by restricting immigration, which appealed most significantly to those who felt threatened by increasing immigration flows into Europe and left behind by the societal development resulting from it. At the end of the day, what started out as a dissatisfied minority, "whose values and identity attachments were increasingly at odds with the mainstream liberal consensus" (Ford & Goodwin, 2017, p. 20), quickly evolved into an overwhelming social power. Driven by right-wing populist parties and pushed by the pan-European refugee crisis, this minority eventually turned the tide in their favour by successfully electing the Conservative Party into parliament. The Conservatives, led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, are located at the centre-right of the political spectrum and favour the preservation of traditional cultural and social values (Webb & Norton of Louth, 2019). The social transformation that comes with increasing globalisation and immigration is therefore largely unwanted and rejected by both government and social majority.

Now taking a look across the Atlantic Ocean to the USA, the first term of president Donald Trump has been characterized incidents of white police violence particularly towards African-Americans. As a consequence, multiple civil resistance movements have been founded and rallied prominently in Charlottesville, Ferguson, Dallas and many more. "I can't breathe" – these were the last words of Eric

Garner, Freddie Gray and now George Floyd; only three of the many African-Americans that had been killed by police force, and whose deaths have sparked massive actions of civil unrest (Ehl, 2020). At the core of these protests lies the racial inequality that persists as a major social issue in the USA. As this racial divide is based on cultural and social identity, it provides an ideal breeding ground for populist ideologies that frame the African-American minority as a threat to the traditional American stereotype (Berlet & Sunshine, 2019). These societal beliefs characterized by suspicion and prejudices against African-Americans have been "a primary factor in Donald Trump's electoral success and much of […] his policy agenda rests on deep-rooted racism and white supremacist presumptions in USA institutions and culture" (Bobo, 2017, 86). However, the African-American minority has expressed their discontent with this political and social stigma through acts of civil resistance, by which they attempt to resist the deterioration of race relations and end the ongoing police violence towards them (Atkins, 2019). As they are looking for more equality and social acceptance from the white majority, they have protested to raise awareness to their cause. Their ultimate goal in doing so is to cause a more holistic social change via the contestation of singular social norms in respect to police violence (Black Lives Matter, 2019a). Essentially, this oppressed minority of African-Americans is challenging the dominant, inequal structures kept by a mostly white majority that holds on to ancient perceptions of racial superiority, often expressed through discrimination and violence by white police officers.

In both Europe and the USA, the growth of right-wing populism is founded on fears about cultural identity and social status (Béland, 2020; Macaulay, 2019). These fears are commonly exploited by populist parties, as they wilfully draw an enemy stereotype based on ethnicity or race, which exacerbates the social tensions between majority and minorities, or structures and agents (Macaulay, 2019). In both cases, this fundamental struggle led to civil unrest from the minorities, who felt dissatisfied with the current political and social system. Even though the motives of the challenging minorities are quite different in the cases, they all aim at spawning social change by initiating a shift of fundamental social values, norms and opinions within the respective society.

Scholars have attempted to describe these social conflicts with theoretical concepts: The theory of norm contestation tries to examine how and why norms and values are perceived as appropriate in a society and how these norms may or may not be changed by the influence of individual or collective disobedience (Wiener, 2014b). This can be paired with structuration theory, which investigates the relationship between the encompassing structures that construct social life, and the agency of individuals trying to object and possibly re-construct these structures. Both of these theories can and will be used to analyse the power struggle that exists between the currently dominant structures and the minorities that resist them. By doing so, this thesis operates in the realm of political sociology by taking a micro-sociological approach, thus focussing on the underlying social forces that shape a political system. The objective of this is to contribute to the existing body of research and to understand which factors, influences and conditions play a role in civil protest. In recent times, there have been various outstanding acts of resistance, but the sole focus of this study lies on the cases in the United States, as they are set within the same structures. Analysing the social and political structures for multiple countries and the impact of civil resistance would simply go beyond the scope on this paper.

Eventually, it is attempted to draw conclusions from these case studies and potentially project the findings to other cases. The objective is to assess the impact of civil resistance, which lessons can be learned from success or failure and maybe to even take a tentative look into the future. More

specifically, this thesis tries to analyse the effectiveness of Colin Kaepernick's taking of the knee, as well as the collective protests by the Black Lives Matter movement. Both of these methods of protest are intended to initiate change in the US-American structures and bring awareness to the perceived discrepancy between the dominant white majority and the African-American minority, particularly in cases of police brutality and racism. To examine the cases, the following questions must be asked:

1. **How do minorities resist dominant structures?**
   The strategies of each form of protest will be investigated, using selected conditions and in how far the respective movements fulfil them.
2. **What impact do they have or why do they matter?**
   This thesis hopes to evaluate how effective or ineffective these protests are in moving the societal norms, based upon what the minorities believe the norm should be.

Finally, following the analysis of the two cases, general conclusions can be drawn and evaluated. As civil unrest grew in both USA and Europe, those conclusions from the USA will then be compared to the situations currently observed in Europe. Many of the racial, ethnical and social undertones observed in the United States are reflected in various European countries. Those issues of societal change and the criteria that influence norms to shift can often be used in order to predict what may or may not happen in a different culture. In order to forecast what may happen in the European Union as minorities struggle for power, this analysis can serve as a starting point for those wishing to review the societal effects and struggles of themes such as minority and majority power struggles, individual and group protests, and pushback from a dominant majority that may or may not be correct.

2   Theoretical Framework

In order to examine the relationship between majority and minority, or dominance and resistance, and to understand how social norms shape human behaviour, there needs to be an in-depth understanding of the theoretical concepts that describe these sociological phenomena. After initially discussing the foundations of the Structure-Agency-Debate and Structuration Theory, this chapter will then illustrate the concept of norm contestation.

2.1   The Structure-Agency-Debate

The Structure-Agency-Debate originates in the realm of sociology, where scholars such as Emile Durkheim argue that society is directed by deeply embedded structures that cannot be challenged, so called "social facts" (Durkheim, 1964, p. 10), which have a coercive impact on individuals, eventually allowing them to act only within the limits of these structures. Those constraints placed on individuals then lead to "collective habits [that] find expression in definite forms: legal rules, moral regulations, popular proverbs, social conventions" (Durkheim, 1964, p. 45). The transformation of a habit into laws or norms consolidates the bare existence of them in society and lastly creates patterns of behaviour that are reinforced by certain practices. For instance, the extensive racism found in the United States has been established in society initially through a common habit and is now frequently reinforced by discriminatory and racist behaviour. As Tan (2011) puts it:

> "not only is society "structured" and exerting powerful forces on individuals, its mechanisms (inclusive of rules, sanctions, conventions, obligations, etc.) function in such a way as to sustain its given structure." (p.39).

On the other hand, Max Weber claims that agency, which is the capacity of individuals and groups to act independently from those structures, has the chance to alter the structures by this individual behaviour. Here, "the individual is not a static entity who is inscribed on by powerful social forces, rather, he/she is a dynamic, rational, and motivated actor in any given social context (Tan, 2011, p. 43). According to Giddens, "agency implies power" (Giddens, 1986, p. 9), as agents have the mere capability to decide what they do or do not do, independent of their motives or intentions; the fact that they can make *any* decision, gives them power (Giddens, 1986, p. 9).

This debate has been famously transferred to International Relations theory, where it revolves around the agency of states and the structure of the global system, often equated with globalisation. This approach is frequently used to understand and explain the behaviour of states. According to the structuralist approach here, states are "little more than [...] passive victims of the global structure" (Hobson & Ramesh, 2010, p. 7), therefore leaving them without the opportunity to operate against those superior structures. All actions of states are restricted and steered by the international order. On the other end, the agent-centric approach attributes decisive power to the state which enables it to "conduct policy free of global structural constraint" (Hobson & Ramesh, 2010, p. 7). Here, global structures are merely the by-product of states' actions, but remain weak and inferior to the autonomy of those states. Alexander Wendt, a leading theorist, claims that agency "matters in determining norms, rules and habits that govern the structure in which they operate" (Peterson, 2018, p. 639).

These two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive: social structures might be strong, but they are not set in stone ad infinitum. Agents can, in fact, contribute to the adaptation and change of

social structures, but at the same time their influence is limited. The combination of the two trains of thought into a more holistic framework is called Structuration Theory.

2.2 Structuration Theory

A major advantage of this dual theory is that it is not necessary to choose between either agents or structure, but there can be a compromise between both. Selecting a collective-sum approach makes the process of changing structures not only one of struggle, but one of "competitive cooperation" (Hobson & Ramesh, 2010, p. 9), where agents can accumulate more power by working with the existing forces on all levels, instead of against them.

This synthesis has been pioneered by Anthony Giddens, who developed the 'Structuration Theory' in his work *The Constitution of Society* from 1984. Giddens thoroughly investigates the meaning of agency and structures in the context of social theories and then presents his structuration theory, which rejects the mutual exclusion of both elements and instead suggests an interdependence of both. Thus, any social action of the agents does not only produce societal values, rules and norms (structures), but the action itself is a product of those structures. Essentially, agents choose and evaluate their actions based on their knowledge of societal rules, therein deciding to conform to them or to challenge them. To sum up in the words of Giddens:

> "Structure is not to be equated with constraint, but it is always both constraining and enabling. This, of course, does not prevent [...] social systems from stretching away, in time and space, beyond the control of an individual actors. Nor does it compromise the possibility that actors' own theories of the social systems which the help to constitute and reconstitute in their activities may reify those systems" (Giddens, 1986, p. 25).

This theoretical concept has been continued and extended by other scholars such as Hobson and Ramesh, who argue that "states and globalisation are mutually reflexive and are embedded in, or are co-constitutive of, each other" (2010, p. 8). This means that agents and structures shape each other and that structures are not only limitations but can also display an opportunity for the agents to operate; however, the agents are not completely autonomous either. In this respect, Lane describes both agents and structures as "not dichotomous but co-existing" (Lane, 2001, p. 295). In his works, which is largely based on Giddens' theory, he claims that the reproduction of structures in society can be seen as a cycle, or loop. This is illustrated in the following image, which described the process as a "dualistic, or feedback, relationship between agency and social structure" (Lane, 2001, p. 297).

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Constituted

Manifested

as meaning-laden
rules and resources

as opportunities
and limitations

Produces and
Reproduces

Reflexive
monitoring
of action

Enables and
Constrains

Instantiated

Internalised

via social actions

as meaning-laden
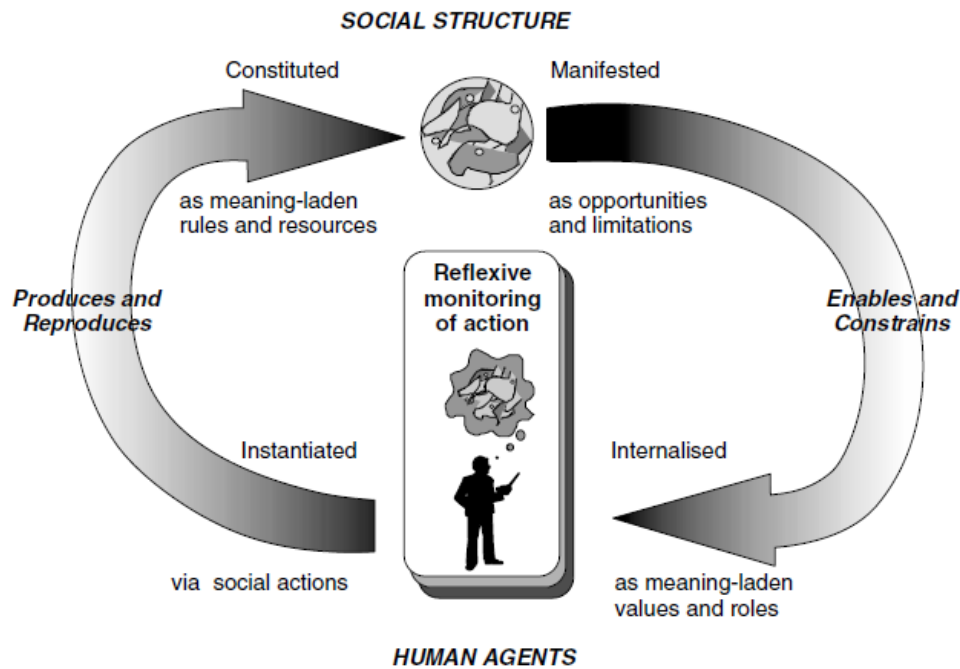values and roles

HUMAN AGENTS

Figure 1 Lane (2001, p.297)

In this figure, the social structure is seen as given, manifested through actions and traditions by human agents over the course of time, and therefore seems impenetrable. Yet, this structure equally constraints and enables the human agents to act by shaping their behaviour through socially accepted values and roles. The human agent uses his knowledge about those values and structures and ponders his social actions carefully (reflexive monitoring) to either align them with the structures, or to deliberately challenge them. As a consequence, these actions can determine if the current structure is reinforced or if it is altered by new values, norms and ideas. If the human agent successfully changes the norms, a new order can be instantiated, and new rules and resources determine the new structure. Lastly, human agents now base their actions on this new system and might reproduces or challenge it further. This cycle can be applied endlessly over time, generations and geographical locations. Through globalization and the advancement of social media and communication technologies, agents are handed new tools to work internationally and to both gather and spread ideologies. As a consequence, structures and norms are increasingly influenced by global social developments and social norms are frequently challenged. This specific process of redefining the social structures by challenging societal values is called *norm contestation*.

2.3   Norm Contestation

The theory of norm contestation is a theoretical framework that has been originally established in the field of International Relations (IR). It has since been developed further into the sociological field and it relies heavily on the existence of structures and agency in society as explained prior. In this case, norm contestation provides a frame with which we can make an effective attempt to examine how minorities contest norms and which impact their contestation has. To do so, it is pivotal to understand the concept of norm contestation.

According to Wiener's so-called *principle of contestedness*, there is a "global agreement that, in principle, the norms, rules and principles of governance are contested *and* that they require regular

contestation in order to work" (Wiener, 2014a, p. 3). Contestation is therefore necessary in order to adjust the prevailing norms to new developments in the global context and make them suitable for the ever-changing demands, opinions and beliefs of citizens. With new technologies, social changes and an unprecedented level of globalization, some norms tend to be outdated quickly and demonstrate a need to be realigned.

However, not every contestation brings about new norms; the result of questioning norms might also be the strengthening and reinforcement of norms (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2013). This concept does not only apply to global governance norms, but can be transferred to any societal norms, as contestation is a social practice. Taking a closer look at social norms, they can be defined as both "routines of behaviour and [...] normatively desirable behaviour" (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2013, p. 4). Therefore, they do not only reflect how people *act* in certain situations, but they also suggest how people *should or should not* act. This means by implication that norms can be positive when they expect people to proactively comply with them, or negative through discourage people to act in a certain way (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2013).

This paper investigates societal norms instead of international treaties. In the global context, norms can be considered to be existing when a majority of states agree to be bound by those norms (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2013, p. 7). Looking through a socio-political lens, social structures are not necessarily written into the law, but they are defined by how the majority of citizens behaves. However, both laws and social norms are regularly contested. Contestation can be enacted in various ways, for example through simple non-compliance where people deviate from the majority's behaviour because they disagree with the norm. According to Deitelhoff and Zimmermann, non-compliance especially gains momentum when more people join in, over a long period of time, and most importantly in the absence of sanctions (2013). Following Panke and Petersohn, this non-compliance eventually leads to the erosion of the norm (Panke & Petersohn, 2011). Non-compliance is, however, not the only way to contest norms: According to Rosert and Schirmbeck, norm erosion can as well be brought about by public discourse that challenges the legitimacy and moral justification of said norm (Rosert & Schirmbeck, 2007). This is expressed through civil resistance, where challengers try to convince people to leave the original social norms behind and adopt a new, supposedly better, one. In effect, "protest can both represent and shift citizens' opinions" (Gillion, 2020, p. 10).

What can be derived from this cycle is that all norms, legally adopted or not, can be and often will be challenged by someone, for example by non-compliance or by initiating a public debate about the norm's right to exist. It must be acknowledged that norms are not necessarily unanimous: to every social norm, there are both challengers as well as supporters that try to establish the rule that they subjectively believe in. This is an important aspect, as norms gain their validity from the shared belief of a community in them, but do not have to apply to a society as a whole (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2013). This means that norms shared by a dominant majority might actually be discriminating another part of society. Essentially, norms are always subjective, as "interpretation is [...] derived from the social practice of enacting meaning that is used in a specific context" (Wiener, 2008, p. 4). Due to different cultural and personal beliefs that constitute social life, norms do not have to be universally accepted. This is consequently the reason why norms are not complied with and challenged by agents who feel that these norms should not be accepted or acted upon. (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2013)

Norm contestation often means more that the mere disapproval of certain norms, as "it critically questions societal rules, regulations and procedures" (Wiener, 2014a, p. 2). Through this critical approach, contesters regularly aim at challenging the status quo as a whole and to induce social change by changing fundamental norms. As Wiener notes, especially fundamental norms such as democracy, equality or human rights are more likely to be contested, as they are rather unspecific and require broader mechanisms such as laws in order to be implemented. Yet, these fundamental norms are highly important for a society, as they are at the core of that society's lifestyle and freedom (Wiener, 2007). This, by implication, means that a change of fundamental norms might bring about a vital change in the fundamental structure of society itself.

At the core of the individual's desire to bring about change lies the critical reflection of norms, where the contesters personally reflect on the appropriateness and legitimacy of the dominant societal rules (Rigby, Woulfin, & März, 2016). This principle of reflection aligns with the philosophy of Giddens, as his Structuration Theory emphasizes the duality of norms (Lane, 2001): On the one hand, norms structure the societal life; on the other hand, norms themselves are socially constructed. This mutual interdependence strongly resembles the concept of social structure previously outlined by Lane (2001) and Wiener (2007): According to their findings, the consequence of agents challenging the social norms can be the change of the overarching social structure, which then produces renewed social norms that can be challenged again.

As aforementioned, norm contestation is habitually initiated by those disadvantaged by them, and it is "a sole indicator of political discontent" (Gillion, 2020, p. 6). This implies that there is usually a strong opposition that profits from certain norms and that does not want anything to change. Therefore, contesting the norms might cause exclusion from this group, which is often the majority, and other social repercussions (Wiener, 2014b, p. 18). For this reason, some people choose to remain silent; however, this thesis concentrates on those agents that did not remain silent. Those individual and collective actors are openly objecting to specific social structures through civil resistance acts, which will be further investigated in the following section.

2.4   The Sociology of Protest

Civil resistance, or protesting, is a "social practice [that] entails objection to specific issues that matter to people" (Wiener, 2014a, p. 3) and the act of protesting is making these concerns visible and salient to the wider public (Gillion, 2020). In order to comprehend this social practice, a sociological lens must be applied to look at these protest movements. Sociology can be defined as "the systematic study of the development, structure, interaction, and collective behaviour of organized groups of human beings" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.); or "a social science that studies human societies, their interactions, and the processes that preserve and change them" (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 2019). Essentially, sociology looks at both groups and individuals and how they are organized, what they want, how they claim social power within the society and what impact they have.

In this context, the purpose of protesting is the

> "engagement in intentional actions that disrupt oppressive hegemonic systems by challenging a clearly defined opposition while simultaneously empowering individuals and groups disadvantaged by inequitable arrangements" (Cooper, Macaulay, & Rodriguez, 2017, 4-5).

This means that different social groups and individuals seek to challenge a dominant power system and ideally change the presumably illegitimate structures that it entails. However, this process is highly complex as agents make use of diverse sets of methods, channels and strategies in order to reach their objectives. The sociological approach helps to shed light on the construction and development of agents, their intentions and their methods; ultimately, this thesis is about the sociological relationship between dominance and resistance, or between structures and agents.

More specifically, dominance and resistance can be found in both the public discourse and everyday life as well as in institutions and their formal practices. Looking at both spheres is vital, as they cover different grounds:

> "The purpose of public discourse is to search for right answers to public questions, so that the state and individuals may guide their actions as much as possible in conformity with justice and the common good of the people. These 'ideals' of public discourse seek to guide and to preserve that common good of the people which coordinates every citizen's private interests on the basis of a shared public community. Private actions against the public good violate justice, and may be restrained or forbidden." (Sellers, 2003, p. 63)

According to this, the outcome of public discourse is a commonly accepted code of behaviour that serves the interests of the citizens; and which ought to be (legally) binding to them and to the government. Public discourse is about abstract topics such as equality, appropriateness and fairness of behavioural patterns; and it is supposed to define what kind of behaviour is socially acceptable and which is not. These results radiate eventually into public institutions, as "institutions' power and politics are frequently exercised through the discourse of their members" (Mayr, 2008, p. 1). As structures are established in institutions, the institutions in turn guide the behaviour of their members.

Both public discourse and institutions are prone to criticism, or "moral protest" as Jasper (2008) calls it. By objecting established practices, protesters point to an alternative that aligns better with their own cultural and moral viewpoint, while "inaction is a validation of the status quo" (Gillion, 2020, p. 6). This implies that protesters aim at encouraging individuals to participate in the protest, or to cast their support at the ballot box (Gillion, 2020). Essentially, they try to thereby replace the current behavioural patterns with new, supposedly improved, norms that they find more appropriate. In this case study, these practices can be found both in public discourse as well as in institutions.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

In order to answer the research questions, a case study design was chosen. A case study is a qualitative research design and can be defined as "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of units" (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). By focussing on one specific case only, in-depth data can be gathered that eventually might be transferable to other cases. The case study at hand will concentrate on analysing and understanding the mechanisms of norm contestation in the field of systemic racism in the United States, with the purpose of possibly transferring this knowledge to other Western societies that show similar social developments. As this paper investigates the impact of civil resistance on the social structure, it will thoroughly look at the agents of civil resistance and their impact on the norms that shape the social structure. To gather even more specific data, two particular cases have been chosen: Colin Kaepernick taking a knee in 2016, and the social movement Black Lives Matter. More precisely, it is attempted to determine the prevalence of social norms and structures and under what circumstances they can be altered within a certain time frame. Looking at the extensive African-American history in the USA and considering the scope of this paper, only the most recent developments that occurred roughly in the last decade can be examined. More precisely, the focus lies on the time after the election of Barack Obama as president in 2008 up until today.

3.2 Data collection

In this case study, the researcher keeps an observing role with no opportunity of influencing the case itself. Consequently, this case study will be conducted by desk research, while practical methods such as surveys or interviews will not be employed here. It is advantageous to use the available secondary resources for this analysis, and it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the body of research on this specific issue.

3.3 Justification

The case study design described above has been chosen because of its descriptive and observational function. The goal is not necessarily to determine a cause-and-effect relationship, but rather to observe and describe certain characteristics, values and behaviours. The objective is to outline a momentary glimpse of the prevailing social structures in a society. The case study design also allows an in-depth examination of the subject and consequently provides a very detailed insight and explanation about the mechanisms at work. Regardless, one needs to keep in mind that case studies have a significant disadvantage: they can only partly be projected to other cases. Even though there might be similarities in the development of Western societies, the analysis and the eventual outcome cannot be automatically assumed for other countries or societies, as their historical, social and economic characteristics might vary. The results from this case study are uniquely determined by the case and are not easily applicable to other cases; as a result, it is critical to be careful when comparing cases, because the external validity of this case study remains fairly low.

The case study only captures a brief moment of time; however, the social structures in the USA are a product of their history. Usually, when looking at longer periods of time, researchers can find and identify certain patterns and cycles. In these longitudinal studies the units are observed over an extended period of time in order to analyse the long-term development and possibly recurring patterns (Salkind, 2010). By including the factor time, researchers can more effectively draw conclusion on a possible cause-and-effect relationship between the variables (Caruana, Roman,

Hernández-Sánchez, & Solli, 2015). Therefore, this case study can be understood as one segment of a more comprehensive timeline, but analysing the bigger picture would go beyond the scope of this paper. Both case study and longitudinal designs are observational: the researcher does not influence the independent variable, but merely looks at the units from an outside perspective (Caruana et al., 2015). Therefore, any other political, economic or social factors affecting the study cannot be controlled either and must be accepted and acknowledged as such.

The theory of Structures and Agency is essentially applicable to any society in any country. As globalisation and other trends intensify, societies tend to adapt to social, economic and political changes; and some societies display similar developments over time. Recently, in both the USA and Europe, right-wing populism and conservative ideology has gathered increased media attention, majorly resulting from conflicts between racially or ethnically defined majorities and minorities. In Europe, this can be connected to the recent refugee discussion and increasing immigration from southern and eastern European countries (Mudde, 2016). As a result, xenophobic and anti-immigrant feelings have been brought to the surface and evolved into a pressing political and social issue in countries such as Germany, France, Great Britain, Hungary and Italy (Mudde, 2016). As opposed to this, such social structures are not new in the United States. Coming from a history of segregation, the racial divide is already strongly manifested in politics, economy and society; and it is frequently used to push political agendas (Greven, 2016).

The biggest difference between the USA and European countries is the social standing and the objective of the respective minority: In the USA, civil resistance is based on African-American communities that are increasingly discontent with the way they are treated by law enforcement official and society itself. They aim to replace this perceived system of institutionalized racism with more equal social structures. In Europe, however, the minority is constituted by those on the far right aiming at changing the political course, especially in regard to immigration policy, by supporting right-wing populist parties. In an effort to make their anti-immigration feelings more socially acceptable, the minority desires restrictions to uphold a more homogenous society.

3.4   Limitations

This study is narrowed down to two very specific cases, which provides the foundation of more general hypotheses; however, in order to test these hypotheses and confirm their validity, a more comprehensive study is needed. Especially with regard to the distinct social, economic and political infrastructure of the countries under investigation, a comparison between their development is always tentative and requires more research to substantiate the findings. This applies for the comparison of USA and Europe as well as for European countries among themselves. Moreover, this research only grasps a short timeframe. As the social structures are always a product of history, their evolution over time cannot be ignored. Quite often, the conditions and predispositions for the rise of populism are already set up in the historical construction of that society.

Regarding the content, the comparison between racially and ethnically defined conflicts is not always unequivocal. Even though an underlying mentality of 'Us versus Them' for all cases is assumed, the fine mechanisms of this social phenomenon might differ. As this paper cannot illustrate all social structures in such detail, the similarity and comparability of cases must be assumed based on the underlying conceptions of majority and minority identities.

On a more practical note, a substantial lack of reliable data on police violence in the USA was observed, as there is no federal institution that comprehensively registers incidents of police crime. Additionally, police departments are not legally required to report their incidents. Therefore, all statistics are set up and researched privately by organisations or, in this case, newspapers. As a result, the numbers of incidents are often similar, but they are not identical, which can be attributed to diverging methods of gathering and interpreting the barely available data. Evidently, these numbers must be used cautiously and can only be used as indices for the actual situation of police violence.

3.5   Operationalization

As described, this case study looks at recent civil resistance movements in the United States and at how minorities try to challenge dominant social structures through norm contestation. To this end, Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013) have identified three important conditions for norm contestation to be successful.

> "Norm stability is eroding if non-compliance is no longer described as non-compliance and becomes widespread. Both is most likely to happen the more contestation of a norm begins to target its validity, i.e. the inter-subjectiveness of its normative obligation instead of its application." (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2013, 4f)

> "Such erosion is most likely to set in when contestation radicalizes by (1) turning from application to validity itself (questioning the "righteousness" of the obligatory claims as such) and by (2) becoming constant (allowing no more temporal stabilizations of the norm)" (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2013, p. 5)

In short, civil resistance must firstly be (1) **contested,** in the sense of targeting the legitimacy of a social norm. Secondly, civil resistance must be (2) **widespread** and lastly, it must be (3) **constant**, meaning that people have to reject the application of a certain social norm over a long period of time. The first condition, contestation, reflects the depth of resistance, as it shows how profoundly it targets the core of a certain social norm. Consistency and spread both reflect the breadth of a resistance movement.

Evidently, these conditions are not exhaustive, as there are various other methods that could be applied here to examine the cases at hand. However, using the conditions by Deitelhoff and Zimmermann was identified as quite effective for this purpose: As the conditions are fairly simple, they allow for the analysis to be clear and to remain within the scope of this paper. Additionally, they can be applied to other societies unaltered. Thus, to understand how norm contestation works in practice, it will be observed how agents try to fulfil those conditions and what impact on social norms and structures their actions have.

4 Case Study: Modern civil resistance movements in the United States

As Peterson (2018) suggests, "most debates [...] boil down to differing views about whether outcomes result more from the agency [...] or the structure of the [...] system" (Peterson, 2018, p. 637). In an attempt to apply the theoretical framework of agents versus structures to the case, the first step is looking at the structures: what are the currently dominant social structures, and how are the established? As the civil resistance movements under investigation are targeting police violence, this approach will eventually be narrowed down the focus on police structures. Then, both the individual and the collective approach of civil resistance will be illuminated: who are the agents and how they work? In this context, the selected cases will be introduced.

4.1 Structures

In International Relations theory, the global structures are a combination of economic, social and cultures factors and interconnections. In sociology, these structures are set on a much smaller scale, but still on the macro-level. Structures determine the parameters in which a society works, and they are created by public discourse over time. Essentially, they prescribe which behaviour is acceptable and which is not. These patterns are eventually internalized by citizens, and then permeate the institutions through their employees. The practices of those institutions then again shape the public life of citizens and the circle is perpetuated. The process of forming social structures is ever-continuing and is shaped over centuries by historical, cultural, economic and political developments. For this case study, it is fundamental to understand how the current structures in the United States came into existence and how they were solidified or modified over time.

At the beginning of the 17th century, white Americans brought people with African ancestry to the USA in order to deliberately enslave them based on their skin colour (Fields, 1990). During this time, slaves were categorically stripped of their human rights, as they were treated like mere goods; violence and inhumane living conditions were typical. These practices were abolished in 1865 after a bloody American civil war (Fields, 1990), but African-Americans still faced further discrimination through post-slavery systems such as the 'Jim Crow Laws' and the concept of 'separate but equal', where public school, transportation or restaurants were physically separated for Whites and African-Americans (Fields, 1990). Legal advances have been made since to ensure the equality of rights for everyone. However, in the study of Massey and Denton (2003), the authors observed that racism at that time had already been deeply embedded due to this long-standing practice of inequality, and has been institutionalized until today. Institutional racism can be described as the systemic disadvantage and discrimination of African-Americans in in both public and private fields such as housing, education, employment, incomes, health care, and criminal justice (Bailey et al., 2017). Or as Jones puts it:

> "These effects are suffused throughout the culture via institutional structures, ideological beliefs, and personal everyday actions of people in the culture, and these effects are passed on from generations to generations" (1997, p. 472).

Even though legal and social efforts were made to improve the situation, "notions of racism and white supremacy remain powerful elements of American culture" (Bobo, 2017, 1). Feagin (2010) even argues that the oppression of non-whites has been supported and established by various political figures in the past, including the very authors of the U.S. Constitution: a document that, he believes, was specifically written to maintain the existing racial order and to ensure white people's wealth and prosperity (Feagin, 2010).

Looking at modern day times, some progress can, however, be spotted: legislation has been passed which formerly bans racial discrimination and makes racially motivated crimes legally prosecutable. In theory, this absence of arbitrariness and illegality of racial violence represents a significant shift towards equality. The most recent phase of progress can undoubtedly be assigned to the election of Barack Obama in 2008, the first African-American president of the United States. As many scholars argue, his election sent a strong signal towards equality and for a moment, it looked like the racial divide could be overcome permanently. Stout and Le (2012), for example, found that even though the late 2000s were characterized by economic regression and hardship, the election of Obama "represents the destruction of the proverbial glass ceiling" (Stout & Le, 2012, p. 1339) that many African-Americans perceive is held up by systemic racism. By doing so, Obama became a role model for those that had lost faith in the American system. Goldman and Mutz added that his successful campaigning even reduced racial prejudices among the white majority and generally improved white attitudes towards African-Americans; they call this the '"Obama Effect" (2014, p. 6).

At the same time though, Obamas election did not only bring about hope and progression. Regardless of the newfound optimism among African-Americans, their chances of economic and social success were still far from equal. An alarming development was observed by Kaiser, Drury, Spalding, Cheryan, & O'Brien, 2009): with the election of Obama, many citizens believed that full racial equality was now established and that further affirmative actions towards desegregation were not necessary anymore. Therefore, the support for measures of social justice declined, which slowed down real progress towards equality significantly. Moreover, there was not only a positive 'Obama Effect': during his campaign, racially motivated hate crimes and right-wing activism grew in numbers (Beirich & Schlatter, 2014) as Obama's successful election "infuriated" (2014, p. 80) many members of the white majority. In both politics and civil society, white individuals felt threatened by having an African-American man in the highest national office (Beirich & Schlatter, 2014). Robinson (2017) explains this as follows:

> "dominant-group attitudes towards other racial groups are shaped by a sense of superiority over racial others and by a desire to defend dominant-group interests against threats, whether real or perceived" (Robinson, 2017, p. 558).

Based on this ideology, supremacist groups emerged at alarming rates: A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019) shows that there has been an increase of hate groups by 30% since 2015; mounting to a record high of 1020 hate groups in 2018. A majority of these groups can be classified as radical right, motivated by "a deep fear of demographic change" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019, p. 9). These groups resist progressive change and have engaged in political activism themselves to enforce their racially motivated agenda and to sustain the social structure as they know it (Gillion, 2020). Beirich and Schlatter even go so far as to say that white supremacists would even support an African-American male as president, as they hope this "would shock white America […] and perhaps set of a race war that […] would ultimately end in Aryan victory" (2014, p. 83).

Evidently, whilst the election of Obama heralded in a new self-understanding for oppressed African-Americans, a white backlash boiled under the surface only to culminate in the election of Donald Trump in 2016. At this point, the racial struggle had intensified immensely and the 'Obama Effect' has been reversed: African-Americans feel more powerless than ever, as the racial divide is deepening rapidly. At the same time, white supremacists feel encouraged in their beliefs, as they are reassured

in their dominant position and they "make America great again" (Eddington, 2018, p. 2); implying that there has been an aberration that needed to be corrected by re-establishing white dominance. This inherently racist worldview held by a largely white majority is frequently mirrored in both public and private social structures. To comprehend how broadly entrenched racism really is in existing social structures, different sets of structures must be looked at. By assessing smaller components of structure, sub-sets can be identified which are deeply affected by systemic racism. However, due to the scope of this paper, the focus needs to be narrowed down even more.

To give a brief idea of how such a framework could look like, structures are here separated into three rather general layers: treatment, opportunity and human rights. Treatment and opportunity are both connected to institutions such as the police, courts, schools, colleges or companies. This means that African-Americans often face institutional discrimination in legal, educational and professional matters. On a more private level, African-American are confronted with racism through personal bullying or harassment, displaying a strong social gradient. This framework, substantiated with examples for each layer, is presented in the figure below:
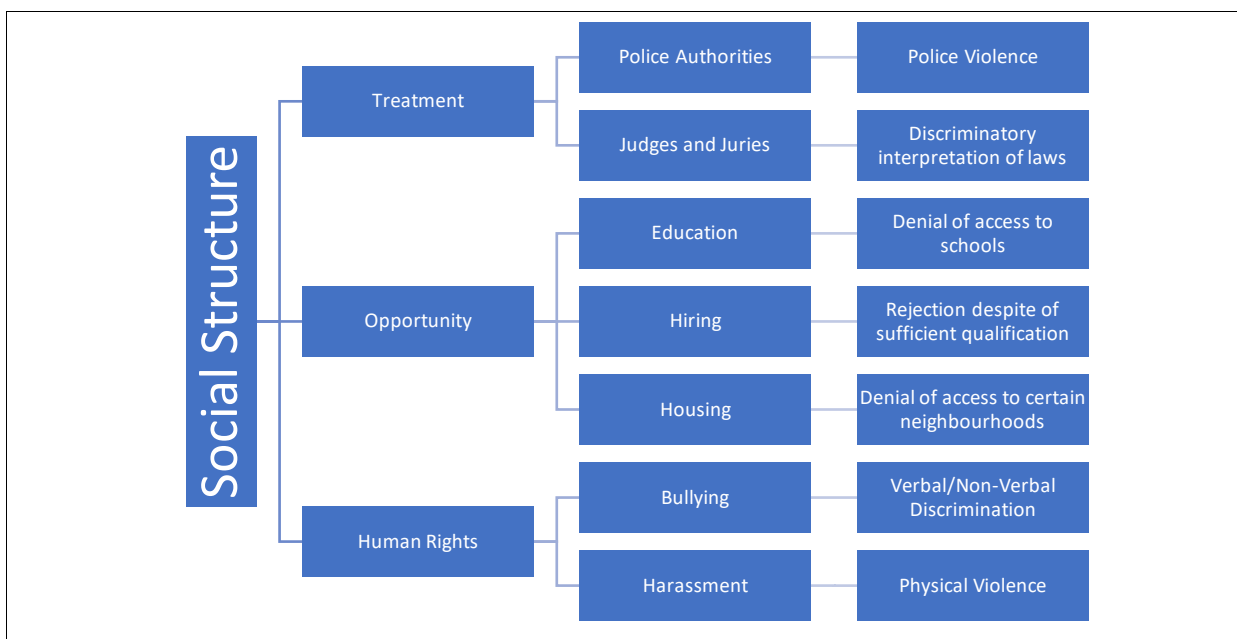

Figure 2 Social Structures (Own Illustration)

As early as 1881, Frederick Douglass very aptly portrays this very holistic framework of systemic racism as experienced by the African-American individual:

> "In nearly every department of American life they are confronted by this insidious influence. It fills the air. It meets them at the workshop and factory, when they apply for work. It meets them at the church, at the hotel, at the ballot-box, and worst of all, it meets them in the jury-box. [...] The workshop denies him work, and the inn denies him shelter; the ballot-box a fair vote, and the jury-box a fair trial. [...] He may not now be bought and sold like a beast in the market, but he is the trammeled victim of a prejudice, well calculated to repress his manly ambition, paralyze his energies, and make him a dejected and spiritless man, if not a sullen enemy to society." (Douglass & Virginia, 1995, p. 568).

Even though this description has been written 138 year ago, many of its aspects are still accurate today. For instance, Massey and Denton conducted a study on the housing situation of African-

Americans in the United States. In their book from 1993, they have identified that residential segregation, more specifically the existence of black ghettos, has been deliberately manufactured by Whites in order to separate themselves from African-Americans, who were consequently forced to live in poor housing conditions in often low-income and high-criminal zones (Massey & Denton, 2003). Moreover, they recognize that the life in ghettos often occurs as a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty, unemployment, drugs, crime, the lack of education, social and economic failure and white prejudice and condemnation (Massey & Denton, 2003). The longstanding tradition of having, for example, separate schools that are often underfinanced in black living areas and therefore cannot provide the same quality of education, leads to high obstacles for African-Americans to receive higher education (Bankston & Caldas, 1996; Massey & Denton, 2003). Being rejected from college programs, many African-Americans have to opt for low-income jobs or remain in unemployment, resulting in a dangerous situation of financial insecurity that might lead to the abuse of drugs or the engagement in criminal activities (Massey & Denton, 2003). This economic instability is often condemned by the rest of society, creating a massive social divide along the racial lines (Rankin & Quane, 2000). This divide is clearly visible when, for example, looking at poverty statistics of the U.S. Census Bureau: According to their data, 21.2 % of African-American families in the United States in 2017 suffer from poverty, compared to only 8.7 % of white, non-Hispanic families in the same year (Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar, 2018, p. 14).

These issues of unemployment, poverty and social stigmatization in connection with drugs and crime are often generalized in the wider society and create a universal prejudice against all African-Americans, no matter their actual living situation. In other words, the common way of behaviour is to mistrust and degrade African-Americans. This prejudice is the outcome of a public discourse led by a white majority for centuries, which established a socially acceptable behavioural pattern of discriminating a perceived minority. This pattern then radiates habitually from society into public institutions through their staff by adopting their values and norms over time. By being established in both the public discourse as well as institutions, racial discrimination has become systemic. Even though systemic racism is so widespread, this paper can only elaborate on one sub-set, which in this case are police structures.

4.1.1 Focus: Police Structures

In the USA, most contemporary civil resistance has emerged as a reaction to police violence. The police is the extended arm of the government and as such, officers are vested with the authority to employ physical force in order to prevent crime and civil disorder (Police Foundation, 1996). However, this use of force has been increasingly pushed into the public discourse by civil resistance movements, as they feel targeted and threatened by an underlying racial prejudice.

Looking at national crime statistics, a study conducted by Edwards, Esposito and Lee in 2018 assessed the risk of police-involved death based on race/ethnicity and place from 2012-2018. The results of their study are unambiguous: the risk of being killed by the police lies between 1.9 and 2.4 deaths per 100.000 per year for African-American men. The equivalent number for white men is only between 0.6 and 0.7 (Edwards, Esposito, & Lee, 2018). Apparently, men with a foreign descent indeed seem to be more likely to be suspected and eventually killed by police officers in the United States. Looking back to the very beginning of policing, it becomes evident that police violence is a manifestation of the racial conflict that goes back several hundred years. As soon as the first Africans were brought to North America to serve as slaves, the wealthy white elite established patrols in order to keep control

over their slaves (Robinson, 2017). Because of their perceived superiority, the patrols were often extremely brutal towards African-Americans, which was completely legal at the time. This initial phase of inequality eventually resulted in the Civil War and was then followed by a period of progress, in which the slave trade was abolished and African-Americans for the first time legally gained freedom. However, it did not take long before race relations worsened again: the Jim Crow laws were implemented, effectively separating Whites and African-Americans in public spheres whilst denying them equal human rights (Nodjimbadem, 2017). These laws were understood as a "way of life" (Robinson, 2017, p. 557) and successfully executed with the help of the police-like patrols. (Robinson, 2017)

As the cities grew bigger and population density rose, first modern police forces were established to keep the (racial) order and the respective legislation was passed by the white-only government. Lawmakers as well as police officers still held deep prejudices from the Jim Crow era against African-Americans and continued to see them as a threat to their social, economic and political status. (Nodjimbadem, 2017) African-Americans were consequently forced to live in poverty, unemployment, poor housing and lack of perspective – a set of circumstances that frequently led to their involvement in crimes and the increasing concentration of African-American population in so-called ghettos. In those ghettos, African-Americans and police officers were often confronted with each other, resulting in ever growing mutual mistrust and detestation between the two groups (Massey & Denton, 2003). At this point, African-Americans were "historically stereotyped as an undesirable group" (Robinson, 2017, p. 555) and racism had become structural in virtually every part of life.

Fast-forwarding to today, police structures are often still inherently racist and build on this structural predisposition for suspicion and mistrust. According to various databases, the rates for African-Americans dying by police use are far higher than for white men. For example, in 2015 there were 1.146 people killed by police; out of them, 7.69 per million were African-American and only 2.95 per million were white (The Guardian, n.d.). This is even more shocking when considering that African-Americans only make up roughly 13% of the US population (Mapping Police Violence, n.d.a). Additionally, when looking at the trial results for white officers involved in those fatal shootings of African-American men, it becomes evident that racist practices are still quietly accepted, as punishment is often absent: According to mappingpoliceviolence.org, out of 104 cases in 2015 of police officers fatally killing an unarmed African-American person, only 13 of the officers were charged with a crime. Out of those, only 4 cases resulted in convictions, most of them being minor jail time with the longest sentence being 4 years (Mapping Police Violence, n.d.b). This suggests that racism is embedded in police as well as judicial structures, preserving institutional racism:

> "Cultures reproduces itself. Managers in the police organization tend to hire people like themselves, who see the world like they do. The organization subsequently has little effect: its members, through the organizational experiences, reproduce their already existing cultural worldview" (Crank, 2004, p. 26)

Summarizing, Robinson, 2017) argues that "policing tactics are a reflection of society and are an attempt to control what is perceived as a threat to the majority, and that is currently [...] Black men in particular" (p.559). Policing is here described as an instrument of social control, much like it was employed by white elites throughout history. As Feagin (2010) puts it:

> "Life under a system of racism involves an ongoing struggle between racially defined human communities—one seeking to preserve its unjustly derived status and privileges and the other seeking to resist or overthrow its continuing oppression." (Feagin, 2010, p. 13)

Because of these practices based on individual cultural views, the structural racism in public institutions like the police is perpetuated. Evidently, there is an ongoing struggle between a dominant majority and a challenging minority, looking to alter this societal structure as according to their own ideology of right and wrong. Therefore, the next section concentrates on illustrating this minority and its agents.

4.2 Agency

According to Giddens' Structuration Theory, human agents have internalized certain social structures through cultural inheritance. However, through reflexive thinking and monitoring of those cultural and social practices, agents can deliberately decide to either reproduce or contest them, ideally resulting in new social structures. Thus, agents are those who drive social change. This case study looks at the micro-level of society, or at the individual and collective agents that decide to contest social norms. Self-evidently, this examination must also include the opposition, represented by those agents who want to reproduce existing social norms.

Agency can have differing degrees: it can often be found in individuals that are socially powerful, for example through their popularity or wealth, which allows them to work alone. They think for themselves and follow their personal agenda and beliefs (Cole, 2019), but they also have to face the risks of media backlash and personal or career consequences all by themselves. Groups, by contrast, consist of mostly non-famous agents that must work together for a collective agenda in order to generate enough social power. Even though groups often need to agree on compromises, it is true that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Groups stand together as one when taking actions for their cause; they celebrate their victories together and absorb all setbacks together. This solidarity is an important reason why people work as a team, and it puts less responsibility on each individual in the group, lowering the threshold of joining. In the following chapter, the differences in individual and collective civil resistance will be examined and then specified for the exemplary cases.

4.2.1 Focus: Individual Civil Resistance

The racial struggle in the USA is not a new phenomenon, and thus there has always been resistance. Protest movements were often spearheaded by individuals, especially by prominent forerunners such as Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and, most recently, Barack Obama. These public figures encourage others to follow their lead and inspire change on a broader scale (Ganz, 2008; Morris & Staggenborg, 2006). However, not only political actors are involved in civil resistance. Especially in spheres outside the political world, protest does not only draw attention but in many cases causes controversy. One of these unusual yet powerful setting are sports.

Sports play a major role in the average American everyday life. Domestic sports and team sports such as football, basketball, boxing and track attract large audiences and the associated business involves billions of dollars. In the United States alone, the Superbowl 2019 had 98.2 million viewers, making it one of the most watched sports event on the globe (Statista, 2019). As Sorek and White (2016) noticed, especially football maintains an outstanding role in American life (Sorek & White, 2016): The contact sport is extremely popular in movies and literature, it enjoys a traditional value and attracts a fanbase from diverse backgrounds and social classes (Sorek & White, 2016). Along with basketball and

track, football is not only extremely successful, but it is also characterized by an overrepresentation of African-Americans (Wiggins, 2014). According to the 2019 NFL Racial and Gender Report Card, released by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) at the University of Central Florida, 70.1% of players in the 2019 NFL season were non-whites, with 58.9% of all players being African-American (Lapchick, 2019). At the same time, there were only two non-white owners of NFL teams: one Pakistani-born man and one Asian American woman. Out of all 32 teams in the NFL, one head coach was Latino and only three were African-Americans, which marks a drop from 21.9% in 2018 to just 9.4% in 2019 (Lapchick, 2019, p. 9). It appears controversial that those African-Americans, who crucially form the face of this sport, are simultaneously denied higher positions and often exposed to racism on an everyday basis in sport and in personal life alike.

This is built on a historic foundation: In 1890, the 'separate but equal' policy was established in sports facilities (and everyday life), which allowed for the majority of African-Americans to be legally excluded from sports events (Harris, 1999). In baseball, African-Americans were commonly forced to play in so-called Negro Leagues (Harris, 1999) for significantly less salary and often under poor conditions (Wiggins, 2014). Later on, professional football slowly accepted more African-American players, but "they were accepted on the field only" (Harris, 1999, p. 166). Despite their athletic value, African-American players were often denied social interaction, adequate facilities and equal payment (Harris, 1999). Until today, scholars have noticed this discrepancy: African-Americans are often overrepresented in sports such as basketball and football, but key positions are traditionally staffed by whites: "Although realising success by […] their outstanding physical talents and work ethic, all of them had to depend on white coaches, managers and benefactors […]" (Singer, 2005; Wiggins, 2014, p. 184).

Even though the discrimination in sports was manifold, resistance and activism for improvement remained low at first. This can be accounted to one significant factor: African-American athletes feared to spark a backlash with the predominantly white fans and managers and consequently forfeit their popularity and chances of success (Wiggins, 2014). As Kilcline (2017) recognizes, sports are usually supposed to be "apolitical in nature and […] not […] a suitable setting for the expression of political opinions" (2017, p. 158). Therefore, the consequences were often harsh: suspension and complete removal from the team was a common reaction to openly speaking up against discrimination (Harris, 1999). Therefore, especially upcoming athletes would take "neutral positions on racial issues so as not to jeopardise their careers in sport" (Wiggins, 2014, p. 193). Throughout history, only few African-American athletes have stood up and spoken out for their fellows both on and off the field. Some of these actions have attracted great attention due to the success and popularity of the athletes involved; names such as Tommie Smith, John Carlos and Muhammad Ali are now inevitably connected with civil resistance. The most recently addition to this group is undoubtedly Colin Kaepernick.

4.2.2 Taking a knee

On August 14th 2016, the quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers decided to not stand while the national anthem was played before a game, but instead take a knee in order to protest the ongoing racial discrimination in the country (Wyche, 2016). This taking of the knee sparked a nationwide scandal, as many perceived his action as disrespectful towards the American flag and the army veterans that were honoured at the game that day. Later, Kaepernick stated that he is "not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of colour"

(Wyche, 2016); making it clear that his protest was directed specifically towards the issue of police violence.

Kaepernick separated from his football team and was not signed by another team since. On a more personal note, he was insulted by president Trump: "Get that son of a b*tch off the field right now. Out! He's fired. He's fired!" (Graham, 2017), leading to social condemnation by Trumps supporters. Evidently, the career-ending consequences that African-American athletes had feared throughout history still apply today and racial activism in sports is still rigorously punished by society and sport organizations. Even though Kaepernick is nowadays backed up by actors, musicians and fellow athletes, his personal and professional suffrage from his act of resistance remains tremendous as he remains a free agent ever since.

4.2.3   Focus: Social movements

Social movements are groups of individuals that take action with the objective to "empower oppressed populations to mount effective challenges and resist the more powerful and advantaged elites" (Glasberg & Shannon, 2011, p. 150). Commonly, most of the group members are part of an oppressed minority and their ultimate goal is to induce political and/or social change (Glasberg & Shannon, 2011; Zald & McCarthy, 2003). To reach their goals, social movements can draw on numerous methods and strategies such as campaigns, petitions, boycotts, protest marches and demonstrations (International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2019). By using those tactics, groups can attract the attention of political elites, reach broad media coverage to advocate for their cause and potentially recruit more sympathizers. According to Ritter, civil resistance "has had a tremendous impact on the world, [...] allowing people to successfully claim their rights" (Ritter, 2015, p. 469).

Public support is the foundation of collective action, as the chances of success become higher with more participants that advocate for it. A key feature to success is therefore mobilization (Obar, Zube, & Lampe, 2011). Through mobilization methods, actors within the resisting group create social relationship with other individuals, attempting to bring them together and to collectively work for their cause. Today, the most promising tool for mobilization is social media. Research by Obar, Zube and Lampe (2011) found that almost all bigger advocacy groups use platforms such as Facebook or Twitter to communicate with citizens, volunteers and the general public in order to extent their reach. These new instruments allow modern social movements to grow faster and to reach like-minded people around the globe.

4.2.4   Black Lives Matter

One of the most prominent examples for such a modern social movement is Black Lives Matter (BLM). The US-based movement was founded in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi as a reaction to the acquittal of George Zimmermann, a white male who shot the unarmed African-American teenager Trayvon Martin on February 26th, 2012 (Black Lives Matter, 2019b; Dahl, 2013). According to the BLM website, their main objective is to substantially change the existing institutional discrimination, in this case embodied through police violence, against African-Americans that are "systematically targeted for demise" (Black Lives Matter, 2019a). The movement's fast growth rates can be attributed to their use of Social Media: the high speed and broad reach of today's platforms such as Twitter and Facebook helped to ignite a nationwide sentiment of activism. According to Anderson et al., the hashtag *#BlackLivesMatter* has become a symbol for African-American resistance and has been used nearly 30 million times on Twitter, which amounts to about 17,000 uses per day

(Anderson, Toor, Rainie, & Smith, 2018). Black Lives Matter has since then organised numerous demonstrations all over the United States, and they continue advocating for their cause in civil society and politics alike.

4.3   Making Claims

Individuals and groups employ different methods and strategies in order to contest social norms. Social norms only work if the majority of people believe in their legitimacy and conforms with them. If there is widespread loyalty and compliance to these norms and behaviours, they are perpetuated. Civil resistance movements attempt to break this cycle "by mobilising the population to withdraw that consent" (Randle, 1994, p. 9). To that end, both individual and collective agents need to make claims, which is the "conscious articulation of political demands in the public sphere" (Lindekilde, 2013). Unlike influencing the political landscape by voting every couple of years, agents use claims in order to re-adjust the political course outside of voting periods and it is often related to short-term developments and events. Claim-making consists of two parts: the first is the actual claim, namely a specifically formulated political demand; the second is the making, which entails the transmission of the claims to the public or rather the addressees (Lindekilde, 2013). In this case, there are multiple addressees that are expected to react to the claims: the government (by passing legislation according to the demands); the police authorities (by altering their work-related behaviour concerning African-Americans); the public (by altering their personal views and behaviour towards African-Americans). Tilly has taken this idea further into the realm of social movements and finds:

> "A movement [...] involves mutual claim-making between challengers and powerholders. The claim-making [...] often engages third parties: other powerholders, repressive forces, rivals, allies, citizens at large. [...] Although movement activists sometimes take direct action against authorities, rivals, or opponents, in general social movements center indirect forms of action: actions that display will and capacity, but would not in themselves accomplish the objectives on behalf of which they make claims. Social movements call instead for powerholders take the crucial actions [...]; they organize around the demand that powerholders recognize, protect, endorse, forward, even impose a given program." (Tilly, 1993-1994).

As both Tilly and Lindekilde have noted, social movements need to bring their claims into public consciousness through actions. Traditionally, these actions take place outside of formal procedures and elections (Lindekilde, 2013). According to Randle (1994), there are different kinds of actions: agents can use protest and persuasion, such as demonstrations and petitions. Additionally, they can use social, economic and political non-cooperation, for example through boycotts or strikes. Lastly, non-violent intervention is expressed through sit-ins or occupations. (Randle, 1994, 9 ff)

All of these methods, however, generate public attention and seek to recruit supporters. Public attention is not only crucial for social movements, but also for the singular agent. The taking of the knee by Kaepernick was a rather symbolic and silent act and his claims consequently remained unprecise. He did not formulate one specific political demand, but his action nevertheless reached an immense audience through live television transmission, social media and extensive reporting on it, therefore generating a massive public discourse on the general issue. Compared to that, the BLM social movement has defined more explicit goals which need to be focused on, such as police brutality, a criminal justice reform, environmental conditions and common sense gun laws (Black Lives Matter, 2019c). These objectives are consciously formulated, openly communicated and spread mostly through demonstrations, protest marches and online (social media) campaigns. However, they need

public figures to raise additional nationwide awareness for their cause, as their actions stay mostly local. What can be derived from this observation is that most acts of civil resistance operate in various ways but are still broadly intertwined and associated with other movements. Despite their different use of channels and approaches, they share a common objective: both Kaepernick and the BLM movement, as members of a minority, essentially want to challenge existing social structures through norm contestation.

5   Interim conclusion

So far, it has been observed that right-wing populism is frequently based on social classification founded on ethnic, religious or racial identities, and eventually depends on the social affiliation to one of those classes (Béland, 2020). In the case at hand, the distinction is made between two groups: there is the national population (the white, heterosexual, Christian American) and there are the others (African-Americans, LGBTQ, immigrants, Muslims) (Béland, 2020). Most often, one of these groups constitutes the majority and distances itself from the minority or even actively oppresses it. This social behaviour is regularly based on prejudices, for example African-Americans being more criminal, less intelligent and less well-mannered (Massey & Denton, 2003). This situation also reveals a divide of power between a rather powerful majority and a powerless minority; as the latter is frequently undermined by the former.

These unbalanced social structures have permeated throughout history until today and in the US especially, they have been institutionalized and normalized. With the ongoing globalization, however, the American population is increasingly confronted with people from other nationalities, ethnicities, religions and cultures. Nevertheless, with a more heterogeneous society, there are now increasing fears and anxieties within the traditional majority about losing their cultural identity and social status. Therefore, populist ideologies have found a large basis of followers who feel threatened by this changing world and want to go back to how things were before. On the opposite side of this spectrum are the minorities: they seek to challenge the system of institutionalized discrimination, which they perceive as being upheld by false and unfair accusations against them. Usually, these minorities are underrepresented in political entities and they frequently experience discrimination in fields such as education, employment, housing, the legal system and their everyday life. Consequently, minorities feel politically and socially dissatisfied and at some point, they transform their discontent into actions through informal ways of participation, such as demonstrations and protests (Gillion, 2020).

A powerful expression of this clash between minority and majority is the recent civil unrest in the USA, promoted by the Black Lives Matters movement and by Colin Kaepernick taking a knee. Their protest is directed primarily at police violence, which are a replica of the overall racist social structures. The purpose of their resistance is clear: end police brutality and induce a more general social change in order to improve their social standing overall. By challenging the stabilized social norm of discriminating African-Americans, they try to publicly put this behaviour into question and change the perception of its legitimacy. Ideally, more and more people react to this impulse and discern this social practice as illegitimate; as a result, they will no longer comply with it but rather advocate for its dismissal. It creates a snowfall effect with which even more people can be recruited for this cause. Then, this process continues until the majority of the population perceives the social norm as unjust, and the norm changes. As Gillion notes,

"historically, political protest has been spurred by voices within marginalized groups, by those people who express the concerns of the repressed, and are seen as belonging to radical and isolated segments of society" (Gillion, 2020, p. 6).

This observation is crucial, as the perception of activists as radical and isolated often determines the reaction of the wider public to civil resistance acts. While some might be swayed by the protester's ideas, others will disapprove of their protest altogether. This can be based on the fact that these people do not want norms to change, or that they perceive the protesting group as violent or illegitimate (Gillion, 2020). As a result, these people are likely to intentionally reinforce the social norm in question, and even advocate for its retention. Evidently, norm contestation is a relentless struggle between majority and minority. Both sides have their own version of what is right and wrong, and they will both push against each other trying to adjust social norms to their own belief. As these agents, and groups of agents, have different sources of power (such as money, people or political influence), their strength and methods in this conflict varies. In the following analysis, both cases will be examined in detail in order to find out how this struggle eventually plays out.

6 Analysis

The previous chapters have comprehensively illustrated the pre-existing social structures and their creation over time, as well as the agents of contemporary civil resistance objecting certain social structures. To substantiate the assumption that these social structures are inherently racist, the research has been narrowed down to police structures, a sub-set of the social structure. It was then discovered that police structures are indeed characterized by structural racism and discriminatory behaviour, which is expressed through cases of police brutality especially against African-Americans. This system of perceived injustice and prejudice provokes civil resistance by individuals and groups within the affected minority. At the core of their dissatisfaction lies the allegedly arbitrary employment of violence based on subjective judgement. In order to express their discontent and possibly enforcing a shift in these racist social norms, those agents engage in different methods of civil resistance.

6.1 Part I: How do minorities resist dominant structures?

In this first part, the two cases chosen will be investigated in order to answer the first research question on how minorities, either in a group or individually, attempt to resist and challenge dominant social structures. As aforementioned, it is assumed that the character of a resistance movement can be determined by applying three conditions: (1) Spread, (2) Consistency and (3) Level of contestation. Therefore, the objective is to find out to what extent both cases meet these conditions in order to comprehend their motives, strategies and methods of operating.

6.1.1 Black Lives Matter

Spread and Consistency

The Black Lives Matter movement was founded in 2013 as a protest to several incidents of white police officers shooting African-American men, often without legal consequences. What started out as a Social Media movement was later characterized by actual marches and demonstrations with mass attendance as well as media attention. The initial success can be attributed to today's influence of Social Media: the movement spread quickly through the digital world both within the US and across the globe (Eligon, 2015). This strategy helped significantly with recruiting supporters throughout the country, as BLM is decentralized and depends on local communities and groups. By using the Internet, people quickly managed to come together and build so-called chapters that organize own demonstrations and other actions; as of June 2019, the Black Lives Matter Global Network entails 38 of those autonomous chapters (Scales, 2019).

The main focus of the movement is police injustice against African-Americans, as most demonstrations followed incidents of police brutality, pushing them into public discourse and generating massive attention. After the death of Eric Garner in July 2014, the BLM movement used his last words "I can't breathe" as a slogan during their marches. This catchphrase quickly spread, and became even more visible when several professional Basketball players such as Kobe Bryant, Lebron James and others wore T-shirts with the slogan during warm ups to show solidarity (Pincus, 2014). After the game, Bryant explained his move and advocated for social change:

"That's what our nation is founded on. […] We have the ability to question these things in a peaceful fashion. That's what makes us a great country. We have the ability to voice up, we have the platform to speak up and we have the platform to affect change." (Pincus, 2014)

Shortly thereafter, another well-known incident was the shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed African-American teenager, in August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. His death was a particular milestone: not only was this the first time that BLM mass demonstrations took place and gained worldwide attention; the city of Ferguson was also rattled with looting and riots for days, marking the tipping point from initially peaceful protests to occasional violence in the streets (McLaughlin, 2016). As police brutality continued, the spread of BLM expanded until it peaked in July 2016, when the movement spread to Europe and solidarity marches were held in Berlin, London and Amsterdam. The reason for this breakthrough was the killing of Philando Castile in Minnesota and Alton Sterling in Louisiana on July 6th: both men were African-Americans, both were shot by white police officers, both shootings were caught on camera and showed the brutality with which the two victims were treated. (McKenzie, 2016)

The very next day, July 7th 2016, marked the biggest turning point for the movement: during a peaceful BLM protest march in honour of Castile and Sterling in Dallas, a sniper opened fire on police officers, hurting 11 and killing five (Fernandez, Pérez-Pena, & Bromwich, 2017). According to officials, the African-American shooter Micah Johnson specifically planned to kill as many white police officers as possible. He was not officially associated with BLM, but with radical movements that advocated for violence against white people, and he possessed multiple guns, rifles and bomb-making materials at his home. (Fernandez et al., 2017)

During the emerge of the BLM movement, their priorities were clear: raising awareness and visibility. By drawing maximum attention to the issue of racially motivated police violence, the activists attempted to bring this issue into public discourse (Gallagher, Reagan, Danforth, & Dodds, 2018). At first, social media helped to simply raise consciousness for the general issue of unjust social norms and racial discrimination in police structures. While spreading the hashtag *#BlackLivesMatter* gathered was easy and far-reaching, taking their protest to the streets increased their visibility outside of African-American communities and spread their message throughout all levels of society (Gillion, 2020). Looking at the development on the digital level, the use of the hashtag *#BlackLivesMatter* on Twitter surged drastically with each incident, but decreased quickly thereafter, and then stayed rather low until the next outbreak (Eligon, 2015).

However, both the use of the hashtag as well as the number of physical protests decreased after the incident in Dallas, which caused immense controversy and backlash among the wider public. By the end of 2016, this pushback was so strong that the movement was effectively repressed by public opinion and eventually experienced a core setback when Donald Trump was elected. As a consequence of their decreasing reach and visibility, the movement changed its strategy:

"What people are seeing is that there are less demonstrations," [said] Alicia Garza, one of the three women who created the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag […]. "A lot of that is that people are channeling their energy into organizing locally, recognizing that in Trump's America, our communities are under direct attack." (Marcin, 2017)

Level of Contestation

The shooting of police officers in Dallas generated much criticism and rejection to the BLM movement, as the wider society commonly associated the gunman with the movement itself. As Gillion notes, "the public can be particularly effective in helping to further a movement's political agenda" (Gillion, 2020, p. 8); however, the public can also be the reason why a movement fails. After the incidents in Ferguson and Dallas, the public backlash was widespread and counter-reactions were strong. One of the biggest issues was that many critics claimed the approach was exclusive: by saying that black lives mattered, BLM activists would imply that white lives or blue lives (police officers) do not matter (Gallagher et al., 2018). In return, BLM members and others suggested that using the term "All lives matter" instead was, in fact, racist: according to the activist Ashton Woods "it essentially ignores the systemic racism that black people face [...] These people have no idea what the plight is of a black person" (Chan, 2016). According to a public opinion poll, a majority of 78% of voters supported this criticism (Rasmussen Reports, 2015), presenting a significantly high level of contestation and leading to heated debates about these terms on the highest political levels. On one hand, these conflicts kept the topic in the media but on the other hand, it distracted many from the structural issues underlying the protests.

As the movement grew, the controversy around its organization increased as well: Because BLM is a grassroots movement, there is no formal hierarchy and local groups operate decentralized and independently. In practice, this means that "as long as you believed in the message and joined the cause, you were part of the movement" (Gillion, 2020, p. 140). This strategy can be very successful, as activists in local communities do not need to wait for a superior level to give instructions, and they can tailor their resistance acts to the particular conditions in their area (Eligon, 2015). However, this organizational structure also has two major disadvantages: there is no long-term schedule, as most protest actions emerge as ad hoc reactions to certain local incidents. As a consequence, these purpose-built events might not apply to other regions, preventing the protest to go beyond the local level. Additionally, the lack of superior coordination causes the protesting activities to be disrupted and incoherent, as protests formed quickly after a certain incident, both online and in-person, but dissembled just as rapidly (Eligon, 2015). This means that whenever there was injustice taking place, the reactions of the public were intensive and the level of contestation extremely high, but eventually short-lived.

The second disadvantage is the lack of coordination and agreement, and the uncontrollability of local groups (Eligon, 2015). Whilst everyone can be active and claim to work on behalf of BLM, some opinions are more radical than others. Even though the riots in Ferguson and the shooting in Dallas were both isolated cases, they were generally connoted with Black Lives Matter, causing strong societal condemnation for the violence applied by some protesters. Especially the incident in Dallas caused the relation between protesters and police officials to become more tense and mistrustful than ever. Then, after the election of Trump, it became clear that "at this point, marching and protesting, it's not going anywhere [...] so we're trying to find new avenues of engaging people for change" (Eligon, 2015). This change of strategy made the BLM movement more sophisticated, as more specific claims were made and taken directly to law-making officials instead of the streets. The downside, however, is that the public visibility of resistance acts decreased, because the new strategy does not generate as much contestation and public discussion as the (violent) demonstrations did, enabling people to easily ignore and dismiss this social issue.

6.1.2 Taking a knee

Spread and Consistency

The protest movement started in the NFL preseason of 2016, when Kaepernick started to sit on the bench, instead of standing, while the national anthem was played before a game. His actions were motivated by the ongoing police violence towards African-Americans, and he wanted to bring attention to this issue. Only a week later, he and his teammate Eric Reid both opted for kneeling instead of sitting, which caused a first wave of attention towards this unusual behaviour. (Mather, 2019) In the following first week of the 2016 season, more players joined the silent protest, as about 11 players from other NFL teams took a knee or raised their fists (Breech, 2016). Outside the NFL, the support was still reserved: in September, only Megan Rapinoe from the US women's soccer team knelt during the national anthem to show her support, which brought some media attention to the issue (Mather, 2019). Kaepernick's protest continued throughout the whole 2016 season, but there were only few other players joining. The San Francisco 49ers, where Kaepernick was the quarterback then, did not perform well during this season and in March 2017, Kaepernick separated from the team. While Kaepernick was unable to find a new team that would sign him, the new 2017 season started with continuing anthem protests by a few other NFL athletes, triggered by the violence and the neo-Nazi march happening at the same time in Charlottesville, Virginia. (Mather, 2019)

Shortly thereafter, when Seth DeValve became the first white player to take a knee (Baccellieri, 2017), a new milestone for the movement had been set. Meanwhile, remarkable protest actions by civil activist groups had been initiated outside the NFL: In August 2017, members of the New York police department came together to rally for Kaepernick and only few days later the 'United We Stand Rally for Colin Kaepernick' was held at the NFL headquarter in New York, protesting against Kaepernick being laid off from his team in March and demanding the boycott of the NFL. (Reid, 2017) These gatherings and support actions were all leading up to the peak of the protest movement, when in September 2017 over 200 players knelt, raised their fists or locked their arms in solidarity with Kaepernick. This sudden increase, however, decreased just as fast and in the following week, only a handful of players continued to protest and media attention declined. Furthermore, the NFL issued a new policy in May 2018 that enabled the fining and punishment of players who would not stand during the national anthem; this discouraged many players to continue protesting, as they were now prone to personal and professional drawbacks. (Mather, 2019)

Nevertheless, the movement was not completely shut down by this new rule: just before the 2018 season, Kaepernick became the face of Nike's new campaign. As an official sponsor of the NFL, the campaign sparked great controversy amongst society: on Twitter, over 30.000 people called for a boycott of Nike, and videos surfaced were fans would burn their Nike products in protest (Sabur, 2018). After a short drop in share prices due to this boycott, Nike's stock closed at an all-time high in September 2018 (Dator, 2018). Thus, the controversy did not only boost Nike sales, but it also brought Kaepernick and his protest back into the media and people's minds. For Kaepernick, this was a great opportunity to keep him resistance movement alive outside the stadium. All in all, Kaepernick started a protest movement that was characterized by phases of increase and decrease. Starting with only himself and rather unnoticed at first, his idea spread across the NFL, other sports and large corporations over the years. Even though these protest actions were not performed regularly and peaked every now and then, they continuously reignited the intense discussions within society.

Level of contestation

The initial act of sitting, later replaced by taking a knee, was symbolic and non-verbal; first and foremost a mere gesture without a reference to a particular event or issue. Even though Kaepernick later explains his protest against police violence, he does not make explicit demands and his claims are unspecific. Because of this, his resistance does at first not seem very radical, as it is rather vague and untargeted. Therefore, the protest remained unspectacular throughout the 2016 season and did not stir up too much attention and controversy. The intensity of his protest only picked up a year later, when on September 22nd 2017, at a political rally in Alabama, Kaepernick's peaceful act of taking a knee was heavily condemned by US president Donald Trump:

> "We're proud of our country, we respect our flag. [...] Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now, out, he's fired. He's fired!'" (Li, 2017)

This involvement of Trump caused the protest movement to move into the political world and it drew massive attention to the fact that Kaepernick was kneeling at a football game as an expression of protest towards police violence. It caused the aforementioned peak of almost 200 other NFL players to show solidarity. (Graham & Pengelly, 2017)

Whilst at this point, civil activist groups already had picked up the sentiment and were peacefully protesting across the country, Trump's derogatory comment gave these discussions a new dimension: by inferring that Kaepernick was disrespecting the flag, his actions were commonly connoted with being unpatriotic instead of protesting social problems. Since patriotism is perceived to be a core value in the USA (Burkey & Zamalin, 2016), this fuelled the public controversy and societal conflict even more. The underlying reasons for this backlash were both the supposed disrespecting of the flag, and the very act of protesting during a sports event itself (Gillion, 2020). As aforementioned, sports arenas were traditionally viewed as apolitical, and the involvement of social issues into the sports world is still commonly frowned upon (Kilcline, 2017), as sports are viewed as leisure activities that bring people from all backgrounds together. This is especially true for those fans that belong to the white majority: while they already have a negative impression of the activists protesting in the streets, they do not want to see any more protesting during their favourite sports. Moreover, from an ideological perspective, members of this majority might even be in favour of the systemic racism that, consciously or unconsciously, benefits them disproportionately and therefore contest protest activity altogether.

With this public backlash, especially among fans, the level of contestation increased dramatically. The further condemnation of political figures then prompted a massive surge in protesting players throughout the NFL in Week 3 in the 2017 season. After this outbreak, the stadium protests receded but the launch of the Nike campaign in 2018 caused the controversy to boil up again and to spread even further in society due to the company's significant economic impact and reach beyond the NFL. Evidently, the level of contestation fluctuated over time and peaked whenever concrete protest actions were taken, either in the stadium or through other economic or social players. In the meantime, the level of contestation declined.

Ultimately, civil resistance movements originate from both individuals and groups on all levels of society, and them make use of diverse strategies and methods. They all want to initiate social change

as they are heavily dissatisfied with the current structural setup of the society that they live in. The next chapter will investigate what the actual impact of their endeavours is.

6.2 Part II: What impact does civil resistance have?

Civil resistance is not a new phenomenon in the United States, as its history is characterized by such movements – most often, these movements were created to advocate for equal rights and the end of discrimination of African-Americans. The latest surge of civil resistance was no different: As it could be seen earlier, social structures in the US are still systemically discriminating towards African-Americans and during Obama's second term as president, the conflict between (white) police officers and African-American communities intensified noticeably. As more and more fatal shootings were reported by the media, African-American communities became increasingly alarmed and enraged; out of this, civil resistance movements were born to bring about social change. Especially the fact that most police officers involved in such killings were acquitted, led to the foundation of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013. The following years, this movement organized various protests against police brutality and frequently demonstrated for equal rights. In 2016, this sentiment was picked up by NFL athlete Colin Kaepernick, who took a knee when the US anthem was played before games. This simple gesture inspired a new, but very different, wave of resistance. After having investigated to what extent the movements fulfil the conditions of spread, consistency and level of contestation, it is now crucial to examine what this fulfilment, or non-fulfilment, entails. To that end, the question is: What impact did those resistance movements have, and where are they now?

Firstly, a short look must be taken at the statistics: According to mappingpoliceviolence.org, there were 1.099 people killed by police in 2019. Out of those, 24% were killed even though African-Americans make up only 13% of the US population (Mapping Police Violence, n.d.a). Another source, a magazine called The Root, claims that there were "1.112 non-suicide-related deaths at the hands of police in 2019" (Harriot, 2020). The data platform Statista, however, counts 1.004 deaths by police in 2019, with 235 of them being African-American (Statista, 2020). Deviating from that by far, a database from Fatal Encounters lists as many as 1.789 people (Fatal encounters, 2020) by including suicides and people who were stabbed or beaten to death, as opposed to other sources that only list death by gunshot (Harriot, 2020).

At a first glance, these statistics suggest that there has not been much change in numbers compared to the years before, as they have not increased or decreased by extreme margins. Additionally, it is noticeable that the available data is diverging, as the sources display different numbers. The explanation for this is plain: there is no official federal agency that collects all data on this issue and therefore, other institutions such as newspapers or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) collect their own data from media sources and create their statistics on them (Harriot, 2020). Each source, however, uses a different method of collecting and counting, which causes the results to deviate from each other. Most importantly, however, is the fact that there is no requirement for police departments to report any violent encounters or killings to a superior agency. Therefore, it is assumed that not all incidents are reported and that there is a high number of completely unknown cases (Nordberg, Crawford, Praetorius, & Hatcher, 2016).

Even though there is no official data material, all aforementioned statistics share a common observation: African-Americans are disproportionally targeted by police officers in searches, they are more likely to be treated with mistrust and violence, and they are more likely to be killed by white

police officers. But as the data material is incomplete and to some extent unreliable, the impact of civil resistance must be determined from a more subjective perspective and by making observations from the outside. To this end, the cases have been analysed with regard to their level of spread, consistency and contestation, because it is assumed that the social impact of civil resistance is strongest when these criteria are fulfilled.

6.2.1 Black Lives Matter

At first, however, Black Lives Matter was off to a promising start when their demonstrations grew massively and earned global media attention. This raised awareness to the extent of structural racism and caught the attention of "those who declared racism a relic of America's past" (Martin, 2018). Even more so, it confronted them with the severity and reality of social injustices in their country. This confrontation led to high levels of contestation and heated debates, but it also gave rise to counter-reactions and rejection.

> "By attempting to undercut you, people strive to restore order, maintain what is familiar to them, and protect themselves from the pains of adaptive change. They want to be comfortable again, and you're in the way." (Heifetz & Linsky)

As the dissenting voices became louder, the BLM movement revealed flaws that made them vulnerable to their criticism: because the movement was decentralized, their strategies were inconsistent and incoherent (Taylor, 2019). As a result, almost each incident at the time lead to a social media outbreak, but eventually decreased quickly thereafter and left no permanent impact. Due to the lack of coordination and consensus, some protesters then turned to violence (especially against police officers) which provided a solid foundation for condemnation from the movements' opponents. The lack of accountability and the connotation to violence caused rejection of the movement within the population altogether (Taylor, 2019). Additionally, the movement was actively challenged by their opponents as they tried discrediting BLM's legitimacy by starting the 'All Lives Matter' argument, which was created as a counter-hashtag and served to invalidate the Black Lives Matter argument (Gallagher et al., 2018).

This situation of struggle was ultimately instrumentalized by now-president Trump, as he said "I want you to know that patriotic Americans of all backgrounds truly support and love our police." (Boyer, 2017). By openly taking the side of police officers, he automatically solidarized with the white majority that condemned the alleged police targeting by BLM. He successfully turned the focus away from a debate about equality and towards an issue of patriotism, which contributed to the growing rejection of BLM within society. This sentiment was supported by his voters, and eventually, the BLM movement was heavily criticized and met with such strong counter-resistance that, as Taylor, 2019) summarizes: "today, there are few signs of the grassroots Black Lives Matter movement that in its first years captured the imagination and hopes of young black people and beyond."

A consequence of this is that media coverage has decreased: after 2016, the racial debate does not seem to be as present as it has been before. Apart from the strong public and political backlash that the movement faced, a possible reason for this is the emergence of other social issues: the European refugee crisis, climate change demonstrations and president Trump's impeachment process are only a few examples of recent global events that have kept people in suspense. This development is not surprising: mass media outlets are profit-oriented and thus tend to concentrate on few current issues that they extensively report on (Gillion, 2020). Additionally, many news channels run along partisan

lines and their reporting is consequently often biased; at the same time, people choose to watch those channels that "buttress our point of view, or reading newspapers […] that reinforce the political positions we desire" (Gillion, 2020, p. 16). As a consequence to these factors, certain topics spread into the public discourse and often become the main subject of public debate, while at the same time, other subjects are largely ignored (Kosicki, 2006; Protess, 2016). By implication, the lack of media coverage often means that certain topics fade from the public discourse. With other subjects being pushed up the public agenda, people are easily distracted from previous issues and quickly forget about it. Recently however, the political and social discussion racial discrimination has been reignited due to the viral video of George Floyd's death by the hands of a white police officer. New protests have been sparked, and global media attention has been caught; apparently, the willingness to advocate for social change and to protest is still existent but has only been forgotten and ignored until now.

6.2.2   Taking a knee

After BLM had more or less disappeared from the radar of society and politics, Colin Kaepernick sparked his own civil resistance movement. His actions were largely unnoticed at first and only handful of other athletes joined in throughout the 2016 season, but media coverage and levels of contestation slowly increased over time. As the people's attention grew, so did the public discourse; however, it was focussed heavily on the appropriateness of protest in sports in general. Because the political involvement of athletes is traditionally frowned upon as part of a "shut up and play" (Martin, 2018) mentality, many fans opposed the fact that Kaepernick used this platform for protest (Martin, 2018). However, it is no coincidence that the conversation took this particular direction: In August 2016, during an interview with several media representatives, Martin and McHendry (2016) noticed that "on multiple occasions the media tried to re-centre attention on the specific act itself […]" (p. 93), while Kaepernick was trying to emphasize that his protest was not limited to football and that he wanted to raise awareness for the racial inequality in the USA. While it is fairly easy to discount and condemn the activists in the streets, sports fans cannot ignore protest actions that happen on the football field of their favourite teams. Sports activism directly and openly confronts them with the severity of social issues and the criticism of the social structures that they often enjoy and perpetuate. Similar to the BLM movement, Kaepernick's protest was therefore selectively reported on, to the effect that the underlying reasons why Kaepernick was kneeling got mostly lost in the shuffle. Eventually, Kaepernick left his team after the 2016 season, so the next season started without him on the field to the consequence that only a few other NFL athletes kept the protest alive.

Not only fans were dismissive towards Kaepernick's methods: president Trump bluntly shared his (insulting) opinion on this issue, causing the incident to become strongly politicized. His involvement had diverse repercussions: at first, the NFL registered the biggest outbreak of civil resistance on the field, coupled with extensively media coverage on the issue. This development stirred up controversy and discussion on all levels, promising a wave of solidarity for Kaepernick and his cause. In reality, however, NFL players quickly stopped protesting because of Trumps' political pressure on NFL owners (Teuffel, 2017). Those owners then claimed to be looking for a compromise between social activism and football, because "people don't want football to be politicized, but there's a need to do something to listen to our players and help them." (Breech, 2017) In the end, however, the owners banned any protesting on the field, but allowed players to stay in the locker room during the national anthem was played (Paras & Richardson, 2018).

Additionally, to this attempt of suppressing and removing civil resistance from the football field through the official channels, Trump picked up the fans' disapproval and successfully encouraged it by labelling the protest as unpatriotic (Gillion, 2020; Teuffel, 2017). Because Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem, many viewers felt that he "violated the culture of compulsory patriotism that permeates much of contemporary U.S. culture— in particular at sporting events" (Martin & McHendry, 2016, 88). This aversion of fans against protesting in the stadium increased and spread throughout the league, for example to Baltimore: when the Ravens decided to kneel and pray before the national anthem, the fans in Baltimore booed their own team (Breech, 2017).

The rest of the season consequently ran without any major protests on the field, causing media reporting and the public discourse to recede. It only gained speed again when Nike released their campaign in 2018 featuring Kaepernick, where the level of contestation surged strongly and caused new controversy. Even though the campaign turned out to be quite successful for the company, especially their slogan "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything" brought critics to the scene. They called out Nike for exploiting the controversy around the former NFL star to increase their sales and pose as a socially conscious enterprise; at the same time, they questioned the extent of Kaepernick's sacrifice: "Colin Kaepernick turned down an NFL contract and now will earn millions by posing as a social justice warrior for the benefit of a massive multinational corporation." (Shapiro, 2018).

Effectively, by expediting these efforts to dismiss Kaepernick's' protest as unpatriotic, the time and place as inappropriate (Gillion, 2020) and his intentions as dishonest, his opponents attempt to "control the means of protest [which] ultimately end up silencing marginalized populations from voicing any discontent at all" (Martin & McHendry, 2016, 98). To some extent, this pushback from politicians, NFL operatives and fans was successful: Kaepernick remains a free agent, which keeps him from protesting in the stadium, and former fans burnt their Nike gear as a boycott to his campaign. However, the very involvement of those actors created a discussion about this silent protest and made it very much non-silent, which is precisely what Kaepernick aimed for.

Ultimately, civil activism for racial equality is likely to receive heavy headwind, especially in settings such as sports and even more so in the USA than in other countries. In this case, Kaepernick was met with anger, disapproval and hostility from both civil society as well as high-profile and powerful politicians such as Donald Trump, which eventually led to the extinction of protesting by taking a knee in the NFL. However, what remains from Kaepernick's protest is that

> "[he] forced conversations that needed to happen, conversations that wouldn't have happened otherwise. It's been uncomfortable and confronting and, while it doesn't look like it now, the country is better for it." (Barca, 2018)

6.3   Generalization

Based on the previous observations, it can now be attempted to draw more general conclusions about norm contestation in modern societies. The impact of civil resistance via norm contestation is dichotomous: at first glance, speaking and acting up against dominant structures, not matter how, raises the attention and awareness of others to this issue. It often makes people realize the severity of a social issue and ideally, they reflect their own behaviour in this regard. Self-reflection is a desirable outcome of resistance – however, to make a real difference, people need to reconsider and eventually change their behaviour. To achieve this, resistance must be carried out over a long period of time in

order to permanently change the legitimacy and acceptance of certain values within society. Both of the movements gave a strong initial impulse to a social and political debate about how society ought to be, causing high levels of contestation. Because of that, the movements evolved quickly into demonstrations and further protests. However, both contestation and spread peaked at certain points in time and then quickly declined; thus, by being inconsistent and only climaxing sporadically, both resistance movements lacked the continuous perseverance necessary to induce profound social change.

However, these conditions of spread, consistency and contestation are not exhaustive. Gillion notes that "there needs to be a frame alignment whereby the citizens' interests, values and beliefs overlap with the goals, ideology, and activities of social movement organizations" (2020, p. 12). In this case study, a lack of such overlap is clearly visible, and even more so provides the foundation for the massive public backlash. This is expressed through counter-reactions from a strong white majority that favours the preservation of the current social structures. The majority here identifies itself as 'the American people' and are usually white, Christian and heterosexual. As this group has historically benefitted from the inequal social structures, and from oppressing culturally different minorities, they now fear the loss of their own cultural identity and social standing if they allow the minorities to be equal. Therefore, resistance movements do not make them reconsider their social attitudes, but it makes them even reinforce them out of fear of losing their social standing and their cultural identity. In the USA particularly, public backlash has been strongly connected to racial issues in the past: Gillion has found that in the 1950s and 1960s, public backlash to minority rights was especially strong and based on "racism, bigotry and white fear of sharing […] with perceived undeserving African Americans" (2020, p. 137). Today, this tradition of public disapproval has not changed much, and it was expressed by a magnitude of counter-reactions, for example by the All Lives Matter movement. A study of this movement showed that it frequently "frames Black protesters versus law enforcement with an 'us versus them' mentality" (Gallagher et al., 2018), thereby exacerbating the historical tensions between African-Americans and police officers, making their conflict possibly worse than before. The initial protest by BLM was at the same time deemed "un-American and racist" (Gillion, 2020, p. 141) and in July 2016, a petition to label the BLM movement as a terror group gathered more than 100.000 signatures (Gillion, 2020). This extreme pushback shows that the movement did not only bring racial discrimination to the public agenda, but it also revealed how deeply entrenched racism still is in the social structures of the USA, and how strongly they are reinforced by a white majority. Thus, norm contestation does not necessarily lead to norm change, but can even strengthen it.

In this particular case study, the counter-movement has one weighty advantage: it is supported and to some extent even led by Donald Trump. As president, he is overwhelmingly powerful in terms of steering media attention, controlling law making processes and financial support systems. His involvement, and especially his derogatory comments, made the protests highly controversial and increased their visibility; on the other side, he successfully discredited Kaepernick as unpatriotic and by that distracted many from the real reason for his protest. Trump therefore actively "attacked the integrity of the demonstrators" (Gillion, 2020, p. 137) and with that fuelled the disapproval of Kaepernick's protest and worsened the ongoing cultural and racial tensions; encouraging more and more people to reject the resistance efforts and object social change entirely. Even more so, some people took their objection further and felt provoked to act violently, for example during supremacist rallies such as in Charlottesville:

"The attack in Charlottesville changed everything. We saw the racist fringe that usually hides in the corners of the Internet emerge to show its power. They were American terrorists sending a message to the nation – we're here, we have numbers, we have weapons, be afraid. And the president of the United States answered by repeatedly signaling that he's not discomforted by them. 'He is in very real terms their president, and he constantly affirms that'. […] 'Trump is the white supremacist in chief.'" (Touré, 2017)

Returning to the findings so far, it appears that both the recent resistance movements have not been successful in achieving their objectives due to two major reasons:

Firstly, both movements lack long-term consistency. This can be partly attributed to their decentralized organizational structure and strategy, but also to the short lifespan of media attention to one specific issue. As there are so many news each day, media outlets will eventually proceed to cover other issues, which then eliminate the resistance movement from the spotlight.

Secondly, the strong counter-reactions from the majority have shown that there is little room for social change. Because the fear of losing their cultural and social identity and status is widespread in the majority of the population, the attempts at creating a more equal and more heterogenous society have been objected and condemned strongly. This development was, and still is, driven by the populist political agenda of Trump. By acknowledging and exploiting these fears and putting them at the centre of his campaign, he successfully amplified the social divide between 'Us' and 'Them'. As he has no intention of improving the strained racial relations in the USA, his election is undoubtedly marking a huge step backwards in terms of equality and social advancement of African-Americans.

Regardless of all setbacks, civil resistance has not been futile. By protesting and raising awareness to the structural issues underlying racial discrimination, a conversation about the legitimacy of this social setup has been started and is ongoing. Each act of resistance can be seen as a domino stone: one particular stone might not have the strongest impact, but it might cause many other stones to fall, multiplying the initial impulse. Or as Gillion puts it: "Protest plants the seed withing the electorate today that will allow change to flourish in the future" (2020, p. 18).

7 Conclusion

Throughout the last two decades, civil resistance movements have made a name for themselves and their prominence has peaked most recently in the light of mass protests in both Europe and the USA. In these Western societies, the occurrence of civil resistance movements can be connected to the prevailing growth and influence of right-wing populism. A central aspect of this ideology is a social and cultural distinction between perceived majority and minority groups, whose relationship is often strained. Usually, populists frame both groups as opposing sides in the sense of an 'Us versus Them' mentality, which can be based on cultural, ethnic, racial, religious or other social grounds. This fragmentation of society commonly leads to imbalanced power distributions, as the majority is often dominant and the minority thus is inferior. This presumed inferiority, or even oppression of the latter, can lead to deep-rooted political and social dissatisfaction of these minorities, which is every so often expressed through civil resistance acts. Civil resistance acts are attempts to reorganize existing structures and power relations.

This philosophy is grounded on several theoretical assumptions, which have been explored earlier in this thesis: Firstly, the Structure-Agency-debate assumes that human behaviour is shaped primarily by either structures or agency. Structures can be described as social settings and guidelines that people (must) follow; Agency is the capacity of each person to act independently from these assumed structures. However, this distinction is quite one-dimensional: in an effort to combine these two strands into a more holistic approach, Giddens has developed the so-called Structuration theory, in which he illustrates that both structure and agency are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, structures do not only influence human behaviour, but they are also influenced and constructed by human behaviour; therefore, structure and agency construct each other in a constant social cycle. Based on this, the theory of norm contestation assumes that all structures, or social norms, are not set in stone can be changed by human actions. By contesting norms through protest, disobedience and the like, agents can influence the design of social structures, which will then alter or even replace former established norms and practices. In this case study, norm contestation is expressed through civil resistance acts, performed by agents stemming from the minority in an effort to change current social norms that are perceived as inappropriate or illegitimate. The results of this study suggest that there is indeed a connection between structures and agents: while it is true that agents are influenced by their social and cultural surrounding and upbringing, they do have the capacity to reflect on social norms and decide not to comply with them. Therefore, it cannot be said that either structures or agents determine what society looks like, but it is the combination of both that shapes social behaviour over time. For this case study specifically, the findings reveal that the currently existing structures and norms in the United States are often dominant, but they are not incontestable. Social norms are constantly exposed to contestation that could end in either their prevalence or abolishment. However, fundamental changes often need vast amounts of time to succeed, and newly established social norms are themselves prone to norm contestation from other social (minority) groups. As the interpretation of appropriateness and legitimacy of norms is highly subjective and complex, different social groups want different things and favour different social structures.

This can be clearly seen when comparing recent European and American civil resistance movements, as they advocate for very dissimilar ideologies. In Europe, the minority is constituted by citizens on the far right that want to enforce policies such as immigration restrictions and with that replace the former social norms of solidarity and open borders, which are the lead values for members of the EU.

By doing so, they try to reinforce the social divide that is pushed by populist agendas. In the USA, the minority is constituted by African-Americans that try to break down the social practice of racial discrimination against them, expressed through police violence, and replace them with social values of equality, respect and fairness. Hence, they contest the populist policies and try to narrow the social divide that prevails in society.

As the scope of this thesis is limited, a case study design was chosen in order to look at specific cases more in depth and to gather insights that are more general and might be applicable to other cases. Therefore, the analysis was focussed on how this social conflict plays out in the United States. More specifically, the recent intensification of (white) police violence against African-Americans was addressed, because this development has caused two major civil resistance movements of recent times: The Black Lives Matter movement and Colin Kaepernick taking a knee. Both movements are exemplary for recent African-American activism, and they aptly illustrate the struggle between a dominant majority and a protesting minority.

The first research questions aimed at how civil resistance is executed and under which conditions it can be successful. The conditions spread, consistency and the level of contestation have been identified as appropriate indicators for the performance of civil resistance. Therefore, the two cases have been analysed in particular towards these conditions and in how far these conditions have been met by each movement. In a second step, the actual impact of the movements was assessed; more specifically, it was evaluated how the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the conditions have actually mattered in practice.

Colin Kaepernick started his protest in 2016 by famously taking a knee in the stadium. Later on, he explained that his protest addresses police violence against African-Americans and the apparent impunity of perpetrators. His protest was hotly discussed, displaying high levels of contestation, and many athletes inside and outside the NFL at some point participated in his symbolic act. However, both the spread and consistency of his protest was disrupted as the acts occurred only on some weekends and only at some NFL games. Plus, Kaepernick left his team after the 2016 season and the NFL imposed hefty fines for any protesting on the field, which reduced both the spread and consistency of protests to a minimum. Therefore, the level of contestation surged and declined erratically. Additionally, the public backlash was fierce: first of all, sports spectators categorically disliked the expression of political opinions in the arena, which led to widespread disapproval of the act of protesting itself. The fact that the protest took place in the stadium also distracted many people from the underlying cause of Kaepernick's protest, as Trump successfully framed his movement as unpatriotic, because he first knelt while the national anthem was played to honour veterans. This move chastened support for Kaepernick, who was now labelled unpatriotic and supposedly 'non-American'. However, his civil activism started much needed discussions in both society and politics about the apparent racial divide and injustice, but they did not last long because his purpose got off the track due to inconsistency and major blowbacks from the public, politics and the NFL itself.

The Black Lives Matter movement spread quickly and widely, as police violence incidents gained massive public attention at that time. With the help of social media, the movement became well-known and many local movements were initiated in order to join the protest. Their demonstrations and marches were covered extensively by the media, and levels of contestation were high. However, the promising start of the movement sparked public backlash, and even inspired counter-actions of

white supremacists. These tensions escalated quickly, as some demonstrations turned violent, including arson, looting and even the deliberate killing of white police officers in revenge. Even though these cases were individual cases and not initiated by the BLM organizers, the movement was commonly connoted with violence ever since. Several politicians, including Trump, supported this condemning view of the movement, and a countermovement called All Lives Matter was founded. While BLM caused massive debates on the issue of police violence and racial injustice both nationally and internationally, the movement eventually shut down its public protest when president Trump was elected. Their defeat can be attributed to the inconsistency in strategy, the outbreak of violence and lack of accountability in this context, which eventually led to the categorical rejection of the movement within the white majority. As the public opinion of the movement deteriorated, their social impact and acceptance dropped, forcing them to seek other ways of advocating and contesting.

From these detailed findings, more general conclusions can be drawn: the discriminating and racist practices have been established in both the public discourse and institutions. These structures have been enforced over hundreds of years by a white majority in an attempt to undermine the African-American minority and to preserve their own superior status. Nowadays, social and political power is still unfairly distributed and often privileges members of the white majority, while members of minorities groups are disadvantaged in various fields of life. Even though the recent civil protests have spread massively and caused great controversy around this issue, they have not been successful in changing this long-standing regime of systemic and often wilful discrimination of minorities groups. In both cases, the initial protest sparked high levels of contestation, it spread widely, and during the first weeks and month, their actions were on everyone's lips. However, both cases lacked spread and consistency over a longer period of time. Additionally, they were confronted with major public backlash and political disapproval, essentially led by key figure Donald Trump. In fact, the recent political rise of right-wing populism, that is often connoted to Trump, indicates the aggravation of the racial divide. Backed by the president and his political authority, populist ideologies and their advocates have gained ground, and racial relations are now more tense than ever. Evidently, due to the lack of political and social effort by the people in the highest offices and the deep entrenchment of this social classification within the wider public, racial inequality and discrimination in the USA is unlikely to be completely ruled out by civil resistance movements in the near future.

Regardless of this result, social change is not impossible; which can be observed in Europe. In the UK, the former populist minority has managed to turn the tide in their favour and they have achieved not only a change of regime by putting the rather traditional Conservative party in office, but they have also successfully enforced the Brexit. This development has been boiling for several years; eventually, the refugee crisis in Central Europe tipped the scales and populist agendas were spread within politics and society alike. With this reorientation of the UK's political direction and the implementation of anti-immigration laws, the social structures transformed as well. Supported by the political leaders, the prevailing condemnation of immigrants, Muslims and other minority groups might become systemic and institutionally embedded within the next few years. Once this happens, it is likely that these social structures will be normalized, and any attempt at changing these structures through civil resistance will encounter similar issues as the contemporary protest movements in the USA.

In Germany, the populist minority is still that: a minority. Even though the refugee debate has helped populist parties to gather access to political parliaments, and a big support base for populist ideology has been unveiled, there is a strong pushback from the wider public. In the political landscape, the

majority of parties have decided to stand for openness and solidarity, instead of classification and repulse of immigrant groups. Additionally, there have been private social efforts such as marches and concerts to object right-wing activism and to take a stand against racism, showing that populist thinking is not socially accepted within the wider public. However, while Germany managed to navigate through the refugee crisis without experiencing a complete political turnover, the populist minority is still actively advocating for their beliefs. There is increasing mistrust in the federal government, and populist movements are not shy of using public fears in their favour. Thus, another crisis might easily cause a major upheaval of the right-wing minority, and it cannot be predicted how strong the pushback of the majority will be in that case.

As aforementioned, civil resistance movements by any minority need to fulfil the conditions of spread, consistency and level of contestation to some degree. Looking at all cases under investigation here, the fulfilment of these conditions, however, effectively depends on two key factors: firstly, the internal organization of the movement and secondly, the social frame that the resistance is set in.

Being internally well-organized ensures that the actions are coordinated, well-planned and that individuals do not step out of line. The latter has, for example, happened to the BLM movement when it became violent due to individual action. Violence is commonly rejected by the wider public and often leads to condemnation. In Germany, the actions of individuals casted a poor light on the party as a whole: higher AfD officials often made headlines with controversial statements, for example when they openly called for shooting on refugees, women and children, only to retract their statements later (Steffen, 2016). This revealed not only that some individuals within the party had extreme right-wing opinions, which differed from the general party line, but it displayed a lack of coordination and accountability that eventually repelled many voters and diminished public support (Steffen, 2016).

However, even well-organized movements can fail when they are confronted with certain structures. As the infrastructure of any country is composed of social, economic, political and cultural factors, the mechanisms behind this system are often complex, and they determine the chances of success. In Europe, the refugee crisis affected virtually all countries in the EU, but some were able to cope with the influx of people in need better than others. Especially the structurally weaker countries, such as Poland, were not able to handle the new citizens which resulted in a quick political landslide to the right wing. As most refugees arrived in Italy and Greece due to their geographical location, it caused a rapid overextension of national capacities in these countries and facilitated the rise of populist parties that wanted to close the borders immediately. By implication, economically strong countries such as Germany had more resources to handle the refugees effectively and to manage negative impacts. Nevertheless, Germany might be a very exceptional case: with the history of National Socialism, the Nazi regime and the subsequent World War that it entailed, many Germans are concerned about right-wing ideology. This might be one of the reasons why the public backlash in Germany is so strong, and populist ideology that builds on classification of the people is often harshly condemned and categorically rejected.

Summarizing these findings, it can be observed that different social developments are often founded on the same basis: the conflict of a dominant majority and challenging minority. Even though this struggle may origin from different social and cultural conflicts, the goal of social change via civil resistance remains the same. In the three countries illustrated here, this situation has played out differently: In the USA, the civil resistance movements for racial equality has been largely shut down

by public and political backlash. In Germany, the right-wing minorities are still active, regardless of a massive public blowback, and the outcome of their resistance remains to be seen. In the UK, the former right-wing minority has been most successful, as conservative forces have taken over the political steering wheel. It has been identified that the success of minorities depends on several circumstances such as their internal organization and the social structures that surround them. Ultimately, it is recognized that medium-term social change, through norm contestation, is possible if the conditions are right. Therefore, there is still hope for any future civil resistance movements to establish equal structures in the USA; on the contrary, the right-wing groups in Germany might eventually take over and establish a class society with discriminatory practices.

However, these findings are not exclusive: more research needs to be done in order to construct a more comprehensive overview of civil resistance movements. As the scope of this thesis is limited, the paper focussed on two examples of resistance movements within one sub-set of social structures. In reality, these structures are manifold and more complex than it can be illustrated here. Additionally, civil resistance movements are not isolated cases, but they depend on both historic and contemporary factors that determine the social, cultural and political landscape. Only a thorough analysis of each case can produce reliable outcomes that may be generalized. For a comparison to other cases, the individual cases must be viewed with a critical lens, as they have unique social, economic and political structures.

In the future, it is likely that majorities and minorities will clash even more frequently. With almost unlimited access to information through internet and Social Media, minorities can create and share ideas even faster. With these simplified avenues to connect and collaborate, future civil resistance movements can improve their organizational structures in order to ensure wide-ranging spread and consistency. These tactics can also possibly spill over to other social groups and societies, where local agents are inspired to revolt as well, triggering new resistance movements.

A very recent example are the resurged protests after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. A white police officer knelt on Floyd's neck for over eight minutes, even though he repetitively claimed that he cannot breathe, resulting in his death. This incident has sparked the biggest Black Lives Matter protest to date, which spread over every US-American state as well as virtually all other continents in the forms of marching, demonstrating and rallying (Noor, 2020). On June 2nd, people all over the World posted a black image with the hashtag *#blackouttuesday* on their social media in honour of Floyd (Bakare & Davies, 2020), and multiple companies, celebrities and athletes with global reach and influence have spoken out against racism, contributed by donating money or even participated in local rallies themselves (Varley, 2020). At the same time, the aggressive and condescending response to the protests by law enforcement and president Trump sparked even more controversy, outrage and conflict around racial issues and the prevailing racial discrimination in the USA (Persio Lotto, 2020).

This massive support, however, is unprecedented to the movement. First steps towards more racial awareness and justice have been taken as a reaction to it (Noor, 2020), such as the indictment of the police offers involved in Floyd's death, and on first sight, the BLM movement has improved in terms of organization and spread, leading to drastically increased international pressure on Trump and law enforcement structures. Yet again, some demonstrations in the USA have turned into violence, destruction and looting, which could cost the movement the much-needed support by their fellow

countrymen; in the end, their choice at the ballot box will define how this struggle eventually plays out (Gillion, 2020).

Ultimately, it can be said that social structures are not set in stone, but they can be altered and they can be replaced. This process takes time, consistent efforts and ideally a social surrounding that is willing to learn and to change. At the moment, any race-related civil resistance movement will be confronted with public and political backlash in the USA, as their social structures are biased and so deeply influenced by racial perspectives. However, one defining moment still lies ahead of the ongoing civil resistance movements: the presidential elections in November 2020. As the outcome of this milestone remains unknown, only time can tell to what extent modern civil resistance movements such as Black Lives Matter can inspire fundamental and sustainable social change in the USA.

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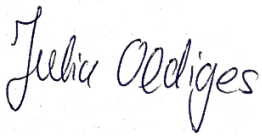
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Declaration of Academic Honesty

Hereby I declare on oath that I have written this Master thesis independently, without outside assistance and without making use of any other sources than stated in the thesis. All parts adopted literally or correspondingly from any publication have been acknowledged and fully cited.

Münster, 24/06/2020