



BACHELOR THESIS

“We can’t breathe” in these political structures - Political opportunity structures and anti-racism movements

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Affidavit

I, Rahel Bleile, certify that I have written this paper independently, using only the sources and aids indicated.

I further declare that the present work has not yet been submitted within the scope of any other examination procedure.

Münster, the 30th of June 2021




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Abstract

The death of George Floyd in May 2020 provoked anti-racism protests not only in the US but around the world. In France, George Floyd's death caused the resurgence of protests, demanding justice for Adama Traoré, a Black man who died in police custody in July of 2016. He has been referred to as the "French George Floyd" in newspapers. Given the relevance of institutional racism and police violence against Black people in both the US and France, it seems appropriate and necessary to examine the relationship between the political opportunity structures of the countries and the prominent anti-racism movements. The bachelor thesis deals with the research question *What explains the impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France?*. The question is answered in a comparative case study. Consulting political opportunity theory, it is argued that disruptive, assimilative, and alternative strategies employed by anti-racism movements as well as the political opportunity structures of the US and France explain variances in procedural, substantive, and public impacts. Using information obtained from semi-structured expert interviews, it is concluded that political opportunity structures and strategies do affect the countries' impacts but that other variables such as institutional racism also play a significant role in the impacts achieved by anti-racism movements. The small sample size decreases the external validity of the study and is likely to distort the findings. By employing multiple strategies to address the system as well as the community directly, and taking political opportunity structures of their countries into account, anti-racism movements around the world can most effectively address the topic of racism and police brutality.

“We can’t breathe” in these political structures -

Political opportunity structures and anti-racism movements

1. Introduction

Many Black people and People of Color around the world are affected by institutionalized racism. As the title of this thesis indicates, they cannot breathe in a system that systematically oppresses them, a system that does not offer them a chance to articulate their demands. The weight of the political structures not only metaphorically presses on the lungs of millions of people but also literally.

The killing of George Floyd by Michigan police officer Derek Chauvin caused tremendous protests in the US in 2020 (Joseph–Salisbury et al., 2021). The video showing Chauvin on Floyd’s neck, sparked protests not only in the US but around the world, including in Europe and notably in France. “I can’t breathe” were not only George Floyd’s last words. “I can’t breathe” were also the last words of Eric Garner, a Black man who was killed by police in 2014 (Morales et al., 2019). After Garner’s murder “We can’t breathe” became a chant during Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in the US (Williamson et al., 2018).

Floyd’s killing caused a resurgence in protests against police violence in France in 2020. Adama Traoré, a French Black man died in police custody in July 2016 and is referred to as the “French George Floyd” (Francois, 2021). In 2016 Adama’s sister, Assa Traoré, founded the “Justice for Adama campaign” (hereafter referred to as committee Adama). While Derek Chauvin was convicted of being “guilty of manslaughter, second-degree murder, and third-degree murder” and was sentenced to 22 ½ years in prison (Chappell, 2021) the committee Adama demands a trial in court for Adama and the conviction of the police officers responsible five years after his death (Francois, 2021). The circumstances of Adama Traoré’s and George Floyd’s death are different in that George Floyd’s murder was filmed and undeniably caused by the police officers. Until this day it is debated whether Adama Traoré died from pre-existing health conditions or whether his death was caused by the police (Okello, 2020). The simultaneous building and growth of the anti-racism protest movements, as well as the simultaneous public debate around the murders and trials and police violence in the US and France, are reasons for making a comparative case study. The

different reactions and influences of anti-racism movements in the respective countries, give rise to the following research question:

What explains the impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France?

In this thesis, it is argued that the political opportunity structure and strategies of social movements affect the procedural, substantive, and public impacts of social movements such as anti-racism movements. The different impacts are further specified in the theory section. The political system of each country has its own political structures, which determine in what way they participate, to what extent, and how many of their demands are implemented (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1992; Kriesi, 2004).

The political systems and institutions of both the US and France exhibit oppressive and racist structures. One of the reasons for which Black people and People of Color go to the streets to protest and build movements is institutional racism. Many have not been able to breathe in this structurally oppressive political system. According to political opportunity theory, social movements must adapt their strategies to the country's political opportunity structures to make procedural, substantive (Kitschelt, 1986), and public impacts. According to the theory, the political opportunity structures of countries also determine to what extent demanded policies will be implemented and to what extent anti-racism movements can have procedural, substantive (Kitschelt, 1986), and public impacts.

In a comparative case study, the political opportunity structures, as well as the anti-racism movements, are analyzed. The US and France lend themselves well to cross-national comparison because of their different political opportunity structures. The effect of the political opportunity structures of the countries, as well as of the strategies employed by their respective anti-racism movements that result from the political opportunity structure, on procedural, substantive, and public impacts of anti-racism movements, is expected to be different, according to political opportunity theory. The anti-racism movements that emerged in the countries similarly lend themselves for comparison because of their different backgrounds and histories but similar times of eruption of protests and movement building. Black Lives Matter protests and the Black Lives Matter movement which originated in the US spread to France in 2016 with the death of Adama Traoré and gained momentum in 2020 (Collins, 2020). Similarities and differences in the country's

structures can be observed. The produced knowledge can be of use for anti-racism movements around the world that aim to maximize their procedural, substantive, and public impacts by taking the political opportunity structure into account and by adapting their strategies.

Taking into consideration other factors that contribute to differences in the impacts such as different histories and traditions of racism, this thesis aims to find out the extent to which the political opportunity structure of the US and France affects procedural, substantive, and public impacts of anti-racism movements and the extent to which strategies of anti-racism movements affect impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France.

The research question is answered in a comparative case study using qualitative methods. In the background chapter, the history and traditions of racism and anti-racism movements in the US and France are briefly addressed. Then, the political opportunity theory is elaborated. First, the independent variables, namely the political opportunity structure and strategies, and then the dependent variable impacts are discussed, and hypotheses are made. Following the theory section, the methods section deals with the data collection and data analysis methods. In the analysis chapters, the following sub-questions are discussed:

1. *What structures do the political systems of the US and France exhibit?*
2. *What are the purposes of anti-racism movements in the US and France?*
3. *How do strategies of anti-racism movements influence the impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France?*
4. *How do the political opportunity structures of the US and France influence the impacts of anti-racism movements?*

In the conclusion and discussion section, the research question is debated and reflections on the thesis are made.

5. Background on racism and anti-racism movements in the US and France

The different histories and traditions of racism and anti-racism movements in the US and France must be considered when explaining the impacts of anti-racism movements of the countries. In the following sections, the history of racism in the US and France is shortly introduced alongside the prominent anti-racism movements of the respective countries.

2.1 Racism and anti-racism movements in the US

The US's history is marked by slave trading, Jim Crow laws, and the systemic racism which determines the lives of many Black US-Americans up until this day (Clayton, 2018). Institutional racism is for instance acted out in police violence against Black people in the US. Police violence in the US has a long tradition dating back to the times of slavery (REUS2, 17.05.2021). In the South of the US, slave catchers chased down runaways and prevented slave revolts (Waxman, 2017).

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s laid a foundation for US anti-racism movement structures nowadays. In 2013, after Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman, was not found guilty of second-degree murder and was acquitted of manslaughter charges, the Black Lives Matter movement was called into being by Patrice Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, three Black queer US women, (Clayton, 2018). Black Lives Matter was not well known until the killing of Michael Brown who was African-American, in Ferguson, Missouri. Starting as a hashtag, Black Lives Matter developed into a global anti-racism movement (Garza, 2020; Rickford, 2016).

In the US, the movement is decentralized and consists of numerous local Black Lives Matter groups (Garza, 2020). With the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 many protests erupted, and the movement gained momentum, not only in the US but in all parts of the world. With the trial of George Floyd's murderer, former police officer Derek Chauvin, and the almost simultaneous killing of Daunte Wright, another African-American by another police officer, protests erupted again in the US in 2021 (Griffith & Hampton, 2021). Many people feared that justice would not be served and that George Floyd's murderer would go without proper punishment like many white people and especially white police officers accused of violent crimes against Black people and People of Color before him (Griffith & Hampton, 2021). In June 2021 Derek Chauvin was sentenced to 22 ½ years in prison (Chappell, 2021).

2.2 Racism and anti-racism movements in France

Racism in France is characterized by its colonial history, the Algerian war, immigrants entering France after the end of the colonization, and the formation of segregated banlieues. Moreover, an anti-communitarian world view upholds the image of a non-racial society in France (Montague, 2013). Communitarianism in France is the distinction between ethnicities into separate

communities that, according to anti-communitarianism in France, prevents the integration of non-white people (Montague, 2013).

The “beur” movement of the 1980s which was mostly made up of second-generation immigrants of North African descent first challenged this anti-communitarian French society (Montague, 2013). The members of the “beur” movement consisted primarily of youth groups of the banlieues (Montague, 2013). They “advocated for an improved understanding of how they were victims of a growing racist environment that disrupted access to education and housing and that was especially prevalent in relations with the police” (Montague, 2013, p. 222). The “beur” movement lost influence because it was criticized for being exclusive. Critics say that the movement’s focus was on the ethnicity of the members. The movement did not represent the anti-communitarian values represented by the state (Montague, 2013).

With the decline of the “beur” movement, SOS Racism became one of the predominant French anti-racism associations (Montague, 2013). Its collaborations with leftist French parties, mainly the Socialist Party enabled SOS Racism far-reaching success (Montague, 2013). In comparison to the “beurs”, SOS Racism attracted not only a group of youth of a particular ethnicity from the banlieues, but it attracted youths of all origins and gained support from elites (Montague, 2013). The “beurs” “denounced SOS Racism’s anti-racist slogans as insufficient to address the structural mechanisms and historical antagonisms that oppressed and excluded postcolonial minority immigrant youth and rebuffed political overtures as cooption, but SOS Racism limited itself to a simple resonant moral message that tended to equate racism with the extreme right and was willing to work closely with Socialist ministers and the President’s top advisors” (Blatt, 1997, as cited in Montague, 2013, p. 222).

In 2005, riots in the banlieues of Paris and other French cities erupted after a police investigation that ended with the death of two French youths of Malian and Tunisian descent who were fleeing from the police (Sahlins, 2006). Anti-racism movements re-emerged after the 2005 riots supporting the view that racism is a problem in France that must be addressed (Montague, 2013).

In the wake of the death of Adama Traoré in 2016, protests flooded the streets of the French Republic. After a few months, the protests subsided and were revived in 2020 after the murder of

George Floyd. Protests all over France undertook the title for the protests “Black Lives Matter” which originates from the US.

In this section background information on racism and anti-racism movements in the US and France is delivered. The history and traditions of racism and anti-racism movements play a role in the extent to which impacts are made. According to political opportunity theory, political opportunity structures of countries also affect the extent to which impacts are made. In the next section, political opportunity theory is presented, and thereby the theoretical foundation of the thesis is elaborated.

6. Political opportunity theory

Political opportunity theory has been identified as one of the dominant social movement theories, alongside classical and resource mobilization theories (McAdam, 1999; Meyer, 2004; Moor & Wahlström, 2019).

Political opportunity structures of countries contribute to establishing how social movements such as anti-racism movements strategize to maximize their impacts. Despite the theory’s popularity and its application to various social movements in the last decades, theoretical definitions of political opportunity structures remain scarce. Instead, operational definitions have been given in most of the previous literature (Moor & Wahlström, 2019). Some define political opportunity structures as exogenous factors that influence social movements (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). Others define political opportunity structures as “options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them that depend on factors outside the mobilizing group” (Koopmans, 1999, p. 97). Political opportunity theory is a means to predict variance in the strategy, organization, mobilization, and impact of similar social movements across different time periods and different institutional contexts (Tarrow, 1988). The theory helps investigate the relationship between the mainstream institutional context of political systems and social movements (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). It assumes that social movements do not emerge, decide, strategize, and organize themselves in a vacuum. Rather, the theory assumes that the political-institutional context influences the social movement (Meyer, 2004). Political opportunity theorists argue that certain variables of the political structure advantage the emergence, mobilization, strategizing, and impact of social movements, while others disadvantage them (Meyer, 2004). Kriesi et al. emphasize that “social revolutions are

typically triggered by a political crisis that weakens the control on the population exercised by the political system” (Kriesi et al., 1992, p. 220).

Kitschelt (1986) shows that political opportunity structures can to some extent explain social movement’s choices for certain strategies that are most effective as well as the impacts of social movements on their political environments. Kitschelt analyzes the relationship between four democracies’ political opportunities, among them the US and France, and their effect on strategies and impacts on anti-nuclear movements (Kitschelt, 1986). According to Kitschelt (1986), political opportunity structures encompass input structures on the one hand, whose openness contributes to determining a social movement’s access to the political system, and output structures on the other (Kitschelt, 1986; Moor & Wahlström, 2019). The strength of output structures determines the effectiveness of implementing policies that are demanded by social movements (Kitschelt, 1986; Moor & Wahlström, 2019). Kitschelt distinguishes between open and closed political input structures and weak and strong output structures (Kitschelt, 1986).

In the following section, conceptualisations of these categories are delivered. Then, a conceptualization of strategies of social movements is presented. Consequently, the dependent variables procedural, substantive, and public impacts are discussed and hypotheses on the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables are established.

3.1 Independent variable: political opportunity structures

According to political opportunity theory, the impacts of social movements depend among other factors on the openness and strength of the political systems of states (Kitschelt, 1986). As illustrated in table 1, open states are defined by their availability for social movements to access the decision-making process at multiple points (Kitschelt, 1986). Closed states on the other hand are defined by exhibiting few access points for interest groups (see table 1). According to Kitschelt (1986), the openness of states increases when the legislative branch can develop and control policies independently of the executive (Kitschelt, 1986). This is the case because the legislature is typically publicly accountable and open to public scrutiny whereas only the heads of the executive experience this kind of public scrutiny (Kitschelt, 1986). Furthermore, the openness of states increases where intermediation between the executive and interest groups is facilitated

(Kitschelt, 1986). This intermediation facilitates access to the center of the decision-making process (Kitschelt, 1986).

Social movements' impacts are determined by more than simply the number of access points. Also, the capacity of political systems to act, or the strength of the state, influences the tactics and impacts of social movements. Strong states are characterized by their capacity to implement policies (see table 1) (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi, 2004). In comparison to weak states, they are centralized and hence possess concentrated power to carry out their decisions (see table 1) (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi, 2004). In contrast to federal states where tasks concerning the administration and implementation of policies are divided among the local, regional, and federal levels, the implementation of policies in a centralized state is more effective (Kitschelt, 1986). Centralization not only refers to administrative power but to economic resources as well. The more considerable the control of the centralized government over economic resources, the more limited are the resources which are available for interest groups (Kitschelt, 1986).

Table 1: Political opportunity structures

Political input structures		Political output structure	
Open	Closed	Weak	Strong
Multiple access points for interest groups.	Few access points for interest groups.	The state has a low capacity to act.	The state has a high capacity to act.

Kitschelt's conceptualization and the distinction between input and output structures have been criticized. Kriesi (2004) contends that the input phase of the policy cycle is inextricably linked to the output phase. Weakness and openness of political systems often correlate in practice, and so do strength and closedness. For instance, decentralization makes policy implementation not only less effective but also offers social movement actors a wide variety of access points (Kriesi, 2004). According to Kriesi (2004), the greater the degree of decentralization, the greater is the degree of openness and weakness of a political system. Hence, the political system is less effective, and its access to social movements is facilitated. Moreover, Kriesi (2004) analyzes that the greater the separation of power between the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary, as well as within the different branches, the greater the amount of openness and weakness of a political system (Kriesi,

2004). The number of points of formal access increases and the capacity of the state to act decreases with the strength of the separation of power between and within the different branches (Kriesi, 2004).

3.2 Independent variable: strategies of social movements

Strategies employed by social movements to impact the political system can be either assimilative, disruptive (Kitschelt, 1986), or alternative, depending on their political opportunity structures (see table 2). Assimilative strategies include “lobbying, petitioning government bodies through referendum campaigns and partisan involvement in electoral contests” (see table 2) (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 67). Disruptive and confrontational strategies involve demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience (see table 2) (Kitschelt, 1986). Alternative strategies constitute a new category. Alternative strategies are invented following the conduction of the interviews. They are strategies that do not fit into either strategy category of assimilative disruptive. With alternative strategies, social movements do not aim to influence established institutions but rather to circumvent established political institutions (see table 2). By employing alternative strategies, social movements try to affect the community directly. An alternative strategy is for instance educating students on the topic of racism. The category is further explained and illustrated with examples in the analysis part of the thesis. The different strategies and their definitions are summarized in table 2 and can be consulted in the course of reading the thesis.

Table 2: Strategies of social movements

Assimilative strategies	Disruptive strategies	Alternative strategies
In direct interaction with established institutions: lobbying, petitioning government bodies, partisan involvement in electoral contests, etc.	In indirect interaction with established institutions: demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience, etc.	In no interaction with established institutions: helping community members in need, education of the public, etc.

In this section and the section before this section, the independent variables strategies of social movements, and political opportunity structures are discussed. In the following section, the dependent variables procedural, substantive, and public impacts are discussed.

3.3 Dependent variable: impacts of social movements

The effects of political opportunity structures on the impacts of social movements remain understudied (Kriesi, 2004). In his article “Political opportunity structures and political protest: Anti-nuclear movements in four democracies” (1986) Kitschelt first maps out a conceptualization of the impacts of social movements. He distinguishes between procedural, substantive, and structural impacts. Procedural impacts “open new channels to participation to protest actors and involve their recognition as legitimate representatives of demands” (see table 3) (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 67). Substantive impacts are modifications of policies in response to protests (see table 3) (Kitschelt, 1986). Structural impacts are direct impacts on the political opportunity structure in response to the demands of social movements (Kitschelt, 1986). Structural impacts are not discussed in this thesis due to the limited amount of information that could be derived from the interviews. However, another category of impacts is introduced: public impacts. Public impacts played a significant role in the interviews, which is why this new category is included. Public impacts are impacts that are not procedural because they do not open new channels of participation in the decision-making process. They are also not substantive because they do not induce policy changes (or only indirectly). Public impacts are impacts that are not meant to affect established institutions but rather the community or the public directly. For instance, anti-racism movements can make educational impacts. In educating the public on the topic of racism and anti-racism, public impacts are made. This category is further illustrated with examples in the analysis section.

Table 3: Impacts of social movements

Procedural impacts	Substantive impacts	Public impacts
Open new channels to participate in the decision-making process until the interest group is viewed as legitimate actors.	Changes in the policy.	Impacts that affect the community directly.

In this section, the dependent variable procedural, substantive, and public impacts are discussed. In the subsequent sections the expected effects of the independent variables on these impacts, according to political opportunity theory, are discussed.

3.4 Hypotheses: political opportunity structures and impacts

Hypotheses on the effect of the political opportunity structure on impacts of social movements according to political opportunity are summarized in table 4. Kitschelt (1986) argues that procedural gains are high in open political systems as they offer more access points to social movements and as the likelihood increases that “some established political actors will ally themselves with the social movement in order to strengthen their own position with the newcomers” (see table 4) (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 67). According to the political opportunity theory, this is less likely to be the case in political systems with closed structures where the political elite makes decisions, not taking into account interest groups (Kitschelt, 1986).

According to Kitschelt (1986), in order for substantive gains to be made, political institutions and processes ought to be open and have high capacities to implement policies (see table 4). In practice, a combination of open and strong systems does not occur often (Kriesi, 2004). When a political system is closed and strong, a limited amount of policy reforms is initiated because access to the decision-making process is impeded (Kitschelt, 1986). In weak political regimes, policy reform is least likely to be found, be it open or closed, because the regime has little capacity to implement reforms (Kitschelt, 1986).

As explained earlier, public impacts circumvent political structures and institutions and affect the community directly. It is retrieved from the interviews that public impacts are more likely to be achieved in weak regimes than in strong regimes (see table 4). A possible explanation for that finding is that social movements try to circumvent cumbersome implementation processes that do not lead to policies. The finding is analyzed and discussed in the analysis and discussion sections.

Table 4: Hypotheses: political opportunity structures and impacts

Procedural impacts	Substantive impacts	Public impacts
High in systems with open structures.	High in systems with open and strong structures.	High in systems with weak structures.

In this section, hypotheses on the effect of the political opportunity structure on the impacts of social movements are made. In the next section, hypotheses on the effect of strategies of social movements on the impacts of social movements are made.

3.5 Hypotheses: strategies and impacts

The effect of the political opportunity structure on strategies, hence using strategies as a dependent variable has been studied in the literature extensively. Kitschelt (1986) points out that assimilative strategies are employed by social movements that operate in open and weak or strong political systems. He reasons that there are multiple access points in open regimes which is why social movements try to affect the political system through established institutions.

According to Kitschelt (1986), disruptive strategies are applied by social movements that operate in closed and strong or weak political systems. Social movements seek to influence the political system from outside established political institutions.

The political opportunity theory is extended by introducing a new strategy category. Strategies that could not be categorized as assimilative or disruptive are categorized as alternative strategies. Social movements that employ assimilative strategies do not try to influence established institutions (at least not directly). Rather, they seek to influence the public. Derived from the information of the interviews, it can be assumed that assimilative strategies are more likely to be applied in systems with weak and closed political structures. In these structures, it is less likely for social movements to enter established politics as well as to see changes in policy in these political systems. Social movements that employ alternative strategies try to circumvent these weak and closed political systems and make direct changes in the communities. Hypotheses on the effects of the political opportunity structure on strategies of social movements are summarized in table 5.

Table 5: Hypotheses: strategies and political opportunity structures

Assimilative strategies	Disruptive strategies	Alternative strategies
Employed in systems with open and weak/strong structures.	Employed in systems with closed and strong/weak structures.	Employed in systems with closed and weak structures.

The effectiveness of strategies remains understudied. Social movements adapt themselves to the political structures in which they are situated and employ strategies that are most effective within the opportunities the political structures offer. Hypotheses on the effectiveness of strategies are summarized in table 6. It can be assumed that concerning procedural impacts, assimilative strategies are most effective in systems with open structures, no matter whether they are weak or strong. Concerning substantive impacts, procedural impacts are most effective in systems with closed and strong structures. Concerning public impacts, it is derived from the interviews that alternative strategies are most effective in systems with closed and weak structures. According to the interviewees, disruptive strategies are also effective in making public impacts in political systems, especially in systems with closed and weak structures. Disruptive strategies such as protests and acts of civil disobedience call the attention of the public and raise awareness of topics dear to the social movement. This is discussed in detail in the analysis section.

Table 6: Hypotheses: strategies and impacts

Procedural impacts	Substantive impacts	Public impacts
Assimilative strategies most effective in systems with open and weak/strong structures.	Disruptive strategies most effective in systems with closed and strong/weak structures.	Alternative strategies most effective in systems with closed and weak structures. Disruptive strategies most effective in systems with closed and weak structures.

7. Methods

To answer the explanatory research question *What explains the impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France?* a comparative case study is executed. This research design presents itself

as adequate as the research question addresses two cases, the US and France. In the thesis, these two cases, or more specifically, their opportunity structures as well as the strategies of the anti-racism movements and their impacts, are analyzed and compared.

The first part of the analysis consists of the comparison between the political opportunity structures of the US and France. The sub-question guiding this part of the analysis is:

What structures do the political systems of the US and France exhibit?

The theoretical concepts of political opportunity theory are used in order to categorize the political systems of the countries. The qualitative content analysis method is applied.

The second part of the analysis consists of the comparison between the effect of the political opportunity structures of the US and France and strategies of anti-racism movements on impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France.

Data from semi-structured expert interviews with actors from anti-racism movements in the US and France are used. Through this qualitative method, a deeper understanding of the interaction between political opportunity structures and anti-racism movements of the respective countries is generated. Moreover, this relatively open method allows actors of anti-racism movements to tell their narratives.

They were asked general questions about the anti-racist movement they participate in; questions about its strategies, the effectiveness of its strategies, and its impacts. They were encouraged to elaborate on their perceptions of the anti-racism movements they are active in. The questions were similar for each of the interviewees but adjusted depending on the delivered answers. Qualitative research that investigates the narratives of actors of social movements remains understudied (Moor & Wahlström, 2019). This research aims to fill this gap in the literature.

Concerning internal validity, it is difficult to measure what role other factors play that influence impacts of anti-racism movements. Here, it must be noted that it is not the aim of the research to determine factors that have the greatest effect on impacts. Rather, it is to gain an in-depth understanding of what effect the political opportunity structure and strategies have on anti-racism movements while considering the opinions of anti-racism movement actors.

Two respondents from the US, respondent 1 from the US (REUS1) and respondent 2 from the US (REUS2), and two respondents from France, respondent 1 from France (REFR1) and respondent 2 from France (REFR2), are selected for the interviews¹. The interviewees' names are anonymized as well as the city name of one of the interviewees in order to prevent them from being harmed in any way through this research. The relatively small sample is a threat to external validity. It is debatable whether the interviewees are representative of all anti-racism movements in the US and France. This is however not the claim of this research. Rather, the research aims to generate an understanding of the impacts induced by the anti-racism movements in which the interviewees are active.

The interviewees were contacted via social media. External reliability is ensured by purposefully selecting interviewees based on their knowledge of anti-racism movements in the US and France. They are informed from personal experience and are experts in the field as they are participating in anti-racism movements themselves. A threat to external reliability depicts the fact that no member of the committee Adama could be found for the interview due to the language barrier. As is explained later on in the research more in-depth, the committee Adama is an important anti-racism movement in France.

A threat to internal reliability constitutes the language and culture barrier. Interviewees might not be able to express what they mean or what they said might be interpreted differently by me. This is avoided by sending the interviewees the interpretations of their answers and asking them to correct them if necessary. The interviewee's answers are complemented using data from official (government) documents, and newspaper articles.

The interviewees were informed about the potential risks of the interview beforehand. Risks could include psychological stress due to disturbing and stressful topics such as racism and police brutality. The interviewees have given their consent to talk about potentially stressful topics. Moreover, the interviewees have permitted me to use the obtained information for this thesis. They were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time without explanation or justification.

¹ The transcribed interviews are to be found in the data appendix.

The obtained information from the interviews was transcribed and then categorized into categories that reflect the sub-questions of the analysis part. The sub-questions are:

1. *What are the purposes of anti-racism movements in the US and France?*
2. *How do strategies of anti-racism movements influence the impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France?*
3. *How do the political opportunity structures of the US and France influence the impacts of anti-racism movements?*

In the following sections, the previously explained methods are applied. First, the political opportunity structures of the US and France are analyzed and the first sub-question that is not related to the interviews is answered. Subsequently, the purposes of the anti-racism movements the respondents are active in are examined. Then, the effectiveness of strategies and the effect of the political opportunity of the countries on the impacts of anti-racism movements is analyzed making use of qualitative content analysis.

8. Political opportunity structures of the US and France

In the next sections, the sub-question *What structures do the political systems of the US and France exhibit?* is discussed.

5.1 The political opportunity structure of the US

The US displays a federal system. According to the 10th amendment of the US constitution “the powers not delegated to the US by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people” (Sbragia, 2009, p. 240). Besides state administrations, thousands of other local governments have organized themselves and have executive powers in the US (Sbragia, 2009, p. 240). These thousands of local governments represent multiple access points that allow interest groups such as social movements to enter political institutions. Resources and power are distributed among them which decreases the capacity of the central government to act. The US’s decentralization causes the US to appear as a rather open political system with a low capacity to implement policies.

Furthermore, the US is the closest approximation to a presidential system compared to other political systems (Shugart, 2009). The separation of power between the executive, legislative, and judiciary was enshrined in the Federalist Papers of the Founding Fathers of the US (Shugart, 2009). The executive and legislative are independent of and separate from each other (Shugart, 2009). Encroachment of one branch into the other is prevented. Both the President of the US and the members of the House of Representatives are elected directly (Shugart, 2009). Unlike in parliamentary systems, in presidential systems such as the one in the US, the government cannot be voted out of office by the parliament. The judiciary in the US has a strong position because of judicial review it can execute and stands in opposition to the executive and the legislative (Pasquino, 1998). According to Kriesi (2004), the separation of powers causes the US's structures to be open and weak. Separation of power between and within the branches facilitates accessibility from interest groups and decreases the capacity of the government to act (Kriesi, 2004).

5.2 The political opportunity structure of France

The French state exhibits a high capacity to implement policies. De Tocqueville classified France “as a quasi-ideal case of a centralized state” that has the power to assert itself more than 150 years ago (De Tocqueville, 1856, as cited in Thoenig, 2005). Since the introduction of a decentralization policy by President Mitterand in 1981 France is not the archetype of a centralized state that it once used to be (Thoenig, 2005). In 2004 the second wave of decentralization hit the French Republic and further undermined the strength of the French state (Clift, 2008). The centrality of the French state is decreasing. However, in comparison to other states such as the US, France can still be considered a central state with a powerful capacity to act and implement policies (Clift, 2008).

In France, interest group pressure is traditionally viewed as being illegitimate, according to McCauley (McCauley, 2017). “Elected governments are mandated with the will of the people directly, without the intermediation of other interests” (Hazareesingh, 2002, as cited in McCauley, p.422). This causes the French political system to exhibit closed and strong political structures. However, McCauley (2017) argues that the image of France as a state that does not pay attention to interest groups no longer corresponds to reality. Wilson (2008, as cited in McCauley, 2017) reasons that the contemporary French state allows and even supports the existence of tolerated interest groups. Interest groups with radical demands or interest groups with a lot of influence,

however, experience the same exclusion as traditionally expected from the French state (McCauley, 2017).

Due to its semi-presidential system, the powers between and within the different branches are not completely separated in France as is the case in the US-American political system. According to Duverger, a semi-presidential system consists of three elements: “(1) the President of the republic is elected by universal suffrage, (2) he possesses quite considerable powers, (3) he has opposite him, however a Prime Minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power and can stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them.” (Duverger, 1980). France’s executive is two-headed, consisting of the President and the Prime Minister (Elgie & Grossman, 2017). The Prime Minister is instructed with a dual responsibility towards the National Assembly (as is usual in parliamentary political systems) and towards the President (Elgie & Grossman, 2017). Under cohabitation, (which occurs when the President is from a different party than the elected majority in the National Assembly and the Prime Minister) the President is more dependent on the parliament than when the President and the Prime Minister are from the same political party (Elgie & Grossman, 2017). In 2005, a reform that makes cohabitation less likely was passed. Hence, the strength of the President was reinforced. In 2008, the strength of the National Assembly was reinforced regarding legislative agenda-setting (Elgie & Grossman, 2017). Moreover, the government is responsible to the parliament but can also dissolve it (European Committee of the Regions, n.d.). The judiciary in France is not as strong as the executive, and unlike the judiciary in the US, court decisions do not often result in policy changes (Hayward & Wright, 2002; Pasquino, 1998). The weak judiciary in France originates from de Gaulle who aimed “to minimize ‘external’ interference by either the elected legislature or an independent judiciary” (Hayward & Wright, 2002, p. 5). According to Kitschelt (1986) and Kriesi (2004) the interdependency of the executive and legislative, and the executive’s relative independence of the executive to the judiciary cause France to exhibit strong and closed structures.

To summarize, France is considered to exhibit rather closed and strong political structures while tending to incrementally open and weaken its structures. Especially the closedness of the French political system can be called into question because interest groups are increasingly involved and included in institutional processes (McCauley, 2017). The US on the other hand exhibits rather weak and open political structures.

As summarized in table 7, the weak and open political opportunity structure of the US is expected to explain the procedural impacts of anti-racism movements in the US. The closed political opportunity structure of France on the other hand is expected to explain why anti-racism movements in France are less likely to make procedural impacts than anti-racism movements in the US. Anti-racism movements in France are more likely to make substantive impacts than anti-racism movements in the US due to France's closed political structures. Furthermore, it can be derived from the interviews that both, anti-racism movements from the US and from France are likely to make public impacts. This can be explained by the closed political structures of the French system and the weak political structures of the US system.

Table 7: Hypotheses: applying political opportunity structures and impacts

	Procedural impacts	Substantive impacts	Public impacts
Political opportunity structure of the US	Yes.	No	Yes.
Political opportunity structure of France	No.	Yes.	Yes.

The effectiveness of strategies of anti-racism movements can be expected making use of political opportunity structures. Assimilative strategies are expected to be most effective concerning procedural impacts in the US. Disruptive strategies are expected to be most effective in France concerning substantive impacts. Alternative strategies are expected to be most effective in the US concerning public impacts. Moreover, concerning public impacts, disruptive impacts are expected to make public impacts in the US as well as in France. The hypotheses are illustrated in table 8.

Table 8: Hypotheses: applying strategies and impacts

Procedural impacts	Substantive impacts	Public impacts
Assimilative strategies are most effective in the US.	Disruptive strategies are most effective in France.	Alternative strategies are most effective in the US and France. Disruptive strategies are most effective in France and the US.

9. Purposes of anti-racism movements in the US and France

In this section, the interviewees as well as the purposes of the anti-racism movements they are active in are presented. The sub-question *What are the purposes of anti-racism movements in the US and France?* is discussed.

6.1 Anti-racism movements in the US

REUS1 joined the local group of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles in early high school, around 2014. As a person of color in LA, she thinks it is important to be part of an anti-racist organization (REUS1, 15.05.2021). According to REUS1 Black Lives Matter is about more than just police brutality. She asserts that Black Lives Matter does not equal anti-whiteness. Rather, it means equality and justice for all lives. As Black people and People of Color experience racism daily in the US and have been for hundreds of years, it is time to focus on them for the moment (REUS1, 15.05.2021).

REUS2 founded Anti-Racist Communities (ARC) in July or August of 2020 (REUS2, 17.05.2021). After the murder of George Floyd, she spoke up about racism on social media, went to protests, and met people who were also furious about the injustices happening to Black people and People of Color in the US (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Growing up in a white-dominated small town with around 45.000 inhabitants near Seattle, which she did not feel represented by, she “decided to create a space where people can fight for our rights and just be a community” (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Starting as Black Lives Matter [city name], it changed into Anti-Racist Communities after being accused of racism by supporters of the “All Lives Matter” slogan, people who believe that just focusing on Black lives is racist. Moreover, REUS2 contends that, though “we believe that Black lives matter, of course, but it’s also, it was bigger than that, at that point” (REUS2, 17.05.2021). It was also about building a community and about people helping each other (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Within the first few days, over 200 people joined the community. Though still struggling with the diversity of the group (most people in ARC are white, which reflects the city’s racial makeup), ARC has reached 500 Facebook members and at least 200 active members (REUS2, 17.05.2021).

6.2 Anti-racism movements in France

REFR2 is part of Black Lives Matter Sciences Po, an anti-racist association in the social and political science university Sciences Po (REFR2, 23.05.2021). Realizing that the topic of racism is not well addressed by the administration as well as students, a second-year student, founded Black Lives Matter Sciences Po in 2016. Officials of the US Black Lives Matter movement agreed to have their name in a student organization on the French university campus (REFR2, 23.05.2021). Black Lives Matter Sciences Po also organized some events with the committee Adama, the committee behind the protests and movement around Assa Traoré. According to REFR2, the committee Adama is the main pillar of the Black Lives Matter movement in France (REFR2, 23.05.2021). REFR2 herself participated in a protest, organized by Assa Traoré in the summer of 2020 (REFR2, 23.05.2021). REFR1, from SOS Racism, accuses the committee Adama of being homophobic and antisemitic.

REFR1 works in a local committee of the organization SOS Racism (REFR1, 17.05.2021). He is part of the local group Paris 19th arrondissement SOS Racism which is closely linked to SOS Racism Paris. REFR1 explained that the local group tries to help reduce racism nationally. SOS Racism was founded in 1984 (REFR1, 17.05.2021). The organization is subsidized by the government (REFR1, 17.05.2021). SOS Racism forms an integral part of government bodies and is consulted by established French political institutions (REFR1, 17.05.2021). REFR2 does not have information about SOS Racism but calls another anti-racism organization close to the government, la LICRA (International League Against Racism and Antisemitism) the “puppet of the government” (REFR2, 23.05.2021). Also, the committee Adama invited and then disinvited SOS Racism to an Adama Traoré protest because, as REFR1 assumes, the organization is viewed as being “too close to the government” (REFR1, 17.05.2021). According to REFR1, SOS Racism’s legitimacy is questioned by newer groups such as the committee Adama because of the organization’s anti-communitarian way of thinking (REFR1, 17.05.2021). SOS Racism contends that the color of skin does not make the entirety of someone’s identity and that one should not be judged by it (REFR1, 17.05.2021). REFR1 thinks that everybody who wants to help in the fight against racism should join SOS Racism (REFR1, 17.05.2021).

Hence, anti-racism movements in France are torn into two streams. One stream is consciously let into established institutions by the state. SOS Racism is part of this stream. The committee Adama on the other hand is not part of established institutions.

7. Explaining impacts with strategies

In this section the sub-question *How do strategies of anti-racism movements influence impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France?* is discussed. First, the strategies employed by the different anti-racism movements are presented. Then, the effects of the strategies on procedural and substantive impacts as well as public impacts are analyzed and summarized in table 9.

7.1 Describing strategies of anti-racism movements in the US

Concerning strategies, both interviewees from the US state that they organized and participated in protests (REUS1, 15.05.2021; REUS2, 17.05.2021). Anyone in ARC, the organization REUS2 founded, could organize a rally (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Another strategy employed by ARC is to present anti-racist policy plans to the city council and the local police departments (REUS2, 17.05.2021). One request of a policy plan is for the city council to hire a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) staff member who assesses every decision the city council makes through an equitable lens (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Furthermore, the police's budget spending is critically analyzed by one of the teams of ARC (REUS2, 17.05.2021). ARC met with the police chief and talked about how the funds could be reallocated in a way that would benefit the community (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Moreover, some members of ARC are running for the city council and ARC is supporting their campaigns (REUS2, 17.05.2021).

Furthermore, anti-racism movements in the US have stopped solely relying on top-down established institutions to change policies. They are more likely to develop bottom-up strategies now. REUS1 says that politicians are “gonna do what they want so we have to change, we’re doing it in our community instead.” (REUS1, 15.05.2021). For instance, ARC’s founder contends that “if there was a community member in need, who needed a little bit of financial support, or moral support or needed to find a job, we would hook them up with all of our connections” (REUS2, 17.05.2021).

Protesting is a disruptive strategy while interacting with the city council and police department are categorized as assimilative strategies. Alternative strategies that circumvent the government are neither disruptive nor assimilative. They aim to make a change, not through policy but the community. How effective are the different strategies according to the interviewees?

7.2 Effectiveness of strategies of anti-racism movements in the US

It is expected that disruptive strategies are not as effective in making public impacts in the US as in France because protests in the US are not faced with as much repression as protests in France and media attention is smaller. REUS2 however states: “When we had events and protests and rallies and marches and vigils, it would spread” (REUS2, 17.05.2021). According to her, raising community awareness is the main purpose of protesting, rallying, and marching. It is an effective way to reach the people and address the topic of racism in a city that is made up of a white majority (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Also in the experience of REUS1, protests are most likely to be effective in being heard by the public (REUS1, 15.05.2021). Furthermore, REUS2 explains that in her experience disruptive strategies such as protests are not effective in making procedural and substantive gains “because all you’re doing is pissing off the government” (REUS2, 17.05.2021). In contradicting REUS2 however, it can also be argued that disruptive strategies can indirectly make procedural and substantive impacts. In a democracy, the public elects, and part of the public becomes the elected and can open new channels of participation to new actors or induce policy change.

According to political opportunity theory, in the US, assimilative strategies are expected to be more effective in making procedural impacts than substantive and public impacts. REUS2 verifies the theory: The government and police officials have been listening to the demands of ARC (procedural impacts). However, the implementation of the demands leaves a lot to be desired (substantive impacts) (REUS2, 17.05.2021). For instance, a bill was passed in December of 2020 that included a DEI staff member in the budget for 2021 to 2022 (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Instead of offering a full-time position, as demanded by ARC, the council agreed on a part-time position for the DEI staff member. Moreover, the city council still has not hired a DEI staff member in May of 2021 (REUS2, 17.05.2021). In the opinion of REUS2, the local government was simply trying to “get us off their back” by agreeing to have a DEI staff member in the city council (REUS2, 17.05.2021).

According to REUS1, politicians in the US cannot be trusted (REUS1, 15.05.2021). For her, change must come from the communities and not from established institutions (REUS1, 15.05.2021). Disruptive and alternative strategies are more effective than assimilative ones in attaining public impacts. Attaining procedural and substantive impacts is not her goal because the political system of the US “has let us down constantly” (REUS1, 15.05.2021). REUS2 too contends that ARC has put a pause on trying to change policies (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Their focus is now more on changing “the hearts and minds of the community” (REUS2, 17.05.2021). ARC wants to focus on employing alternative and disruptive strategies to make public impacts. According to REUS2, working on policy implementation was frustrating because ARC could barely reach anything, and “it was work, work, work, policy, policy, all this depressing stuff, all this hate. We've had a few people, actually been killed by the police”. Moreover, according to REUS1, the US is “built on a racist foundation” (REUS1, 15.05.2021). Because the system and its established parties and politicians are inherently racist, disruptive and alternative strategies are most effective in the US in making public impacts (REUS1, 15.05.2021).

The weak political system of the US combined with institutional racism that infiltrates every institution of the US weakens the advantages that open systems typically offer to social movements for anti-racism movements. The anti-racism movements in which REUS1 and REUS2 are active, have moved to alternative strategies that are neither assimilative nor disruptive. They have developed alternative strategies that bypass the political structures to reach the community directly which they view as being more effective. Still, according to the interviewees, disruptive strategies are an important strategy; not to reach politicians but to reach the public.

REUS2 concludes that in her opinion, there are multiple ways of fighting racism. Assimilative strategies help to reach policy changes in the US while disruptive strategies help raise awareness among politicians and the community (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Alternative strategies help reach the community directly (REUS2, 17.05.2021).

In the following section, the effect of strategies of anti-racism movements on the impacts of anti-racism movements in France is discussed.

7.3 Describing strategies of anti-racism movements in France

SOS Racism holds educational talks about racism and antisemitism as well as other forms of discrimination in schools (REFR1, 17.05.2021). Moreover, the anti-racism organization educates students on racist terror on social media and executes testing operations (REFR1, 17.05.2021). For instance, during testing operations, a group of Black people, a group of Arab people, and a group of white people go undercover into a store. It is tested whether, if, and if yes which group the security of the store follows. This is done to statistically represent discrimination in France (REFR1, 17.05.2021). Statistics on the amount of racism in clubs, camping sites, housing markets, and more are produced by SOS Racism (REFR1, 17.05.2021). Besides that, public agents from SOS Racism work with state administrations to reduce racism within public administrations in France. The organization forms an integral part of government bodies and is consulted by them (REFR1, 17.05.2021). Moreover, SOS Racism helps victims of racism find counsel and defends them in court. SOS Racism also organizes and attends anti-racism protests (REFR1, 17.05.2021).

The committee Adama primarily organizes protests. It demands the prosecution of the officers that killed Adama Traoré as well as the structural rethinking of the police system. REFR2 explains: “I’ve been to protests but, I mean, it’s really difficult because it’s quite intense. Like, the French way of dealing with protest is really, really, really dangerous. So, when you go to protests it’s literally risking your life because you can die” (REFR2, 23.05.2021).

SOS Racism employs rather assimilative and alternative strategies. The organization also joins protests and therefore also employs disruptive strategies (REFR1, 17.05.2021). The committee Adama on the other hand employs rather disruptive strategies (REFR2, 23.05.2021). There is no information about whether the committee Adama employs assimilative or alternative strategies.

7.4 Effectiveness of strategies of anti-racism movements in France

Political opportunity theory suggests that disruptive strategies are most effective in making substantive impacts in France. Unlike what political opportunity suggests, substantive and procedural impacts have been reached by SOS Racism by employing rather assimilative strategies. For instance, the organization talks with the French administration about racism and other discriminations and is consulted by government bodies on the topic of racism and discrimination (REFR1, 17.05.2021). Public gains could be reached by SOS Racism through educating students

on different forms of discrimination or by carrying out testing operations in order to make racism in France visible (REFR1, 17.05.2021). Thus, by employing alternative strategies, public impacts are made by SOS Racism.

When questioned about the effectiveness of SOS Racism's strategies, REFR1 (member of SOS Racism) admits "We don't have much power here, we don't have much leverage" (REFR1, 17.05.2021). In contrast, "Assa Traoré has much more" (REFR1, 17.05.2021). In his opinion, disruptive strategies are most effective when it comes to being listened to by the public (REFR1, 17.05.2021) (although alternative strategies do affect the public as well, e.g. educating the public). Also, unlike what political opportunity theory suggests, REFR1 contends that disruptive strategies the committee Adama employs have not led to substantive impacts (REFR1, 23.05.2021).

In the fall of 2020, a draft law was initiated prohibiting the filming of police officers in France. People who broke the law would have to pay 45.000€ and would have to spend a year in prison (France 24, 2020). Protests erupted in Paris and other French cities (France 24, 2020). Among the protesters were yellow vest supporters as well as other families and friends of people who suffered from police brutality (Deutsche Welle, 2020). Protesters feared that victims of police brutality, who are often People of Color, Black people, or people from deprived neighborhoods would be unable to document and report police misconduct. The draft law was dropped and said to be completely rewritten in response to protests. As political opportunity suggests, disruptive strategies can hence affect substantive impacts in France. That happens during a political crisis when a lot of people come together to protest.

No information was delivered by the interviewees about the effect of disruptive and alternative strategies on procedural impacts and the effect of alternative strategies on substantive strategies. It can be assumed, however, that neither groups such as the committee Adama nor SOS Racism have induced procedural impacts through disruptive or alternative strategies, or substantive impacts through alternative strategies.

REFR1 concludes by stating that no matter where it comes from and what strategies are employed, what matters is that racism in France is reduced. In his opinion, the fight against racism should not be played down to a dispute among anti-racism movement streams. Instead of focusing on the dispute, everyone should join the fight against racism (REFR1, 17.05.2021).

Table 9: Strategies and impacts

	Procedural impacts	Substantive impacts	Public impacts
Disruptive	US: not effective. France: assumed to not be effective.	US: not effective. France: effective.	US: effective. France: effective.
Assimilative	US: effective. France: effective for groups close to established political institutions.	US: not effective. France: effective for groups close to established political institutions.	US: not effective. France: not effective.
Alternative	US: not effective. France: assumed to not be effective.	US: not effective. France: assumed to not be effective.	US: effective. France: effective for groups close to established political institutions.

8. Explaining impacts with the political opportunity structure

In this section the last sub-question *How do the political opportunity structures of the US and France influence the impacts of anti-racism movements?* is discussed. A comparison between the effect of the political opportunity structure of the US on impacts and the political opportunity structure of France on impacts is summarized in table 9.

8.1 Effect of the political opportunity structure on impacts in the US

The openness of the US regime's structures grants anti-racism movements the opportunity to make procedural gains. The fact that ARC initiated a bill for a DEI staff member exemplarily shows the openness of the political system of the US. Another example of procedural gains induced by ARC in the US is that local politicians were open to talking to ARC members (REUS2, 17.05.2021). The organization interacted with the city council and the police about questions such as why the budget for the police is as high as it is (REUS2, 17.05.2021).

The government spends its money on new police cars when, according to ARC, the money is needed in the community (REUS2, 17.05.2021). ARC demands that in case someone in the community has a mental breakdown due to financial issues and steals, not the police are called but a mental health worker (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Demands like that have not been debated in the local government because it would mean the structural rethinking of an entire system. In the opinion of REUS2 and REUS1, the structural rethinking of the system is exactly the right point to start because the foundation of the US system is saturated by racism (REUS2, 17.05.2021). REUS2 recounts that “Whenever we would have meetings with the city or the police I would get dismissed. I wouldn’t even get invited to some of these meetings” because she is not white (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Institutional racism plays an essential part in what degree substantive, as well as procedural impacts, can be made in the US.

In April 2021, former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin “was found guilty of manslaughter, second-degree murder and third-degree murder in the death of George Floyd” (Bogel-Burroughs & Arango, 2021). REUS1 reports on the trial of Derek Chauvin: “People were so afraid of him not getting convicted, even though the whole world saw the murder” (REUS1, 15.05.2021). Following the murder of George Floyd, several counties in Michigan have “adopted resolutions that declared racism a public health crisis” (Black Lives Matter, 2020, p. 32). The resolution could be a precedent for anti-racism policies. In Indiana, the first Community Police Review Board was established (Black Lives Matter, 2020). In other US-American cities, city councils are successfully pressured to replace the police with “community-based, unarmed emergency responders in instances of non-violent calls for service” (Black Lives Matter, 2020, p. 32). As proposed by political opportunity theory, policy change is often induced by a political crisis that weakens the control of the state over the population (Kriesi et al., 1992). The murder of George Floyd can be considered a political crisis and the open political structure of the US responded to the murder of George Floyd with policy change. Nonetheless, the weakness of the US’s system decreases the likelihood of implementing federal policies. Rather, change comes from local governments.

The fact that the position offered to a DEI staff member would only be a part-time job, and not a full-time job as demanded by ARC shows either how little the local government wants to invest in a DEI staff due to institutional racism or how little money they have. REUS2 asserts that she

“personally, and a lot of the other chairs no longer have like the bandwidth of working on policy and constantly getting shut down. It’s been really tough, it’s been really, really hard, I’ll be honest” (REUS2, 17.05.2021). Inducing policy change in the US is impeded by the weak US regime and institutional racism. Anti-racism movement actors become frustrated because policy change is not initiated (REUS2, 17.05.2021). In consequence, they lose trust in politicians (REUS1, 15.05.2021).

Due to the US’s weak and inherently racist political system, anti-racism movements in the US have moved from trying to reach established institutions to trying to reach and help the community directly and hence make public impacts. For instance, ARC has helped a community member in need and supported them in finding housing and a job (REUS2, 17.05.2021). For now, the organization is circumventing established institutions and REUS2 believes that established political institutions will eventually follow the community because lastly, in a democratic country such as the US, the people make politics, policies, and polities (REUS2, 17.05.2021). REUS2 says, “more AOCs are gonna pop up everywhere” (REUS2, 17.05.2021). More and more people who care about anti-racism like the Democratic congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who was elected on a progressive agenda, are going to be in politics and replace racist politicians (REUS2, 17.05.2021).

To summarize, the US’s openness increases the likelihood for procedural gains to be made while the US’s weakness combined with institutional racism decreases the likelihood for substantive impacts to be made. Moreover, the weakness of the political structures of the US increases the likelihood of anti-racism movements making public impacts. REUS1 says: “There’s a difference between hearing it and acting on it. You know, and actually trying to do something on it. And I honestly think they’re not gonna do something on it” (REUS1, 15.05.2021).

In the following section, the effect of the political opportunity structure of France on the impacts of anti-racism movements is discussed.

8.2 Effect of the political opportunity structure on impacts in France

SOS Racism has won court cases against big companies such as L’Oréal Paris (REFR1, 17.05.2021). However, as the judiciary in France is not as strong as the executive, court cases do not often reach changes in policy and substantive impacts remain scarce (Hayward & Wright, 2002;

Pasquino, 1998). Nonetheless, SOS Racism has induced policy change due to its close ties to government bodies and is being consulted on the topic of racism (REFR1, 17.05.2021).

SOS Racism educates police, students, and the community in general (REFR1, 17.05.2021). The organization demands policies that enforce anti-discrimination education, something that they have been doing since their foundation by themselves (REFR1, 17.05.2021). The anti-racism organization makes procedural and public gains. Unlike predicted by political opportunity theory, the organization makes procedural impacts in a closed and strong system. The French political structures have opened themselves up to this particular group. Hence, the political structures of France are not completely closed off to interest groups. Especially not-too-radical interest groups such as SOS Racism are allowed to enter established political institutions and participate in political decision-making (Montague, 2013). SOS Racism's public impacts can be explained by the, exclusively for the organization, relatively open French political structure. The openness allows the organization to be subsidized by the French government. It uses these resources to make public impacts and help the community directly, for instance by educating them or representing victims of racism in court.

More radical movements such as the committee Adama, barely have allies among the government. "Allies are a really small minority because the government is really, really fighting hard to stop Assa Traoré" (REFR2, 23.05.2021). Assa Traoré has been put on trial in 2021 for publicly naming the policemen she accuses of killing her brother (REFR2, 23.05.2021). The strong state is doing everything it can to silence Assa Traoré and the committee Adama (REFR2, 23.05.2021). Substantive impacts are therefore difficult to achieve for these radical movements because the strong French state tries to keep those movements out of established institutions. Being repressed, however, gives these radical movements a voice that is spread by the media to the public and which ultimately reaches state officials. Repression can attract media and third parties that would not have listened to the demands of those movements had they not been brutally repressed (Koopmans, 1990, as cited in Kriesi et al., 1992). The example of the draft law which was planned to prohibit the filming of police is relevant here again. The draft law was rewritten after protests erupted. When protests reach an overwhelming amount of approval, media is attracted, and a political crisis is induced, the strong French institutions can rewrite a proposed policy or law which would not be as easy in weak regimes.

To summarize, for SOS Racism, the French political structures appear rather open and strong which increases their likelihood of making procedural and public impacts. For the committee Adama, the political opportunity structures appear to remain strong and closed. This explains why radical movements such as the committee Adama have not made more procedural impacts. They have however reached public awareness for the topic of racism and police brutality. Moreover, if the demands of those radical groups reach established institutions, substantive impacts can be achieved. Less radical anti-racism groups, such as SOS Racism make substantive impacts. Though substantive impacts induced by SOS Racism remain scarce, the organization does induce substantive impacts. The French political structure has opened itself up to SOS Racism and exhibits, exclusively for this group, open structures which can explain the procedural and substantive impacts induced by SOS Racism.

Table 10: Political opportunity structures and impacts

	Procedural impacts	Substantive impacts	Public impacts
Political opportunity structure of the US	Yes.	No, only in the case of a political crisis.	Yes.
Political opportunity structure of France	Yes, groups close to established political institutions. No, groups not close to established political institutions.	Yes, groups close to the established political institutions. No, groups not close to established political institutions. Only in the case of a political crisis.	Yes.

9. Discussion and conclusion

The title of this thesis “‘We can’t breathe’ in these political structures” refers to the fact that political opportunity structures combined with institutional racism, inherent in political structures, press on the necks of millions of people across the world daily. In this thesis, some of the strategies

of anti-racism movements are elaborated and it is discussed what impacts these strategies have induced to lessen the pressure weighing on Black people and People of Color.

In a comparative case study the research question *What explains the impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France?* is answered.

It is argued that strategies employed by anti-racism movements and the political opportunity structure of the US and France contribute to explain the impacts of anti-racism movements in the respective countries.

When comparing the effect of disruptive, assimilative, and alternative strategies on procedural, substantive, and public impacts of anti-racism movements in the US and France (as illustrated in table 9) what is noticeable is that there are only small differences between the effectiveness of strategies of anti-racism movements in the US and anti-racism movements close to established institutions in France (SOS Racism). This can be explained by the fact that political opportunity structures appear open to anti-racism movements close to established institutions in France (SOS Racism). Nonetheless, hypotheses on the effect of strategies of anti-racism movements on impacts could only in part be verified. Political opportunity theory expects disruptive strategies to be most effective in France concerning substantive impacts. This is not verified by the interview respondent. Moreover, the theory suggests that in the US, assimilative strategies are most effective concerning procedural impacts. This hypothesis is verified by the respondent. Concerning public impacts, it is found out that alternative strategies are most effective in the US and France which can be theoretically explained (see theory part). Moreover, according to the interviewees, disruptive strategies are most effective in making public impacts in France and the US. The assumption that social movements adapt themselves to the political structures in which they are situated and employ strategies that are most effective within these opportunities is only in parts verified.

According to the interviewees, disruptive strategies are most effective in making substantive and public impacts in France while in the US, disruptive strategies are less likely to make substantive impacts and likely to make public impacts. Assimilative strategies are most effective in making procedural gains in the US. Assimilative strategies are not effective in making substantive and public impacts in the US. In France, for anti-racism movements close to established institutions

(such as SOS Racism), assimilative strategies are most effective concerning procedural and substantive impacts. Assimilative strategies are however not effective in making public impacts, not in France nor the US. According to the interviewees, alternative strategies are most effective in making public impacts in the US as well as in France for anti-racism movements close to established institutions. By taking the effectiveness of the different strategies on the different impacts into account, anti-racism movements can target their strategies on the impact they want to make.

When comparing the effect of the political opportunity structure of the US on procedural, substantive, and public impacts with the effect of the political opportunity structure of France on the different impacts (as illustrated in table 10), what becomes noticeable is that French anti-racism movements close to established political institutions (such as SOS Racism) and anti-racism movements in the US are likely to make procedural impacts. That organizations such as SOS Racism make procedural impacts can be explained by the exclusively to one group appearing open French structures. That anti-racism movements not close to established institutions in France (such as the committee Adama) are unlikely to make substantive impacts can be explained by the closed French structures. That groups such as SOS Racism to whom the French structures appear open make public impacts cannot be explained by political opportunity theory. It would be expected that groups such as the committee Adama make public impacts for whom the political structures appear closed. Procedural and substantive impacts induced or not induced by anti-racism movements in the US can be explained by the US's weak and open political opportunity structure. Public impacts induced by anti-racism movements in the US can be explained by the weak political opportunity structure of the US.

The explanatory power of strategies of anti-racism movements on impacts is limited. The small sample size of the interview respondents decreases external validity and is likely to distort the findings of the study. The explanatory power of political opportunity structures is also limited. Though political opportunity structures can explain certain impacts, they cannot explain others. It can be concluded from the interviews that third variables, such as institutional racism, do not only have an effect on the effectiveness of strategies but also change the expected effect of the political opportunity structure on impacts.

In further studies, other variables that could explain the impacts of anti-racism movements can be studied. Moreover, the effect of the political opportunity structure on strategies of anti-racism movements can be analyzed more in-depth. Besides that, in further studies, the number of respondents should be anticipated to be higher in order to increase the external validity of the research. Moreover, a member of the committee Adama could be consulted in similar research in order to adequately represent the two streams of anti-racism movements in France.

I expect that cases of police violence are reduced in the future and that impacts made by anti-racism movements become more and more effective. By employing multiple strategies to address the system as well as the community directly, and taking political opportunity structures of their countries into account, anti-racism movements around the world can most effectively address the topic of racism and police brutality.

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