THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT AND THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY COMPARED:
VIOLENCE, THE STATE AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE USA,
1966 to 1976.

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March 2019

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THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED WITH LOVE AND GRADITUDE TO
MY PARTNER GRACE LOUISE KENNEDY.

I ALSO WISH TO THANK AIM LEADER LARRY ANDERSON OF
FORT DEFIANCE, NAVAJO NATION, USA AND TO REMEMBER HIS
BROTHER MICHAEL WHO DIED IN 1978.
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DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I, Míceál Daniel Cronin, hereby declare the work herein to be that of my own and that I have not obtained a degree from NUI Galway, or elsewhere, on the basis of this work.

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Míceál Daniel Cronin

Dated this ________ day of ______________________ 2019
CHRONOLOGY

American Indian Movement

Formation

1952
- Huge reserves of natural minerals are discovered on Indian tribal territory in Montana, Wyoming and North and South Dakota: The process of relocation begins

1961
- The formation of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC)

1964
- The first occupation of Alcatraz Island

1968
- The emergence of Red Power
- AIM form in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Development

1969
- The second occupation of Alcatraz Island

1970
- AIM stage an armed protest at Cass Lake, Minnesota
- The organisation occupy the Mayflower II in Plymouth, Massachusetts

1972
- The killing of Raymond Yellow Thunder
- The Trail of Broken Treaties March to Washington DC

1973
- The killing of Wesley Bad Heart Bull
- State-sponsored violence escalates on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota
- The occupation of Wounded Knee
**Decline**

1973
- The killing of Pedro Bissonette
- The “reign of terror” on the Pine Ridge Reservation commences
- AIM leaders are harassed, arrested or retreat underground

1974
- The leadership trials
- Russell Means runs against Richard “Dickie” Wilson for the position of tribal chairman

1975
- AIM reactivates the tactic of armed self-defence
- Two FBI agents and one AIM member are killed in a gun battle on Pine Ridge

1976
- The killing of Anna Mae Aquash
- The arrest of Leonard Peltier and the disintegration of AIM as an effective force
CHRONOLOGY

Black Panther Party

Formation

1955
- The murder of Emmett Till
- Robert F. Williams joins his local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People in Monroe, North Carolina

1963
- Martin Luther King delivers his *I Have a Dream* speech in Washington DC

1964
- The formation of the Deacons for Defence and Justice
- Malcolm X delivers his *Ballot or the Bullet* speech in Detroit

1965
- The Watts Riots in Los Angeles
- The assassination of Malcolm X

1966
- The emergence of Black Power
- The Black Panther Party form in Oakland, California

Development

1967
- The killing of Denzil Dowell
- The protest at the Californian General Assembly in Sacramento
- The imprisonment of Huey P. Newton

1968
- The assassination of Martin Luther King
- The killing of Bobby Hutton and the exile of Eldridge Cleaver
Decline

1969
- The killing of John Huggins and Alprentice “bunchy” Carter
- The killing of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark

1970
- Huey P. Newton is released from prison
- State violence precipitates an internal organisational debate on the efficacy of armed action

1971
- The killing of George Jackson
- The BPP split into two factions: The emergence of the Black Liberation Army (BLA)

1973
- The BPP embrace the social-democratic route and run a candidate for the Mayor of Oakland
- The disintegration of the BLA and the demise of the BPP on a national level
ACRONYMS

AIM - AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT
BLA - BLACK LIBERATION ARMY
BPP - BLACK PANTHER PARTY
BIA - BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
COINTELPRO - FBI'S COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
CORE - CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY
CR - CIVIL RIGHTS
FBI - FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FOI - FRUIT OF ISLAM
GOON - GUARDIANS OF THE OGLALA NATION
KKK - KU KLUX KLAN
LCFO - LOWNDES COUNTY FREEDOM ORGANISATION
NIO - NATION OF ISLAM
NAACP - NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLOURED PEOPLE
NCAI - NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS
NIYC - NATIONAL INDIAN YOUTH COUNCIL
NSM - NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY
OIA - OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
OSCRO - OGLALA SIOUX CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANISATION
OAU - ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

PLO - PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANISATION

POS - POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

PPT - POLITICAL PROCESS THEORY (ANOTHER TERM FOR POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE)

RM - RESOURCE MOBILISATION

RMT - RESOURCE MOBILISATION THEORY

SM - SOCIAL MOVEMENT

SMO - SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANISATION

SMT - SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

SCLC - SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

SDS - STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

SNCC - STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

SAIA - SURVIVAL OF AMERICAN INDIANS ASSOCIATION

UNA - UNITED NATIVE AMERICANS

UNIA - UNITED NEGRO IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

WU - WEATHER UNDERGROUND

WKLO/DA - WOUNDED KNEE LEGAL OFFENSE/DEFENCE COMMITTEE
ABSTRACT

The concepts of liberal democracy and pluralism evoke themes relating to justice, parity of esteem and the right of equal protection under the law. At the centre of these tenets is a state that is deemed to be both the primary anchor and promoter of such ideals. My research explores how the historical experience of African and Native Americans in the USA departs from such standards. There is much evidence to indicate that state and structural and racial violence have consistently oppressed African and Native American populations. In the 1960s, in a context of social and political upheaval, two movements were formed to address this oppression. These were the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Black Panther Party (BPP). Each of these movements advanced a notion of racial empowerment as they emerged against the wider backdrop that was the civil rights struggle.

This thesis conducts a comparative analysis of AIM and the BPP. The interactive effects of external violence on the two movements’ mobilisation and persistence are examined across the life-cycle stages of formation, development and decline. My theoretical framework is underpinned by social movement theory. Three specific social movement theoretical approaches are utilised: framing theory, resource mobilisation theory, and the theory that highlights the importance of political opportunity structures. These approaches are employed in considering movement similarities and differences during each of the three life-cycle stages.

Social movement theory has tended historically to concentrate on groups promoting liberal reforms. My research offers an opportunity to assess how well framing theory, resource mobilisation theory and political opportunity structure theory can account for two movements that utilised armed tactics. The key theoretical objective of this study is to outline how well each of three social movement frameworks can illuminate why violence became central to the framing of movement grievances, how violent tactics became a central resource,
and how violence became a critical factor in the opening and closing of political opportunities.

State violence as a key determinant in movement emergence and decline has also been a historically neglected topic of social movement research. The radicalising effects of state-based and state-backed violence on social movement appearance, development and demise are elements my research highlights. The contribution of this thesis is to elucidate the effects of external violence on the life-cycle of two particular social movements while also addressing some shortcomings relating to violence as a resource in social movement mobilisation.
INTRODUCTION

‘The system of the state is comprised of **several apparatuses or institutions** of which certain have a principally repressive role’


‘One is impressed that most American violence and this illuminates its relationship to state power—has been initiated with a “conservative” bias. It has been unleashed against abolitionists, Catholics, radicals, workers and labor organizers, Negroes, Orientals, and other ethnic or racial or ideological minorities, and has been used ostensibly to protect the American, the Southern, the white Protestant, or simply the established middle class way of life and morals. A high proportion of our violent actions has thus come from the top dogs or the middle dogs’


‘Whatever it [the state] may tell you, it lies — and whatever it has, it has stolen’


At around 4.30am, on the morning of 4 December 1969, armed Chicago police officers broke into an apartment on the south side of the city. Two of its occupants, Fred Hampton (21) and Mark Clark (22), were assassinated as they slept. Both men were members of a militant organisation called the Black Panther Party (BPP). Hampton was the deputy chairman of the movement’s local chapter and under his leadership hundreds of activists had contributed time and effort into establishing clothing and breakfast programmes, liberation schools and a medical clinic for impoverished members of the black community. Some 4,000 children approximately were fed daily at a number of centres across the metropolitan area. Their efforts were supported by a number of black and white businessmen.

In defending the raid, the local police claimed illegal weapons were being stored at the apartment on West Monroe Street. A subsequent investigation showed that, contrary to those assertions, the guns at the premises were legally registered (Alkebulan 2007: 56). Renault Robinson, leader of the black police union at the time, declared unequivocally that both men had been murdered (Haas 2009: 86).

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1 The organization when initially formed was known as the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 114). Throughout this thesis the organization will also be referred to as the BPP or the Panthers.
The previous year, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), J. Edgar Hoover, had ordered the FBI’s counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) to focus almost exclusively on the ascent of black militancy. As a result of this directive, the BPP became the focal point of ‘a search and destroy mission probably unprecedented in America for its scope and systematic ferocity’ (Jeffries 2002: 75). In one year alone, the FBI paid Panther informants and provocateurs twice the amount given to organised crime informers (Newton 1980: 54).

On 24 February 1976, a body was discovered in the remote north-west region of the Pine Ridge Indian reservation in South Dakota. An FBI agent called David Price was present at the scene and photographed the remains. Even though he was well acquainted with the deceased, he failed to identify the body (Weyler 1982: 193). After an autopsy, which concluded that the individual had died of exposure, the hands were severed from the remains. The body was then buried in an unmarked grave. A week later the FBI discovered from the fingerprints that the victim was Anna Mae Aquash, a leading member of the militant American Indian Movement (AIM) (ibid: 191). Her family, with the assistance of AIM lawyers, managed to set up an independent autopsy. The results found that Aquash was murdered at close range with a .32 calibre weapon. A report in the Washington Star newspaper called the killing “an execution-style slaying” and argued that the events raised serious questions about the FBI’s role in the case (ibid: 192).

By the end of 1976 the majority of the AIM leadership were imprisoned, driven underground or dead. In one year alone, over three hundred American Indians had been killed by the police and federal agents (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 61). Due to numerous trials and investigations, AIM’s organisational capacity was severely depleted. Its resources were consumed by endless court battles. The period between 1973 and 1976 is now remembered as the “reign of terror” on the Pine Ridge Reservation (Churchill 1997: 251). It was here that the movement had its strongest support and during this time the rate of killings in this part of South
Dakota outstripped all urban centres throughout the USA. According to Ward Churchill the organisation endured ‘the worst physical repression at the hands of the United States of any domestic group since the 1890 massacre of Big Foots Minneconjou by the 7th cavalry at Wounded Knee’ (1997: 245).²

As a nation, North America traces its liberal democratic roots to the revolutionary war of 1776. In its declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, espousing similar themes a century after John Locke, appealed for greater economic equality and that all men should be recognised as being free to access liberty and pursue happiness. Liberal theorists have consistently suggested the existence of parity of esteem. However, the black and Native American experience has consistently fallen short of liberal democracy’s core principles and has instead been one saturated in violence. For African-Americans in the 18th century, the apparatus of the US state was effectively devised to expedite the development and facilitation of institutional racism within both slave and non-slave holding states. Government officials and white planters soon recognised that the regime of slavery ‘could survive only with the most repressive and bestial force imaginable’ (Marable 1983: 60). Similarly, from the moment white men first set foot on the North American continent, there was seemingly no parameters to the violence perpetrated against the indigenous population. According to Rex Weyler, the story of Indian contact with European settlers is one which encompasses ‘the most expansive geographic invasion and cultural extermination of all time’ (1982: 13).³

By the late 1950s, there were conflicting interpretations of the American state. In contrast to the political scientist, Louis Hartz, who maintained that the US was a liberal society, the black leader Malcolm X argued that the US state was racist to the core (Smith 1999: 9). Throughout the 1960s many radical activists within the

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² In December 1890 around 300 unarmed Indian men, women and children were massacred by the United States Cavalry at Wounded Knee in South Dakota. Afterwards the bodies were dumped at a mass grave at the site (Brown 1970: 444).
³ Michael Mann has gone so far as to describe the violence against Native Americans as genocide. He maintains that four American presidents, including Abraham Lincoln, ‘would be prosecuted today for genocide by an international war crimes tribunal’ (2005: 94-95).
black urban ghettos and Indian reservations of the USA had come to define their situation in terms of ‘internal colonies’ which were sustained by white racism (Hechter 1975: xvi). Those who spoke for these communities argued that they were entirely unrepresented by mainstream political structures and that the tactics of the civil rights movement did not go far enough. They also argued that they were completely unprotected against unrestrained police and racial violence. A belief emerged that the only way to counter such repression would be through the employment of armed self-defence. The American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party were to give expression to this belief. While these organisations had distinct cultural characteristics they shared an important component in that state, structural and racial violence critically came to shape their emergence, development and demise. Against this backdrop, this thesis will present a comparative analysis of AIM and the BPP and the role such violence played in the different stages of their trajectories: formation, progression and decline. It should be noted that the BPP was in existence until 1982 and that AIM still operates in a limited capacity to the present day. However, this research will concentrate on the two movements at the height of their power and demise. Consequently, it will cover a 10 year time frame, considering the BPP until 1973 and AIM up to 1976.

In social science terms, I seek to identify the circumstances which propelled the three phases of these groups’ campaigns. Many armed organisations have their genesis in broader social movements. Militant groups surface when individuals propose more radical tactics to achieve political and social transformation. Radicalisation can result from a number of factors, including violent activity by the state. This raises three questions: why does an organisation adopt militant forms of action as the principle means of protest? How does such a movement maintain itself once it adopts these particular strategies? And, what are the

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4 Armed action has often been a strategy utilised at the far end of a continuum termed contentious politics (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). In this strand of violence-centred theory, reformist social movement investigation is assimilated with studies of violent configurations such as revolutionary activity and civil wars.
consequences for the organisation’s survival? This study will investigate these three questions through a case analysis of the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party. Certain concepts derived from social movement theory (SMT) will be employed to analyse the emergence, expansion and ultimate fate of the two groups. The social movement (SM) perspective may at first sight appear to be a strange theoretical choice as it has historically concentrated on moderate groups promoting reform (Meyer 1991; Piven and Cloward 1995; Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000). SM scholars have traditionally sidelined violence preferring the study of conventional non-violent modes of protest (Della Porta 2013: 15). But for a few notable exceptions, state violence has also been on the periphery of the social movement literature (Tilly 1985; White 1989; McClintock 1998; Goodwin 2001; Della Porta 1995; 2013). The numerous ways in which state repression and state terrorism can influence the appearance, expansion and splintering of armed challengers have attracted relatively little attention (Stohl and Lopez 1984; Gurr 1986; Blakeley 2012). As a result, a school of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) has surfaced in recent years that argues not just for a concentration on organisations which utilise violence but for continued systematic research on the effects and consequences of state repression for movement mobilisation, development and demise (Jackson 2012). However, for all the historical neglect of the importance of exogenous violence for social movement activity, I will nonetheless contend that mainstream SM theoretical concepts can still supply useful analytical and theoretical tools for this study to draw and build upon. This thesis will therefore attempt to evaluate social movement theory by posing a general question: how well does SM theory help us compare two social movements which used armed tactics?

My research will encompass three specific interactive strands that were indisputable factors in the campaigns of the two organisations. Each of these components was motivated and propelled by racism, often in collusion with or entrenched in long-established state practice. The first strand will consider the interaction between the movements and the grievances that stemmed from state violence. Along with the police, the role of the state intelligence services and
state backed paramilitaries will also be examined. The issue of state-instigated violence — including the use of informers/agent provocateurs, torture and disappearances — is largely ignored in the social movement literature (Davenport 2014: 8-9). The second interactive strand is the role played by *structural violence*. The social conditions that existed within the urban ghettos and reservations of North America contributed significantly towards movement formation and development. Economic justice and social transformation were central to the two groups’ campaigns, with the BPP in particular strongly adopting a Marxist-Leninist perspective. At the conclusion of *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State* (1995) Donatella della Porta places another 1960s radical group, the Weather Underground (WU), within the left-libertarian family of movements. Della Porta associates the Panthers with what she terms ‘racial conflicts’ (1995: 216). I disagree with certain aspects of this assessment. While racial violence was certainly a predominant factor in the BPP’s mobilisation, the organisation was also driven by concerns over structural inequities and their ideological position was firmly on the left of the political spectrum. In fact, it was the BPP that was a significant influence on the Weather Underground’s formation, not the other way around. The Panthers were considered by many left-wing groups at the time (including the WU) to be the pre-eminent organisation in the fight against American capitalism. Della Porta’s argument side-lines the intersection between race and class. I would maintain that the BPP’s position was firmly within the arc of left-libertarian movements. As Dan Berger points out, the BPP were the Weather Underground’s ‘heroes’ (2007: 5) and that ‘it would be hard to overstate the importance of the black freedom movement in the formation of the Weather Underground’ (ibid: 96).

The third interactive strand in this study will be termed *popular violence*. This will refer to a range of racially motivated attacks that were directed at the constituencies of AIM and the BPP. Such violence included assaults from right-wing extremist organisations, a hostile white population, and collusion between state forces and those promoting and implementing acts of racial terror. Popular violence, along with the persistence of police brutality, were arguably the key
factors in the initial mobilisation and growth of our groups. Until the 1990s there was very little academic research undertaken on racial violence (Bjorgo 2003: 785). Its appearance in the social movement literature is minimal. Limited attention has also been devoted to state collusion in the perpetuation of \textit{popular violence}. Most of the research has continued to focus on dissident campaigns against governments while overlooking the radicalising effects of external violence and violent counter-movements (Davenport 2007).\textit{Popular violence as a stand-alone entity, and in its association with state forces, is crucial to our understanding of the AIM and BPP campaigns. Both organisations essentially emerged from ethnic minorities historically persecuted by acts of racial violence.}

Social movement theory assumes that within a liberal state people can use pressure groups to bring about change. It also presupposes that everyone is protected by the right to life, an essential part of the liberal canon. We can ask were these moral considerations afforded to the constituencies represented by AIM and the BPP? Also, while social movement theory addresses numerous questions relating to the formation, organization, and development of SMOs, this study will contribute to the literature in a number of ways.

My study will, firstly, be an addition to the small numbers of case analyses that focuses on exogenous violence and its resulting effects on social movement mobilisation. While militant action has been researched by some SM scholars (Della Porta 1995, 2013; Della Porta and Tarrow 1986; Tarrow 1998, Goodwin 2001, Davenport 2007, 2014; Malthaner 2011), the literature has overwhelmingly focused on non-violent forms of protest. As Kathleen J. Fitzgerald and Diane M.

\footnote{Johan L. Olivier’s (1989, 1990, 1991) research in South Africa found that state violence and repression intensified racial atrocities. Olzak and Olivier (1998) concentrated on policing racial protests (USA and South Africa), such as those organised by the civil rights and anti-Apartheid movement.}

\footnote{Barbara Perry points out that ‘a review of the literature on Native Americans and criminal justice, and even a similar review of the narrower literature on ethnic-violence, reveals virtually no consideration of Native Americans as victims of racially-motivated violence’ (2002: 23).}
Rodgers point out, since the 1970s in general ‘social movement theory has taken for granted a reform orientation’ (2000: 577). Secondly, this thesis will contribute to the exploration of movement outcomes in an arena where there has been a heavy emphasis on both movement formation and development (Giugni 1998; Bosi and Giugni 2012; Davenport 2014). According to Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper ‘not surprisingly, scholars have had much more to say about why social movements arise than why they decline, enter a period of “abeyance,” or disappear altogether’ (2003: 315). A third contribution of the thesis concerns the literature on armed groups which has tended to point towards interaction with police as a key component for SMO mobilisation (Della Porta and Reiter 1998; Earl, Soule and McCarthy 2003; Della Porta and Fillieule 2004). To this I will expand the analytical frame by adding popular and structural violence as interactive components in social movement activity.

My fourth contribution relates to the interaction between oppositional movements and the state. The social movement literature has tended to ‘focus prevalently on the armed groups or their militants, ignoring the several ways in which states can influence the emergence, development and decline of violence’ (Bosi, Demetriou and Malthaner 2014: 5). To partly address this one-sided focus, my study will resonate with what Hank Johnson refers to as the repression-mobilization nexus where the state is the initial generator of violence, with its origins often at the center of national policy (2014: 29). And finally, a fifth contribution of my research relates to the strong emphasis (particularly on studies into political violence) placed on groups that employ offensive armed tactics (McClintock 1998; Goodwin 2001; Malthaner 2011; Alimi, Bosi and Demetriou 2012; Della Porta 1995, 2013). The repertoire found in much of this analysis includes kidnappings, assassinations, bombings, bank robberies for campaign funds and the execution of informers. In the case studies of militant groups in the Middle-East, customary tactics have also included suicide bombings (Malthaner 2011). In contrast, the campaigns of both AIM and the BPP were marked by the tactics of self-defence. Offensive armed action was negligible and in AIM’s case virtually non-existent. However, after the BPP split in 1971 over the use of
violence, the Black Liberation Army (BLA) emerged and engaged in a clandestine war against the state. No such development occurred within AIM. Consequently, this study will contribute to our understanding of why clandestine violent tactics develop in specific organizations (Della Porta 2013: 294).7

All in all, throughout the 1990s some elements of social movement research increasingly concentrated on the multiplicity of state responses to collective action. The repertoires of challengers were considered in their interaction with state forces, particularly the police and their role in social movement mobilisation. The theoretical concerns of this thesis — the emphasis on violence (state, structural and popular), social movement theory, and the campaigns of AIM and the BPP — open up new research possibilities. However, I am also joining other scholars who in recent years have been arguing that state violence can significantly contribute towards the formation, development and demise of armed challengers. Therefore, this study will augment the recent literature on the association between social movements and the state. It will contribute towards remedying the error of concentrating primarily on militant groups and their members while overlooking the numerous ways in which the activities of the state and violent counter-movements can influence the appearance, expansion and disintegration of armed groups. The critical issue of police brutality against ethnic minorities has once again re-surfaced in the USA in very recent times. Against a persisting historical backdrop, this study will contend that the experience of the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party offer much to contemporary social movement analysis.

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7 Della Porta refers to such processes as positive and negative cases (2013: 294).
Chapter 1 – Analytical Framework

CHAPTER 1

Analytical Framework

“In the absence of its natural defenders, the interests of the excluded are always in danger of being overlooked”


‘It is often the *opponents* of movements, especially states, which are the main perpetrators of political violence’

*Jeff Goodwin* (2012: 3).

This thesis will rely on a re-examination of the secondary literature to explore the effects of exogenous violence in stimulating social movement appearance, development and demise. It will utilise an analytical framework based on the *relational* processes of radicalisation which focus on the wider political and social contexts in which violent forms of collective action surface and materialise (Bosi and Malthaner 2015: 442). The fundamental argument here is that much social movement activity involves the interactive relationship between movement actors, state forces, and violent counter-movements. Thus, in the first section of this chapter, some contending perspectives on violence and social movement theory will be explored. The second section will review the existing social movement literature on AIM and the BPP. The third section outlines the methodology and structure of this study.

1.1 EXAMINING VIOLENCE, MOBILISATION AND PERSISTENCE

Within the contentious politics\(^8\) approach advanced by McAdam *et al.*, (2001), violence is perceived in the eyes of challenging groups as a legitimate, but not imperative device for accomplishing a group’s goals. Social movements are at

\[^8\] Contentious politics is defined as ‘episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants’ (McAdam *et al.*, 2001: 5).
the centre of most non-violent contentious politics. According to Mayer Zald and John McCarthy, a social movement is ‘a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society’ (1979: 2). A social movement organisation (SMO) ‘identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement these goals’ (ibid). A broad multiplicity of tactical approaches can exist within a wider social movement at any given time.

An armed group is a particular type of SMO whose tactical position is based on the assumed legitimacy of violence. Its goals can range from specific policy objectives to calls for revolutionary transformation involving the overhaul of the economic system along with the pursuit of social and racial equality. Such organisations can also be formed as self-defence mechanisms against external violence. As Jereon Gunning points out, violence ‘does not appear out of nowhere. Usually, there is a long history of contestation, group formation, and increasingly hostile interactions with state or other forces before violence becomes the norm’ (2009: 163). Consequently, all social movements require resources and support to achieve their goals. Social movement theory points to a number of factors influencing the initiation, progression and demise of SMOs. The literature has suggested three crucial general concepts to explain the ascent and development of militant groups. These concepts are: framing, resource mobilisation, and political opportunities (Edwards and Kane 2014: 206). Each of these three concepts will inform the analysis in this thesis.

The first concept of relevance to us is that of framing. This approach has regularly been employed to interpret the ways in which movement actors perceive their external reality (Snow et al., 1986; Snow and Benford 1992).\footnote{In recent years a cultural turn has emerged in social movement analysis that focuses ‘on the ways in which movements use symbols, language, discourse, identity, and other dimensions of culture to recruit, retain, mobilize, and motivate members’ (Williams 2004: 93). Framing is the best known of these cultural approaches (ibid). However, it should be pointed out that political opportunity theorists also emphasise what they term expanding cultural opportunities (see Chapter 1, page 29) (McAdam 1994), while resource mobilization analysis has highlighted the}
Robert Benford maintain that there are three core features to the framing process. The first is diagnostic framing whereby the primary source of discontent is identified by SM actors (2000: 616). The second is prognostic framing which articulates a solution to the problem (ibid). The third is motivational framing which provides a “call to arms” or rationale for engaging in confrontational collective action (ibid: 617). Framing is most effective when it resonates with ‘the salient beliefs of potential recruits’ (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 52). Other important aspects of framing include the notion of master frames. This refers to generalised cultural narratives that are predominant at a particular time. For instance, the civil rights movement is a good example as it promoted a discourse relating to justice, racial equality and social transformation (Snow and Benford 1992: 62). This master frame resonated with the grievances of numerous ethnic minorities across the USA in the 1960s, including the Native American population. It is also important to point out that rival groups can become involved in framing wars (Snow et al. 1986) and as a result employ what is termed counterframing. This is the promotion of a message that opposes and contradicts an earlier effective frame generated by a SMO (Snow and Benford 2000: 617).

There are two other social movement concepts which can be subsumed within framing analysis. The first of these is that of grievance which has been highlighted as an important factor in social movement formation and development. In this context, Ted Robert Gurr argues that ‘violence is primarily

10 This notion of armed struggle as rational echoes the rational choice approach to collective action. Earlier Mancur Olsen (1963) had focused on why individuals chose to participate in social movements. A key component in the process is rationality in that ‘rational agents are said to find the most effective means for realizing their goals or interests, whatever their goals or ends may be’ (Crossley 2002: 58). An equally important element within rational choice theory is the ‘constraints for action within the external environment of the agent’ (ibid).

11 Herbert Blumer (1969) also signified the importance of grievance or what he termed agitation in the formation of armed groups. He maintained that ‘agitation operates to arouse people so to make them possible recruits for the movement’ (ibid: 65). Social actors experience agitation in an emotional process which is ‘marked by abuse, unfair discrimination, and injustice’ (ibid). Blumer pinpointed the role of structure in the surfacing of violence whereby militant forms of action can arise among those who are ‘in a state of distress or exploitation’ (ibid: 76). Revolutionary groups he maintains are ‘usually a lower-class movement operating among the underprivileged’ (ibid: 75).
a response to frustration’ (1980: 69). Gurr also suggests that the vast majority of acts (which culminated in collective violence) in the 1960s were related to socio-political objectives where ‘deprivation induced discontent is a general spur to action’ (ibid: 13). Thus, the process of framing emphasises the practice of grievance identification whereby ‘direct experiences of violence produced, in fact, frames of meaning that justified violence’ (Della Porta 2012: 254).

Another concept related to framing is the role of emotions in SM mobilisation (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta (eds.) 2001; Jasper 2011). William Gamson has emphasised the association between framing, emotions and the creation of what he terms an injustice frame (1992: 68). According to Gamson ‘injustice focuses on the righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul’ (ibid: 32), and ‘for the collective adoption of an injustice frame, it must be shared by the potential challengers in a public way’ (ibid: 73). Therefore, an important aspect of framing involves outlining the context in which a social movement operates. Militant organisations can justify the use of violence, either by framing their political and social conditions as dangerous and a threat to life, or by presenting militancy as the only option available against external violence (Hazen 2009: 284).

The second general concept of relevance to my research is that of resources which has been analysed through the prism of resource mobilisation theory (RMT). While earlier SM studies were more concerned with the why of collectivised action, John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1973) focused on the how. This approach explores social movement mobilisation through the existence of resources. The fulcrum here is the belief that initial group instigation and SMO persistence is determined by a movement’s access to important reserves such as money, manpower, pre-existing social networks, organisational know-how and technical expertise. Mobilisation in this sense has been categorised as the
‘process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action’ (Jenkins 1983: 532).

In recent years, RM theorists have devised a five-fold typology of resource types (Edwards and McCarthey 2004; Edwards and Kane 2014). The first of these types is based on material resources which are related to finance and capital. Human resources, the second type of resource, applies to experience, skills and leadership. Leadership as an example of a human resource has been side-lined in much of the SM literature (Barker, Johnson and Lavalette 2001: 1). However, it is an important asset because ‘the success or failure of the MO [movement organisation] can be highly dependent on the qualities and commitment of the leadership cadre and the tactics they use’ (Zald and McCarthey 1987: 135). The third resource type is social-organisational resources in the sense of being based on social ties and pre-existing networks. Legitimacy and solidarity would provide examples of the fourth type moral resources. The final resource type, cultural resources, emphasises values, beliefs and identities.

In a distinctive rendition of RMT’s emphasis on group solidarity, the new social movement (NSM) approach highlights the significance of collective identity for group mobilisation (Melucci 1988). According to William Gamson, collective

12 Colin Barker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette offer a clear definition of social movement leadership:

For collective images and ideas, projects, forms of action and organisation to emerge, someone must propose them. It is here that the issue of leadership arises. Leadership in movements consists in proposing to these differentiated entities how they should and can identify themselves and act together. Without such proposals, and any assent they receive, movements do not exist, collective identity is not formed, collective action does not occur. The terms ‘leadership’ and ‘social movement’ are inseparably connected (2001: 5; emphasis in original).

13 The term mobilizing structures has also emerged within social movement analysis (McAdam et al. 1996). It too highlights the notion of social-organizational structures and pre-existing networks in group formation. According to Hank Johnson, mobilizing structures are the ‘collectives into which people congregate every day: political, class, religious, and ethnic organizations that, in part, represent member interests’ (2011: 54).

14 Anthony Giddens and Philip W. Sutton maintain that new social movement theory ‘complements that of RMT on how movements garner resources and make use of them’ (2013: 1000).
identity is defined as the ‘shared definition of a group that derives from member’s common interests, experiences, and solidarity’ (1992: 105).

NSM theory has been strongly influenced by European post-structuralism15 (Touraine 1984; Melucci 1988). While it has been utilised in relation to struggles in Latin America, opinion is divided on its suitability in that context. Joe Foweraker (1995) suggests that a refined version of RMT provides as much as the NSM approach. The problem with NSM theory is the emphasis it places on autonomy within civil society. Similarly, John Gledhill points out that the ‘NSM model of ‘autonomous’ and intrinsically democratic social movement practise is a poor fit with Latin American experience’ (2000: 188-89). Gledhill also queries ‘whether ‘new’ movements were genuinely distinct from ‘old’ ones’ (ibid: 186-87). While Neil Harvey (1999)16 supports the theoretical approach of post-structuralists like Ernesto Laclau, he does not incorporate such theory into his primary material on the rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico. Instead, Harvey concentrates on the internal dynamics of three organisations, their splits and the relation of these splits to changing opportunities in the wider context.

I am not convinced of the necessity to employ NSM theory as a distinct conceptual method in this thesis for two reasons. The first is that the NSM approach links two inter-related elements: culture and meaning (Scholl 2014: 237) that are well covered already in the theoretical approaches I will use. Notions of culture are already subsumed within the concepts of RMT and POS

15 According to John Gledhill:

The NSM literature emerged in a period in which European communist parties were in decline and traditional class-based politics seemed incapable of changing society. Many European leftists found a new source of political optimism in the wide variety of movements that were mobilizing people on environmental issues, anti-nuclear issues, and civic and women’s rights issues (2000: 185).

16 The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy studies the 1994 Zapatista revolt in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. Harvey traces the development of peasant and indigenous organizations in the region since the early 1970’s. He compares three organizations and their struggles for agrarian rights while facing hostility from both local elites and federal bureaucrats.
(see footnote 9, page 14), while *framing* analysis highlights *meaning* and how an SMO presents its message to its constituency.\(^\text{17}\)

The second reason for not specifically using NSM theory in this study is that new social movement theorists place little relevance on class struggle, US imperialism or the exploitative effects of global capitalism (Hardisty 1999). This goes against a key feature of both AIM and the BPP. The emphasis in the NSM approach is on movements formed in the post-1960’s period, such as second wave feminism, animal rights and environmental movements (Crossley 2002: 149). The core argument of NSM theorists is that political change is gained ‘through the transformation of values, personal identities and symbols [and] this can be best achieved through the creation of alternative lifestyles’ (Scott 1990: 18).

Resource mobilisation theory can be divided into two camps: The first is the classic entrepreneurial (economic) version promoted by McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977). The second camp revolves around the political variant of RMT which became *political opportunity structure* (POS) analysis (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 14-16). The use of RM in this study moves beyond the entrepreneurial model by examining how such *resources* as military training and ideology came to be utilised by AIM and the BPP. Some RM theorists have maintained that the tactical repertoires employed by SM actors can be influenced by the type and historical nature of available *resources* within a specific social group. Forms of action are often culturally influenced so that the *repertoire of contention* or tactical tradition reflects the options considered most feasible while

\(^{17}\) In order for a social movement to attract support, its goals must be *framed* so that they have *meaning* or ‘resonate with the beliefs, feelings and desires of potential recruits’ (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 52).
side-lining others (Tilly 1978; 1986). As an example, Colin Barker, in a study on the rise of the Solidarity Movement in Poland, highlights the meaning and importance of a *culture of resistance* when he points out that ‘workplace occupations were already a recognised element in Polish workers *repertoire of contention*, and people knew what to do’ (2001: 184).

Other *resource*-related theories include what McAdam *et al.*, (2001) term *competition for power* (67). This dynamic centres on competing social movement tensions relating to the availability or non-availability of *resources*. Additionally, inter-group competition around the use of violence and *resources* can result in an ideological split in the primary organisation (Zwerman and Steinhoff 2005).

The third general concept of relevance to my research is that of *political opportunities*. *Political opportunity structure* (POS) analysis points to those ‘consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent-dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success and failure’ (Tarrow 1998: 85). Social movement tactics can be affected by available *opportunities* which are dictated by the degree of *openness* or *closure* within the political system, the strength of potential *support* and the capacity of the state for *repression* (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Kreisi 2004).

The emergence of armed challengers depends to a large extent on the nature of democracy within a particular state. Doug McAdam (1982), one of the central proponents of POS, argues that insurgency is an outcome of a number of factors:

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18 The more recent notion of resource *diffusion* builds on this idea of perpetuating patterns of protest in that ‘movement actors are highly attuned to the actions of other actors, borrowing or imitating tactics, frames, slogans, and so forth when seemed advantageous’ (Soule 2004: 295).

19 The *political opportunity structure* approach is also sometimes referred to as *political process theory* (PPT) (Tarrow 2011: 26-28).

20 A number of scholars have emphasized the *threat* model of repression ‘where the larger the threat to political elites, the greater the amount of repression’ (Earl 2003: 52). This notion would resonate with Doug McAdam’s (1982) assertion that radical organizations seeking fundamental change can expect greater levels of repression.

21 *Political opportunities* can also be affected by the social position that any constituency holds within the system itself. Piven and Cloward (1977), adopting a Marxist framework, maintained that the poor were badly positioned to benefit from anything other than the politics of disruption.
(1) the state’s inability to repress dissent as a consequence of broader political instability; (2) the organisational strength of the excluded group, focusing particularly on solidarity and a communications network, and (3) what he terms *cognitive liberation* and *insurgent consciousness* which is facilitated by a belief that the political system is no longer legitimate. As McAdam points out ‘movement emergence implies a transformation of consciousness within a significant segment of the aggrieved population. Before collective protest can get under way, people must collectively define their situations as unjust and subject to change through group action’ (1982: 51). In a separate development, McAdam (1996) highlighted *expanding cultural opportunities* which can also increase the potential for social movement activity.\(^{22}\)

Another important factor comes into play in the POS approach and this is the response of social control agencies to SM mobilisation (Crossley 2002: 114). This dynamic can be viewed through two other features of opportunity related analysis: *tactical innovation/adaptation* and *repression*. Doug McAdam points to the significance of what he terms *tactical innovation* in social movement mobilisation whereby ‘lacking institutionalised power, challengers must devise protest techniques that offset their powerlessness’ (1983:735). As a result, social movement actors can become involved in a dynamic called *tactical adaptation* where ‘in chess-like fashion, movement opponents [the state/counter-movements] can be expected through effective *tactical adaptation*, to neutralise the new tactic’ (ibid). McAdam maintains that *tactical innovation* and *adaptation* only occur within the wider *political opportunity structure* in that these processes only derive their ‘significance from the larger political/organisational context’ in which they occur (ibid: 736).

\(^{22}\) McAdam has identified four specific types of *expanding political opportunities*. These are:

1. The dramatization of a glaring contradiction between a highly salient cultural value and conventional social practices, (2) “suddenly imposed grievances,” (3) dramatizations of a system’s vulnerability or illegitimacy, (4) the availability of an innovative “master frame” within which subsequent challengers can map their own grievances and demands (1996: 25).
The second social control factor is repression. Opportunity analysis points to the fact that a SMO must have the capacity to resist the social control endeavours of the state and a movement’s failure to achieve its objectives is ‘attributable to successful repression by the state’ (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 55). The effects of repression are not just limited to the later stages of a group’s campaign as the use of state violence ‘has been interpreted as signalling a closure of political opportunities’ (Della Porta 2012: 246). Robert W. White also emphasises the notion of closing political opportunities and maintains that armed action ‘results from a conscious decision that occurs when people come to see peaceful protest [as] futile’ (1989: 1297-1298). Similarly, Jeff Goodwin points out, ‘exclusion, especially violent exclusion or repression of certain social groups, tends to “push” these oppressed group’s into revolutionary movements’ (2001: 30). Goodwin maintains that militant organisations surface when there is effectively “no other way out”23 (ibid: 260).

Other SM analysis that has absorbed the notion of political opportunity structure include the policing of protest or protest policing which is referred to as ‘the police handling of protest events - what protestors usually refer to as “repression” and the state characterises as “law and order.”’ (Della Porta 2013: 35). Protest policing has a direct impact on social movement mobilisation as it is ‘a sort of barometer for the available political opportunities’ and as a result this dynamic affects an SMO’s protest repertoires once it forms (ibid). The tactics and style of policing reflect the general characteristics of the prevailing political milieu and culture (Della Porta 1996: 67).

23 Jeff Goodwin appropriated the notion of “no other way out” from Leon Trotsky who maintained that “people do not make revolution eagerly any more than they do war.... A revolution takes place only when there is no other way out” (Quoted in Goodwin 2001: 260).
1.2 REVIEWING THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT LITERATURE ON AIM AND THE BPP

The existing literature on AIM and the BPP can be divided into four different categories: biographical and autobiographical, historical overviews, comparative and social movement literature. In the initial category, most of the key activists in both organisations have produced memoirs. The predatory nature of state, structural and racial violence is evident throughout their formative years. These dynamics surfaced through poverty and unemployment; the education and criminal justice system; and in particular omnipresent police and racial violence (Seale 1970; Newton 1973; Shakur 1987; Crow Dog and Erdoes 1990; Brown 1992; Hilliard and Cole 1993; Means and Wolf 1996; Banks and Erdoes 2004; Abu Jamal, 2008). A number of key figures from both organisations also received army training and served with US forces throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, these veterans were to provide a critical mobilising resource for the two movements’ and the advantages of such experience on movement persistence is outlined in a number of autobiographies (Seale 1970; Kipp 1997; Olsen 2000; Banks and Erdoes 2004).

The second category of published material involves historical overviews and reassessments of the two movements. In general, literature on the BPP is greater in number and a wider variety of avenues are explored in relation to the organisation: group cohesiveness (Calloway 1977); analysis of the speeches and writings of Panther leaders (Papke 1994); the ideological concepts of party co-founder Huey P. Newton (Jeffries 2006); the BPP’s relationship to the media (Rhodes 2007); and an exploration of the association between the organisation and the French philosopher Michel Foucault (Heiner 2007). Elsewhere, Charles E. Jones (1998) edits a volume entitled *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* where a number of contributors attempt to explore and reinterpret the movement’s history. In a series of essays, different writers chart unexamined aspects of the group’s structures such as the role of women in the organisation. Cleaver and Katsiaficas (2001) edit a similar style volume which includes
perspectives from former BPP members Elmer Gerard “Geronimo” Pratt and Mumia Abu-Jamal. While Lazerow and Williams (eds.) (2006) compile a series of essays which contains among others a contribution from James T. Campbell who argues that the Panthers may not have been a single movement, but rather a number of local movements across the USA (97-104).

Three notable works on the BPP deserve attention in this category as they all consider the three stages of the movement’s campaign. The first is Curtis J. Austin’s (2006) *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* which explores the interactive effects of violence on the Panthers’ formation and demise. There is a particularly strong focus here on the personal and political acrimony that developed prior to the organisation’s split in 1971 and the violence that unfolded within the movement as a result. The second important monograph is by former party member Paul Alkebulan (2007) which is titled *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party*. Alkebulan examines party ideology, tactics, internal divisions and the role of women in the movement. He maintains that the rank and file membership was the engine of the organisation and that while the Panthers eventually revoked the path of armed struggle against the US state, it also ‘learned this fundamental lesson at a tremendous cost’ (2007: 132). The third significant work is *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013). This is a comprehensive overview and analysis of the organisation’s trajectory with the authors pointing out that the BPP ‘were able to forcibly assert their political agenda through armed confrontations with the state’ (2013: 391). However, such tactics drew an overwhelming violent response from state forces and ‘repression made the core Panther practices difficult to sustain and quickly led to the party’s demise’ (ibid: 397).

The literature on the American Indian Movement is, as stated, less numerous. However, three monographs deserve attention when analysing the movement’s mobilisation in totality. The first is *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (Chaat Smith and Allen Warrior 1996). This provides
a detailed investigation into Native American protest groups of the 1950s and 1960s which culminated with the formation of AIM. The authors argue that the movement’s objectives were for ‘power and respect, for treaty rights and personal validation, for economic and political justice’ (1996: 277). Chaat Smith and Allen Warrior also chart the violence which instigated the movement’s appearance and pay particular attention to the racial violence which propelled AIM’s development between 1972 and 1973 (1996: 112-126; 171-193).

The second relevant work is *Blood of the Land: The Government and Corporate War against the American Indian Movement*. Rex Weyler (1982) argues that the state unleashed its repressive apparatus against AIM because the organisation posed a threat to considerable corporate interest in Indian land and resources. A third important book is Peter Mattheissen’s (1992) *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse: The Story of Leonard Peltier and the FBI’s war on the American Indian Movement*. Mattheissen focuses on the later stages of AIM’s campaign and he outlines how the state targeted the movement through a number of means, particularly violence. He examines the case of AIM member Leonard Peltier, in prison to this day since 1977, and argues that ‘the ruthless persecution of [Peltier] has less to do with his own actions than with underlying issues of history, racism and economics’ (1992: xx).

For the purpose of this thesis, a narrower review of the literature shows that while there is a moderate body of separate works on the organisations, there is a distinct lack of concentrated academic attention which analyses both groups comparatively. Probably the best-known monograph that encompasses violence and the two movement’s campaigns is *Agents of Repression: the FBI’s Secret*
Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002). While this work does not specifically reference social movement theory, it nonetheless outlines the consistent FBI and state campaigns to destroy and discredit many of the legal activities carried out by the movements. State tactics included intimidation, infiltration, beatings, arrests and execution style killings. In AIM’s case, the violence included the funding and backing of a paramilitary terror group on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota from the early to mid-1970s. Between 1973 and 1976, Churchill and Vander Wall argue that the state employed death squads, similar to those in operation in South America at the time, to effectively neutralise and destroy the militant Indian organisation. However, there are two shortcomings with this work in relation to this thesis. The first is that Churchill and Vander Wall tend to concentrate on the later stages of the movements campaigns. And, the second is that the overwhelming focus of the book is on AIM and in particular the repression suffered by activists and sympathisers between 1973 and 1976. Analysis on the earlier phases of the group’s trajectory is limited.

Outside of this, comparative literature is sparse. Elizabeth Castle (2000), again not from a SM theoretical perspective, concentrates on female activism in the two organisations. She contends that ‘the strategies women pursued and the roles they adopted can only be understood against the backdrop of the longer history of gender relations in African and Native American culture’ (16). While violence against the two communities is certainly referred to here, the central argument of the thesis is that ‘although [black and Indian] women were members of male-dominated groups, they were active in shaping the gender relations as well as the policies of these organisations’ (ibid). Elsewhere, Jeffries, Dyson and Jones, have included the two groups in a study along with another 1960s movement, the Young Lords (a Latino group in Chicago). Under a number of headings, the authors examine the organisations’ strategies in relation to their philosophy, membership, political direction and what they term the ‘woman question’ (2010:15). While police brutality is recognised as a key factor in the movement’s instigation, there is no in-depth exploration on the effects of violence, particularly
racial and structural violence, in the formation, development and demise of AIM and the BPP. Also, throughout this study, there is no reference to social movement theory.

AIM and the BPP appear infrequently within the specific social movement literature. Jules Boycoff (2007), in research focusing on the Global Justice Movement, mentions the two organisations in a study illustrating how the state can neutralise a SMO through various tactics, including media manipulation, court prosecutions and hearings. In a similar vein, Michael Carley (1997) explores how repressive state tactics can undermine and destroy a social movement. He takes AIM’s disintegration as an example, and in particular the FBI’s campaign against it, focusing on what he terms ‘opinion control’, ‘internal infiltration’ and in a restatement of Churchill and Vander Wall’s position (2002), ‘direct assault’ (165-69).

There are no comparative studies on AIM and the BPP which explore the interactive effects of external violence on movement mobilisation and persistence which utilise the SM concepts of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities. However, these concepts do appear in a limited number of separate investigations into these groups. For instance, Tim Baylor (1996) studied AIM’s campaign and how the organisation was framed by the media. He argues that ‘class bias is one factor that significantly affects media framing’ and that ‘violent tactics will not elicit media support’ (242, 248). Elsewhere, in their conclusion to Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party, Bloom and Martin Jr. (2013) briefly refer to political opportunity structure analysis and argue that this perspective ‘makes it hard to understand why, even as the insurgent Civil Rights Movement fell apart, revolutionary black nationalism [throughout 1968 and 1969] developed and thrived’ (397).

Probably the analysis most of interest here is Stotik, Shriver and Cable’s (1994) investigation into the demise of AIM which employs various social movement concepts. These authors apply aspects of resource mobilisation theory and political opportunity structure as well as new social movement theory to account
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for AIM’s disintegration. However, no similar analysis is undertaken for the movement’s formational or developmental phases. Ultimately, these authors argue that aspects of NSM and POS can explain the organisation’s decline. NSM theorists highlight the generation of collective identity as intrinsic to movement persistence. As a result, Stotik, Shriver and Cable maintain that ‘the primary cause of AIM’s lack of collective identity stemmed from its inability to establish itself as a movement that could meet the needs of both urban and reservation Native Americans’ (63). They also point to the social control aspects of political opportunity structure analysis to account for AIM’s decline. These authors argue that repression was a central factor in AIM’s demise and that ‘the magnitude of threat that AIM presented to the government is illustrated by the fact that AIM leaders were targeted by the FBI only four years after the groups founding’ (64). These combined factors depleted the movement’s resources to a point where the organisation could no longer sustain adequate levels of mobilisation. In their conclusion, Stotik, Shriver and Cable argue that further research on this topic should include ‘the identification of the modes of social control employed by the state against movements’ (65).

In sum, this study will contribute towards the social movement literature on AIM and the BPP by adding to the minimal case analysis involving exogenous violence as an interactive feature in SM appearance and persistence. The role of state and state-sponsored violence will be specifically highlighted in this regard. It will also compensate for the lack of attention given to racial and structural violence in the SM literature. This thesis will shed light on movement outcomes in an arena where the key focus has been on the formational and developmental stages of social movement mobilisation. Crucially, through the employment of social movement theory, it will address the under-researched place of violence as a resource and strategy in social movement functioning.

1.3 METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

In the terminology of social science, the goal of this thesis is to use social movement theory to comparatively interpret the AIM and BPP campaigns. Three
main approaches exist within the field of comparative analysis (Ragin 1987). The first is the *experimental* method (used notably in psychology) which involves ‘the creation of data… in an artificial setting’ (Della Porta 2008: 200). The second is the *statistical* method which is mathematically based and utilizes ‘mathematical elaboration of empirically relevant data’ (ibid: 201). The third approach, somewhat tautologically called the *comparative* method, is the most suited to the two movements that I will be examining, for reasons to be elucidated below.

Within the comparative framework, there are two main strategies of research: the variable-oriented approach and what Charles C. Ragin (1987) calls case-oriented comparative methods. Variable-based research tends to follow statistical rules in that a high-\(N\) (a research design encompassing many cases) is considered preferable (Della Porta 2008: 207). Variable-oriented studies also place an emphasis on cases ‘that are independent from each other’ and case selection is generally on a random basis (ibid: 208). In contrast, case-oriented analysis focuses on small-\(N\) studies (a research design based on a small number of cases) and as a result, much of comparative sociological-political research follow the case-oriented approach (Savolainen 1994: 1219). Therefore, this strategy is deemed the more appropriate method in relation to our two cases in that it is applicable for comparatists who ‘want to understand or interpret specific cases’ (Ragin 1987: 35). As opposed to the random case-selection process of variable-based analysis, case-oriented researchers ‘intentionally select cases that differ relatively little from each other with respect to the outcome under investigation’ (Della Porta 2008: 212). Subsequently, they generally focus ‘on cases where a phenomenon (such as revolution) is present’ (ibid). Thus, the degree to which the selected comparable cases belong in the same category ‘is assessed in the course of the research itself’ (ibid: 207).

According to Charles C. Ragin, ‘most discussions of case-oriented methods begin (and often end) with John Stuart Mill’s presentation of canons of experimental inquiry’ (1987: 36). Ragin points out that Mill’s approach is ‘of particular
relevance to case-oriented investigation’ (ibid) and that this procedure ‘works well when the number of relevant cases is relatively small’ (ibid: 49). While for reasons described below, Mill’s methods will require some modification, debates about comparative analysis generally commence with Mill’s strategies as they form the ‘basis of analytic comparison in qualitative data analysis’ (Neuman 2000: 427).

As for the methods themselves, in the first instance, the method of agreement highlights similarities across different cases. Mill formulated the analysis as follows, ‘If two or more of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstances in which alone all the instances agree, is the cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon’ (1843: Vol. 1: 454). As an example, this can be translated by the following proposition:

If two or more countries being compared display the same phenomenon (e.g. high rates of solo living) and these countries share only one other characteristic in common (e.g. high levels of prosperity) then that characteristic is the cause of the phenomenon they have in common (i.e. high rates of living alone) (De Vaus 2008: 252; emphasis in original).25

By employing the method of agreement, the researcher demonstrates that particular cases have a shared outcome. As a result, the researcher can point out that despite differences ‘critical similarities exist’ (Neuman 2000: 428). On the other hand, the method of difference, detects attributes in similar cases, but which differ in a critical respect. According to Mill ‘the circumstances in which alone the two instances differ, is the effect, or the cause, or an indispensable part of the cause, of the phenomenon’ (1843: Vol. 1: 455). In this context, the researcher highlights specific aspects of a case which diverge on particular grounds (Neuman 2000: 428). Thus, as David de Vaus points out, the method of difference proceeds for example ‘by focusing on countries that differ in regard to the

25 Using the method of agreement ‘the cause of the phenomenon is the one circumstance that is present in all the analysed instances’ (Della Porta 2008: 204).
outcome (e.g. rates of solo living) and seek to find the one, and only one, other difference between these countries’ (2008: 254).26

According to Mill, the methods of agreement and difference permit the researcher to discover and prove causal relations (Savolainen 1994: 1218). However, this has been shown to be problematic in important respects. Ever since Cohen and Nagel’s (1934) discussion on the method ‘it has been a philosophical commonplace that they fulfil neither of these functions’ (ibid). Therefore, my approach is closer to the research strategies pursued by Theda Skocpol (1979), who did not invest these methods with either powers of discovery or proof (Savolainen 1994: 1219).27 Instead, Skocpol utilised the eliminative aspects of the methods for as Cohen and Nagel go on to point out, one of their key functions is to ‘eliminate irrelevant circumstances’ (1934: 256).28 According to Skocpol:

Using Mill’s logics, I considered carefully whether causal hypotheses from Marxian class analysis and from Ted Gurr, Neil Smelser, Charles Tilly, and Chalmers Johnson could do an adequate job in explaining why France, Russia, and China had social revolutions, while other similarly situated modernizing agrarian states did not (1986: 189).29

This study will proceed along comparable lines in that it will explore how the three central concepts in the social movement literature can be used to highlight similarities and differences in the experience of AIM and the BPP. The implementation of the method will produce the required results. Thus, my employment of Mill’s methods is not to enter debates around causality or to

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26 Using the method of difference ‘we have to look for the one circumstance on which they differ’ (ibid).

27 Other notable examples of where Mill’s logics are employed include Alexis de Tocqueville (1955) The Old Regime and the French Revolution and Barrington Moore, Jr., (1966) Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy.

28 Jukka Savolainen maintains that ‘it is obvious when Skocpol promotes the use of Mill’s methods in comparative historical research, she only has the eliminative functions in mind’ (1994: 1218).

29 Skocpol utilised the method of agreement by stressing ‘similarities in the face of other important differences’ (Skocpol and Somers 1980: 185). She then proceeds in line with the method of difference by ‘analytically focused contrasts between France, Russia and China, on the one hand, and selected parts of the histories of England, Prussia/Germany, and Japan, on the other’ (ibid).
discover, prove or seek ‘universal laws’ but to develop ‘ideas about regularities or patterned relations from preexisting theories’ which point to ‘regularities within a social context’ (Neuman 2000: 427-428). Therefore, the relevant context in this thesis is the association between external violence, the state and two social movements in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s.

According to Charles C. Ragin, by utilizing a comparative case-oriented approach ‘each case is examined as a whole and as a total situation resulting from a combination of conditions, and cases are compared with each other as wholes’ (1987: 49). In tandem with later developments of Mill’s methods, I will also utilize Herbert Blumer’s (1951) movement lifecycle approach. Blumer was one of the earliest scholars to analyze the trajectory of a social movement’s campaign in totality in terms of lifecycle phases. What Blumer suggests is that a SMO has a complete lifecycle with group initiation, progression and demise all equally relevant to the study of organizational campaigning. Thus, the notion of movement lifecycles points to various interactive elements which instigate movement activity at different points of the protest cycle.

My use of lifecycle analysis in this thesis will revolve around three phases: formation, development and demise. Even though these groups emerged from a context of state, structural and racial injustice, there are instances where one specific feature of their mobilization differed. Therefore, by utilizing Mill’s method we can point to where specific similarities and differences emerged at the three stages of the groups campaigns. In line with Blumer’s process of movement lifecycles, this thesis will pose specific questions at specific points of

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30 W. Lawrence Neuman uses the example of a researcher who ‘looks for a pattern within all twentieth-century US urban public schools, not a casual law that applies to all educational organizations or all bureaucracies’ (2000: 428).

31 More recently, the cycle of protest model has been employed to study the various stages of SM mobilisation (Tarrow and Della Porta 1986). However, this method is in many ways similar and most certainly influenced by Blumer’s notion of movement lifecycles.

32 Blumer identified four stages of a social movement’s lifecycle. These are: “social ferment,” “popular excitement,” “formalization” and “institutionalization.” Scholars have since renamed these phases but the underlying themes remain unchanged. These social movement stages have become known as “emergence”, “coalescence”, “bureaucratization” and “decline” (Christiansen 2009: 2).
the organisation’s trajectory. Thus, I will seek to identify how framing, resource mobilization and political opportunities offer insight into the three phases of formation, development and demise.\(^{33}\)

Overall then, the key theoretical arc of this thesis is to point to what extent each of the three SM concepts can shed some light on why violence became (1) fundamental to the framing of movement grievance (2) how it contributed towards the resources employed by the two organizations and (3) how violence became central to both opening and closing political opportunities. Therefore, the investigation will proceed as follows: Chapters 2 and 3 will ask two questions: (1) what role did the different types of violence play in the formation of the BPP and AIM respectively? And, (2) how can the three social movement concepts illuminate the violence for this phase of the group’s lifecycle? Chapter 4 presents a comparative analysis of the formational phase and asks what similarity and difference emerged in framing, resource mobilization and political opportunities during this lifecycle phase? This chapter also asks: can we make a positive or negative case for the applicability of these concepts to the formation of our two cases? Chapters 5 and 6 follow a similar pattern in relation to violence and the issue of movement development. Chapter 7 again comparatively explores this period. Chapters 8 and 9 will examine the contribution of violence in the organizations’ demise, while Chapter 10 will follow the questions posed in the comparative Chapters 4 and 7.

In summary, this research will employ three SM concepts to inform the analysis. It will be attentive to similarities as well as dissimilarities in the two movements’ lifecycles. As the theoretical analysis into armed groups has progressed, my study offers an opportunity to reappraise these organisations whose existence among students of social movements has attracted relatively little attention. The SM theoretical framework outlined above will permit me to analyse not just the ideological and tactical motivations of armed struggle but to consider as well the

\(^{33}\) Two of Blumer’s movement lifecycle stages, “social ferment” and “popular excitement” will be subsumed within the formational phase.
impacts of state violence and violent counter-movements on social movement formation, development and demise. The ability of the general concepts of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities to illuminate violence and armed movements such as AIM and the BPP will further be assessed in the concluding chapter.
CHAPTER 2

The Formation of the BPP

“You just had to be black and moving to be shot by the police”

_BPP Member_ (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 28).

‘Those who deplore violence loudest and most publicly are usually pillars of the status quo — school principals, businessmen, politicians, ministers. What they inveigh against most often is overt attack on property or against the “good order of society.” They rarely see violence in defence of the status quo in the same light as violence directed against it. At the time of the Watts riots in 1965, Mr. Johnson [President Lyndon] urged Negroes to realise that nothing of value can be won through violent means — a proposition which may be true but which the President did not apply to the escalation in Vietnam he was just then embarked upon, and which it would never have occurred to him to apply to the actions of the Los Angeles police department’

_Thomas Rose_ (1969:5).

‘It is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks’


Introduction

Social movement theory has offered numerous explanations for group formation. This chapter will employ the conceptual insights of _framing_, _resource mobilisation_, and _political opportunities_ to examine the events surrounding the emergence of the Black Panther Party in 1966. Violence had been a consistent feature of the African-American experience since the days of the slave trade. Unrestrained police and popular violence had been a given within the black community for decades prior to the Panthers’ emergence. The state had often colluded in ongoing racial terror.\(^{34}\) Armed self-defence against the violence had appeared only sporadically since 1776. There had been no national militant organisation formed to combat the aggression against black America until the appearance of the BPP. Therefore, the key questions in this chapter are: How did

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\(^{34}\) Akinyele Omowale Umoja points out that ‘the primary social function of the [racial] violence was to maintain white political and economic power and the colour line during segregation’ (2013: 1).
violence, state, structural and popular, contribute towards the formation of the BPP? How was this violence *framed* by the organisation’s leaders? What resources were utilised to counteract it? And, what opportunities for movement formation were opened or closed due to violence?

This chapter will therefore investigate the role of violence in the emergence of the Black Panther Party. It will argue that the formation of the BPP was inextricably linked with three interactive factors. The first of these factors was the pervasive existence of *popular violence*. Decades before the Panthers emerged, various black citizens and organisations had arrived at the conclusion that when it came to the racial brutalisation of African-Americans, the state could never be relied upon for equal protection under law. One of the key repertoires that were employed to counter such violence was armed self-defence groups, particularly noticeable in the Southern States of the USA. The BPP were formed within the arc of struggle that was the civil rights movement. A contentious debate over the tactical application of violent and non-violent methods had featured prominently throughout the civil rights campaign for freedom, justice and equality. Militant black resistance did not just surface with the emergence of the Panthers as there had been a tradition of armed self-defence for decades. Violent tactics escalated in the years after World War II.

On their formation, the BPP’s leadership were fully aware of the previous armed self-defence repertoires that had been employed by numerous black militant groups (Newton 1973: 111). Long before the organisation appeared, some individuals had decided that a *possible* tactic to combat violence against the black community was armed self-defence. This tactic was paradoxically facilitated through another aspect of the state; the army and the military training received by black ex-servicemen. This strategy continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s and at times, it coexisted alongside the moderate approach of the civil rights movement (Austin 2006: 10). Competing tensions over the tactical application of either violent or non-violent methods would feature prominently throughout the civil rights campaign.
The second factor propelling the BPP’s formation was the *state violence* committed through the actions and policies of the police force. Police brutality was to advance rather than halt the use of militant forms of action and its endemic nature created the conditions for a radicalisation process, particularly throughout the urban ghettos of the USA (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 28-30). The perception within these communities was that the police were operating entirely outside the boundaries of law and order. The police force in these districts was essentially viewed in ways similar to an occupying army (Rose 1969: 8). Thus, a militant consensus emerged around the belief that if the state was intent on continually exercising repressive tactics, then black communities would require some form of armed protection. The civil rights advances in 1964 and 1965 were certainly a step forward for black America, but these gains did not address the perpetual violence committed by the police. Consequently, by the mid-1960s an environment was in place for the ascent of black militancy. Riots and widespread disorder due to police violence was now a common feature throughout the black ghettos of the USA.

The third factor which influenced the emergence of the BPP was the *structural violence* which blighted the lives of poor black Americans. Political access and representation for these communities were virtually non-existent. Poverty, unemployment, substandard housing and a lack of proper health facilities were pervasive. As a result, the black urban ghetto became a breeding ground for discontent, and this anger, coupled with intense police violence, precipitated the urban riots of 1964 and 1965. Black radicals argued that these districts were essentially internal colonies within the USA (Alkebulan 2007: 14). During this period, a number of social movements had been drawn to the theoretical strategies espoused by proponents of Marxist-Leninism, particularly those regarding the use of revolutionary violence. Subsequently, the founders of the BPP were to identify a correlation between the structural violence that black communities faced in the USA and the violence experienced by oppressed groups throughout the third world. State challengers in Latin America and Africa had diagnosed imperialism as the primary instigator of violence and the writings of
revolutionary figures such as Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Mao Zedong provided the justification for armed rebellion that Panther leaders embraced. The capacity of key BPP figures to appropriate ideological constructs regarding violence, colonialism and armed self-defence was central to the movement’s philosophy.

2.1 VIOLENCE AND THE FRAMING OF GRIEVANCES: PART I

2.1.1 Robert F. Williams: The Resource of Armed Self-Defence

On 28 August 1955 in Money, Mississippi, a 14 year old black teenager named Emmett Till was murdered while visiting relations. Two white men, Roy Bryant and JW Milam, accused the child of reportedly whistling at one of the men’s wives. In retaliation, they captured him, took him to a nearby barn and along with several accomplices, tortured the young man, gouging out one of his eyes before shooting him in the head. After dismembering his body with an axe, they attached a cotton gin fan to his neck and threw his remains into the nearby Tallahatchie River. According to Curtis J. Austin, ‘a heightened black consciousness emerged in the wake of this tragedy. At this time, many blacks felt enough was enough’ (2006: 6).

Due to exogenous violence, there had been a historic pattern of armed self-defence groups that were mobilised at different points to protect the black community against waves of racial terror. These manifestations of armed self-defence were particularly apparent throughout the slave states of the Deep South. In the summer of 1831, there had been a sizable slave revolt in Virginia under the direction of Nat Turner. According to historian Herbert Aptheker ‘this event was not an isolated unique phenomenon, but the culmination of a series of slave conspiracies and revolts which had occurred in the immediate past’ (1993: 11). Previously, uprisings had also been instigated in 1800 by Gabriel Prosser in Virginia, and in 1822 by Denmark Vesey in South Carolina.
According to Arthur Waskow, ‘in many parts of the United States, the semi-private use of violence by whites to control Negroes had long been permitted by the state in the form of lynching’s which, though formally illegal, were rarely punished’ (1969: 164). As a result, there had always been competing analysis within African-American circles over how to deal with the issue of external violence. Writing in 1849, the black author and activist Frederick Douglass maintained that:

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will... Negroes will be hunted at the North, and held and flogged at the South, so long as they submit to those devilish outrages, and make no resistance, either moral or physical (Quoted in Rose 1969: 45).

During the Second World War, the fight for democracy and liberty overseas had convinced many throughout black America that the use of violence could be legitimised in the pursuit of freedom (Austin 2006: 4). A key figure to emerge at this juncture was Robert F. Williams. He later recalled that, “when Hitler’s tyranny threatened the world, we did not hear much about how immoral it is to meet violence with violence” (Quoted in Tyson 1998: 560). Born in Monroe, North Carolina in 1925, all the factors that were eventually to give rise to black militancy were apparent in Williams’ childhood experience (Austin 2006: 5). In particular, the constant threat of racial violence and the state’s consistent failure to provide adequate protection to the black community were keenly felt.35 Williams later pointed out that:

It has always been an accepted right of Americans, as the history of our western states proves, that where the law is unable, or unwilling,

35 According to Robert F. Williams in the 1960s:

The majority of white people in the United States have literally no idea of the violence with which Negroes in the South are treated daily - nay, hourly. This violence is deliberate, conscious, condoned by the authorities. It has gone on for centuries and is going on today, every day, unceasing and unremitting. It is our way of life. Negro existence in the South has been one long travail, steeped in terror and blood — our blood (1962: 5).
to enforce order, the citizen can, and must, act in self-defence against lawless violence. I believe this right holds for black Americans as well as whites (1962: 3).

In 1946, a Second World War black friend of Williams’ named Bennie Montgomery killed a white landowner in self-defence. In retaliation, the Ku Klux Klan threatened to lynch the man before trial. The authorities quickly brought the charge of murder against him and Montgomery was executed ten months later. After his body was shipped home for burial, the KKK warned that they would seize the remains and drag them through the streets of Monroe. It had long been obvious to Williams that state authorities could in no way be relied upon to provide sufficient protection for such an attack. Thus, when a motorcade of Klansmen arrived at the funeral home, they were met by a party of up to forty men fully armed. No shots were fired and as a result, the motorcade quietly dispersed. Williams and three others present that night were to become key figures in the fight against popular violence in the area. Williams maintained that...

...since the city officials wouldn’t stop the Klan, we decided to stop the Klan ourselves. We started this action out of the need for defence because law and order had completely vanished, because there was no such thing as a fourteenth amendment to the United States Constitution in Monroe, North Carolina (1962:17).

There also had been many historical precedents which indicated that the state did not just provide adequate protection to the black community, but in many cases colluded with right-wing extremists. For instance, the KKK had numerous police officers who were members (Austin 2006: 11). It was also riddled with FBI

36 Richard Maxwell Brown points out that:

There have been three Ku Klan movements. The first movement arose in the South during reconstruction in defense of white supremacy and home rule. The second Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s spread all through the country, and outside the South directed its violence against immoral and incorrigible white persons. The present Ku Klux Klan of the 1950s and 1960s is mainly a Southern movement devoted to white supremacy (1969: 87).

37 The fourteenth amendment to the US constitution was ratified in 1868 and it promised all citizens, whatever their color or creed, equal protection by the state. This same amendment would also be referred to in the ten point manifesto of the Black Panther Party, whereby the nascent organization proposed that “the courts should follow the United States constitution so that black people receive fair trials” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 72).
agents working within the organisation and ‘used by the FBI during the early 1960s against the civil rights movement’ (Churchill 1992: 96). For figures such as Williams, such realities dictated that “we had to resist, and that resistance could be effective if we resisted in groups, and we resisted with guns” (Quoted in Tyson 1998: 549). As a result, friction between those advocating non-violence and armed self-defence was a regular feature throughout the years of the civil rights movement. However, while the US attorney general Ramsey Clarke was referring to Martin Luther King as the “apostle of nonviolence”, a visitor to the black leader’s home in 1956 noted that the figurehead for the civil rights movement had armed guards and that there was a considerable arsenal of weapons on the premises (Austin 2006: 18; Tyson 1998: 546).

2.1.2 Military Training as a Resource against Popular Violence

Military training was to be a primary mobilising mechanism employed by the BPP when they emerged. A number of key party figures including Bobby Seale, Elmer Gerard “Geronimo” Pratt and John Huggins were ex-army personnel. Military training as a resource had long been drawn upon in previous campaigns to stem popular violence. Many black veterans from World War II and the Korean War were to empower and sustain these initiatives throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Nelson Peery points out that black ex-servicemen were essential elements in the fight against racial violence in that groups

...led by the veterans and determined to get some of the freedoms they had fought and died for, were no longer afraid of the Klan and the Sheriffs. This was the specific form in which the worldwide wave of national liberation washed ashore in America (2007: 30).

In 1955, Robert Williams joined his local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP). This moderate organisation, created by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1909, had been at the centre of the struggle for black equality since its inception (Fairclough 2001: 69). Even though it was a reformist movement, Williams enlisted the support of a number of other black army veterans. By 1959, he had recruited some 200 members to the NAACP
branch in Monroe. This chapter was distinct within the national organisation, in that its membership was largely drawn from the working class.

Two years previously, the group had campaigned to desegregate the local swimming pool. In retaliation, the KKK launched a wave of attacks on the homes of civil rights leaders. On more than one occasion, Klan attackers were repelled with both sandbag fortifications and concerted volleys of disciplined gunfire. Within a couple of years, Williams’ group would constitute a ‘well armed and disciplined fighting unit’ and its ranks ‘didn’t scare easily’ (Tyson 1998: 550-551). Ongoing battles between chapter members of the NAACP and the KKK became a common feature in Monroe. By the late 1950s, certainly among the more radical wing of the civil rights movement, Williams had established himself as a credible alternative to Martin Luther King’s appeal for non-violence (Joseph 2006: 20-21).

The resource of black ex-servicemen was not just confined to Monroe. In the late 1950s in Birmingham, Alabama, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, a leading figure in the city’s freedom movement, sought protection from a group of ex-army veterans. This body was formed by a Colonel Stone “Buck” Johnson and they successfully prevented a number of bomb attacks on the pastor’s church (Wendt 2007: 322-330). Two years prior to the formation of the Black Panther Party, an organisation was established in Jonesboro, Louisiana called the Deacons for Defence and Justice. Once again, previous military training was also a strong element here, as ex-servicemen patrolled black neighbourhoods as a deterrent against right-wing violence. According to Akinyele Omowale Umoja ‘without armed resistance, primarily organised by local people, the National Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists would not have been able to organise in Mississippi’ (2013:2).38 Predating the

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38 The SNCC was formed in April 1960. Although it was initially close to Martin Luther King’s moderate Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), it became increasingly independent of its influence. CORE was formed in 1948, but escalated its campaign in the late
appeal for Black Power in the mid-1960s, these armed self-defence units were the only line of protection for both civil rights activists and the wider black community as racial violence raged unabated and unchecked (Wendt 2007: 324).

2.1.3 1964-1965: Opportunities for Militant Advancement

As outlined in the previous two sections, the armed tactics that would be employed by the BPP were in place long before the organisation formed. For instance, two important movements, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were to increasingly question the validity of non-violence to combat racial terror. In 1964, SNCC chairman James Forman, maintained that the unremitting nature of popular violence “confirmed the absolute necessity for armed self-defence” (Quoted in Ovenden 1992: 34). The confrontational tone of both CORE and the SNCC increased considerably when Stokely Carmichael took over the leadership of the latter, and Floyd McKissick assumed the central position in CORE (Austin 2006: 19).

In 1964, the SNCC made a failed attempt to integrate into the National Democratic Party (Joseph 2006: 129). As a result, movement members became involved in the formation of the Lowndes County Freedom Organisation (LCFO), an independent political party in Alabama. A year later, under the leadership of John Hulette, thousands of blacks who resided in the poverty-stricken area joined the organisation. Two years before the formation of the BPP, this group was the first to use the image of the Black Panther as its symbol.

When the Panthers emerged in 1966, many within the organisation’s ranks were well aware of the militant apparatus that had offered protection against popular

1950s and early 1960s. Both movements were the target of persistent violence by right-wing extremists throughout the Deep South (Ovenden 1992: 26-27).

39 These organizations were also aware of the state’s double standards on violent resistance. As Staughton Lynd underlines, ‘it ill becomes white Americans to rebuke the SNCC for repudiating “passive obedience” which the leaders of the American Revolution so much scorned’ (1969: 232).

40 Numerically the African-American population outnumbered the white population in the county by approximately eight to one. However, out of around twelve thousand black citizens only one, Hulette himself, was registered to vote (Austin 2006: 13).
violence in the Deep South. The founders of the BPP, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, later admitted that the organisational tactics of Robert F. Williams, John Hullette and the Deacons for Defence and Justice was the key influence on the paramilitary composition of their movement (Newton 1973: 111). Despite the Panthers’ initial inception on the West Coast, many prominent party figures were born in the Deep South. The chairman of the SNCC, James Forman, was later to categorise the emergence of the BPP as “the extension of work many of us in the SNCC had been doing over the past seven years, and a natural outgrowth of the intense struggles that had been waged since 1960” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 129).

2.1.4 Malcolm X: The Framing of Armed Self-Defence

During the 1950s and 1960s, no prominent black national figure was to criticise the tactic of non-violence more than Malcolm X. Unlike Martin Luther King and a number of other civil rights leaders, his education was formed on the streets, where many like him were pushed ‘to the margins of society, left with no other source of income than petty crime’ (Ovenden 1992: 15). Born Malcolm Little in 1925, he was convicted on burglary charges at the age of 21. While in prison he joined Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam (NIO), and became a devout Muslim. The NIO argued that black salvation could only be achieved if there

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41 Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were from Louisiana and Texas respectively. Eldridge Cleaver was born in Arkansas while David Hilliard hailed from Alabama. The two first recruits to the party were Elbert “Big Man” Howard who was from Tennessee and Robert “Lil’ Bobby” Hutton who was from Arkansas (Abu-Jamal 2008: 6).
42 In 1950, the radical black leader changed his name to Malcolm X. The ‘X’ would reflect the fact that he would never know his true African family name. He was to maintain that ‘for me, my “X” replaced the white slave-master name of “Little” which some blue-eyed devil named Little had imposed upon my paternal forebears’ (Malcolm X and Alex Haley 1965: 44).
43 The Nation of Islam or the Black Muslims as they were also known were formed in Detroit by a Middle Eastern immigrant named Wallace D. Fard in 1930. After his mysterious disappearance in 1934, Elijah Poole, who later took the name Elijah Muhammad, ran the movement until his death in 1975. On joining the NIO ‘converts would replace their surname by ‘X’, to signify the unknown African name taken from them by the slave owners’ (Ovenden 1992: 19).
44 Malcolm X’s prison background made him extremely appealing to the black underclass which formed much of the BPP’s leadership. One of these figures, Eldridge Cleaver, influenced by Malcolm X, transformed himself in prison and joined the Nation of Islam in the early 1960s. He went on to become a respected prison leader, organizing strikes and stoppages. Cleaver’s efforts and activities ‘were part of a growing prison movement that in just a few years would make headlines all over the world’ (Austin 2006: 72-73).
was a total separation from white society. Upon his release from prison in 1952, Malcolm X became a leader of an NIO mosque in Harlem, New York. He was unequivocal on the issue of armed self-defence, arguing that blacks experienced the American nightmare, not the American dream. In repeated attacks towards the US state, he was to sow the seeds of what eventually became the armed self-defence tactics employed by the BPP. He would refer to the march on Washington in 1963, when Martin Luther King made his historic I Have a Dream Speech, as a “one-day integrated picnic” (Quoted in Malcolm X and Alex Haley 1965: 278, 280-281).

The principle division, however, with other black leaders at the time, was over the question of how to deal with state and racial violence. Central to Malcolm X’s philosophy was direct military-style confrontations with the police. In April 1957 in Harlem, two members of the Nation of Islam, Lypsie Tall and Johnson Hinton, came upon a number of police officers viciously beating a suspect who was black. At this, one of the NIO members shouted to the police that “you’re not in Alabama. This is New York” (Quoted in Marable 2011: 127). The two Muslims were then set upon, with Hinton in particular beaten close to death. They were then arrested and brought to the local police station. Shortly after when word spread of the assault, about two thousand people gathered in front of the building and demanded their immediate release. Malcolm X was contacted and asked to negotiate with local police commanders in order to prevent a riot (Joseph 2006: 9). Arriving shortly afterwards, he met and spoke with two high ranking officials. After a highly fractious exchange, the police chiefs agreed to let Malcolm X see Johnson Hinton to ascertain if he needed medical attention. While the talks were ongoing, members of the Fruit of Islam (FOI), which was the NIO’s security unit, lined up in the formation of ‘an all-black unarmed quasi military regiment’ (Joseph 2006:10). Nervous officials from the police department pleaded with Malcolm X to avert potential violence. When the black minister was satisfied his comrade would receive due process under law, he ordered the Muslims to stand down. This they carried out with a military precision. Hinton was eventually transferred to a local hospital and then released.
back into police custody. He was diagnosed as having received a brain contusion, lacerations to his scalp and subdural haemorrhaging (Marable 2011: 127).

In an address delivered in Detroit two years before the BPP formed in California, Malcolm X outlined how he believed police and racial violence should be dealt with. The principle of armed self-defence was continually justified throughout his speech. Once again, a black leader evoked America’s revolutionary past arguing that:

> When this country here was first being founded there was thirteen colonies. The whites were colonised. They were fed up with this taxation without representation, so some of them stood up and said “liberty or death”. Liberty or death was what brought about the freedom of whites in this country from the English.

As a result of such declarations, the co-founder of the BPP, Bobby Seale, was later to recall the influence Malcolm X had on his political philosophy when he pointed out that the Black Muslim minister ‘had advocated armed self-defence against the racist power structure and shown the racist white power structure that we intend to use guns to defend our people’ (1970: 21). On their emergence, the organisation was to consider themselves ‘the heirs of Malcolm X’ (Austin 2006: 52).

### 2.2 VIOLENCE AND THE FRAMING OF GRIEVANCES: PART II

#### 2.2.1 The Framing of State Violence: Part I

It was the police, more than any other arm of the state, which had historically represented the face of state violence for many African-Americans. The daily brutality was acknowledged by all strands of black opinion. During his *I Have a Dream* speech in Washington DC in 1963, Martin Luther King maintained that

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45 Over time the incident became part of local folklore and, sometime after, Johnson Hinton was awarded the largest police brutality settlement in New York’s history (Joseph 2006: 11).
46 Malcolm X. *The Ballot or the Bullet*. Speech. King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan. 12 Apr. 1964.
‘we can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.’ It was also widely accepted in the black community that the police had persistently colluded in acts of right-wing terror. In later years, Robert Williams recalled an armed attack on the home of Albert E. Perry, the vice president of the Monroe branch of the NAACP. On that night the Ku Klux Klan motorcade included two police cars (Williams 1962: 3).

While it is virtually impossible to quantify the damage police violence had inflicted on the black community, this was also the one issue that was to unite the disparate elements within the civil rights movement. For instance in 1963, Birmingham in Alabama was the city chosen by Martin Luther King and the SCLC leadership to stage a campaign to break segregation. It was also chosen to shine a light on police brutality. The Black Panther Party was primarily instigated to counter unrestrained police violence in Oakland, California. As Laura Pulido points out, the BPP’s focus on ‘self-defence cannot be understood outside of the black communities relationship to the police’ (2002: 774). The perception was that the black community in Oakland broadly faced the same abuse of police power as those that resided in the Jim Crow South (ibid).

Racism within police departments across the USA was also rife. Robert Self maintains that the force in Oakland had long been ‘a bastion of both racial paternalism and virulent racism’ (2005: 229). By 1966, nearly 35% of the population of Oakland was black while only 4.7% of the officers in the area were African-American (Blauner 1972: 100). Essentially, the activities of the police force were regarded as no more than a continuation of white supremacist violence (Marable 1983: 29). Offensive and racist language was applied regularly by the police and an unspoken “shoot to kill” policy had existed for many years (Blauner 1969: 404).

Between 1960 and 1968 alone, even though approximately 10% of the American population was black, they constituted 51% of those killed by the police (Jeffries

2006: 9). At the same time, the police were consistently implicated in a number of studies which examined the escalation of riots in urban America. For instance, the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968) concluded that the presence of the police in minority communities was the one factor that significantly contributed to disorder and violence (Olzak and Olivier 1998: 256). In the months leading up the BPP’s formation, this sense of grievance was articulated by Huey Newton when he argued that:

Black people have begged, prayed, petitioned and demonstrated, among other things to get the racist power structure to right the wrongs historically being perpetuated against black people… Vicious police dogs, cattle prods, and increased patrols have become familiar sights in black communities… The time has come for black people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late (Quoted in Calloway 1977: 56).

2.2.2 The Framing of State Violence: Part II

Police violence and the riots that followed had been a common feature nationally in the years prior to the Black Panthers’ formation. The confrontations were always sparked by an incident involving the police and a member or members of the black community. On 16 July 1964, a black 15 year-old adolescent was shot by an off-duty police officer, triggering 10 days of rioting in Harlem (Joseph 2006: 110). On the day of the funeral, crowds were baton charged and shot, setting off further unrest and rioting. In the aftermath of this episode, violent disorder spread to other cities including Saint Louis, Philadelphia and Detroit. A year after the events in Harlem, an incident between a black female and a number of police officers in the Watts area of Los Angeles unleashed six days of chaos. The LA police department had a long standing reputation for racial brutality.

Speaking in 1961, Roy Wilkins, the executive director of the NAACP, said that the police in Los Angeles were “next to those in Birmingham, Alabama in the treatment of black citizens” (Quoted in Jeffries 2006: 7). The beatings and killings of blacks occurred regularly but went either unnoticed or without proper investigation. Only about 4% of the LA police force was African-American and
as a result, tensions had been heightened in the Watts area for years (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 28).

On 11 August 1965, Rena Frye, the mother of a young black male who had been arrested for a traffic offence was roughly handled or struck by a police officer in Watts (Fairclough 2001: 295). A crowd gathered and incensed at what had occurred, began throwing bottles, wood and stones. Within hours, the situation had become completely out of control, with widespread rioting and looting, running battles with the police and the assault of many white people. In total, the disorder covered an area of forty-five sq. miles; $200 million worth of property was destroyed leading to the arrests of over four thousand people; and resulted in 34 deaths. It was the ‘bloodiest race riot since the Detroit outbreak of 1943’, and considerably greater and more destructive than the previous year’s disturbances in Philadelphia, Rochester and New York (ibid: 296). Interviews carried out afterwards found that over 15% of the Watts population had taken part in the rioting, and 34% of the community had approved of it as it unfolded. Even amongst those who disapproved, there was an unspoken sympathy for the actions taken.48

It seemed now that it was now only a matter of time before this rage and anger was channelled into a cohesive social movement, with those involved in rioting regarded as prime recruiting material for any militant black resistance group (Calloway 1977: 58). A team of experts sent by President Lyndon Johnson to observe the social conditions that existed in black urban areas across the USA, chose Oakland as the site most likely to follow Watts into disorder and chaos over police violence. One government official described the area as a “powder-

48 An investigation into the rioters in Watts found that they were mainly in the 18 to 34 year old age group. Douglas G. Glasgow, a professor of social welfare, carried out an investigation of the inner city youth of LA and found that many “were jobless and lacked saleable skills and opportunities to get them; they had been subjected and labelled as social problems by the police, the schools, the employment and welfare agencies; they were victims of the new camouflaged racism” (Quoted in Marable 1983: 63).
keg” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 38). All that was required now was a leadership to spearhead a militant black social movement.

2.2.3 Leadership as Resource

The background of the BPP leadership was shaped by the prevalence of state, popular and structural violence. Poverty, unemployment and hopelessness categorised much of their formative years. Bobby Seale later recalled that, ‘I grew up just like any other brother. We didn’t always have money’ (Seale 1970: 6). In the years following World War II, white police officers known for their ferocity were recruited from the Deep South to patrol black neighbourhoods like Oakland (Pearson 1995:49). In 1947, Paul Heide, a trade union leader in the area, was to deliver a ‘stinging indictment of police brutality against African-Americans before the Oakland City Council’ (Self 2005: 69). Violence emanating from the police department was so severe than an investigation by the Californian legislature in 1950 precipitated both the resignation of the police chief and the jailing of another officer at San Quentin (Pearson 1995: 49).

By the early 1960s, Oakland had two distinct geographical divisions. Piedmont was predominantly white and the home to the upper middle and upper classes, while the flatlands consisted of low income families of Black, Chicano and Chinese origin. These were to make up about 50% of Oakland’s total population (Newton 1973: 15). The Seale Family, like many others, lived in extremely poor and dirty conditions (Seale 1970: 6). Rat infestation was rampant in the area. Bobby Seale maintained that, ‘by the time I turned sixteen, I was more opposed to society and the injustices and bad things in it, but I wasn’t articulate about it. In learning history, I picked up on things that had been done wrong’ (ibid: 7). In 1954, Seale joined the US Air Force, and it was during this time that his hatred intensified towards the government for its racist treatment of ethnic minorities in the army (ibid: 6-8). It was also here, however, that he was to receive training in the use of weapons (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 22). Unable to find consistent work due to a dishonourable discharge from the armed forces, he enrolled in Merritt College in Oakland and through this met Huey P. Newton in 1962.
In the summer of 1966, Bobby Seale took up a position at the North Oakland Neighbourhood Anti-Poverty program. Huey Newton was also involved in community organising at the time (Seale 1970: 35). Through his work, Seale became more aware of police-community relations and ‘how 75 to 85 percent of [the Oakland police department] were racists’ (ibid: 52). Two months prior to the Panthers’ establishment, rumours spread that a young black girl had been severely beaten by the police during her brother’s arrest. A large crowd gathered in the event’s aftermath, smashing cars and windows and hurling gasoline bombs.

Towards the end of September 1966, a black 16-year old youth called Matthew Johnson, was shot in the back while panicking and attempting to flee from a stolen car. Once again, a riot erupted and lasted for several days and as a result, 146 people were arrested and 10 injured with gunshot wounds (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 38). Seale and Newton came to the conclusion that there was now a hardened element within the ghettos that was primed for armed action. This contingent of black youth had lost all faith in the non-violent protest of the civil rights model. As Bobby Seale pointed out “the ghetto black isn’t afraid to stand up to the cops, because he already lives with violence. He expects to die any day” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 52).

2.2.4 Ideology as Resource: Part I

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale had a number of influential ideological templates to draw upon when it came to forming a black militant group. One was the use of revolutionary violence in the face of colonialism. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the struggle for independence in many African and Caribbean countries became a model for a number of black leaders including Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X. Both men observed these developments internationally, and through
this prism, aligned the civil rights struggle in America with global battles being fought by the oppressed.\textsuperscript{49}

By this time the Black Muslim minister had become ‘increasingly enamoured with the ideals and successes of third world revolutionaries. Some saw in the Marxist struggle a better way of defining and addressing racial conflict’ (Marable 2011: 155).\textsuperscript{50} Against waves of unremitting police violence, this explosive mix of Black Nationalism and Marxism strongly appealed to both Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Malcolm X, according to former Panther Paul Alkebulan, became the movement’s ‘ideological saint’ (2007: 8).

Robert Williams had also promoted a Marxist-Leninist perspective. In 1961, with his life threatened by the KKK — who were acting in collusion with the FBI — he escaped from North Carolina and from there went into exile in Cuba (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 33). According to Paul Alkebulan ‘Williams was driven into exile because the state had superior military resources’ (2007: 129). While Malcolm X and Robert Williams articulated a tactical way forward for the black struggle in the USA, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale also came into contact in Merritt College in Oakland with the writings of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon. According to Newton:

We read the work of Frantz Fanon,\textsuperscript{51} particularly \textit{The Wretched of the Earth}, the four volumes of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, and Che

\textsuperscript{49} In 1963, Chairman Mao, who had previously met with the founder of the NAACP, W. E. B. Du Bois, issued a highly critical statement on American racism and situated the civil rights movement within the global struggle against imperialism (Kelley and Esch 2009: 8-9).

\textsuperscript{50} In September 1960, Fidel Castro, on a visit to the United Nations General Assembly in New York, met with Malcolm X. The black leader was invited to visit Cuba on a number of occasions (Marable 2011: 172-173).

\textsuperscript{51} A World War II veteran and a psychiatrist from the French West Indies, Fanon fought during Algeria’s fight for independence from French Colonial Rule (Alkebulan 2007: 13).
Chapter 2 - The Formation of the BPP

Guevara’s *Guerrilla Warfare*... We read these men’s works because we saw them as kinsmen (1973: 111).

When formed, the BPP was to align itself with the Marxist proposition that state violence is used to protect the interests of the power structure; and armed action against these interests is morally justified. The ruling elite employed it to preserve order, while the oppressed had no option but to respond with counter-violence (Parekh 1992: 110). Huey Newton envisaged the party’s structure as Leninist in nature. One of Lenin’s central objectives was the creation of a revolutionary vanguard party which he defined as a highly efficient, highly disciplined group of professional revolutionaries. These individuals would coordinate political action and class struggle, confront state violence and infuse the oppressed with a socialist consciousness. Lenin also maintained that such an organisation should target members with previous military training (Gottlieb 1992: 89). In a similar vein, Huey Newton argued that a small dedicated group of activists, accustomed to state violence, would set in motion a spark of rebellion through the black urban ghettos of the USA. All that was required was a black vanguard force that would preside over the revolt (Umoja 1999: 135).

2.2.5 Ideology as Resource: Part II

The economic and social conditions which existed within many black communities were also to contribute substantially towards the ideological narratives embraced by the Black Panther Party. According to Howard Zinn, violence against African-Americans...

> did not end with the outlawing of slavery because the violence done to the Negro person continues on the Southern plantation, in the Southern town, and in the Northern ghettos. Again and again, the young Negro uses the term “concentration camp” or “prison” to describe the ghetto (1969: 74).

Demographically, across the USA in the 1960s, poor blacks were distinguished from their white counterparts in that they usually resided in urban ghettos (Marable 1983: 58). A seething discontent had been simmering for years in such districts. Black radicals were to argue that this culture of poverty and
marginalisation effectively created a separate geographical entity within the United States itself.

Oakland was a prime example of such deprivation in that non-residents of the area occupied over half of all the jobs in the black community. Some 75% of these held positions paying $75,000 per annum or more, even though in the previous decade, the white population in Oakland had dropped by nearly 60% (Self 2005: 166). By 1966, while a considerable black population still existed in the area, they lacked the financial and political resources to press for greater inclusion in Oakland’s economy and politics (ibid: 170). As a result, anger and frustration was palpable as it was felt that outsiders had emptied the community of political power, employment and capital (ibid: 219-220).

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale maintained that the black community in Oakland existed within structures that resembled internal colonies and that the police enforced the colonised nature of the ghettos (Alkebulan 2007: 14). According to Robert Blauner, racism is a fundamental component of colonisation; and by the mid-1960s, he saw African-Americans for the most part as ‘distinct in the extent to which their communities have remained controlled economically, politically and administratively from the outside’ (1969: 396-97). Key party figure Eldridge Cleaver was to sum up the perception held by many when he wrote that ‘black people are a stolen people held in a colonial status on stolen land, and any analysis which does not acknowledge the colonial status of black people cannot hope to deal with the real problem’ (1968: 51).

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were to take ideological inspiration from anti-colonial authors. Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) was pivotal in this respect. Fanon developed what he termed “a slightly stretched Marxist analysis” originally written for purposes in industrial Western Europe but transposed in his case to colonial North Africa (Quoted in Roberts 2004: 140). According to Eldridge Cleaver, Fanon was the “first Marxist-Leninist theorist primarily concerned with blacks” (Quoted in Papke 1994: 658). Huey Newton believed that Fanon’s writings were particularly pertinent to the experiences of
urban blacks. *The Wretched of the Earth*, detailing the oppressiveness and brutality of colonial state violence, equated with Newton’s experience of black Oakland.\(^{52}\) The book was to become the movement’s ideological template (Jeffries 2006: 35).

Frantz Fanon argued that the state is the ‘bringer of violence into the home and the mind of the native’ (1963: 38). He maintained that colonialism is intrinsically violent and it can only be destroyed by an equal application of force. The process of de-colonialisation was ultimately ‘a violent phenomenon’ (ibid: 35). As a result of such assertions, Fanon came to be regarded as the BPP’s ‘apostle of violence’ (Anthony 1970: 2). Paul Alkebulan points out ‘the Panthers thus justified their political position in the classic terms of a national liberation struggle’ (2007: 14).

### 2.2.6 October 1966: Opportunities for Movement Formation

On 21 February 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated while giving a speech at the Audobon Ballroom in Harlem in New York. The black minister was shot to death in disputable circumstances. According to Manning Marable all of his supporters ‘were convinced that law enforcement and the US government were extensively involved in the murder’ (2011: 454). Consequently, many young urban blacks felt the figurehead for their militancy was gone. Eldridge Cleaver maintained that “Malcolm prophesised the coming of the gun to the black liberation struggle. Huey P. Newton picked up the gun and pulled the trigger” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 146).

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\(^{52}\) Isaiah Berlin has pointed to the theoretical parallels between Karl Marx, Frantz Fanon and the Black Panther Party and the contention that ‘the insulted and the oppressed can find themselves and acquire self-identity and human dignity in acts of revolutionary violence (1979: 328).
In the months leading up to the Panthers’ formation, Newton and Bobby Seale made repeated attempts to advocate the tactics of armed self-defence to several community groups in the San Francisco area. They argued that unless the black community armed and protected itself, it could not depend on the forces of the state to do so. Newton and Seale had come in contact with other black organisations at Merritt College including the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). Both men attempted to persuade such groups to carry weapons to a protest concerning educational demands (Alkebulan 2007: 4-5). They also pushed for these organisations to engage in armed self-defence against the police. Their ideas were rejected by RAM (Austin 2006: 32-33).

Nonetheless, Newton and Seale pointed to what they saw ‘as the failure and rejection of the philosophy of non-violence favoured by Martin Luther King and the determination of the police to employ excessive force on suppressing black protest’ (Austin 2006: 32). In the Bay Area of San Francisco, and in nearby Oakland, the conditions for blacks throughout the summer of 1966 had ‘reached unbearable proportions’ (Jeffries 2006: 8).

In the months after the Watts riots in Los Angeles, two local activists had organised a Community Alert Patrol as a means to effectively police the police (Austin 2006: 32). They documented patrol activities and in August 1966 were to display a Black Panther logo on their vehicles. It was around this time that Huey Newton was to become aware of their activities. Frustrated and angered by the slow progress being achieved by the mainstream civil rights movement, the

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53 While residing in Cuba, Robert Williams had become the honorary chairman-in-exile of RAM (Alkebulan 2007: 129).
54 The Revolutionary Action Movement was a group formed among radical black students in Ohio in 1962. A number of its members went to Mississippi to assist in the civil rights campaign, and promised if need be, to use force of arms to bring about political change. The organization strongly embraced a socialist philosophy. Due to this stance, it soon attracted the attention of the FBI. As a result, RAM members were forced underground and a number of remaining party figures tried to convince both Newton and Seale that any deployment of weapons against the state would be severely counterproductive (Joseph 2006: 53-60).
commitment to non-violent tactics started to dissipate among many black activists in Oakland.

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defence was officially formed in October 1966. Opportunities for such militant forms of action were now favourable. According to Feagin and Hahn ‘surveys of blacks conducted between 1964 and 1968 found that...one-third to two-thirds said that violence helped the cause [of the civil rights movement]’ (1973: 275-82). The BPP became an additional component of the civil rights struggle and represented another step in the ongoing debate within the black community over the efficacy of armed self-defence. Once the Panthers formed, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale engaged directly with the residents of Oakland and asked them what they perceived were the most pressing problems affecting blacks socially and politically. From the answers they received, they drew up a Ten-Point Program which would inform party strategy throughout its existence (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 71). The consequences of state, racial and structural violence would permeate the document. Subsequently, Huey Newton maintained that both he and Bobby Seale ‘had no choice but to form an organisation that would involve the lower-class brothers’ (Newton 1973: 110).
CHAPTER 3

THE FORMATION OF AIM

‘[American Imperialism] is well illustrated by our genocidal campaigns against the Indians, by which we destroyed not only the warrior tribes but also some of the most truly peaceable people who have ever existed, violating again and again the very treaties we had helped to write and sign. Once again we justified our violence by portraying the victims as possessed by evil, as less than human, as in fact the infectious source of the violence we were perpetrating’


“When you abuse people for so long, that the only thing they can turn to is confrontational politics, then they are going to do that”

*Dennis Banks (AIM Co-Founder).*

Introduction

This chapter will utilise the social movement concepts of *framing, resource mobilisation* and *political opportunities* to explore the formation of the American Indian Movement in 1968. As with the previous chapter, the central questions here are: What role did violence — state, structural and popular — play in the emergence of the organisation? How was the violence *framed* by AIM leaders? What *resources* were employed to counteract it? And, what *opportunities* for movement formation opened and closed due to violence? In this context, it will be argued that the emergence of the organisation was associated with three interconnected factors.

The first was the legacy of *state* and *popular violence* against the Native American community which at one point included the policy of genocide (Brown 1970; Jennings 1975; Mann 2005). This violence was instigated to both nullify Indian resistance, and to seize land rich in minerals and natural energy resources. Native American territory has long been subjected to continued resource exploitation by the state. In total, the Indian population has lost over 95% of its

land base since Christopher Columbus arrived on the continent in 1492. Indian efforts to retrieve these rights have consistently resulted in their victimisation by violent means (Perry 2002: 232). During the 1950s, the US government discovered further reservoirs of natural resources, particularly throughout the reservations of the northern plains. Consequently, a policy of Indian relocation was advanced by the state. This was undertaken to assist considerable corporate and economic interests who sought to profit from the finds. Whole communities were forcibly removed from reservation lands and as a result, urban Indian ghettos appeared in cities such as Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota. These districts, rife with social deprivation, became a focal point for discontent and a breeding ground for political activism. The effects of these displacement policies would serve as a critical mobilizing tool for a number of Indian protest groups throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Of these, the most militant was AIM.56

The second factor we need to explore here is the consequences of the genocidal violence that was employed to subjugate Native America. I will outline how structural violence pervaded all aspects of Indian life and will particularly focus on the economic deprivation and racism which coursed through the education and the criminal justice systems. By the mid-1960s, poverty, unemployment, alcoholism and substandard housing were endemic features throughout the Indian reservations of North America. Political representation and political access for the Native American community was virtually non-existent. The rate of Indian inmates incarcerated within the prison system far exceeded those of their white counterparts (Means and Wolf 1996: 163). The backgrounds of AIM

56 The founders and leaders of AIM were primarily Chippewa in tribal origin, the largest Indian group in Minnesota. Some of them were born and raised in urban centres such as Minneapolis and St., Paul, but the vast majority were originally from the reservations scattered throughout the North and West of the state (Smith and Warrior 1996: 128). All of these figures would come from families and communities displaced by land seizures. While AIM developed as a national body and would go on to have chapters across the USA, this thesis will place a heavy emphasis on its activities across the states of the Northern Plains (South and North Dakota, Minnesota and Nebraska). This is where the organisation formed, where virtually all of its key figures were from, the site of its strongest support, and the area where most of its prominent actions occurred (Mattheissen 1992).
leaders were demonstrative of these inequities, in that all were raised in poverty and each had experienced the institutionalised violence that permeated the education of Native American children. These individuals also possessed a characteristic dissimilar to the pattern of Indian social movements after the Second World War. This was the fact that AIM’s founders were all ex-convicts who were radicalised in prison.

The third violence-related feature in AIM’s formation was police brutality. Political disempowerment and economic marginalisation was the accepted fate for the vast majority of Indians. The Native community had virtually no resources to assist them to navigate their own social, economic and political destiny. This disenfranchisement was buttressed by ongoing policies of state-directed violence (Perry 2002). In 1968, its particular characteristic in the urban Indian ghettos of Minneapolis, where AIM formed, was police brutality. Arrests, beatings and a racially inspired campaign of terror against Indians by the police in the city was pervasive at the time. Another feature of this violence was that it went completely unchecked, with the state offering no protection from its widespread usage. Key AIM figures such as Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt argued that the Indian ghetto community in the city had effectively no other choice but to confront the police and racial violence which terrorised the Native American population daily. All previous attempts by the Indian community in Minneapolis to seek redress through normalised routes of protest were shut down. AIM emerged as a result of this void.

By the late 1960s, state and racially motivated violence had effectively destroyed the Indian population in the USA. The American Indian Movement was the first militant response to this terror since the Indian wars of the 1870s. The 1890 massacre of approximately 300 unarmed Sioux men, women and children at Wounded Knee in South Dakota encapsulated this oppression. This unbridled act of mass state violence would cast a long shadow over the eventual campaign of AIM. Issues relating to the violent seizure of land, and the resulting structural deprivation, instilled a sense of anger and discontent that was palpable
throughout Native America by 1968. While AIM emerged in response to a historically distinct set of grievances, it also formed within, and profited from, the civil rights movement. Indian activists took advantage of this opportune milieu to develop a militant organisation that demanded an end to racial and economic injustice. The Black Power movement that surfaced throughout the 1960s had initiated a specific concept of nationalism. It employed racial identity as a conduit for pride and as a channel for political mobilisation (Escobar 1993: 1486). AIM embraced these narratives and reinterpreted them to define their own notion of cultural and militant nationalism.

3.1 VIOLENCE AND THE FRAMING OF INDIAN GRIEVANCES: PART I

3.1.1 The Framing of Ethno-Violence and Ethnocide: Part I

It would be a challenge to locate a social movement concept which adequately describes the violence perpetrated against Native Americans since the first wave of colonisation in the 14th century. Among all the cultural and ethnic groups in the USA, the Native American is in ‘a unique situation characterised by centuries of government backed, organised repression that at one time included genocide’ (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 55). As Michael Mann points out ‘unlike the descendants of slaves, the descendants of murdered Native Americans are few and marginalized. Genocide was a success’ (2005: 98).

When Christopher Columbus first arrived on the North American continent, he was to write that the Native people were kind and generous and displayed “as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts” (Quoted in Kerbo 1996: 308). Every year to this day, the feast of thanksgiving is a celebration of the first pilgrim settlers in 1620 and their saviour from starvation by the Wampanoag Indians of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. However, within fifty years most of these tribes had been slaughtered and massacred by the colonists. Of those that remained, the women and children were enslaved in New England, while the men were sold as slaves and shipped to the West Indies (ibid: 309).
The extermination of the Indian population was always only about one thing and that was the seizure of territory. Consequently, colonisation, through racist means, was the primary *modus operandi* of the European settlers (Jennings 1975: 5). Barbara Perry maintains that by presenting the Indians as a ‘deviant other,’ such a categorisation effectively gave the white majority free-rein for acts of both ethnocide and ethno-violence. The ‘other’ in this case was perceived as un-Christian, backward and savage (2002: 234).

Acts of genocide had appeared as early as the 16th century in Virginia. The army and settler militias were those most responsible for the ethnic cleansings, as the Native population had no means to cope with the superior firepower of the colonists (Mann 2005: 96). The destruction of the environment through mining, railroad construction and the hunting of game to extinction also caused thousands of Indian deaths. As a result, those that did survive depended on essential government supplies, for which they were forced to trade tribal land (ibid: 84). By 1784, all the territory along the East and Gulf Coasts of the United States had been annexed by white settlers. Seventy years later, a similar policy was instigated east of the Mississippi River and by 1890, practically all of the USA was colonised. The US government made repeated attempts to force the signing over of Indian land for the vast mineral resources which lay beneath. When there was a refusal to do so, military assaults, particularly in the 19th century, escalated as by then there was an unofficial and semi-official policy of extermination in place by the US army. One such method was the distribution of clothing infected with smallpox to Indian children (Kerbo 1996: 309).

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57 Perry points out that the phenomenon of ethnoviolence is ‘otherwise known as hate crime’ while…

58 Writing on the tactics of the US government, Howard Zinn notes that ‘in the record of violence, we might note a phenomenon different than either the quick destruction of the body, or the slow destruction of the spirit, and that is the elimination of the means of life — land, shelter, clothing, food’ (1969: 73).
It was the tribes of the northern plains that would go on to be most associated with the campaign of the American Indian Movement. The first major treaty between Washington and these nations was signed in 1851. Three years later, it was broken and over one hundred Natives were killed in the process (Matthiessen 1992: 6). In 1864, there was widespread fury among the Indian population at the slaughter of many Cheyenne at Sand Creek, Colorado. This attack included the sexual mutilation of men, women and children (ibid).\(^59\)

During the 95 years between the formation of the USA in 1776 and 1871, the US government endorsed 371 treaties with the various Indian tribes. All of these were regarded as international instruments implemented between sovereign nations. In the following 100 years they were either ‘violated, broken, ignored or otherwise abrogated by the United States’ (Weyler 1982: 21-22). Michael Mann points out that ‘there can be no doubting the electoral popularity of the removal of Indians. There were no protests comparable to those who sought to abolish the slavery of blacks until the formation of the Indian rights movement in the 1880s — too late to save many’ (2005: 96).\(^60\) According to official estimates, the indigenous population dropped from 340,000 to 221,000 between the years 1860 to 1924 (ibid: 66).\(^61\)

3.1.2 The Framing of Ethno-Violence and Ethnocide: Part II

The commissioner of Indian affairs in the 1930s, John Collier, pointed out that “it was among the Plains Indians that the policy of annihilation of the societies

\(^59\) This pattern of state instigated violence was not isolated. Further south in the lands of the Navajo in Arizona and New Mexico, the soldiers of Kit Carson were known to have played catch ‘with the severed breasts of young Navajo women’ (Matthiessen 1992: 6).

\(^60\) According to Howard Zinn:

“The United States Army crushed the Indians in a series of wars and battles: the Chivington Massacre of 1864 in Colorado, the Black Kettle Massacre by Custer in 1868 in Texas, the driving of the Cheyenne’s south in 1878, and the Massacre of Wounded Knee in 1890. There were the Cheyenne-Arapaho war and the Sioux Wars of the 1860s. In the 1870s came the Red River War, the Nez Percé War, the Apache War, and more Sioux Wars (1969: 73).”

\(^61\) In 1492, there were 541 Indian Nations with approximately 10 million people residing in what is now known as the United States (Weyler 1982: 65).
and then of the individual Indian personality was carried to the furthest extreme” (Quoted in Rose 1969: 73). In this context, two historical episodes were highly significant when assessing AIM’s campaign. The first of these was the signing of the Fort Laramie treaty on 6 November, 1868. At the time, this agreement guaranteed the Lakota people unconditional control of the Sioux reservation in South Dakota (Matthiessen 1992: 7). However, once gold was discovered in the Black Hills, many white prospectors were allowed to pass through Indian land without Native permission. In 1876, in a direct reversal of the ‘68 treaty, US troops were sent to these territories with the intention of neutralizing a rebellion instigated by Indian leaders Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. The Lakota under the two men had previously inflicted two of the three biggest defeats suffered by the US Cavalry at the hands of Native American tribes (ibid: 12). The government quickly terminated the document signed eight years earlier and in parallel, state violence escalated rapidly. With the threat of starvation hanging over his people, Red Cloud was forced to renegotiate the original 1868 compact, and in turn, handed the rights of the Black Hills over to the US government (ibid: 13). In 1877, in return for subsistence rations, 22.8 million acres of surrounding territory was seized by the authorities. That same year, Crazy Horse was stabbed to death by a US cavalry officer at Fort Robinson, Nebraska (ibid: 12-15). While such campaigns of Indian resistance were eventually subdued and defeated, the memory of militant Indian action was to be consistently invoked by key AIM figures once the organization emerged. For instance, Clyde Bellecourt maintained that “there had always been an American Indian Movement. For hundreds of years there have been people like Crazy Horse who stood up and fought for us” (Quoted in Matthiessen 1992: 34).

The second episode that was to have profound repercussions for AIM occurred on 29 December 1890. On that day, a number of Lakota men, women and children were surrounded by the US cavalry at Wounded Knee in South Dakota and ordered to surrender a gun. In the ensuing confusion a shot was fired and as the Indians attempted to flee, about 300 men, women and children were slaughtered. Afterwards the bodies were dumped in a mass grave at the site. One
who did survive was a lady called Louise Weasel Bear who years later recalled that “we tried to run but they shot us like we were buffalo.” (Quoted in Brown 1970: 444). Eventually, only two rifles were found at the site which belonged to the Indians and both had been unused.

The massacre at Wounded Knee was in time to earn an infamy and represented the end of any Indian resistance to colonisation (Magnuson 2013: 2). This event significantly contributed to a situation whereby there was now a strong reluctance among many tribes to instigate any form of armed self-defence. In a country that was now predominantly white such action ‘seemed not only unrealistic but suicidal’ (Cornell 1990: 198). As the years passed, more Indian land was seized by the government. In 1889, the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota (where Wounded Knee is located) covered an estimated 2,722,000 acres of land. By 1942, over 1,000,000 acres of this territory had passed into other hands (Matthiessen 1992: 30). In the early 1950s, further deposits of uranium and coal was discovered on reservation lands throughout the states of the northern plains. As AIM developed as an organisation, the movement would reignite the events surrounding the Fort Laramie treaty and in particular the massacre at Wounded Knee. In so doing, and in challenging government claims to Indian land, they were to pose a considerable threat to the enormous energy corporations that were secretly moving into the Black Hills of South Dakota (ibid: 32).

3.1.3 The Resource of Pre-Existing Networks

In the decade preceding the formation of AIM, there was evidence that a renewed Native American challenge to the state was evolving. During the 1950s, an upsurge in activism began to appear on several reservations across the USA. Such protests were to concentrate primarily on the continuous reduction in the tribal land base and on state and racially motivated violence (Johnson 1996: 139). In 1958, on the Tuscarora reservation in Western New York, hundreds of Native people fought running battles with the police when there was an attempt to seize land to build a new reservoir. On this particular occasion, the disorder was so intense that a regiment of the US army was mobilised (ibid). The same year, after
been harassed and victimised by the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina, a number of armed Lumbee Indians attacked a major KKK rally in the area. The white supremacist group was eventually forced to retreat from the county (Cornell 1990: 189). A year later, a contingent of Native Americans marched on the headquarters of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Washington, and attempted to make a citizen’s arrest on the Indian commissioner (ibid). 62

These events were to reflect an increased militancy that was now emerging within Indian protest circles as the 1960s dawned. Walter Wetzel, a former president of the moderate National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), 63 argued at the time that “we Indians have been struggling unsuccessfully with the problems of maintaining home and family and Indian ownership of the land. We must strike” (Quoted in Johnson 2007: 31-32). In 1961 the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) was formed. Its co-founders, Melvin Thom and Clyde Warrior, reignited the subject of Indian self-determination and argued for an alleviation of the state, structural and popular violence forced on both reservation and urban Indians (Johnson 1996: 135). The NIYC escalated Native resistance by employing tactics that had been successful for the civil rights movement in the Deep South. They organised what became known as “fish-ins” 64 in the Pacific Northwest. These activities were utilised as a result of state laws curbing Indian fishing rights (Johnson 2007: 33). 65 Consequently, further disruptive action soon spread.

In 1965, Cherokee communities in Oklahoma defied restrictions on Indian hunting, while a number of tribes in Washington State attempted to bar non-Indians from their land. There was also dissension on reservations in California

62 The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was established within the Interior Department of the US Government in 1832. From its inception it has been accused of being ‘manipulated by special interests that coveted Indian land, with its timber, water and the minerals beneath’ (Mattheissen 1992: 26).
63 The NCAI was formed in Denver in 1944 by a number of tribal leaders and former members of the BIA. It was the oldest and most established of Indian advocacy groups and promoted the politics of moderate reform. As late as 1967, the organization flew a large banner outside its headquarters which proclaimed “Indians Don’t Demonstate” (Smith and Warrior 1996: 37).
64 These strategies replicated the “sit-ins” which were organised by black groups to protest racial discrimination in restaurants across the southern states of the USA.
65 In 1964, another organization calling itself the Survival of American Indians Association (SAIA) emerged from the fishing rights protests in the Pacific North-West (Johnson 2007: 40).
and New York, where forty-one Mohawk Indians were arrested as they blocked the construction of a bridge they argued was in violation of a treaty signed in 1794 (Cornell 1990: 189). By this time, there was a network of Indian protest groups in place. A sustained campaign of dissent and disorder had become a perpetual feature throughout a number of North American reservations. Such protest was more often than not inextricably linked to the bitter legacy of land seizure, and the ensuing violence that was regularly employed by state forces. As a result, when established in 1968, AIM was able to plug into such networks and reenergise them (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 56).

3.1.4 The Framing of Popular and Structural Violence

By the turn of the 20th century, there were approximately 250,000 Native Americans (about 0.3% of the total population) in the USA. By the mid-1960s, life on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, home to the Oglala Sioux, was reflective of the wider social conditions that existed for Indians across the North American continent. Politically marginalised, its inhabitants according to Akim D. Reinhardt were ‘subject to the direct colonial authority of the United States’ (2007: 20). Ward Churchill argues that ‘consider the implications of these nations lying within the borders of the United States itself; they are internal colonies presently engaged to varying extents in anti-colonial struggle’ (1983: 198; emphasis in original).

Between 1880 and 1933, (ironically in parallel with unremitting violence) the central core of US government policy towards the Indian population was one of assimilation. The General Allotment (Dawes) Act in 1887 had ordered that Native land was to be subdivided into separate plots and allocated individually. Administrative rule on all reservations was now in the control of the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA), which was affiliated to the US Interior Department.

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66 In Maine, a number of Passamaquoddy Indians aggressively curtailed logging operations. Such activity was reflective of a pattern of sporadic protest throughout Indian land in the mid-1960s (Cornell 1990: 189).
In the years following the final subjugation of the tribal system, Native people were not permitted to leave reservation boundaries without an OIA agent approving (ibid: 20-21). Ironically, The Dawes Act also promised US citizenship to those Natives Americans who accepted the allotment policy.67

According to Reinhardt, by the 1930s ‘America’s goal was nothing short of the eradication of Native cultures, and proponents of assimilation saw schools as a perfect vehicle for bleaching indigenous traditions from Native children’ (2007: 62). The formative years of AIM leaders was shaped by such violent state practice. Boarding schools had been established during the late 19th and early 20th century to educate Indian children in the Euro-American way. Initially formed by the Christian missionaries and eventually overseen by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), they were operated on the basis of ‘killing the Indian to save the man’ (Hendricks 2007: 31). Children were often torn from their parents and sent to schools, many thousands of miles away from home. The parents in turn were threatened with a cut in food rations if they withheld their child from such a system. Once in schools, such as The Haskell Institute in Kansas, and The Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, the young boys and girls were subjected to a 'program of education and manual labor in an attempt to reshape indigenous children as Euro-Americans' (Reinhardt 2007: 62). School administrators destroyed all vestiges of Native culture, from the burning of Indian clothes, cutting the children’s hair and replacing all Native religion with Christian teachings. Violent beatings and sexual assaults were regularly enforced on those who continued to speak in their Native tongue (ibid).

In the years leading up to AIM’s emergence, the structural conditions on reservations across North America were desperate. By the mid-1960s, the average life expectancy of an Indian male was 44.5 years. Suicide rates were about 15 times the national average. Malnutrition on the reservations was rife, with unemployment standing at around 90%. The school dropout rate was about

67 In 1924, because of the 10,000 or so Indians killed in action during the First World War, citizenship was awarded to the Native American population (Mattheissen 1992: 26).
75% and the average annual Indian family income was around $1,000. 90-95% of Native housing was substandard (Hendricks 2007: 37). Alongside with such social deprivation, the Indian population had also to contend with extreme levels of racism and violence from a hostile white majority population. According to AIM member Mary Crow Dog, in places like South Dakota 'white kids learn to be racists almost before they learn to walk' (1990: 22).

3.1.5 The Founders of AIM: The Prison as a Resource

By 1968, Minneapolis in Minnesota was the only urban centre in North America with an identifiable Indian ghetto. This community, while making up only about 10% of the city’s population, represented over three quarters of its prison inmates (Means and Wolf 1996: 163). The rate of Native American incarceration in other northern plains states was also substantially higher than for any other ethnic group, and considerably more severe than for its counterparts in the white population (Bates 2012: 7). Arrests and police detention were in the main alcohol related, with the situation deteriorating for Native people because the vast majority of Indians could not afford bail. In only rare cases was there any attempt by Native Americans to defend themselves in court.

The racial bias against Native Americans within the criminal justice system was to contribute substantially towards an escalation in militant Indian activity. Most, if not all of the key figures associated with AIM’s emergence, had spent time behind bars. As Clyde Bellecourt later recalled “people always say that the American Indian Movement started in 1968, but to me it started in the hole [prison] at Stillwater in ’62” (Quoted in Mosedale 2000). Even though the Indian population in South Dakota was less than 6.5%, Native Americans during the years of the civil rights struggle were to constitute between a quarter and a third of the state’s prison population (Mattheissen 1992: 34). These statistics were ‘less

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68 When they emerged, the main figures associated with AIM were Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, his brother Vernon, Eddie Benton-Banai and an elderly Indian woman called Pat Ballanger. All, except Ballanger, had served time in prison before the movement formed. As Rex Weyler points out, ‘the prison system provided the environment of frustration, boredom, and anger which gave birth to the American Indian Movement in 1968’ (1982: 35).
a reflection of anti-social tendencies than of racism and punitive attitudes towards Indians’ (ibid).

In 1961, after being imprisoned in Stillwater, Clyde Bellecourt went on hunger strike to protest against the severity of his sentence. It was only through the intervention of fellow inmate, Eddie Benton-Banai, and Banai’s teachings on Native American culture that persuaded Bellecourt to end his protest. Bellecourt’s background was typical of the profile of those who went on to found AIM. He was born the seventh of eleven children in 1936 on the White Earth Indian reservation in Northern Minnesota, at the time the poorest of all the tribes in that part of the state. The unemployment rate was approximately 95% and his family lived in dire poverty. His father was a disabled World War I veteran and they survived on his meagre disability payment and food from the local rivers and forests (Weyler 1982: 35). As a child, Bellecourt was educated at a reservation mission school ran ruthlessly by Benedictine Nuns. He was first arrested at the age of 11.

Clyde Bellecourt was to continue on this path of state institutionalisation when he was eventually imprisoned at the age of 25 on burglary charges (Weyler 1982: 35). Imprisonment was the first opportunity for many Native Americans to learn about tribal history, culture and spirituality (Aasen, Salinas and Wittstock 2009: 62). Benton-Banai and Bellecourt set about organising education classes for Indian prisoners in Native American culture and history with Bellecourt later referring to them as the “first real Indian studies program in the country” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 34). Both individuals came to the conclusion that the Native population was effectively being decimated by state, structural and racial violence and argued that if the tribal system was to survive, the Indian community would have to empower itself through solidarity and social movement mobilisation (Mattheissen 1992: 34). Released on parole in 1964, Clyde Bellecourt immediately set about organising the Indian ghetto community in Minneapolis.
3.2 VIOLENCE AND THE FRAMING OF INDIAN GRIEVANCES:
PART II

3.2.1 Structural Violence and Resource Networks

In 1952, huge reserves of natural minerals including uranium and coal deposits were discovered on Indian tribal territory in Montana, Wyoming and North and South Dakota. Subsequently, what was termed a second gold rush began, with significant corporate interests devising plans ‘for a great energy empire in the United States’ (Mattheissen 1992: 31). In tandem with these finds, President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Bureau of Indian Affairs instigated what was termed relocation and termination programs. These were designed to draw Indians away from land rich in resources and into the urban centres of the USA. Once there, the process of state assimilation and acculturation would continue (Johnson 2007: 29).

In 1953, the US congress passed House Resolution 108 (termination act) which ceased both federal assistance and federal recognition of Native American territory. As a result, the reservations were opened for development. Three years later, to facilitate the dispossession of further territory, the Relocation Act was passed which placed thousands of American Indians into large urban settings (Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 258). The displaced were promised vocational training and assistance if they complied with such programmes. In the process, more than a 100,000 Native Americans were relocated (Johnson 1996: 130). However, the vocational training only lasted about three weeks. The provided housing was substandard and the state’s financial support dwindled within a month. As well as coping with such conditions, the Indian population also had to contend with

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69 Native Americans, of all the ethnic minorities, were unique in their relationship to the federal government. Washington was obliged through various treaties and tribal recognition to negotiate with these communities. On the other hand, due to their historical position as slaves, the African-American population possessed no land base of its own. Therefore their concerns were not dealt with at the same government to government level as was the case with American Indians (Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 258).
Chapter 3 – The Formation of AIM

high levels of police violence, racism and discrimination. Consequently, Indian slums and ghettos appeared in such cities as Minneapolis and St. Paul, where Native Americans were to experience 'the same de-facto segregation meted out to African-Americans' (Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 258). Such conditions were to provide the spark for AIM’s emergence.

By 1965, it was 'increasingly clear than a "New Indian" had arrived, unwilling to accept BIA or even War on Poverty-style paternalism’ (Deloria Jr. 1970: 136). A number of Native American groups protested vigorously against the policies of termination and relocation. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) had lobbied extensively against the termination act when it was first introduced. It was supported in its efforts by a number of other Indian organisations (Johnson 1996: 132). By this time, the Native American population had a lower per capita income than any other ethnic group in North America, and infant mortality rates were higher than any country in the hemisphere (Means and Wolf 1996: 21). In 1967, the moderate NCAI signalled a radical shift in tone when they appointed as leader the Indian academic and activist, Vine Deloria Jr. The same year, after decades of quiet compliance with Washington, a number of tribal leaders walked out of a White House conference on national poverty levels in protest (Johnson 1996: 135). Elsewhere, the President of the National Indian Youth Council, Melvin Thom, argued that relocation was another attempt by the state to destroy the traditional way of Indian life.

Traditional Indians and those most concerned with preserving language and culture were not interested in the relocation programs. Such individuals continued to speak their own language, practise tribal religion, and follow elders and spiritual leaders rather than dictates set by Washington and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They were to retain a strong presence, particularly on the reservations of the northern plains. These forces, left behind by relocation, would eventually form an alliance with the displaced urban radicals of AIM. This

70 The War on Poverty program was a federal government initiative set up by President Lyndon Johnson. It was designed to combat the extreme deprivation that existed in many parts of the USA in the 1960s (Bloom and Martin Jr.: 2013: 13).
coalition would later prove to be a crucial component in the resumption of armed Indian resistance in the early 1970s (Gosse 2005: 135).

3.2.2 The Civil Rights Movement: Opportunities for Militant Indian Activism

There can be no underestimating the effects that the civil rights movement had on Native American protest groups. In many respects, Indian activism in the early 1960s was to parallel the ascent of the black civil rights struggle. As rhetoric relating to equality and justice dominated the socio-political landscape, many Indian organizations adopted both similar language and tactics to ensure their concerns were not sidelined. These groupings were to argue in the same categorical terms as their black counterparts that the US state fermented violence, racism and marginalisation. Strategies instigated by both the civil rights movement and groups that arose in its shadow, were replicated by Indian organizations as the affirmation of African-American cultural identity became a template for other ethnic groups to emulate (Jojola 2009: 78). The surfacing of what became known as Red Power is testimony to this. As Vine Deloria Jr. points out ‘Black Power, as a communications phenomenon, was a godsend to other groups’ (Deloria Jr. 1970: 101).

In the mid-1960s, the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) had been a crucial component in the link between older reformers and younger radicals. As the decade progressed, the organization gradually embraced the methods and techniques of the Black Power movement which was on the ascent at the time (Johnson 2007: 32-33). Consequently, activists within the NIYC initiated the term “Red Power” which articulated a narrative of pride and empowerment in Indian life and culture (Johnson 1996: 135). Its proponents called for Native American self-determination and sovereignty. As Vine Deloria Jr. argued “Red Power means we want power over our own lives” (Quoted in Edmunds, Hoxie and Salisbury 2007: 426). Those involved were according to Troy Johnson the ‘disillusioned Indian youth from reservations, urban centers, and universities who sought to improve their lives and to reform the conditions of their people’
A significant section of those involved were also Indian veterans from the Vietnam War (Johnson 1996: 130-31).

The Red Power movement rejected the notion of assimilation even more forcefully than their Black Power counterparts and argued for self-government on Native American land (Young 1990: 160). Vine Deloria Jr. maintained that whatever about the aspiration of equality that resided within the US constitution, minority groups had always been victimised by the broader economic forces of North America. He argued that for any movement to sustain itself, it must have a land base of its own, and for him the Black Power movement clarified ‘the intellectual concepts which had kept Indians and Mexicans confused and allowed the concept of self-determination to become valid’ (Deloria Jr. 1970: 180). The civil rights frames of protest would also resonate among those Native Americans who had been on the receiving end of state and structural malpractice. In 1966, AIM’s co-founder Dennis Banks was incarcerated in Stillwater State Prison. He later recalled that:

I started to educate myself while in solitary... It had a tremendous impact on me, what was going on outside of prison that year. Sitting in that jail cell I began to understand there was a hell of a goddamn movement going that I wasn’t part, the Anti-War movement, the Black Panther movement, the Civil Rights movement, the Students for a Democratic Society. I began to see that the greatest war was going to go on right here in the United States (Quoted in Smith and Warrior 1996: 129).

3.2.3 The Framing of Structural Violence in Indian Ghettos

The state’s policy of relocation and the structural deprivation that developed as a result had a disastrous effect on the displaced Native American population and effectively ‘dumped thousands of bewildered Indians into the cities’ (Mattheissen 1992: 35). The resultant creation of urban Indian ghettos contributed significantly towards politicised unrest. These centres became a focal point for discontent as unemployment, poverty and racism was endemic in such areas. As well as such

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71 Social unrest precipitated by relocation had contributed to the surfacing of a number of urban Indian organizations. The Bay Area in San Francisco, for instance, had one of the largest
structural deprivation, the displaced Indian community also had to contend with extreme levels of police targeting, harassment and violence.

In 1968, a movement calling itself the United Native Americans (UNA) published *Warpath* which was the first Pan-Indian newspaper in the USA (Johnson 1996: 135). By this time, the structural conditions that existed in black ghettos across North America were replicated in urban Indian communities. The Kerner Commission, established by President Lyndon Johnson to investigate the urban rebellions of 1967, found that poor structural conditions were responsible for increased conflict in ghetto districts. The report also pointed out that racism had contributed significantly to the unrest with the white community historically resistant to both desegregation and equality in housing (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 86).

Over a fifth of Indian homes in Minneapolis where AIM emerged had broken windows, nearly 40% contained inadequate plumbing, and three quarters were deemed to be structurally unstable. Less than 1% of the public housing units available were allocated to Indian families (Birong 2009: 28). By the late 1960s, the average Native American family in the city earned 1,978 dollars annually, and in 1968 alone, only 14 Indian students (out of a potential 1,357 students) graduated from the high schools of Minneapolis (ibid: 28).

Political access for urban Indians across the USA was virtually non-existent. There were a miniscule number of programs which helped Native Americans adjust to city life. However, the vast majority of these were affiliated with the Christian Churches and these organisations sought to perpetuate the process of communities of relocated Native Americans. Groups representing such constituencies surfaced and were critical of both the economic and social conditions that existed at the time. In March 1964, five Lakota Sioux Indians occupied Alcatraz Island, off San Francisco, which had been abandoned by the US authorities in 1962. These protestors decided to take advantage of a federal law which stated that land evacuated by the government could return to its original owner once all operations ceased on that territory (Weyler 1982: 42). The group issued a communiqué arguing that the island was in Native title in accordance with the Fort Laramie treaty of 1868. They also demanded justice and equality for urban Indians (Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 259). These patterns of inequality exist to the present day with only about half of all Native American students graduating in Minnesota State Schools. This compares to the graduation rates for white students which are close to 90% (Koumpilova, Webster and Mahamad 2018).
assimilation which promoted the eradication of Native language, culture and traditions (Bonney 1977: 212). The ghettos of Minneapolis also became home to many Indian veterans returning from the conflict in South-East Asia. During the offensive in Vietnam, large numbers of Indian men and women had 'fought to defend a concept of freedom that they themselves had never experienced' (Johnson 2007: 33). Many of those serving saw a direct correlation between the violence suffered by Native Americans and the plight of the Vietnamese people (Johnson 1996: 134). A substantial proportion of these veterans were later to fill the ranks of the rising Red Power movement and go on to become key figures with AIM (Johnson 2007: 33). On returning to the USA, they faced criticism not just from an American public over an unpopular war, but they also had to cope with poverty, unemployment, and police brutality.73

3.2.4 Leadership as Resource

The leadership of the American Indian Movement were from a similar social class.74 Their political radicalisation was shaped by their interaction with external violence and their prison records made them more identifiable to many Indians who had difficulty adjusting to a white man’s system (Bonney 1977: 213). Dennis Banks background typified this process. Recalling his early childhood in Leech Lake, Minnesota

... [I was] not born in a hospital but on a creaking bedstead in my grandmother’s house. It was just a wooden two-bedroomed house with a living-room and kitchen — a typical reservation dwelling of those days — without electricity, running water or indoor plumbing (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 12-13).

73 Ira Hayes was probably the most famous of all Native American veterans, as he was one of the marines captured in the famous photograph raising the American flag on Iwo Jima during World War II. He later froze to death on his return to the United States at the age of thirty-two (Weyler 1982: 38).

74 Antonio Gramsci placed a considerable relevance on the centrality of leadership for social movement formation. This author distinguishes between traditional and organic intellectuals (1971: 6-23). Tradition here refers to learning which emanates from traditional sources of knowledge, whether professional, academic and so on. On the other hand, as a movement develops, new forms of individuals emerge whom Gramsci refers to as ‘organic intellectuals’ who are ‘distinguished less by their profession... than by their function in directing the ideas and aspiration of the class to which they organically belong’ (ibid: 3).
Banks was forcibly taken from his family at the age of five and sent to Pipestem Indian School, about 400 miles from his home. He spent the next nine years in this institution. On his arrival, his head was shaven, all his traditional clothing burned and Native religious practise banned. The children were regularly beaten and sexual assault was common (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 24). In 1954, Banks joined the Air Force. The military regime was easy to adjust to as his years at boarding school had ‘prepared me for another round of obedience and discipline’ (ibid: 43). He was stationed for three years in Japan, and during this time, he met and married a Japanese woman and had a child. As a result of this relationship, Banks was to have what he considers his ‘hour of awakening’ over the fact that his

...Japanese family members were called “gooks” and “slant-eyes” by whites, and those who suffered from these names, were people just like me. Was I not a “slant-eye”, as all American Indians are? My image of the United States was already shattered, my belief in America crushed, my duty and obligation finished. I wanted nothing more to do with the military or the US government (ibid: 55).

Tried on account of going AWOL with his wife and child, Banks was court marshalled and eventually sent back alone to the US in chains (ibid). On his release, he returned to his home on the reservation in Minnesota where he saw “little but unemployment, alcoholism and slow death” (Quoted in Smith and Warrior 1996: 129). For the next 10 years of his life, he was to join countless other relocated Indians who migrated between the reservations of the northern plains and cities such as Minneapolis and St. Paul. The urban environment, however, offered little in the way of opportunities and before long Banks, like many of his Indian friends, was battling with alcoholism. Most of his associates at that time had experienced a similar fate in that:

We had all served in the military and during our get-togethers; we would talk about our boarding schools buddies who had never come back from the wars in Korea or Vietnam. Many times we cried. We eventually all lived on Fourth Avenue, the centre of Indian life in Minneapolis (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 59).
In 1964, Banks was to serve a year in prison for burglary and was again indicted in 1966 for stealing ‘16 bags of groceries’ with a white friend (ibid: 60). For this offense, Banks was sentenced to 5 years in prison while his companion got two years’ probation and was immediately released (ibid). It was during this second term of imprisonment that his radicalisation solidified. Throughout this period, Banks began to educate himself on Indian culture and history and to read obsessively about previous Indian land treaties. He also became aware of the surging momentum behind both the anti-war and civil rights movements (Smith and Warrior 1996: 129). As political opportunities were opening up for minorities, Banks noted that Indian protest groups had not attended the 1963 March on Washington DC when Martin Luther King delivered his historic *I Have a Dream* speech. There was also little Indian participation in the Poor People’s March of 1968, and those that did attend, camped outside the central protest site (Wilkinson 2009: 1-2). Banks argued that…

I refused to be a typical prison inmate. I was different from the others, so they locked me up in a cell by myself. I started to educate myself while in solitary and found that there was a lot of social and political unrest happening on the outside (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 60-61).

These recollections underline the fact that militant Indian activism emerged within the prison environment of the mid-1960s. According to Steve Hendricks, the American Indian Movement ‘was begotten, in the phrase favoured by Indians, in the “iron house”’ (2007: 31). Dennis Banks was released in May, 1968. He immediately contacted an old friend of his from boarding school days, George Mitchell. Two months later, and a month after the Poor People’s March in Washington DC, both men with the help of an older Indian woman named Pat

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75 In 1968 Martin Luther King organized an interracial march in Washington DC to protest on behalf of the poor and to argue that the key issues at the time were poverty and neglect (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 116-117).
Ballanger, were to re-ignite a Native militant challenge not seen since the Indian wars a century earlier.

3.2.5 State Violence in Minneapolis: Opportunities for Movement Formation

By the summer of 1968 black ghetto revolts, triggered by police brutality, were common features across urban America. Police violence was on the rise. The utilisation of self-defence against state violence was a recurring tactical motif for revolutionary groups throughout the 1960s. Consequently, the strategies initially employed by AIM to combat police violence were similar to those used by the Black Panther Party (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 63).

Once released from prison, Dennis Banks intended to highlight state violence as the Indian neighbourhoods of Minneapolis had been consistently subject to intensive police brutality (Birong 2009: 35). Since there were virtually no community centres, and social outlets were minimal, the bars had become a centre for Indian socialisation, particularly around the East Franklin Avenue area of the city. This was the district where the vast majority of the Native population resided at the time (Cohen 1973: 780). Police harassment and violence over minor alcohol-related incidences were common. According to Troy Johnson, ‘the Minneapolis police often waited outside of bars frequented by Indian people, and at closing time they would confront them. Indian people claimed that they were beaten, the women sexually assaulted and then thrown into jail without cause’ (2007: 9).

Police violence against innocent Indian civilians was widespread throughout the USA at the time as even ‘before the advent of any militant Indian resistance, the attitude of the police to Native Americans whether victims, witnesses or suspects would be incivility if not outright violence’ (Perry 2002: 237). The Indian community in Minneapolis suspected that they were subjected to such mistreatment because of their high visibility, inaccessible resources for bail or

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76 Ballanger, though living in Minneapolis, was originally from the Anishinabe people of the Western Great Lakes. She would go on to be referred to as the “mother of AIM” (Weyler 1982: 214).
attorney fees, and their unawareness of their individual legal rights (Bonney 1977: 214). Police-Indian encounters were frequent within such an environment, with paddy wagons regularly parked where Native people socialised in order to facilitate large-scale arrests. These confrontations were exacerbated by the regular employment of aggressive racial slurs by police officers (Birong 2009: 35-36).

Clyde Bellecourt later maintained that “back then, there were only two Indian organisations in town, and they weren’t concerned about police brutality and racism” (Quoted in Mosedale 2000). Subsequently, the perception among Native American activists in Minneapolis was that this targeting and detention was discriminatory in itself, and that non-Indians socializing in more prosperous districts were never subjected to such treatment (Cohen 1973: 781). The Native American relationship to the police resembled the attention received by other ethnic minorities. Racial profiling, stop and search, suspicion and surveillance were all a common feature for many urban Indians (Perry 2002: 237-238).

According to Aasen, Salinas and Wittstock ‘police brutality in Franklin Avenue and its environs in South Minneapolis had been well documented in photographs and the local newspapers’ (2009: 62). As a result of this incessant targeting, Dennis Banks and George Mitchell organised a public meeting for the evening of 28 July, 1968. Before the gathering, Banks wrote down on a scrap of paper the issues he believed should top the agenda for any emerging Indian resistance group. These were the ‘prisons, courts, police, treaties, the government’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 61). Banks was to position the Indian plight within the wider narrative of the civil rights struggle. Consequently, he maintained that such circumstances were favourable towards the establishment of a militant Indian social movement.

The critical issue for those present at the meeting was police violence. Many of those that attended spoke about the daily brutality directed at them by the law enforcement authorities in Minneapolis. Clyde Bellecourt was also present that night. Banks maintained that Bellecourt spoke ‘with such intensity that his
enthusiasm swept over us like a storm’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 62). By the end of the evening, the American Indian Movement was formed. Injustices within the prisons, the courts, various land treaties and the Native American relationship with the US government, would all within time become key to the movement’s mobilisation. For the moment, however, the central grievance was state violence, personified by the regular police assaults on urban Indians. Consequently, Dennis Banks believed that the group already had a template for combating such violence, so when the time came ‘we patterned it after the patrol created by the Black Panthers in Oakland’ (ibid: 63).
Chapter 4 – Formation: Comparing the Cases

CHAPTER 4

Formation - Comparing the Cases

“Throughout American history, racial, ethnic, and political minorities have felt oppressed and outside the processes of participation and bargaining. They have felt that they have had no influence in making adjustments or drastic changes. Violent revolt has appeared to be the only alternative”


**Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with comparatively examining the role of violence in the emergence of AIM and the BPP. They were in a number of respects two very different revolutionary movements. In terms of ideology, AIM was primarily concerned with grounding its philosophies in Native American culture, history and tradition. By contrast, the BPP was strongly motivated by Marxist-Leninist theory and writings. The two organisations, however, shared a number of key similarities. Above all, both represented racial minorities who had historically been exposed to intense levels of state, structural and popular violence. Thus, the key questions to be answered in this chapter are: Using Mill’s Methods, which allows us to pinpoint one discernible variable; what were the similarities and differences in framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities for this phase of the group’s lifecycle? And, can we make a positive or negative case for the applicability of these concepts for the formation of our two cases?

**4.1 METHOD OF AGREEMENT: MOVEMENT SIMILARITIES**

4.1.1 Framing: Police Violence

Robert Benford and David Snow point to three core features of the framing process which can be shown to be relevant in the case of AIM and the BPP. The first is what they term _diagnostic framing_ whereby the primary source of discontent is identified by emerging social movement actors. According to the authors:
Since social movements seek to remedy or alter some problematic situation or issue, it follows that directed action is contingent in identification of the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents. This attributional component of diagnostic framing attends to this function by focusing blame or responsibility (2000: 616).

Police violence against the black and Indian communities in Oakland and Minneapolis was the central grievance behind the formation of the Panthers and AIM. The violent tactics of the police became the key issue around which black and Native American activists mobilised their constituents and as a result, police brutality was framed by both movements as the pre-eminent issue requiring specific social movement intervention. The policies and practises of law enforcement actors led to a state of almost chronic hostility within the black and Indian ghettos of the two cities. The actions of the police, rather than being a moderating influence on activism, stimulated the escalation of radicalism to a whole different level. Acts of police violence convinced both groups that they were an oppressed racial minority, and that if they wanted a modicum of equality, they must act collectively to obtain their rights. It seemed to figures such as Huey Newton, Dennis Banks, Bobby Seale and Clyde Bellecourt that just to be black or Indian was sufficient cause for being harassed, targeted and murdered by the police.

During their formational phase, the two movements also framed the notion that racism and the upholding of the economic status quo was inextricably linked with state violence. For instance, Dennis Banks maintained that many Indians who were beaten and arrested by the police were used to provide unpaid labour for various community projects throughout Minneapolis (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 59). Racism, unemployment, housing exclusion and police violence were diagnostically framed as part and parcel of a similar agenda.

The second part of the framing process is prognostic framing (Snow and Benford 2000: 616). This refers to a dynamic which involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan. In short, it addresses the Leninesque question of what
is to be done’ (ibid). In 1966 the BPP and then AIM two years later, framed a remedy to address the issue of police violence. This was to be the notion of police patrols. Both movements formed against a backdrop where police violence, particularly against ethnic-minorities, was escalating at an alarming rate. The rioting and disorder was primarily triggered by confrontations between such social groups and police officers. In 1967, there were 233 insurrections in 168 cities, over 18,000 arrests, nearly 3,500 people injured and 82 killed (Jeffries, Dyson and Jones 2010: 5). The year AIM formed in 1968 was perhaps the most violent of all during this period. In April alone of that particular year; 202 disorders occurred in 172 cities, with over 27,000 people arrested, 3,500 injured and 43 killed. Police violence was the principle stimulant for this chaos.

As a result, this dynamic in the movement’s mobilisation is reflective of the third core framing task which is termed motivational framing whereby social movement actors provide ‘a “call to arms” or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action’ (Snow and Benford 2000: 617). Consequently, it was therefore not surprising that both AIM and the BPP formed in major urban areas where unrestrained police violence gave rise to a hardened activism which evolved into two national organisations. The movements leadership did not have to persuade the Indian and black communities in Minneapolis and Oakland that there were issues surrounding police brutality. Some form of self-defence against external violence was framed as the rational course of action. Therefore, to instigate group formation in both cases, a form of community policing was framed as the suggested prognosis, employed when the peaceful methods of the civil rights movement had paid no dividend.

4.1.2 Resources: The Prison and Movement Leadership

The availability of social movement leadership is regarded as a critical human resource within the typology of resource mobilisation (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Edwards and Kane 2104). According to Aldon Morris and Suzanne Staggenborg, resource mobilisation theorists view leaders as social actors ‘who mobilise resources and found organisations in response to incentives, risks, and
opportunities’ (2004: 173). The BPP and AIM would never have formed without the *resource* of leadership. Key figures such as Dennis Banks, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver, Clyde Bellecourt and Huey Newton were pivotal to the formation of both organisations. All of these men were imprisoned for different periods in the years leading up to the group’s emergence. This experience was to fundamentally alter their political perspective and set in train a process of radicalisation that came to fruition with the establishment of both groups. Consequently, the state, through the prison system, inadvertently provided an *educative resource* in the establishment of both AIM and the BPP. This would resonate with the argument that

...access to educational capital is a product of both agency and structure. Leaders can advance poor people’s movements through their commitment to education for themselves and their followers. Thus Malcolm X was renowned for transforming his jail cell into a “university” and developing the intellectual capital that enabled him to win debates with university-trained scholars (Morris and Staggenborg 2004: 176).

Dennis Banks, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver, Clyde Bellecourt and Huey Newton all grew up in an environment permeated with violence, racism, poverty and exclusion. Their political philosophies were essentially shaped by exposure to state, structural and popular violence. Clyde Bellecourt had been arrested 13 times between 1954 and 1967 and his detention rate would dramatically increase as his political activism developed (Birong 2009: 32). He first made acquaintance with fellow AIM leader Dennis Banks when they were both serving time in Stillwater State Prison in Minnesota.

Huey Newton was first imprisoned in Alameda County Jail in Oakland in 1964. He was to spend the majority of his sentence in solitary confinement, which was commonly referred to by his fellow black prisoners as the “soul breaker” (Newton 1973: 99). Another key BPP figure, Eldridge Cleaver, was also to spend a significant proportion of his young adulthood in state institutions. He was first arrested at the age of 12 in 1947. Between 1954 and 1966 he was to serve time in San Quentin, Soledad and Folsom, some of the most violent prisons in the
USA (Papke 1994: 649). It was during this spell that he began reading political literature. As David Ray Papke points out ‘in part because lengthy prison terms afforded them ample opportunity to do so, the Panther leaders read extensively’ (ibid: 658).

Clyde Bellecourt left Stillwater State Prison in 1964 committed to forming a militant Indian movement which would have Native American culture and spirituality at its core. Consequently, the initial agenda for both AIM and the BPP was ‘the uplifting of their own people’ (Jeffries, Dyson and Jones 2010: 11). The personal biographies of the organisations leadership would facilitate the emergence of the two movements as both groups represented communities with exceedingly high imprisonment rates. Thus, as Morris and Staggenborg point out the resource of leadership provides ‘frames, tactics and organisational vehicles that allow participants to construct a collective identity and participate in collective action at various levels’ (2004: 180). The resource of a specific leadership type would make AIM and the BPP extremely favourable to those who had first-hand knowledge of the racial bias that existed within the criminal justice system.

4.1.3 Opportunities: Closed Structures

Analysis within the field of the political opportunity structure has consistently distinguished between open and closed structures that either allow for ‘easy access to the political system or which make access more difficult’ (Kreisi 2004: 69-70). Sidney Tarrow argues that political opportunities can ‘encourage people to engage in contentious politics’ while closed structures or political constraints signify factors ‘like repression’ (1998: 20). This would confirm Peter Eisenger’s (1973) assertion that militant groups are more likely to surface in an environment where the political opportunity structure is closed and where few opportunities exist for socially deprived groups. As Nick Crossley sums up ‘exclusion, so this story goes, leads to protest’ (2002: 106).
AIM and the BPP emerged from urban ghettos blighted by poverty, unemployment, racism, violence and exclusion. The political opportunity structure was effectively closed to the constituents of both groups. In 1967, President Lyndon Johnson established The Kerner Commission which investigated the urban riots which were exploding throughout the USA at the time. The report found that poor structural conditions and political exclusion primarily contributed to the unrest and disorder. It also pointed to the problems created by the white community’s historical resistance to desegregation and equality (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 86). According to the Research Director, Robert Shellow, racism was endemic within all US institutions and that ethnic minorities felt...

It is legitimate and necessary to use violence against the social order. A truly revolutionary spirit has begun to take hold... An unwillingness to compromise or wait any longer, to risk death rather than have their people continue in a subordinate status (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 86).

The ghetto communities in Oakland and Minneapolis were emblematic of closed structures. These districts had virtually no political access and essentially reflected ‘racial apartheid at the heart of liberalism; and high unemployment in periods of economic growth’ (Self 2005: 20). They also shared similar patterns of emergence in that they were both the consequences of forced internal migration within the USA. In the Native American case, this was largely through the policy of relocation as Minneapolis had one of the largest urban Indian communities in North America. As a result, this gave AIM a level of visibility that many other Indian groups lacked (Jeffries, Dyson and Jones 2010: 6). The state had previously made several attempts during the relocation process to disperse the migrating Indian population. This was in the vain hope that a specific Native American neighbourhood would not emerge in Minneapolis (Birong 2009: 27-28). However, once it did, the social conditions here were no different to those that existed in Oakland with poverty, substandard housing and state and racial violence rife. In a similar vein, the families of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were also part of a vast migratory wave, this time in the 1940s. In this case,
popular violence forced many of these families to relocate to the western states of the USA where on their arrival ‘the new post-war metropolis in California undergirded by segregation failed to deliver upward mobility to the majority of black workers. This realization spawned revolts in Oakland’ (Self 2005: 10).

These communities were home to many black and Indian veterans from the Vietnam War. Many of those believed that military service should have automatically provided them with the rights given to all Americans (Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 256). However, once they were back within the confines of the urban ghettos, these ex-soldiers, many decorated, were to suffer the same de-facto segregation as their black and Indian counterparts (ibid). Consequently, by the mid-1960s, the ghettos of Oakland and Minneapolis contained the closed structures necessary for the ascent of revolutionary groups, and the know-how when it came to arming them.

4.2 METHOD OF DIFFERENCE: MOVEMENT DIFFERENCES

4.2.1 Framing: Ideology

On their emergence, AIM and the BPP were to frame the violence against their communities in different ideological terms. The Panthers were to embrace the tenets of Marxist-Leninism and strategies justifying armed action. The Indian organisation, on the other hand, was to promote a form of cultural nationalism, emphasising pride in identity, history and tradition. According to Robert Benford and David Snow, social movements engage in a process which involves the selection of ‘ideologically congruent’ frames (2000: 624). The leadership of an SMO engages ‘strategically with the symbols and more broadly the culture which mediates agent’s perceptions and understanding of the world’ and effectively

77 While the state exercised unremitting violence on these communities, it also expected its victims to fight its wars. According to Tom Holm, ‘Indians, like other minority groups, bore a disproportionate share of the war’ (1989: 58). Statistics from the black community point to a similar trend as ‘African-Americans complained that they were disproportionately drafted, assigned to combat units and killed in Vietnam’ (Goodwin 2017).
create a *bridge* between the organisation and potential adherents (Crossley 2002: 136).

The leadership of the BPP placed a strong emphasis on revolutionary writings and applied them to *frame* the strategic direction of the party. According to former member Mumia Abu-Jamal ‘the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence began with books’ (2008: 42). Even though the leadership of both organisations came from similar social backgrounds, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were at least afforded the opportunity of third-level education. At Merritt College in Oakland, both men became acquainted with Marxist revolutionary writings. Che Guevara, Mao Tse-Tung and Frantz Fanon were all individuals who actively promoted armed self-defence to counter state violence. It was also during this period that Newton and Seale came into contact with the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). RAM essentially argued that black Americans were colonised within the USA and its leaders maintained that the conditions African-Americans faced were similar to other anti-imperialist struggles of the early 1960s. As a result of interaction with such thinking, the BPP ideologically *framed* the plight of Oakland’s ghetto dwellers in analogous terms with this analysis becoming pivotal to the political direction of the party (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 32).

AIM leaders were primarily educated in prison. The crucial way in which they initially *framed* their grievances was through the prism of cultural identity. Dennis Banks later recalled that ‘inside the pen, I began to read about Indian history and became politicised in the process’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 60). While incarcerated, a number of key movement figures underwent ‘some kind of ideological conversion experience which enabled them to accept their Indianness, to be proud of their Indian heritage’ (Bonney 1977: 213).78 After being

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78 Jeffries, Dyson and Jones point out ‘of all the racial and ethnic groups in the United States, only Native Peoples have the right to claim “the United States” as their land. Despite centuries of brutality, displacement, and de-humanization, Native groups were somehow able to maintain their rich cultural identity’ (2010: 5).
introduced to literature on his Ojibway background, Clyde Bellecourt maintained that he “finally recognised he wasn’t the dirty Indian he’s been told he was by white students at school, where we went through all that racism and hatred” (Quoted in Bonney 1977: 213). While AIM leaders condemned the violence experienced by their people in similar ways to their black counterparts, Native American history, spirituality and culture were to become the organisation’s touchstone, their primary referencing point. This factor is hugely significant in the differing framing process employed by both organisations as it was a key influence on AIM’s relationship to the tactical use of violence.

By contrast, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, black militant circles had become increasingly enamoured with Marxist thinking. Robert F. Williams, while in exile in Cuba, became a mentor figure for Max Stanford, the leader of RAM (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 31). Malcolm X also promoted a class analysis of the black struggle in the USA arguing that “it’s impossible for a white person to believe in capitalism and not believe in racism” (Quoted in Ovenden 1992: 45). There were no comparable Indian leaders engaging with such left-wing perspectives and certainly none who were combining such framing perspectives with a belief for the necessity of armed self-defence. The reality was that key AIM figures perceived no difference between Capitalism and Marxism as ideological frameworks. According to Russell Means, ‘I should state clearly that leading anyone towards Marxism is the last thing on my mind. Marxism is as alien to my culture as Capitalism and Christianity’ (1983: 33).

Sidney Tarrow has pointed to the association between emotions and framing and that ‘out of the cultural reservoir of possible symbols, movement entrepreneurs choose those that they hope will mediate amongst the cultural understandings of the groups they wish to appeal to, their own beliefs and aspirations, and their situations of struggle’ (1998: 109). Notwithstanding the fact that AIM and the BPP shared a similar goal to challenge the exogenous violence that ravaged
ghetto and reservation life, their *ideological framing* on how to combat these realities differed considerably. The left-wing theoretical strategies embraced by the Panthers were employed to both justify and frame armed action as a strategic remedy. While both groups initially surfaced in response to police violence, their process of *ideological framing* was to impact significantly on each organisation's relationship to armed struggle.

4.2.2 Resources: Armed Tactics

One of the key *resource* differences at this stage of the group’s lifecycle was that on their formation, the BPP were armed while AIM was not. Certainly, ideological variations would go some way to explain this dynamic but this feature is overshadowed by the fact that there had been an active tradition of armed self-defence within the black community for decades prior to the Panthers’ surfacing. In contrast, after the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, any form of armed action had become an anathema to many Native Americans. Consequently, this process would resonate with the notion of *resource networks* which are highlighted in resource mobilisation analysis (Oberschall 1973). This idea states that while grievance is often sufficient to trigger periodic dissent, organisational forms can often emanate from whatever *pre-existing networks* exist within that population. As a result, previous repertoires are embraced by newly challenging groups and such *resources* are what social actors basically ‘know how to do’ (Tarrow 1993: 70).

The necessity to combat popular violence was a critical feature in the surfacing of both the BPP and AIM. However, there was no comparable racist organisation like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) which terrorised the Native American population. While there is certainly evidence of Klan violence against the Indian community sporadically (see Chapter 3 p. 66), it was nowhere near the same scale as the assaults perpetrated against African-Americans. KKK violence, often in

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79 In the summer of 1922, the KKK took out a full page advertisement in a Texas newspaper which stated that “The Ku Klux Klan is the one and only organisation composed absolutely and exclusively of ONE HUNDRED PER CENT AMERICANS who place AMERICA FIRST” (Churchill 2018; emphasis in original).
collusion with state forces, was the key element propelling the adoption of armed tactics by black groups, particularly throughout the southern states of the USA (Umoja 2013: 2). The Klan’s deeply embedded presence within the traditional party system significantly contributed towards a scenario whereby popular violence against the black community was both an accepted and common feature of daily life.

The open nature of state complicit violence was to have a significant effect on radicalising elements within black America. By the late 1950s, militant figures such as Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams consistently argued for armed tactics against such aggression. Many high ranking members of the BPP had been born in the Deep South and were well acquainted with racially motivated violence. For instance, the relatives of Elmer Gerard “Geronimo” Pratt, were involved in armed self-defence organisations in Louisiana, some going back to the 1920s. Thus, in the decades preceding the formation of the BPP, right-wing extremist violence of the type experienced by the Pratt family, had created resource networks where there was an acceptance regarding the necessity of armed self-defence. As John McCarthy and Mayer Zald point out, the resource mobilisation model emphasises the fact that ‘different historical circumstances and patterns of pre-existing infrastructures of adherency will affect the strategies’ of social movements ‘in other times and places’ (2003: 184). Therefore, when the Panthers formed in 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale had a number of resource templates in place to resist external violence.

In the 1860s, various white supremacist organisations organised openly and conducted military drills in public. One of these, the White Leagues, was according to Richard Hofstadter ‘the armed wing of the Democratic Party’ (1970: 16). By 1923, the Ku Klux Klan had a national membership of between two and three million white Americans (ibid: 23). As a result, the supremacist organisation had considerable leverage in both the Democratic and Republican parties. Marcus Garvey, the Black Nationalist leader, was to refer to the Klan as ‘the invisible government of the United States’ (Marable 2011: 21-22).

Its motives were primarily economic in nature and it often occurred in response to any semblance of black social ascendancy. For instance, in 1921, the wealthiest African-American community in the USA, located in the Greenwood district of Tulsa, Oklahoma, was attacked in one of the biggest examples of communal violence in American history (Fasenfest 2015: 2).
By contrast, there was no such social-organisational resource available to the leadership of AIM. In fact, the experience of violence had a moderating effect on most Native Americans. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Indian leaders pursued a different tactical approach. Many tribal council members were conservative, with their main objectives been the preservation of age-old tradition and practise. They also knew the dangers of dealing with a hostile white population as memories of the Indian Wars and the massacre at Wounded Knee still resonated strongly. The truth was that most tribal chiefs, especially the older ones, wanted nothing to do with radical politics (Wilkinson 2009: 2). As a result, armed action was just not considered as a rational resource.

On the other hand, key BPP figureheads, such as Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams, consistently invoked the US constitution and the right to use the resource of armed self-defence. Rhetoric steeped in the justification of armed action was widespread in black militant circles with Malcolm X arguing that:

> Though I went to a white school over there in Mason, Michigan, the White man made the mistake of letting me read his history books. He made the mistake of teaching me that Patrick Henry was a patriot, and George Washington. Wasn’t nothing non-violent about old Pat or George Washington. Liberty or death was what brought the freedom of whites in this country from the English.\(^82\)

No such individual promoting armed action had existed among the Native American population since the Indian wars. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, after the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, all forms of Indian armed action against the majority white population were considered suicidal (Cornell 1990:198). And second, Native American social movements generally prided themselves on their cultural and spiritual approach. AIM would be no different in this regard (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 95-104). Though this position was to change somewhat, in 1968 Dennis Banks argued that he ‘rejected violence and some of the methods involving force adopted by the Panthers (ibid: 63). Prior

\(^{82}\) Malcolm X. ‘The Ballot or the Bullet’. Speech. King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan. 12 Apr. 1964.
to AIM’s emergence, the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) was the most confrontational of all Native American protest groups. Its ideology, however, was also grounded in traditional Indian values (Smith and Warrior 1996: 42-43). While armed self-defence as a resource against external violence was alive to the generation of Panther activists, all forms of militant Indian resistance were effectively vanquished by the turn of the 20th century. The implication of the resource mobilisation approach is that ‘the emergence of a new movement consists in the mutation of an already existing network’ (Crossley 2002: 97). Thus, while confrontational rhetoric increased among some Indian leaders in the 1950s, there was no protest dynamic which actively promoted the use of armed action as a resource. Militancy on this level was just simply not on the agenda.

4.2.3 Opportunities: Black Protest Innovation

One of the reasons for the BPP’s emergence is that the organisation surfaced due to specific opportunities that were opened within the wider arc of African-American protest. This was not the case in relation to AIM. Civil rights for Native Americans were not to the forefront in the same way as their black counterparts throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. In truth, there was no broad Indian movement agitating on a similar rights based platform. By contrast, the Panthers emerged within the discourse that was the black civil rights movement. While their tactics may have differed, the BPP’s concerns were broadly similar to Martin Luther King’s in that they also called for alleviation in state, structural and racial violence. In this context, the civil rights struggle when it emerged in the 1950s was specific to black grievances. However, as the 1960s progressed, other ethnic groups, including social movements representing Native Americans, responded to its themes and consequently took advantage of the opportunities the civil rights campaign opened. AIM effectively emerged within this narrative. This would confirm the validity of the argument within POS analysis that ‘peaks in movement activity tend to correspond to the introduction and spread of new protest techniques...The pace of insurgency jumps sharply following the introduction of a new tactical form’ (McAdam 1983: 738).
This is not to say that the BPP itself did not emerge as a result of opportunities created from external sources. For instance, the fertile protest environment that the Vietnam War created is a case in point. However, by 1966, any emerging African-American group would surface within an environment that was receptive to black grievances. By contrast, there was no little or no such precedent in place for Indian activists. Consequently, Native American protest groups consistently plugged into the opportunities that were developing due to the black civil rights movement. As Chapter 3 outlined, they also consistently adopted tactics that were initiated within African-American protest circles. When it emerged, AIM replicated this pattern of tactical innovation (McAdam 1983).

Within POS analysis, the term tactical innovation has been employed to explain a process whereby particular innovative tactics are embraced by a range of disparate social movements. As Aldon Morris maintains ‘certain tactical innovations — the discovery (or rediscovery) of new forms of protest — may spread very quickly and mobilise many people if these new tactics are relatively easy to adopt, resonate with peoples moral views, and seem likely to succeed’ (2003: 229). From the early 1960s, Native American social movements began to appropriate tactics that were surfacing within black protest circles. Where black protestors were utilising “sit-ins” in the Deep South to protest against state and racial violence, their Indian counterparts employed “fish-ins” as a tactical device in the Pacific North-West. Where black activists were articulating the necessity for Black Power, Native American protestors initiated the term Red Power.\(^\text{83}\) AIM was to perpetuate this pattern of tactical innovation when the organisation formed in Minneapolis in 1968. As a result, the movement was to employ the tactic of police patrols instigated by the Panthers in Oakland two years previously. In my own view, the American Indian Movement was searching for a template, not necessarily an ideological template, but a practical mechanism for

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\(^{83}\) Black and Red Power represented a discourse which essentially argued that the ‘traditional bargaining process’ was not working for blacks and Indians and ‘the solution, a way to stop despair and defeat, powerlessness and alienation, is by using the threat and demonstration of violent revolt’ (Rose 1969: 30-31).
combating police violence. They discovered that in the strategies utilised by the BPP in California. It is therefore debatable whether they would have surfaced in the guise they did if it were not for the opportunities that were opened, and the precedents previously set by, black social movements.

**Theoretical Implications**

From these findings, I wish to point to weaknesses and strengths in relation to the conceptual frameworks utilised. Firstly, I will briefly discuss some shortcomings in the theory as they relate to the formation of our two groups.

The notion of grievance is associated with the concept of framing in that framing encapsulates a process of grievance identification (Snow and Benford 2000: 616). Grievance has long been associated with the collective behavioural approach to social movement theory (Tarrow 2011: 22). However, one of the main criticisms levelled at collective behavioural analysis is that it relies too heavily on the pluralist conception of politics. As Linda Connolly points out, ‘the political model in which social movements were located in this framework [collective behaviour] was based on the pluralist ideal of an open polity’ (2006: 14). This element of the theory runs contrary to the formation of AIM and the BPP as the political milieu of the 1960s was a critical element in their mobilisation. Central to this dynamic was the environment created by the civil rights movement which directly challenged the exclusionary practices of the state. The collective behavioural approach is based on the assumption that all challengers have equal access to political representation and power-holders (Giddens and Sutton 2013: 996). However, the BPP and AIM represented constituencies that were effectively outside traditional pluralist ideals. The circumstances surrounding their formation pointed to a state imbued with violence, racism and exclusion.

Criticisms regarding pluralist assumptions have also been levelled at the resource mobilisation framework. Advocates of RM have argued that radical ideologies should be side-lined as they believed most 1960s social movements were aligned
with liberal politics (Mayer 1991: 463). The entrepreneurial model of resource mobilisation theory places little significance on oppressed groups violently excluded from the state. As a result, RM has also been accused of propagating the pluralist conception of democracy (ibid: 462), whereby social movement motivation and ideology are essentially taken for granted.

Resource mobilisation has overwhelmingly concentrated on reformist organisations who view inclusion as the desired goal of a SMO (Mayer 1991; Piven and Cloward 1995; Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000). Consequently, a further weakness in this approach is that it is more applicable to movements which are less likely to employ tactics involving armed action. RMT has also had little success in explaining social movement emergence where group resources are limited (Giddens and Sutton 2013: 1000). Giddens and Sutton point out that RM has ‘something of an economistic feel, drawing similarities between social movements and the competitive market economy’ (2013: 999). The scope of resources in this thesis has been expanded to include military training. Therefore, the inclusion of such a resource would resonate with the argument that resource types should not be reduced to industrial or business models (Connolly 2006: 21). AIM and the BPP were organisations that represented the poorest of Americans. Their formation was most certainly not based on the entrepreneurial model of RM analysis (McCarthy and Zald 1973; 1977).

One related facet of the political opportunity structure deserves attention in our two cases as this facet is associated with the social control elements of POS analysis. Up to now, social movement research on repression has concentrated heavily on the policing of protests or protest policing (Della Porta and Reiter (eds) 1998; Earl 2003; Della Porta and Filleule 2004; Soule and Davenport 2009). Donatella della Porta maintains that the policing of protest is intrinsically associated with available political opportunities as the tactics of the police reflect the broader political environment (1996: 64-67). The style of policing is a

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84 In this context, resource mobilisation has been criticised for exuding a class and elitist bias (Mayer 1991; Piven and Cloward 1995)
signifier of the degree of openness or closure of the political system (ibid). The
term protest policing refers to the policing of protest events and demonstrations
and explores the interaction between police/protestor and the police response to
threat (Soule and Davenport 2009: 2).\footnote{Protest in this context is referred to as ‘demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, riots, and armed
attacks’ (Soule and Davenport 2009: 3)} However, the vast majority of academic
research in this arena has concentrated on overt protest policing as opposed to
covert police activity (Earl, McCarthy and Soule 2003: 582). The problem with
this notion in these cases is that the policing of the Indian and black communities
in Minneapolis and Oakland was heavy-handed and violent before any protest or
social movement got off the ground. It was essentially day-to-day brutality as
there was a historic tradition of police violence against ethnic minorities in the
USA (Blauner 1972).

Della Porta and Reiter (1998) maintain that it is the level of disruption which
determines the level of police response. However, there was no threat to the social
order in these cases. This had nothing to do with protests or demonstrations.
Rather, this was about innocent civilians targeted persistently, both overtly and
covertly, because of race. Consequently, rather than protest policing, the term
most applicable in these cases is persistent police violence which refers to police
activity that went way beyond the remit of policing at protests and
demonstrations. As well as coping with the obvious political constraints, both
AIM and the BPP emerged from constituencies which were terrorised by
incessant acts of police violence. These tactics took the form of harassment,
beatings, false imprisonment and in a number of cases, execution-style killings.
This was essentially institutionalised police brutality and it was how these
organisations viewed the opportunities that were presented to them by the state.
There are different degrees to what is termed closed structures (Kreisi 2004). In
my opinion, the formation of AIM and the BPP is indicative of an advanced case.

Turning to the strengths of the three concepts during the formational phase,
framing is significant in both cases in a number of ways. Firstly, I would argue
that it is doubtful whether the BPP and AIM would ever have emerged without the master frame (Snow and Benford 1992) that was generated by the civil rights movement. These were critical frames in the emergence of our two cases as narratives associated with exogenous violence were pervasive throughout the USA in the 1960s. I would also maintain that these overarching frames were hugely influential in the establishment of both the Black and Red Power movements. The concept of framing also permits us to separately analyse the organisations as it highlights the differing approaches to the use of violence within black political circles prior to the Panthers’ emergence. The notion of framing wars (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1992) are important in this context as they point to how political rivals engage in framing battles over conflicting tactics. The appearance of the BPP in 1966 would point to the success of how Malcolm X framed armed self-defence as opposed to the moderate approach framed by mainstream civil rights leaders.

Framing is significant in exploring the formation of our two groups as it allows us to pinpoint what were shared movement grievances. These frames all pointed to the prevalence of state, structural and popular violence within black and Indian communities. The endemic nature of racism, poverty, unemployment and exclusion were framed in the same categorical terms by both organisations with these frames pointing to a state driven by violence and racism against ethnic minorities. Of crucial importance was the diagnostic and prognostic frame advanced by AIM and the BPP. While AIM’s diagnostic frame differed somewhat as it emphasised issues relating to land seizures, it is indisputable that police violence was framed by both organisations as the key grievance facing the black and Indian populations of Oakland and Minneapolis. The prognostic frame in our two cases promoted the necessity for police patrols.

It was shown that the concept of resource mobilisation exhibited specific strengths as all SMOs require resources to enable movement formation. The resource of military training was highlighted as an important asset in the Panthers’ emergence. A number of key party figures, including co-founder
Bobby Seale, were army veterans. Party members who had served during the Vietnam War were a critical resource when it came to the initial mobilisation against state violence (Austin 2006: 49). As Huey Newton later recalled “[we knew] a number of people who had just come back from Vietnam, and they helped train us in weaponry” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 49). The notion of the RM-related pre-existing networks (Oberschall 1973; Jenkins 1983) is a valuable tool as both the BPP and AIM emerged from previous cycles of protest in the black and Indian communities. The Panthers benefited hugely by the templates set by such groups as the Deacons for Defence and Justice while AIM were able to plug into the resource network supplied by the National Indian Youth Council and the Red Power movement (Edmunds, Hoxie and Salisbury 2007: 427). This dynamic would resonate with the argument that the resources of many social movements depend on the available repertoires of contention (Tilly 1978; 1986).

The resource of leadership, included in the human resource type (Edwards and McCarthy 2004), was highlighted as our two groups would not have formed without key figures such as Huey Newton and Dennis Banks. The notion of moral resources (Edwards and Kane 2014) were also a particular strength for the formational phase as this resource includes factors such as solidarity and the RM-related notion of collective identity (Melucci 1995). One of the critical ways in which AIM and the BPP mobilised was through their members’ personal experience of external violence. As well as these factors, all of the key figures central to the emergence of the two groups had served time in prison prior to the movement’s formation. Another valuable strength of resource mobilisation is that it enables us to interpret AIM’s appropriation of BPP-like police patrols as a prime example of the RM-related notion of diffusion. This dynamic would validate the argument that ‘movement actors are highly attuned to the actions of other actors, borrowing or imitating tactics, frames, slogans, and so forth when deemed advantageous’ (Soule 2004: 295). In my opinion, it is also a good illustration of how a prognostic frame and the diffusion of a specific resource overlap.
Turning to the strengths of the *political opportunity structure*, distinctive aspects of *opportunity*-related analysis are beneficial for the formational phase. In AIM’s case, the notion of *cultural opportunities* (McAdam 1996) is important as they enable us to see how *specific cultural opportunities* were opened for the group as a result of the burgeoning Red Power movement. Violence against Indians was now portrayed as a *specific* form of cultural genocide. On the other hand, *discursive opportunities* (Koopmans and Statham 1999) can contribute to our analysis of the BPP as it emphasises the importance of popular discourses legitimising violence (Della Porta 2012: 247). The prevalence of narratives promoting revolutionary Marxism in the 1960s opened numerous ideological *opportunities* for a black left-wing social movement.

Two important features of POS evaluation are advantageous during the initial lifecycle phase. The first is what Doug McAdam terms *cognitive liberation* and *insurgent consciousness* (1982: 48-51). By utilising such elements of *opportunity*-related analysis, we are able to see how the state gradually lost legitimacy in the eyes of AIM and BPP leaders due to the widespread prevalence of police violence. These cognitive processes, operating in parallel with the wider political milieu of the 1960s, opened numerous *opportunities* for group formation in our two cases. The *opportunities* provided by the civil rights movement and the environment surrounding protests against the Vietnam War cannot be emphasised enough in relation to the emergence of the Panthers and AIM. The formation of our two cases was considerably enabled by the *opportunities* that opened during a *specific* period in recent North American history.

All in all, while the shortcomings mentioned above highlight a number of conceptual deficiencies, this study would make a *positive* case for the applicability of *framing*, *resource mobilisation* and *political opportunities* in illuminating the violence which instigated movement formation in our two cases. Essentially, AIM and the BPP formed because police violence was *framed* by both groups as the key grievance facing the black and Indian communities in Oakland and Minneapolis. The *resource* that was police patrols was the primary
tactic initially employed in both cases to counter such violence. While the opportunities provided by the civil rights movement and the broader political environment of the 1960s supplied the necessary milieu which stimulated these movements appearance. Thus, no one concept is more important than the other to explain group emergence in these cases. Rather, the establishment of AIM and the BPP is indicative of a confluence in all three concepts when analysing social movement formation.
CHAPTER 5

The Development of the BPP

‘We will be criminally negligent if we do not deal with racism and the racist violence’
Assata Shakur - BPP member (1987: 139-140).

‘The death of Dr. King was not a tragedy for America. America should be happy that
Dr. King is dead, because America worked so hard to bring it about’ Eldridge Cleaver

Introduction

This chapter will employ a relational analysis approach to social movement
development. A critical aspect of this process is how violence in its many forms
propels the expansion of an SMO. This dynamic can have its own distinctive
influence on the radicalisation of protest groups as interaction between political
activists and state violence increases the likelihood of arms being employed by
challengers (Alimi, Bosi and Demetriou 2012: 10). There is also a consensus in
the SM literature that the development of social movements depends on framing
grievances, exploiting available opportunities and mobilising adequate
resources. Therefore, the key questions in this chapter are: How did violence —
state, structural and popular — contribute towards the development of the BPP
between 1966 and 1969? How was this violence framed by Panther leaders?
What resources were employed to combat it? And, what opportunities for
movement development were opened or closed due to violence?

This chapter will therefore focus on the role of violence in the development of
the Black Panther Party between 1966 and 1969. It will be argued that the
persistence of both state and popular violence propelled the movement’s
expansion. This feature, more than any other factor, stimulated an increase in
party membership and continued to underline the necessity for the armed self-
defence tactics utilised by the organisation. Consequently, this chapter needs to
explore how the state killings of unarmed black citizens contributed towards an
increase in black radicalism and triggered the further development of an arms-
based tactical repertoire by the Panthers. The existence of state and racial violence sparked widespread anger throughout the black ghettos of the USA and fostered an environment in which disorder, rioting and revolutionary activity intensified. Subsequently, a number of strategies were employed by the BPP to counter such violence. These included the right to bear arms within the US constitution; ideologies promoting armed self-defence; and the continued use of military training as a resource for movement mobilisation. The organisation was also able to access a potential membership base hardened through experiences of state violence. These interacting factors, central to the emergence of the organisation, would continue to operate as a key radicalising component throughout the party’s developmental phase.

This chapter will also examine other violence-related factors including the state’s use of repressive legislation; the arrest and imprisonment of Huey P. Newton; and how the prison became another field of operations for the BPP’s development. The assassination of Martin Luther King in April 1968 was also a pivotal moment in the BPP’s brief history and a significant landmark during this phase of the group’s campaign. In its aftermath, many within the black community came to question both the politics of non-violence and the tactical mechanisms employed by the mainstream civil rights movement. During this tumultuous period, the Panthers would become the pre-eminent black organisation in the USA and it would go on to develop alliances with both white liberals and a number of progressive left-wing organisations protesting against the Vietnam War. As a result, the BPP established a wide array of networks ranging from anti-war groups in the USA to revolutionary movements and governments abroad.

The pervasive nature of structural violence would also drive the organisation’s development. This feature would be most notable in specific programs instigated by the party which attempted to address the expropriation that was prevalent throughout the black ghettos of North America. Consequently, the BPP’s tactical repertoire expanded from an organisation which primarily promoted armed self-
defence to one which also addressed economic deprivation. As a result of the party’s advances, the state responded in kind. BPP members were frequently arrested, shot at indiscriminately by the police and movement leaders were either imprisoned or forced into exile. However, sufficient movement momentum had been built up to overcome such obstacles. In fact, all such violent interaction with the state was a significant variable in propelling the party’s mobilisation during this period as the leadership exploited the reality of state violence to promote group expansion. The leaders also had at their disposal the means to achieve this end with the continued use of ideology, solidarity and military training.

Thus, during this phase of the organisation’s lifecycle, the Panthers had two distinct tactical goals; one was to counter police brutality and the other was to address structural violence in the black community. Between 1966 and 1969, party chapters were to open nationally as the movement’s militant message found favour in cities right across the USA. State, structural and popular violence served to radicalise a potential movement base as the organisation attempted to alleviate the desperate social conditions faced by the black poor. A broadening of organisational strategy contributed towards the emergence of key party figures such as George Jackson, Assata Shakur and Fred Hampton. These individuals were associated with the BPP’s policy of addressing violence both on the streets and in the prisons. We see the Panthers challenging the legitimacy of the state in two direct ways: firstly, by utilising armed self-defence strategies, they both confronted and questioned the authority of the police; and secondly, the organisation continued to actively promote a Marxist-Leninist agenda and argued for a fundamental reshaping of the US economy. It was predicable that the state was never going to allow such a radical challenge to go unanswered.

5.1.1 The Case of Denzil Dowell: State Killings and Movement Opportunities

Persistent police violence was the key element behind the formation of the BPP. It was also the central propelling force which was to drive its development. Writing at the time Newton Garver pointed out ‘there is more violence in the black ghettos than anywhere else in America’ (1969: 12). According to Paul Tagaki, biased policing in the 1960s was evident in the way that ‘black men have been killed by the police at a rate some nine to ten times higher than white men’ (1974: 29-30). Many individuals that had suffered from state violence were immediately attracted to the militant options offered by the Panthers. The party wanted to impress on the black community that in order for political and cultural autonomy to be attained, self-preservation must be the first goal. Therefore, personal experience of police violence was the predominant factor for those joining the nascent organisation.\(^{86}\) As a former Panther member remarked, “every nigga in the black community had either experienced police brutality or was very close to someone that had” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 97).

On 1 April 1967 an unarmed black youth named Denzil Dowell was shot dead by a white Deputy Sheriff in Richmond, San Francisco (Tyner 2006: 111). The police maintained that Dowell had been trying to steal a vehicle. A number of police officers exited the scene without reporting the event to the medical services. Subsequently, the victim’s body was left unattended for several hours. As Dowell was accused of committing a felony, his shooting was ruled a justifiable homicide by the police (Newton 1973: 138). In the aftermath of the killing, a number of important questions remained unanswered. The police maintained that Dowell was shot three times, but a coroner’s report concluded

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\(^{86}\) The Panthers’ recruitment policy was also directed at those who had been exposed to the racial bias that existed within the criminal justice system (Tyner 2006: 111). Point 8 of their Ten Point platform argued that “we believe that black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial” (Quoted in Seale 1970: 68).
that the victim had at least 10 bullet wounds (Austin 2006: 77). All appeals by
the Dowell family to view the remains so as to determine the amount of shots
fired were refused.

In the weeks that followed the killing, the victim’s family contacted the BPP. The
Panthers conducted their own investigation and uncovered a number of other
questionable shootings by the police force in Richmond. These included the
murder of two other black males killed in the same vicinity the previous
December (Tyner 2006:11). Despite this information being made available to the
authorities, there was a refusal to act on it. Instead, the police initiated a vicious
campaign of intimidation against Denzil Dowell’s family (Newton 1973: 139).
As a result, Denzil Dowell’s brother George subsequently joined the party
believing that the African-American community required protection and that it
was essential that an armed militant black organisation be developed (Austin
2006: 79). The Panthers also advised the Dowell family to seek redress for the
killing from Sheriff Walter Younger, the officer in charge of the Richmond police
community patrols. Younger refused to suspend the Deputy Sheriff over the
killing and cynically suggested that the BPP and the Dowell family take their
fight to the state capitol in Sacramento (ibid: xii). In May 1967, the Panthers
would do just that, and turn the issue of Dowell’s killing into one of their biggest
publicity successes.

5.1.2 Arms as a Resource

On their establishment, the BPP decided to employ a number of strategies to
counter state violence. The right to bear arms within the US constitution was to
prove to be the most controversial of these. During his time in Merritt College in
Oakland, Huey Newton had become familiar with the Californian Penal Code
and the laws in relation to armed weapons (Newton 1973: 115). At that time in
the state, private citizens were allowed to carry loaded guns in public (Alkebulan
2007: 6). The BPP maintained that the residential districts occupied by blacks,
belonged to, and should be run by black people. They argued that the
overwhelming white police force had no right to patrol the streets of Oakland and
that these areas needed to be safeguarded by those who resided there (Jeffries, Dyson and Jones 2010: 21). According to Newton Garver, black ghettos in the 1960s operated ‘very like any system of slavery’ (1969: 12). There were approximately 660 police officers in Oakland, with only 16 of those black (Jeffries, Dyson and Jones 2010: 21). Virtually all the repeated complaints of officer brutality by community groups to police department headquarters went unheeded. Thus, in order to protect the community effectively, the Panthers decided that party members should be armed.

The resource of military training was to be a critical factor in the BPP’s mobilisation in much the same way as it had been for decades throughout the Deep South. John Sloane, an army veteran who had been sleeping rough on the streets of Oakland, gave party members their first experience in weapons training (Austin 2006: 49). Bobby Seale later pointed out that ‘we found out that John Sloane had been in the military service and that he was the best man to teach brothers field stripping and shooting of the M-1 rifle. He did that for two or three months’ (1970: 78). Subsequently, it was hoped that the armed patrols would stimulate a surge in party recruitment (ibid). By utilising such an approach, Huey Newton argued that a ‘feeling of solidarity’ would surface, not just in Oakland, but across the urban black ghettos of the USA (Newton 2002: 67).

In early 1967, four months after the party formed, a confrontation occurred which typified the changed relationship between the police and black activists in Oakland. One evening in February of that year, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and a number of party associates were preparing to leave their office when they were stopped by a police patrol. When asked for his phone number, Newton replied

87 As the party membership increased, so too did the number of armed patrols which slowly spread to Richmond, Berkeley and San Francisco. Newton and Seale had to be constantly creative in the raising of funds for more weaponry. One such tactic involved the selling of Mao Tse Tung’s *Little Red Book* at the University of California. The money raised went towards buying more weapons including a high-calibre rifle from a local department store (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 48). According to Bobby Seale ‘we sold the Red Books, made the money and used that money to buy guns’ (1970: 82).
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that under the fifth amendment of the constitution he did not have to give any details other than his name and address (Seale 1970: 86-87). The police officers then asked to look at the weapons the group members were carrying, as Newton was holding an M-1 rifle in full view while Bobby Seale had a 9mm pistol beside him in the seat (Austin 2006: 50). Newton refused their request and informed the officers that under Californian law, the party had a constitutional right to bear arms.

While these events were unfolding, a large number of local residents had gathered to watch the stand-off. As the police attempted to disperse the onlookers, Newton and Seale led a section of the crowd into the BPP’s headquarters and requested that they monitor the confrontation. Newton then began to call the assembled officers “swine, dogs, sharecroppers, bastards and motherfuckers” while all the time holding the rifle in his hand (Seale 1970: 89-91). To the amazement of those present, the event dramatically concluded with the police exiting the scene without making any arrests. Bobby Seale later maintained that approximately 12 or 13 onlookers became party activists after that day (ibid 92-93). The organisation was to regard the incident as both significant and a success. However, Seale was also to later write that ‘this is where all the shit between the party and the pigs [police] began’ (ibid: 87).

5.1.3 Ideology as Resource: Marxist-Leninism and Movement Structure

The structure of the BPP was paramilitary in nature. Ex-military personnel were targeted for party membership following Vladimir Lenin’s belief in the necessity of recruiting professionally trained combatants for revolutionary activity (Jeffries 2006: 10). A central committee, a term traditionally employed by communist organisations, was formed to oversee party discipline and policy (ibid). The BPP’s ten-point platform was also strongly influenced by Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto (ibid 11-12). By 1967, the party had attracted a small

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88 In line with much socialist thought and rhetoric, the Ten Point Program demanded equality in Food, Clothing, Housing, Education, Land, Justice and Peace with its central tenet being the “power to determine our own destiny of our black community” (Quoted in Jeffries 2006: 12).
dedicated cadre of workers who were prepared to devote themselves full time to achieve the organisational goals of the fledgling movement (Calloway 1977: 60). Huey Newton, serving as Minister of Defence, occupied the organisation’s central position. Bobby Seale was Chairman and Eldridge Cleaver the Minister for Information. Influenced by Lenin’s idea for a revolutionary vanguard party (see chapter 2, p. 53), Newton argued that small mobile armed units of the Panthers should defend the black community against the police. He believed that such action would inspire others and that it would precipitate a sense of revolt throughout urban black America (Tyner 2006: 11).

It is important at this point to emphasise that the organisations approach was purely defensive and at no stage during the period between 1966 and 1967 did it employ offensive guerrilla tactics. The police patrols acted almost like a unique version of “neighbourhood watch” groups with armed Panthers protecting black citizens from beatings, harassment and arrest by the police. For instance, in early 1967, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and a number of other party members came across a black man being questioned by the police. Newton advised the individual of his rights and as a crowd of onlookers gathered, he informed the police that the BPP had a right to observe proceedings, as long as they stood 10 feet away (Austin 2006: 55). Newton then informed the arrested individual that the party would bail him out if needed, and that their presence at the scene was to ensure his protection. It was then explained to the crowd who the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence was, and how their primary motivation was both to protect black citizens from state violence and to organise the African-American community politically. The Oakland police were not at all happy at this turn of events. Essentially they were being followed by Panther members who were not only armed, but also ‘intent on catching them violating some kind of policy or procedure’ (ibid: 54). Consequently, while such tactics continued to attract new members, they also triggered the increasing ire of the state.

89 It is difficult to gauge the exact membership of the Panthers during this initial period, but by early 1967 according to Bloom and Martin Jr. the organization had ‘only a handful of members’ (2013: 48).
5.1.4 Framing State Violence in Sacramento

On 2 May 1967, approximately 30 armed BPP members arrived at the Californian General Assembly in Sacramento. On that particular day, pending legislation known as the Mulford Bill, was being debated by state representatives. As a result of the armed self-defence tactics employed by the Panthers, a white public representative from Oakland called Donald Mulford introduced a bill which would prevent private citizens from carrying loaded weapons in public (Austin 2006: xi).\(^90\) By this time, the party’s armed patrols had significantly intensified the tensions between state forces and the movement in California.\(^91\)

Coming a month after the contentious killing of Denzil Dowell, Huey Newton argued that the debate in Sacramento presented a possible publicity opportunity for the party. It would also provide the movement with an opening to portray its militant credentials to the wider black community across the USA.

In a pre-written address delivered on the steps of the assembly, Bobby Seale argued that state violence had necessitated the use of armed self-defence (Austin 2006: vii). Seale asserted that the Mulford Bill was primarily aimed at keeping black people powerless and that it was to be seen as part of a broader agenda of state violence and state repression (Rhodes 1999: 2). Even though the Panthers had never utilised weapons for offensive action, and no one up to this point had been killed by the organisation, they were now threatened by law from carrying arms in public. The tactic that had brought so much effectiveness to their mobilisation was now on the verge of being removed. In a speech delivered in front of the press, Seale, flanked by two armed party members, argued that “The Black Panther Party for Self-Defence believes that the time has come for black

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\(^90\) Donald Mulford was the Republican representative for Piedmont, an affluent district in Oakland. He had opposed similar gun restriction laws prior to his campaign against the Panthers (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 57).

\(^91\) In February 1967 an armed contingent of Black Panthers provided security for Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X. She was visiting San Francisco for a memorial on the second anniversary of her husband’s assassination. On this occasion, a hostile confrontation once again erupted between party members and local police (ibid: 48-50).
people to arm themselves against this terror before it is too late” (Quoted in Austin 2006: xv-xvi).

The address repeatedly pointed out that the African-American community would be totally destroyed if state and popular violence was allowed to continue with impunity. After Seale delivered his speech, the armed Panthers left the legislature, closely followed by police officers. Many of those BPP member’s present on that day were arrested soon afterwards and the Mulford Bill was passed into law on 26 July 1967. While no official investigation into Dowell’s murder was ever undertaken, in its aftermath, the party decided to issue a weekly paper called The Black Panther whose aim was to inform the African-American community on party policy and movement goals (Newton 1973: 142). By late 1967, the newspaper had increased its circulation tenfold. The leadership believed that the tactics employed in Sacramento would only increase the party’s membership, which over time, it did (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 61). The killing itself, and the ensuing events at Sacramento, catapulted the organisation into the public consciousness in a way no individual incidents with police officers ever could.

5.1.5 Opportunities for Movement Development: The Imprisonment of Huey P. Newton

As the BPP expanded nationally, tensions with the police continued to escalate. On the night of 27 October 1967, Huey Newton was stopped by a police officer named John Frey, while driving in Oakland with a friend. Upon recognising Newton, Frey immediately radioed for support and another officer, Herbert Heanes, arrived at the scene. Frey had previously been implicated in a number of incidences involving racist behaviour towards black civilians (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 100). He would regularly taunt black people in the area by declaring that “I am the Gestapo” (ibid). Consequently, there are differing accounts of what unfolded after the initial confrontation. Newton maintained that Frey

92 By 1969, the BPP expanded from a local to a national organization and it had a membership of over 2,000 with 32 chapters in 15 states across the USA (Jones 1988: 417).
immediately began to harass him when the police officer recognised who he was. The BPP leader then consulted with a law book he was carrying and informed the officers that he had a legal right to carry a weapon in the car. According to Newton one of them then replied “you can take that book and shove it up your ass, nigger” (Quoted in Newton 1973: 175-176). Newton then alleged Frey hit him across the face and as he fell to the ground he maintained that one of the police officers opened fire. Events at this point become unclear over exactly what happened next. However, Newton survived the incident with four bullet wounds while Frey was killed with a bullet fired from a police revolver. The other officer Heanes was wounded (Austin 2006: 87).

Whatever about the circumstances surrounding the incident, Huey Newton immediately became a hero to many black people as they knew only too well the reality of being stopped by a police patrol. The fact that a police officer lay dead was inconsequential to them as the event ‘elevated his [Newton’s] stature in the minds of millions of blacks and other minorities who knew from experience the brutality of policemen’ (Austin 2006: 88). As a result, the period of time before Huey Newton’s trial was to trigger the most significant period of growth for the BPP. Further opportunities opened for the organisation as a process of coalition-building increased with forces sympathetic to issues regarding police violence. A Free Huey campaign, which included white liberal support, was initiated which both rejected the police as a legitimate force and demanded Newton’s release ‘irrespective of the details of the case’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 114).

In the months after the incident, the BPP announced an alliance with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 111). Panther leaders also aligned themselves with the Peace and Freedom Party,\(^\text{93}\) which had a strong anti-war and anti-racist agenda. It also established lines of support with various Californian left-wing organisations including The Communist Party (ibid: 107). With Newton in prison, the mantle of leadership

\(^{93}\) The Peace and Freedom Party (PFP) had distanced itself from the Democratic Party which supported the war in Vietnam. The PFP drew support from an array of left-wing and progressive organizations in both San Francisco and Los Angeles (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 107).
was passed to Eldridge Cleaver, who was among those arrested after the events at Sacramento. Cleaver would continue to exploit the avenues that opened up throughout 1967 and would play a critical role in the evolving coalition-building process with both white individuals and organisations (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 79). As 1968 approached, the BPP found itself in a very strong position.

5.2 VIOLENCE AND THE FRAMING OF GRIEVANCES: 1968-1969

5.2.1 Military Training as a Resource: The Emergence of an Underground Wing

By the beginning of 1968, numerous Panther chapters had opened right across the USA. Of these, one of the most formidable and militaristic was formed in Los Angeles. This branch included two key party figures, Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter and Elmer Gerard “Geronimo” Pratt. Both men’s life experiences had been shaped by intense levels of police and racial violence. The Southern California chapter of the party was to have an underground apparatus almost from its inception as Carter ‘virtually brought a military force into the BPP when he joined in 1967’ (Umoja 1999: 136).94 Originally a leader with the most prominent street gang in Los Angeles, The Slausons,95 “Bunchy” Carter had become influenced by the writings of Malcolm X while imprisoned in the early 1960s. After joining the Nation of Islam while behind bars, Carter met Eldridge Cleaver who taught an African-American history and culture class in Soledad.

On his release from prison, “Bunchy” Carter set about transforming street gangs with a ‘gangster mentality’ to a militant movement with a ‘revolutionary consciousness’ (Umoja 1999: 136). The LA police department at the time was

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94 The BPP’s underground was not publicly acknowledged or openly referred to. It operated with ‘autonomous cells in different cities that were referred to by different names at different times’ (Umoja 1999: 136). These units were ‘all part of a movement concept called the Black Liberation Army (BLA)’ (ibid). By 1968, the Panthers’ official rules stated that “no party member can join any other army force other than the Black Liberation Army.” Umoja goes on to point out that “besides serving the function as an urban guerrilla force, the Panther underground included an underground railroad to conceal comrades being sought by Federal and state police. Clandestine medical units were also developed to provide care to BLA soldiers or Panther cadre wounded in combat” (ibid).

95 The Slausons were a five thousand-member street gang in LA and Carter led its most fearsome unit, the Slauson Rengades (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 144).
renowned for its violence and racism and was led by a Chief William Parker who was well known for his right-wing extremist views (Pulido 2002: 773). Consequently, when “Bunchy” Carter joined the BPP in late 1967, he was able to provide an already radicalised street force, hardened through interaction with state violence. Many of these same individuals had been involved in attacking both the police and the National Guard during the Watts riots in Los Angeles two years previously (Umoja 1999: 136).

The resource network that was so prominent in the fight against popular violence in the Deep South also proved critical to the mobilisation of the chapter in Los Angeles. Probably the most important recruit that “Bunchy” Carter made to the branch was “Geronimo” Pratt, who at the age of 20, was already a decorated Special Forces Commando and a veteran of the Vietnam War. Born in Louisiana, Pratt had extensive knowledge of the black self-defence units which had been organised to counter racial violence. Through one of his relations, he was put in contact with “Bunchy” Carter who was also originally from the same state. As a result, Pratt soon became aware of the violent activities of the police in Oakland and California in general (Olsen 2000: 42).

From a young age “Geronimo” Pratt had been informed by his relatives that the black community required trained men for protection against state and racially motivated violence (Olsen 2000: 26). He later recalled that his relatives had: ‘advised us to join the army, and we always followed the elder’s advice… I didn’t join the army out of any sense of patriotism to the United States. I joined because my elders advised me to join’ (Ji Jaga 2001: 75).

On being honourably discharged from the armed services, one of Pratt’s older relations in Louisiana informed him that “those Panthers got some good ideas but they need help organising and defending themselves against the cops. You could do ‘em a lot of good” (Quoted in Olsen 2000: 35). “Bunchy” Carter

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96 According to Curtis J. Austin ‘while the numbers of those with military experience is not ascertainable, it is certain that each chapter had several of these veterans. What is more important than the numbers, however, is the contribution these individuals made to the party’ (2006: 102).
immediately recognised the value of Pratt’s military experience. Alongside the chapter’s co-leader John Huggins, also a Vietnam veteran, Pratt set about training the other chapter members in pistol and rifle practise in the desert outside Los Angeles. Within a number of months, these individuals had become acquainted with an expanding arsenal of weapons which now included grenade launchers and a .55-caliber antitank gun (ibid: 42).\(^7\) By BPP calculations, between 1967 and 1968 approximately 60 black citizens had been shot and killed by the LA police department. Some 25 of these were unarmed (ibid). Such levels of violence, both from state and racially motivated sources, were being replicated nationally and as a result, Pratt maintained that ‘our people were getting massacred and “Bunchy” ordered me to go around the country and teach self-defence… Everything I taught was military preparedness, urban warfare, defensive structure, just what the elders sent me to the army to learn’ (Quoted in Olsen 2000: 44).

5.2.2 The Framing of External Violence: The Killing of Martin Luther King

On 4 April 1968 Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis while supporting a strike by black sanitation workers in the city. As Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr. point out ‘King increasingly championed the struggle against poverty and publicly opposed the war in Vietnam, gaining the cautious respect of the radical young activists. His left-ward turn toward anti-imperialism increasingly incurred the wrath of the establishment’ (2013: 116). In the aftermath of King’s assassination, the BPP was to expand rapidly from a Californian-based movement to a national body with chapters opening in many of America’s main urban centres (Umoja 1999: 137).

Dr. King’s death triggered a wave of rioting and disorder that went on across the USA for days. Bobby Seale maintained that up to that point the BPP had

\(^7\) The BPP would depend on funding from a number of sources, namely the black community itself, individuals/groups opposing the Vietnam War and a number of revolutionary governments abroad (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 346-47). Another means of income was from sales of The Black Panther newspaper. Key party figures were also paid considerable amounts for speech engagements (Seale 1970: 222-223).
advocated non-violent tactics. After King’s assassination, however, he admitted that the organisation needed to be restructured and reenergised. According to another key party figure, Kathleen Cleaver “once King was murdered in April 1968 that kind of ended any public commitment to non-violent change... The Panthers were all of a sudden thrust into the forefront of being the alternative” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 164). That alternative, to some extent, included a change in the BPP’s tactics. With Huey Newton in prison, the leadership had by this point been effectively transferred to Eldridge Cleaver who came to represent the wing of the party more inclined towards militant action (Kelley and Esch 2009: 33). Cleaver argued for the prioritisation of armed confrontations with the police and after the events in Memphis maintained that ‘the war has begun. The violent phase of the black liberation struggle is here, and it will spread’ (1969: 236).98 Newton and Seale, on the other hand, always had ‘intended to use the gun and the rhetoric that accompanied it as recruiting tools, not as ends in themselves’ (Austin 2006: 76).

Two days after Martin Luther King’s assassination, a Panther entourage including Eldridge Cleaver, future Chief of Staff David Hilliard, and 17 year old Bobby Hutton were engaged in a gun battle with police officers for an hour and a half in West Oakland (Alkebulan 2007: 15). Cleaver and Hilliard eventually surrendered and were taken into custody. As Bobby Hutton attempted to do likewise and after handing over his weapon, he was executed by the police (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 119). Speaking the following day at a press conference, Bobby Seale accused the Oakland police department of racism and brutality and maintained that Hutton had his hands in the air and was murdered (ibid). Seale also argued that the shoot-out was an ambush instigated by police officers. At Hutton’s funeral on 12 April, Ericka Huggins, who went on to

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98 It was also Cleaver who influenced the decision to drop self-defence from the party name as the organisation attempted to expand its tactical approach beyond the resistance of police brutality (Harris 2000: 167).
become another important party figure, committed herself to the BPP. She later recalled that “what awakened me, what changed my life and my mind was Bobby Hutton’s face at his funeral…His face [Hutton’s] had been entirely shot out” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 139).

Martin Luther King’s assassination was to mark the greatest period of expansion for the BPP. There was now a widespread perception among African-Americans that even though you may preach non-violence, any form of black radicalism would eventually be crushed by the state. In the meantime, the effects of violence, whether state or racially motivated, continued to propel the Panthers’ mobilisation. According to Kathleen Cleaver, “the murder of King changed the whole dynamic of the country. That is probably the single most significant event in terms of how the Panthers were perceived by the black community” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 159). Consequently, by the end of 1968, the party had chapters in New York, Los Angeles, Seattle and at least 17 other cities across the country including Boston, Chicago, Denver and Detroit (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 159). Over the following two years, BPP offices would also open across the most hostile regions of the Deep South with branches emerging in Winston-Salem (North Carolina), New Orleans, Houston and Richmond (Alkebulan 2007: 50-54).

5.2.3 1968: Further Opportunities for Militant Action

By the middle of 1968, the conditions that existed within black ghettos continued to favour the BPP’s agenda as further waves of urban rioting were unleashed due to police violence. There was also mounting anger and dissent across the USA as the conflict in Vietnam escalated. The BPP by this time was the most influential black movement in America. They had built ties to other left-leaning ethnic organisations like the Brown Berets (Chicano), the Young Lords (Puerto Rican)

There was a widespread belief in the black community at the time that Martin Luther King had been assassinated by state forces. This impression was vindicated 30 years later when 12 jurors in Memphis reached a unanimous verdict and placed the responsibility for the killing on a conspiracy between local, state and federal forces (Yellin 1999).
and the American Indian Movement. The party also sought to establish alliances on a global scale. In August 1968, Eldridge Cleaver and his wife Kathleen gave a number of speeches in Japan to protest against the policies of the American military in the Far East (Clemons and Jones 1999: 194). The significance of Cuba for black militant groups continued when the BPP’s Minister of Education, George Murray, visited the country the same year. Eldridge Cleaver also sought exile there to avoid imprisonment following the April 1968 gun battle in Oakland (Alkebulan 2007: 70). From Cuba, Cleaver moved to Algeria, which had been designated by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as the host country for all of Africa’s liberation movements. Representatives from the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), and a number of other revolutionary groups, were also in residence there during this time (ibid: 71). Cleaver then opened the BPP’s International Section in Algeria with that country’s government recognising the Panthers as the ‘sole representative of the African-American people’ (ibid). This office would publicise the party internationally, make alliances with other revolutionary groups and lobby the United Nations on behalf of all black Americans. A number of Panther members also toured North Korea and North Vietnam and, at one point, Eldridge Cleaver was allowed by the Vietnamese authorities to broadcast to American troops in which he called on them to lay down their weapons (ibid). According to Clemons and Jones ‘[Cleavers] foresight garnered the BPP international solidarity from a host of revolutionary leaders, leftist activists and foreign dignitaries’ (1999: 198-199).

Throughout 1968 the party expanded its recruitment policies in relation to women. The BPP was also the first prominent black organisation to promote gay rights (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 306). However, while such advances were important to the organisation’s development, the everyday violence which existed within the black ghettos of the USA remained the primary factor propelling the Panthers’ mobilisation. Writing at the time J. H. O’Dell argued:

100 The Organization for African Unity sought to promote African self-determination and unity. The group also resisted any attempts to fall under the banner of either the United States or the Soviet Union during the cold war (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 314).
Chapter 5 – The Development of the BPP

The recent rebellions in Newark, Detroit, and revolts elsewhere over the past four years are but the latest examples highlighting this truth. By way of definition, the functional role of the ghetto, as an institutionalised form of racism, is to facilitate the special exploitation of the black population. It is a population occupied by a police force acting as overseers on this urban plantation (1969: 282).

5.2.4 External Violence and Movement Opportunities: Female Activists in the Party

Personal experience of violence was reflective of those attracted to join the BPP. This feature repeatedly manifested itself as the key motivating factor behind their decision. According to Paul Alkebulan ‘the first indications of a changed role for female Panthers occurred in 1969 when the government killed, incarcerated, or drove into exile many of the male leaders’ (2007: 99). This is not to say that women did not play a role in the organisation prior to 1969. For instance, in May 1967, at the Sacramento demonstration, six of the thirty BPP members present that day were female. One of those, Barbara Auther, spoke to the press during the protest and argued that the Panthers had no choice but to arm themselves against state and racially motivated violence (ibid: 104).

Assata Shakur was another of those who joined the BPP on account of being radicalised by violence. Born Jo Anne Deborah Byron in 1947 in New York, Shakur moved at the age of three to live with her grandparents in Wilmington,

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101 Throughout 1968 and 1969 the party continued to expand its base with women now operating at all levels of the movement. Kathleen Cleaver, well known at a national level, was the organization’s communications secretary while Ericka Huggins became the first woman to lead a chapter of the party in New Haven, Connecticut (Alkebulan 2007: 104-105). In 1969, Huggins along with six other women and seven men, including Bobby Seale, were arrested and charged with the murder of a BPP member called Alex Rackley. The latter was suspected of being a police informer. The detained group became known as the New Haven 14. All charges against them were eventually dropped as the state attempted to ‘pin the murder’ on both Huggins and Seale (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 248-250).

102 Shakur’s radicalising political consciousness was illustrated by the fact that she changed her name to one reflecting her awareness of her African Heritage. She later maintained that:

The name Jo Anne began to irk my nerves. I had changed a lot and moved to a different beat. I didn’t feel like no Jo Anne, or no Negro, or no American. I felt like an African woman. My mind, heart and soul, I had gone back to Africa. But my name was still stranded in Europe somewhere (1987: 185).
South Carolina. Once there, her early life was permeated by racism and segregation with “coloured only” and “white only” signs a permanent feature of the landscape. Shakur points out in her autobiography that black people were forbidden to enter numerous public spaces, including a nearby beach. In order for them to even see the ocean, they had to travel to a different state (1987: 23). Racism was rife throughout all levels of society in Wilmington, from the school system to the local cinemas where there was only one movie theatre that black people were allowed to enter (ibid: 38). Shakur later recalled the television broadcasts of the civil rights campaign and maintained that...

I can still remember those ugly terrifying white mobs attacking those little children who were close to my own age. And each year, I would sit in front of that box, watching my people being attacked by white mobs, being bitten by dogs, beaten and water-hosed by the police, arrested and murdered (ibid: 73).

Assata Shakur’s family relocated to New York while she was still a teenager. She subsequently dropped out of high school when she was 17, maintaining that one of her teachers treated the black students like ‘inferior savages’ (ibid: 136). In her early 20’s, she returned to education and while at the City College of New York, she became involved in a number of political protests, sit-ins and demonstrations which were organised to highlight racial violence.

Martin Luther King’s assassination in 1968 motivated Assata Shakur’s commitment to the militant Black Power movement. It also reinforced her outright rejection of non-violent tactics. Within two years, Shakur had moved to Oakland in California where she joined the BPP. While on the west coast, Shakur helped organise demonstrations, political rallies and community education programs. After returning to New York, she was to become an influential member of the party chapter in Harlem and was to maintain that racial violence was the key reason why she became involved in black militancy. In her autobiography she stated that ‘the rich have always used racism to maintain power. We will be criminally negligent, however, if we do not deal with racism
and the racist violence, and if we do not prepare to defend ourselves against it’ (1987: 139-140).

5.2.5 Framing Poverty and Violence as “Structures.”

Writing in 1969, J. H. O’Dell outlined the conditions that existed in the black ghettos of the USA:

> It is a population preyed upon by petty hustlers and charlatans and a variety of other social parasites who wouldn’t be allowed to operate in other communities... As such, the ghetto is merely an updated, modified version of the nineteenth-century slave quarters, in the American system of exploitation (1969: 281-282).

The tactical strategies employed by the Panthers continued to expand throughout 1968 and 1969 with efforts made by the party to address the structural violence which engulfed black ghetto life. As O’Dell went on to point out ‘they [black militants] didn’t create the ghetto slums, but as the victims they are making the ghettos of America the new battleground’ (1969: 283). With Huey Newton in prison and Eldridge Cleaver in exile, Bobby Seale was now principally responsible for formulating party policy. Seale had previously worked at, and had always been, a strong supporter of community programs.

Consequently, the party announced that it would start a free breakfast program for children in September 1968. The first of these opened in Saint Augustine’s Episcopal Church in Oakland on 20 January 1969 (Alkebulan 2007: 31). One BPP member outlined the broader policy changes as follows, “people’s needs are land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace, and the BPP shall not for a day alienate ourselves from the masses and forget their needs for survival” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 181). By April of 1969, the party was feeding more than 1,200 children a day at a number of facilities across the country, including Chicago and Des Moines in Iowa (ibid: 182). Unlike other African-American organisations like the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), the Panthers continued development went hand-in-hand with providing material assistance to the urban
black poor. BPP offices were notable for being always located in the heart of low-income African-American districts (ibid: 196).

Other aspects of what the party would eventually term “survival programs” or “serve the people programs” were unveiled throughout 1969. During the civil rights campaign in the Deep South, liberation schools had become an organisational tactic employed by activists in the most hostile regions known for racial violence. Such centres were utilised to explain the civil rights agenda to community members, serve as a site for education, and as a recruiting device for demonstrations and the voting rights campaign (Alkebulan 2007: 33). The BPP patterned these previous tactics and set up classes in numerous cities to teach children aged 7 to 12 about black history and culture and to instruct them in party ideology (ibid). Medical clinics were also initiated across the country providing services and information ‘primarily in preventive health care’ (ibid: 35). The Panthers argued that the American Health Care System was based on profit and was used as a means to strengthen the elite class. The party’s leadership believed that by providing free health care and advice they would be initiating an example of black socialist self-determination (ibid: 36).

Political education classes were also rolled out in a number of centres across the USA. These were viewed as an essential tool in the organisation’s development. Bobby Seale announced that there would be mandatory classes for BPP members nationally which would concentrate on party history, revolutionary theory and education on the social cost and ills imposed by capitalism (Alkebulan 2007: 38). The survival programs were eventually expanded to include a free clothing program, a free shoe program, housing cooperatives, renter’s assistance and child development centres. However, all of these initiatives were carried out under the constant threat of state violence as the police continued to conduct ‘Nazi-type, house-to-house raids upon the ghetto neighbourhoods…The long list of civilian dead and injured in the ghetto is testimony to this fact’ (O’Dell 1969: 287-288).
5.2.6 George Jackson: The Prison as a Resource

The organisation of the BPP within the prison system was another important feature associated with the party’s development. The Panthers argued that structural violence and the structural inequities that existed within the criminal justice system went hand-in-hand. Both dynamics were driven by racism. As a result, two sections of the Panthers’ ten-point policy programme addressed the issue of black imprisonment. Point 8 called for “freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city programs and jails” (Quoted in Abu-Jamal 2008: 99). Point 9 demanded that “we want all the black people brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities as defined by the constitution of the United States” (ibid). While the civil rights movement had politicised resistance to unequal citizenship laws, the BPP ‘raised this tradition to new levels’ (Alkebulan 2007: 60). This was nowhere more apparent than in their campaign regarding the excessively high rate of black imprisonment.

The BPP’s branch at San Quentin was probably the most unique of all Panther chapters with the party viewing inmates whose revolutionary consciousness had developed while in prison as political prisoners (Alkebulan 2007: 60). George Jackson was to encapsulate this notion. In 1961 at the age of 18, Jackson was imprisoned for robbing $70 from a gas station and for this he received an ‘indeterminate prison term of one year to life’ (ibid: 62). A white Californian would have served less than a year in prison for a similar crime (Austin 2006: 108). While in San Quentin, Jackson became interested in revolutionary politics. In 1966 he met and became friends with another convict called W.L Nolen who introduced him to Marxist writings. As a result, the two men formed an organisation called the Black Guerrilla Family (James 2003: 85). According to Jackson, ‘I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao when I entered prison and they redeemed me’ (1994: 16). However, his increased interest in political activities contributed towards an extension of his prison term as an all-white
parole board consistently refused his release. He was to spend more than seven years in solitary confinement (Austin 2006: 108).

Huey Newton, while in prison awaiting trial, recruited George Jackson to the BPP. The organisation had made a significant impression on the long term convict as he also concurred with the belief that a revolutionary black organisation should mobilise within the prison system and on that basis he was appointed Field Marshal of the Panthers. As a result, Jackson organised the black inmates in protest against the prison authorities on several occasions. In so doing, he claimed that the prison administration tried to have him killed on at least 20 occasions by either bribing white racist inmates or directly trying to kill him using prison guards (Jackson 1994: xviii).

George Jackson maintained that armed action was the only solution to the violence consistently directed at the black population. He was convinced that ‘any serious organising of people must carry with it from the start a potential threat of revolutionary violence’ (Mann 1974: 17). The living conditions inside Californian prisons at the time were intolerable with extreme levels of repression enforced. Many of those who joined the BPP behind bars compared their existence to that of guerrilla fighters. Consequently, the Panthers considered such individuals ideal for a revolutionary army and it was the key reason why the party cultivated communication with such figures. The movement consistently called for a clear linkage between the organisation on the streets and the organisation’s development within the prison system (Alkebulan 2007: 62). Those members behind bars began to refer to themselves as “prisoners of war.” According to George Jackson, black people had been the ones “doing all the dying” and if this course was to continue then the goal must be to “destroy the US as a modern nation-state” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 108).

5.2.7 Fred Hampton: Leadership as Resource

By 1969, the BPP had a three tier organisational structure. First, the central committee based in Oakland; second, a regional tier on a state by state basis; and
third, the chapters in various cities which were run by branch leaders who oversaw and worked with the rank and file membership. Subsequently, a number of key figures surfaced who drove these local chapters that were now opening across the USA. A good example of this development was in Chicago where its figurehead was a charismatic 20 year-old called Fred Hampton. While a teenager, Hampton became a top athlete and an A student at high school (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 226). He then went on to become the youth leader of the Maywood branch of the NAACP and led a march where 500 young people protested non-violently against an all-white swimming pool in the local district (Alkebulan 2007: 54). In 1967, Hampton, according to Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr. ‘appropriated’ an ice cream van and passed out ice cream bars worth $71 to poor black children in the community (2013: 231). For this, he was arrested by the police and charged with robbery and assault.

In early 1969, having joined the BPP a year earlier, Fred Hampton started the party’s free food distribution program in Chicago. The black neighbourhoods he represented were similar in structural conditions to black urban ghettos nationally. By April of 1969, the Panthers’ free food program was feeding over 1,100 children each day. It had also gained considerable community support and respect (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 229). Hampton quickly became known as an efficient organiser and electrified crowds with his breath-taking oratory. He called for a revolution of the poor, not just within the black communities, but argued for a broad based coalition to challenge the violence which was directed at ethnic minorities (Austin 2006: 198). Hampton also reached out to the street gangs which operated on the south side of Chicago as the BPP attempted to politicise groups like the “Blackstone Rangers” which had a dedicated membership of approximately 3,500 strong (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 227). Such groups had plenty of reasons to align themselves with the Panthers for they had been the ‘victims of police brutality and their public outcries against heavy handiness went unheard by the authorities’ (Austin 2006: 198).
By May 1969, Fred Hampton and the Chicago BPP had established a formidable network and structure that was now one of the most dynamic in the party’s national set-up (Alkebulan 2007: 55). Hampton repeatedly called for a mobilisation against racial violence and he regularly spoke out against police brutality. Chicago, like many other urban areas, was a ‘city renowned for its police violence’ (Austin 2006: 211). Hampton was also strongly influenced by Marxism and he placed a huge significance on the global struggles that were occurring beyond Chicago. In his speeches, he constantly attacked the state and racial violence that prevailed throughout the urban black ghettos: ‘the priority of this struggle is class... racism had to come from capitalism. It had to be capitalism first and racism was a by-product of that’ (Hampton 1969).

In May 1969, Fred Hampton was sentenced to between two to five years for robbing the ice cream van two years earlier. Robert Lucas, national director of the Black Liberation Alliance and a former leader of the Congress of Racial Equality, condemned the sentence, maintaining that Hampton’s involvement in the free breakfast program posed a threat to both Mayor Richard Daley and Chicago’s political establishment (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 231). By this time, the BPP’s survival programs, whether organised in the prisons or on the streets, were significantly increasing the party’s support base.

Thus, towards the end of 1969, the Panthers had positioned itself as the pre-eminent left-wing movement in the USA with a committed membership and a formidable organisational structure. During this period, the Panthers were the most rapidly growing black organisation since Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in the 1920s. BPP membership expanded from about 40 members in May 1967 to more than 10,000 by December 1969 (Widener 2010: 199). According to Fred Hampton, “We gonna fight racism not with racism, but with solidarity... And we’re going to march on this pig power structure. And we’re going to say: ‘Stick ‘em up motherfucker. We come for

103 Curtis J. Austin points out that ‘with more than twenty million members and New York City as its base, the UNIA represented the largest black mass movement in American history’ (2006: 301).
what’s ours” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 230). However, as Mumia Abu-Jamal points out, ‘things were going well for the party, and it was growing by leaps and bounds. Things were going so well, that they had to get worse’ (2008: 115).
“We realised that AIM could not allow Indian people to be murdered, that we would have to change tactics.”

Bill Means - AIM member (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 49).

‘Native-American challenges to the authority of “whiteness” continues to elicit violence on the part of the state, often through the actions of law enforcement agencies’


Introduction

This chapter will investigate the role of violence in the development of the American Indian Movement between 1968 and 1973. While peaceful protest remained the dominant strategy employed by AIM during this lifecycle phase, the group’s tactical repertoires would be critically altered by the persistence of state, structural and popular violence. Therefore, the key questions in this chapter are: what role did violence play in the development of AIM between 1968 and 1973? How was the violence framed by the organisation? What resources were used to counter its existence? And, what opportunities were opened/closed due to its effects? It will be argued that the group’s expansion is related to three factors.

The first of these was the prevalence of state violence against the Native American population. Two features of this oppression are particularly significant when analysing this phase of the movement’s lifecycle. The first of these is police violence. Police brutality against the Indian community in Minneapolis was the key interactive factor driving the initial expansion of AIM. The Native population in the city had consistently argued that they were exposed to vicious assaults and beatings due both to their presence on the streets and because legally, they had no comprehension of their legal rights as American citizens (Bonney 1977: 214). Consequently, in August 1968, AIM initiated a program of community police patrols which monitored law enforcement activity within the Indian ghettos of
Minneapolis and which investigated acts of violence against Native people (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 63).

The second example of state-related violence was once again specific to a particular geographic locale. This time it was the Pine Ridge reservation, home to the Oglala Sioux in South Dakota. In February 1973, Native American elders on Pine Ridge requested AIM’s assistance to counter the state and state-sponsored violence that had been raging on the reservation for the previous year or so (Matthissen 1992: 60-61). The conflict was between the non-violent traditional Oglalas and the federally sponsored tribal government under its chairman Richard “Dicky” Wilson (Johnson 2007: 48). Wilson had at his disposal a notorious state funded paramilitary death squad called the Guardians of the Oglala Nation (GOON’s) (Churchill 1992: 95-96). This group was employed time and again against innocent Indian civilians and against those who were perceived to be supporters of AIM. During this time, the Pine Ridge reservation would have the highest rate of murders in the United States and the period itself would become known as the “reign of terror” (Johnson 2007: 49).

The second factor propelling AIM’s development was the continued structural violence which Native Americans faced across the USA. This expropriation was common for those living on the structurally deprived reservations and for those residing in the slum Indian ghettos of North America. In the late 1960s, the per capita income for Native Americans was the lowest of any ethnic group in the USA (Means and Wolf 1996: 161). Thousands of Indians died each year from diseases such as cholera, diphtheria and tuberculosis. Such disease-related deaths were virtually negligible among the white population of the US (ibid). The infant mortality rates for Indians were also the highest of any country in the northern hemisphere. This statistic covered various poverty and disease ridden nations, including Haiti (ibid).

Two further structural grievances drove AIM’s development. The first was the high rate of Indian imprisonment in North America. In Minnesota alone, where the organisation formed, over one third of all prison inmates were Indian, even
though Native people constituted less than 1% of Minnesota’s total population (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 59). The second grievance related to the historical legacy of illegal land seizures by the US state. AIM was to argue that the structural inequities which existed for Indian people were as a result of land seizures which forced almost half of the total Indian population into cities across the USA (Weyler 1982: 65). At the heart of these concerns was a belief that Indian nations were internal colonies of the United States (Churchill 1997: 243). Consequently, a key tactic for the movement during this lifecycle phase was territorial occupation. This occurred on a number of occasions between 1968 and 1973 in specifically targeted takeovers. A primary influence in this respect was the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island by a group calling itself “Indians of All Tribes”. However, AIM’s efforts to reclaim land rights resulted in an escalating campaign by the state that was to include harassment, victimisation and outright violence (Perry 2002: 232).

The third factor which impelled movement progression was popular violence as the Native American community consistently argued that they were subjected to extreme levels of racially motivated violence. AIM leader Russell Means points out that during periods of drought, white ranchers would dig up the traditional graves of Indians and sell their bones to anthropologists, universities, or to tourists as souvenirs (Means and Wolf 1996: 196). In the early 1970s, the organisation made a decision to focus particular attention on racism across the states of the northern plains; in particular concentrating on Nebraska and South Dakota. The movement’s leadership argued that the latter was the most racist state in the USA towards Native Americans with Dennis Banks referring to it as the “Mississippi of the North” where anti-Indian attitudes “resulted in Indian killings being treated as a sort of local sport” (Quoted in Churchill 1997: 147). While acts of popular violence against Indians were common across North America, this decision was made on the back of two specific racial killings which were to have huge significance for this phase of the group’s lifecycle.
Chapter 6 – The Development of AIM

The first occurred in February 1972 in Gordon, Nebraska when a 51 year old Indian man called Raymond Yellow Thunder was tortured and beaten to death by a number of white men. His body was then dumped on a back street in the town and only discovered a number of days later (Smith and Warrior 1996: 113-114). The second incident was in January 1973 when a young Oglala Sioux man called Wesley Bad Heart Bull was stabbed to death in a racially motivated killing. In both of these cases, the local police made little or no effort to either investigate the incidents properly or to press the appropriate murder charges (Churchill 1997: 247). Consequently, there was now a widespread perception within the Indian community that there was a tacit approval by the state in the light treatment shown to white citizens who killed defenceless Native Americans (Weyler 1982: 68). Thus, in the aftermath of both killings, the families of the dead men contacted AIM to request that the organisation intervene and hold the state to account. As a result of these dynamics, the movement would establish itself as the most influential Indian protest group in the USA; not just within urban centres, but also across a number of reservations and in particular, Pine Ridge in South Dakota (Smith and Warrior 1996: 113).


6.1.1 State Violence and Movement Opportunities

The unrelenting nature of state violence against the Indian community in Minneapolis was the key reason behind the initial mobilisation of AIM. Countless numbers of Native Americans in the city had persistently testified that police violence went hand-in-hand with racism. One such victim of the brutality later recalled that:

The police were polite and respectful to me until they saw my band card [ID] in my wallet. They called me a “savage” and asked if I was tough. Three cops came in and beat me in the holding cell. They had

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104 When it emerged, AIM received financial support from a number of organisations and was particularly successful in attracting support from Christian organisations (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 57)
leather gloves on and I had handcuffs. They kept calling me “savage,” hit me over the head with flashlights, broke my nose, cut my head open with flashlights — I needed stitches in my head (Quoted in Perry 2002: 238).

A month after the organisation formed, AIM established a police patrol in the city. According to Dennis Banks, ‘I felt that our people should not face heavily armed racist cops empty handed. There is just too much evidence of racism in the streets, and sometimes a show of strength can actually prevent violence’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 63). An AIM member who joined the organisation in its early days also pointed to the influence of black protest groups: “By the time AIM had become identified as a radical group, it followed the leadership of the Black Panthers, so I think the black community kind of educated us on how to develop a movement” (Quoted in Couture 1996: 58).

Indians living in Minneapolis had long argued that they were subjected to harassment, arrest and beatings by the police due both to their visibility on the streets and because they had little or no knowledge of their legal rights (Bonney 1977: 214). As a result, AIM launched its first police patrol on the night of 23 August 1968. This consisted of about 20 men and women patrolling the East Franklin Avenue area of Minneapolis. Police activity was observed, arrests were filmed, and in many instances the cab fares of drunken Indians were paid by the organisation. A photographer called Roger Woo joined the patrol and he took pictures of the victims of police brutality which were used later in courtroom battles (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 5). AIM members also gave advice to those Indians taken into custody; that they did not have to plead guilty and that they were entitled to an attorney and a jury trial (Mattheissen 1992: 36).

Within six months of the patrols instigation, the Native American jail population in Minneapolis and the surrounding Hennepin County had dropped from over 70% to 10% (Means and Wolf 1996: 163). For twenty-two weeks straight, no arrested Indians were charged with alcohol-related offenses (Birong 2009: 51). Consequently, the AIM leadership turned its attention towards other issues as the organisation began a process of expansion. As Dennis Banks pointed out:
When the American Indian Movement was formed, the first challenge was to halt police brutality. After that, a lot of issues confronted our new organisation: ending high unemployment in the Indian community of Minneapolis; publishing poor housing conditions and fighting the racism of the slum lords who owned the low-income rentals; and stopping the revolving door youth were going through when they were sent to juvenile detention for status offenses (Quoted in Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 4).

6.1.2 Leadership as Resource: Russell Means

A number of key figures were to join the organisation during its developmental phase. Of those, one of the most important was Russell Means. Means was born in 1938 on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota but raised mainly in California where he ‘bitterly resented the loss of his culture and language’ (Mattheissen 1992: 38). Recalling his formative years Means wrote that...

Because Indians have no rights, we therefore have to take anything and everything the government forces upon us. BIA\textsuperscript{105} [Bureau of Indian Affairs] superintendents dictate policies rarely consistent from one reservation to the next — bred by racism, indifference and ineptitude. Every Indian suffers the consequences — poverty, enforced by the might and power of the federal government (Means and Wolf 1996: 21).

Russell Means had been involved in Native American activism for a number of years prior to AIM’s emergence. He had also served time in prison which would help him identify with many other AIM members who had ‘undergone similar experiences of discrimination, alienation and loss of identity, perhaps more severe in that many had served prison sentences’ (Bonney 1977: 221). In 1964, Means had taken part in a protest on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{105} The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was formed in 1824 as a federal agency. Located within the US Department of the Interior it oversees all policy relating to the Native American population (Mattheissen 1992: 26-27).

\textsuperscript{106} Indian activists in the city had previously made several attempts to occupy the prison facility on the island which had being abandoned in 1962. Means and a number of others, including his father Hank, had decided to take advantage of a federal law which stated that land relinquished by the US government should return to its original owner; once all government operations on it ceased (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 9).
In the winter of 1969, Russell Means asked Dennis Banks to make a presentation at an Indian centre in Cleveland that Means himself was running. Means later maintained that ‘during that week in December 1969, I was impressed with AIM’s sense of purpose. The leaders had clear goals and had researched their subject for facts and statistics to back up their assertions’ (Means and Wolf 1996: 152). A month later, Russell Means joined the movement and immediately established a chapter of AIM in Cleveland (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 65). The long-time Indian agitator ‘brought along virtually an entire generation of his family — brothers Ted, Bill, and Dale — cousin Madonna Gilbert, and others — each of whom possessed a web of friends and acquaintances on the Pine Ridge [Sioux] reservation’ (Churchill 1997: 246). As a result, AIM expanded from an urban-based movement with its association on Pine Ridge having lasting consequences for the organisation’s campaign. As Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior point out ‘with the recruitment of Means, AIM no longer was simply an urban organisation in Minneapolis with some chapters sprouting up elsewhere’ (1996: 134).

AIM’s development was considerably enabled by the resource provided by radicalised leaders such as Russell Means. Means was especially adept at inflammatory rhetoric and according to Peter Mattheissen, ‘in the plains states [South Dakota and Nebraska] it was Russell Means who came to stand for almost everything that local white people and the authorities feared and resented about AIM’ (1992: 38). However, Means himself was to argue that it was the persistent violence directed at the Native American population which triggered his decision to join the organisation as police and racial violence against Indians in South Dakota had been endemic for decades. He argued that ‘again and again, we heard stories of helpless and harmless drunks brought in by the BIA’s Indian police to be beaten bloody — not just one cop beating them, but often two or three at a time’ (Means and Wolf 1996: 206). Means also pointed to the pervasive nature of structural violence where ‘conditions were so extreme for Indian people that we were barely hanging on — our very survival was in doubt’ (ibid: 207).
6.1.3 Opportunities for Movement Development: The Occupation of Alcatraz Island

The violent seizure of Indian land and the resulting structural deprivation had been the central Native American grievance against the state for centuries. By the late 1960s when AIM surfaced, that situation had not altered. In the early hours of 20 November 1969, a group calling itself “Indians of All Tribes” occupied Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. It had been the third such attempt since the incident with Russell Means and his father in 1964. In the statements that were issued to the press, the occupiers of Alcatraz said they would pay the US government twenty-four dollars for the facility. This was seen as a deliberate attempt to mock and replicate the purchase of Manhattan Island by Dutch settlers in 1626 (Weyler 1982: 42). The main spokesperson on Alcatraz Island was a Mohawk Indian called Richard Oakes. Oakes had for some time discussed taking over the island as a means of putting the issue of Indian oppression and Indian self-determination into the public sphere (Johnson, Champagne and Nagel 1997: 26). A number of others involved in the takeover were later to become members of AIM. These included John Trudell, a Santee Lakota activist from

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107 Indian academic and activist Vine Deloria Jr. pointed out that “it has been said of missionaries that when they arrived they had only the book and we [Native Americans] had the land. Now we have the book and they have the land” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 64-65). It is estimated that on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota alone, there is an estimated 163 churches representing 17 different denominations (ibid).

108 Referring to the events on Manhattan Island, historians Chief Flying Hawk and M. I. McCreight maintain that:

The Indians had befriended the helpless adventurers [the settlers] when they came among them, and for their kindness the settlers attacked them one night and killed more than a hundred and twenty men, women and children while they were asleep in their wigwams... They went among them with a torch of fire and burned their homes until no Indians were left (1969: 84)

109 Richard Oakes was known to be an admirer of Wallace Mad Bear Anderson. Anderson, along with a number of other activists, had occupied land on the Tuscarora Reservation in New York in 1958 after it was annexed by the Power Authority for a utility project. Laura Waterman Wittstock points out ‘Anderson’s tactics would be used time and again to deal with government misappropriation’ (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 9). In the summer of 1970, Anderson himself visited Alcatraz Island to offer his support to the occupiers (ibid).

Around the end of November 1969, a number of AIM leaders including Clyde Bellecourt and Dennis Banks visited the island to offer support to those involved. Both men saw at first hand the possibilities for furthering AIM’s expansion around the issue of land and grievances relating to Native American self-determination and sovereignty (Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 278). The occupation on Alcatraz Island lasted until 11 June 1971 when federal marshals removed the last protestors. While little progress was ever made on the substantive issues, the occupation would have a symbolic value for Native American protest long after it ceased (Aasen, Salinas and Wittstock 2009: 66). In its aftermath, AIM chapters were formed in a number of cities across the USA. In 1970, the movement organised its first national conference with representatives from 18 different chapters convening to map out and discuss future organisational strategy (Aasen, Salinas and Wittstock 2009: 66). According to Troy R. Johnson ‘the impact of the Alcatraz occupation went beyond the individual lives and consciousness it helped to reshape…The events on Alcatraz marked the beginning of a national Indian activist movement’ (1996: 127-28).

6.1.4 Occupation as a Resource to Counter Structural Violence

The occupation at Alcatraz Island and the tactics utilised by the “Indians of All-Tribes” would critically affect the development of AIM. The violence that had been employed by the state to capture Native American territory and the flagrant disregard shown to lawful treaties by successive US governments was now pinpointed as the critical issue confronting the nascent militant organisation. As Dennis Banks pointed out ‘I soon realised that the struggle for our land was at the heart of our many problems’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 105). AIM leaders argued that the structural violence endemic in Indian life was as a result of land seizure. Thus, as Banks goes on to maintain “only by establishing our rights as sovereign nations, including our right to control our own territories and resources
and our right to genuine self-governance, can we hope to successfully address the conditions currently experienced by our people.” (Quoted in Churchill 1997: 245). As a result, the occupation of what was once Indian land became a key AIM strategy.

Throughout 1970 and 1971, the organisation escalated its militant tactics. In May 1970, approximately 300 AIM activists, many of them armed, came to Cass Lake in Minnesota. It was to be the first of just two occasions that the organisation was to employ arms. There they held a press conference over the contentious issue of land rights. According to Dennis Banks ‘the state enforced rules and regulations that destroyed our people’s livelihood by forcing us to take out hunting and fishing licences and deciding for us how much game and fish we should be allowed to take’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 121). On Thanksgiving Day in the same year, AIM activists occupied the Mayflower II in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and painted nearby Plymouth Rock red. This action was to symbolise the genocidal violence perpetrated by white Europeans against the Indian people (Johnson, Champagne and Nagle 1997: 34).

In August 1971, AIM continued its tactic of staging occupations when the movement assisted the Lac Courte Oreilles tribe in Wisconsin in capturing a dam which had flooded much of the local reservation (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 14; Aasen, Salinas and Wittstock 2009: 66). AIM was also successful in a 1971 occupation of an abandoned coast guard base in Milwaukee where the

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110 It was estimated that up to two-thirds of the total US uranium deposits; a quarter of the low sulphur coal; and 20% of all oil and natural gas lay beneath land with Indian title (Churchill 1997: 244). Alongside these statistics was the fact that...

The royalty rates set up by the US Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), in its exercise of federal trust prerogatives vis-à-vis corporate extraction of Indian mineral assets, amounted to only a fraction of what the same corporations would have paid had they undertaken the same mining operations in non-reservation localities (ibid).

111 The Mayflower II was a replica of the 17th century vessel which transported pilgrims to North America.

112 AIM also suggested at the time that the feast of Thanksgiving should be declared an Indian national day of mourning (Bonney 1977: 215).
organisation set up a community school for Indian children and a detoxification and treatment centre for Indian alcoholics (Weyler 1982: 46). These successes emboldened the organisation as it came to realise that the tactic of occupation was not just an important resource for movement expansion, but that such strategies could have an identifiable positive impact on the quality of Native American life.

Central to the tactic of occupation was the perception that Indian reservations were internal colonies of the USA (Churchill 1997: 243). Therefore, in light of these realities, AIM argued that the very survival of the Native American community was at stake.113 Dennis Banks points out that ‘Clyde [Bellecourt] and I decided that in order to get anywhere, AIM had to become confrontational — confrontational but not violent’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 105). Consequently, while peaceful protest would remain the key movement tactic by the end of 1971, that position would be severely tested by the perpetual nature of exogenous violence against Indians.


6.2.1 The Framing of Popular Violence: Part I

On 14 February 1972 in a small town called Gordon in North-West Nebraska, a 51 year-old Lakota Sioux man called Raymond Yellow Thunder was beaten to death by a gang of white youths. Some months before the killing another Indian man called Norman Little Bird, had been shot and killed in the same vicinity by a white rancher who was never brought to trial (Crow Dog and Erdoes 1990: 83). Raymond Yellow Thunder had been severely beaten and tortured by five people

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113 The notion of survival programs was also key to AIM’s development. This feature was noticeable in the Heart of the Earth Survival School which was set up in Minneapolis. This was eventually followed by the establishment of the Red School House in St. Paul, Minnesota. Both of these initiatives had native language and culture at the centre of their programs. AIM’s emphasis on Indian spiritual and cultural identity meant that the movement became more appealing to a broader base as it ‘identified problems that Indians from a variety of tribes can identify’ (Bonney 1977: 217).
including a woman and two brothers called Leslie and Melvin Hare. He was then stripped and paraded before a gathering at an American Legion dance in Gordon (Mattheissen 1992: 60). Yellow Thunder was eventually taken away in the trunk of a car and his body dumped in a back street. According to Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior ‘some speculated that his tormentors had beaten him so severely that morticians were hiding the body in order to prevent a riot’ (ibid). Those responsible for the killing were eventually arrested and then released, without any preconditions for bail, on a second degree manslaughter charge. As a result, the family of Raymond Yellow Thunder contacted AIM as by that time in 1972 the movement had ‘established a reputation for being able to generate headlines and to be an effective advocate for Indian people in various protests around the country’ (ibid: 115).

Dennis Banks was later to write that ‘the case might have been dismissed like so many other crimes against Indians had AIM not stepped in’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 115). The Indian population had for years argued that racial violence was rampant across the border towns of South Dakota and the Nebraska Panhandle (Smith and Warrior 1996: 112-113). There were also regular complaints of police brutality and that Native Americans were arrested far in excess of their population percentage.

In the aftermath of the Yellow Thunder killing, Russell Means announced that the organisation intended to draw national attention towards the racist violence that was rampant in South Dakota and Nebraska (Smith and Warrior 1996: 112-113). In a speech delivered on the Pine Ridge Reservation, Dennis Banks argued that “if AIM cannot protect our people, it might just as well pack up and disappear…We are prepared to die in this case” (Quoted in Banks and Erdoes 2004: 116).

The events at Gordon would precipitate a period of national growth by AIM with chapters forming throughout the country and the leadership becoming increasingly involved in more visible displays of militant action. On 6 March 1972, AIM organised a caravan consisting of over two hundred cars which
descended on Gordon from the Pine Ridge Reservation in nearby South Dakota (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 116). The organisation effectively took over the town, including the Office of the Mayor. Russell Means informed the authorities that “we’ve come here today to put Gordon on the map. And if justice is not immediately forthcoming, we’re going to take Gordon off the map” (Quoted in Churchill 1997: 246).

The escalation of a more militant approach by AIM paid dividends as officials in the town agreed to set up a human rights commission to investigate wrongdoings against the local Indian population (Smith and Warrior 1996: 116). They also suspended a local police officer who was regularly accused of harassing, beating, and in some cases, raping female Indian prisoners (Crow Dog and Erdoes 1990: 68). The FBI then agreed to AIM’s demands and subsequently Leslie and Melvin Hare were arrested and charged with manslaughter and false imprisonment. The Hare Brothers became the first white citizens in the history of Nebraska to be sent to prison for the killing of a Native American (Churchill 1997: 246). Even though many Indians were angry with the minimal sentences the two brothers eventually received, the victory achieved at Gordon gained the movement the lasting respect of many Indians across the USA, but most especially, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota (Mattheisssen 1992: 60).

6.2.2 1972: Further Violence Stimulates Opportunities

Throughout 1972, AIM’s development was increasingly enabled by the anger which swept throughout Indian land. This situation was largely related to a number of further violent killings of Native Americans. On 2 March 1972, police in Philadelphia shot and killed an unarmed Indian called Leroy Shenandoah. Shenandoah was a former US army Special Forces veteran who had served on the honour guard which attended the casket of John F. Kennedy in November 1963 (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 123). On 1 July, a 19 year-old unarmed Indian male named Philip Celay, from the Papago tribe in Arizona, was shot and killed by a Deputy Sheriff called David Bosman. The local Justice of the Peace,
M.F. Anderson, ruled the death “justifiable homicide” and Bosman was neither suspended nor did he serve any time for the killing (Weyler 1982: 48).

On 20 September 1972, Richard Oakes, the leader of the occupation on Alcatraz Island, was murdered by a white man close to his home in Santa Rosa, California. A week before the incident, Oakes had intervened in a dispute about fishing rights between two white males and an Indian teenager. During the dispute, one of the white men, Michael Morgan, fired a shot over Oakes’ head (Weyler 1982: 49). A week later, Morgan encountered an unarmed Oakes on an isolated forest road and shot and killed the Indian activist. At the time, Oakes was a member of AIM. Morgan was later cleared of all charges relating to the crime (ibid). A month after the Oakes killing, the leadership of AIM, along with a number of other Indian protest groups, held a press conference in Seattle. They condemned the murder of Richard Oakes and demanded equal protection for Indians and for those who campaigned against racial violence and Native American treaty rights (Mattheissen 1992: 51).

One of those in attendance that day was Hank Adams, founder of a group known as Survival of American Indians Association (SAIA). Adams had also been shot and almost killed by white supremacists the previous year (Weyler 1982: 44-45). Consequently, the relentless nature of external violence against Native Americans, along with Indian grievances over land, culminated in what became known as the Trail of Broken Treaties March to Washington DC in October 1972 (ibid: 52). Bill Means, Russell’s brother, maintained that exogenous violence effectively changed the direction of AIM. He maintained at the time that “we could not just carry signs and protest, but we would have to be willing to die to protect our people” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 49).

6.2.3 Tactical Resources: The AIM Occupation of the BIA Headquarters

The Trail of Broken Treaties March was to unite a number of different Native American protest groups with the intention of both highlighting violence against the Native American community and confronting the policies pursued by the
Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Most Indians perceived the BIA to be undemocratic and representative of the white man’s domination. As Peter Mattheissen points out ‘from the beginning, this weak and ambivalent bureau was manipulated by special interests that coveted Indian grazing land, with its timber, water, and the minerals beneath’ (1992: 26). The Trail of Broken Treaties would represent a considerable escalation of AIM tactics as it directly challenged the state for the first time on a national basis. Between 30 September and 2 October, 1972, eight major national Indian organisations, including AIM, convened in Denver, Colorado. Bill Means later recalled that “AIM was one of many, but we probably ended up having the most people there” (Quoted in Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 45). On 4 October, Dennis Banks wrote to President Richard Nixon seeking a meeting. All such requests were turned down (Smith and Warrior 1996: 146). AIM leaders then drew up a 20 point Indian Manifesto which they hoped to present to government officials in Washington DC. Included in the plan was a call to restore treaty-making with Native American tribes which had been terminated by Congress in 1871 (Mattheissen 1992: 55). They also called on the authorities to hand over approximately 110 million acres of land which had been seized by the state; the abolition of the BIA, and a demand to “reclaim and affirm health, housing, employment, economic development, and education for all Indian people” (Quoted in Johnson 2007: 54-55). Clyde Bellecourt maintained that “we knew that 75% of all the energy resources left in America was on our land, and we had to protect that” (Quoted in Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 45). However, as Peter Mattheissen points out ‘from the US government’s point of view, to recognise or negotiate treaty claims all over the country might necessitate the return of vast tracts of America to the true owners, a very dangerous idea indeed’ (1992: 55).

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114 By collaborating with several other Native American movements, AIM hoped to take advantage of the opportunities presented by an imminent US Presidential Election in November 1972. There was a belief that serious concessions could be conceded by the sitting Nixon administration (Churchill 1997: 246).
During the month of October 1972, White House officials, including Harrison Loesch, the assistant secretary of the Interior Department (responsible for the BIA), promised a meeting with AIM leaders once they arrived in the capitol (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 45). The four mile long precession reached Washington DC on 2 November 1972, three days before the US Presidential Election. Assurances had been received through the offices of the Vice-President, Spiro Agnew, that Indian concerns would be given due consideration and that constructive negotiations with US officials would take place. However, when government representatives refused to meet the protestors to negotiate the 20 point plan, up to 400 AIM members occupied the headquarters of the BIA (Weyler 1982: 49-50). The protestors then barricaded themselves inside the building and effectively took control of the offices. AIM members placed a banner reading *Native American Embassy* across the front of the headquarters (Smith and Warrior 1996: 157). Molotov cocktails were assembled by movement activists with the belief that an armed assault by the police and army was inevitable (Gosse 2005: 139).\footnote{Within days, support for the protest arrived from across the country which included a visit from La Donna Harris, the wife of Senator Fred Harris. Also there to express solidarity was key Black Power figure, Stokely Carmichael, and Jim Williams, a spokesperson for the Black Panther Party (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 137-138). By this time AIM had formed alliances with a number of other radical social movements. According to Russell Means:

We decided to get in touch with every other dissident group we could find. We established contact with the Weather Underground, the Black Panthers, the Young Lords (a Puerto Rican movement), a militant Chicano organisation known as the Brown Berets, and the National Lawyers Guild, a small group of mainly young, mostly Jewish revolutionaries (Means and Wolf 1996: 217)}

On Election Day, 5 November, an armed raid by state forces was averted and officials within the Nixon administration negotiated a withdrawal from the building.\footnote{The White House agreed to three major conditions: (1) No prosecutions would be instigated against the protestors (2) Native American issues would undergo a process of reform and (3) The 20 point Indian manifesto would be examined and a response would be forthcoming from the state (Weyler 1982: 53).} White House representatives were desperate to avoid further media
embarrassment (Churchill 1997: 246). Consequently, on 9 November, AIM members evacuated the building and in the process stole a considerable amount of confidential files concerning the leasing practices of Indian land by the BIA. While the organisation had gained no significant concessions from state officials, the occupation, like that on Alcatraz Island, was a ‘great gesture of symbolic resistance’ (Gosse 2005: 139). However, from this point on, the FBI would classify AIM as an extremist organisation (Mattheissen 1992: 247). According to the Secretary of the Interior, Rogers Morton, “there has grown up in the wake of the black movement in this country a revolutionary Indian element. Dramatic violence is their pattern... These are criminal actions and should be dealt with accordingly” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 58-59).

6.2.4 The Framing of Popular Violence: Part II

By early 1973, the persistence of popular violence against Native Americans continued to be a significant element driving the development of AIM. Russell Means argued that “the South Dakota mentality toward Indians made the Ku Klux Klan look like Girl Scouts” (Quoted in Holm 1996: 182). On 23 January of that year, a young Oglala Sioux man, Wesley Bad Heart Bull, was stabbed to death by a white man called Darold Schmitz in the village of Buffalo Gap in South Dakota. Schmitz was a businessman known locally as “Mad Dog” (Mattheissen 1992: 62). Robert High Eagle, a friend of the victim, said that Schmitz had made an open declaration days before the murder that he was “going to kill an Indian” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 62). However, in a situation that resonated with the Raymond Yellow Thunder case, the local police made no effort to press murder charges against Schmitz (Churchill 1997: 247). Instead, Schmitz was charged with involuntary manslaughter and as a result, the mother of the dead man, Sarah Bad Heart Bull, requested AIM’s support.

There was now a widespread acceptance and fear among Native Americans in South Dakota that the state would effectively turn a blind-eye to the racial killing
of innocent Indians. Russell Means then announced that AIM would organise a protest to Custer County Courthouse to demand that the charge of murder be brought against Darold Schmitz (Reinhardt 2007: 169). On 6 February over 200 members of the movement converged on the town. Dennis Banks, Russell Means and a number of others went directly to the states attorney’s office where they were informed that the killing would be properly investigated sometime in the near future.

However, the AIM leaders were not happy with the path the investigation was taking and they demanded that Schmitz be rearrested and murder charges brought against him. Tensions soon escalated when word spread that the victim’s mother, Sarah Bad Heart Bull, had been forcibly pushed down a stairway by law enforcement officers. Angry protestors then set police cars on fire and offices close to the courthouse were burned to the ground (Sayer 2000: 31). The rioting lasted for close to an hour and over 30 Indians were arrested. It was the first outbreak of violence between white men and members of the Sioux Nation since the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 (Mattheissen 1992: 63). When Sarah Bad Heart Bull protested with a state trooper about the brutality of the police, she was viciously put in a choke hold with a night stick (Reinhardt 2007: 170). As a result, the town’s courthouse was set on fire and the local chamber of commerce destroyed. AIM leaders including Dennis Banks and Russell Means were arrested along with Sarah Bad Heart Bull (Churchill 1997: 247). They were all charged with riotous behaviour (ibid).

In the aftermath of the Custer incident, what would be of most concern to AIM was the heavy FBI presence in the town. Shortly after the events that February, the FBI directed its counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO) to harass, disrupt, infiltrate and imprison AIM members (Reinhardt 2007: 169). Dennis Banks was convicted later in 1973 and sentenced to three years imprisonment for his role in the Custer riot. Sarah Bad Heart Bull was to serve 5 months of a one-to-five-year sentence. A number of months later an all-white jury acquitted
Darold Schmitz of second degree manslaughter and he would never spend a day in prison (Churchill 1997: 248).

6.2.5 The GOON Squad: The Framing of State-Sponsored Terror

In late February 1973, a number of Native American elders requested that members of AIM come to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They made an appeal to the movement to counter the violence regularly inflicted on the traditional Sioux people by elements affiliated with the pro-BIA tribal chairman of the reservation, Richard “Dicky” Wilson (Johnson 2007: 48). Many saw Wilson’s presidency as exacerbating old tensions between Indians who had chosen assimilation into white society and traditionalists who fiercely opposed any form of state intervention. AIM in the main ‘drew its support from traditionalist elders and disillusioned young people looking for a way out of the cycle of poverty and alcoholism on the reservation’ (Sayer 2000: 31). Structural violence on Pine Ridge was rampant and by early 1973 the reservation ‘was a scene of desolation’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 145).

Richard Wilson’s past history included allegations relating to boot-legging and there were also accusations that he had misappropriated at least $6,000 of federal funding (ibid). He had been elected to the tribal chairman position the previous year and was implacably opposed to AIM. Within a short period of Wilson assuming office, accusations of ‘nepotism, patronage, graft and corruption were directed towards the new administration’ (Reinhardt 1999: 230). Wilson also believed that AIM represented a serious threat with both its militant rhetoric and the emphasis the movement placed on issues relating to cultural rejuvenation\footnote{In 1969, Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt had established contact with a Sioux spiritual leader called Leonard Crow Dog. According to Banks, it was important for the two men ‘to find a spiritual direction for the American Indian Movement’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 99). These links solidified over the next two to three years so when the opportunity came for the organization to assist traditionalist elements on Pine Ridge it offered the movement ‘a direct link to traditional native cultures, a link that had been diminished during the preceding decades of urbanization’ (Reinhardt 2007: 160).} and treaty claims. Many Indians on Pine Ridge believed that Richard Wilson had acquired office with the assistance of white corporate America and in return
rewarded these individuals contracts associated with land and natural resources (Reinhardt 2007: 79).

During the early 1970s, the BIA had increased funding for law enforcement on a number of reservations throughout the USA as it was felt that militant elements were on the ascent. These programs were put in place on Mohawk and Seneca land in New York State and in particular on the Pine Ridge Reservation where traditional opposition to BIA interference was most intense. By 1972-73, Pine Ridge was the most ‘ripe for a major confrontation’ (Sayer 2000: 29). Due to Richard Wilson’s abuse of power, his opponents on the reservation had previously sought help through the conventional apparatus of the state. However, as Ward Churchill points out:

The BIA responded by providing a $62,000 grant to Wilson for purposes of establishing a Tribal Ranger Group, a paramilitary entity reporting exclusively to Wilson which now began calling itself Guardians of the Oglala Nation (GOONS) — with which to physically intimidate the opposition (1997: 248).

The GOON Squad soon became renowned for its violence, brutality and terror. Drive-by shootings, beatings, and the torture and murder of Wilson’s opponents became common. Within a short period of time the Pine Ridge Reservation had the highest rate of murder in the USA (Johnson 2007: 49). Indian deaths went without any investigation even though the ratio of citizens to FBI agents on the ground was also higher than in any other part of North America (ibid).\textsuperscript{118} State-sponsored killings were used as a pretext to further fund the activities of the GOON squad (Johnson 2007: 49). Ellen Moves Camp, a Sioux elder, maintained

\textsuperscript{118} The state provided such funding to Richard Wilson as it wanted the tribal chairman to transfer a portion of the Pine Ridge Reservation known as the Sheep Mountain Gunnery Range to the US forest service. This particular area was known to be rich in natural mineral resources (Churchill 1997: 248).

\textsuperscript{119} Speaking at the time, an attorney called Kenneth Tilsen (who was involved in supporting various Indian groups) remarked:

The best analogy [to Pine Ridge] is South Vietnam. There are a lot of similarities. Most obviously, there is a corrupt government of natives, who are set up, armed, supplied, financed, propagandized for, and maintained in power, by the US government (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 74).
at the time that “they [the GOON Squad] would go around and anybody that stated against Dick Wilson, they were automatically beaten up or threatened” (Quoted in Reinhardt 2007: 159).

The unremitting violence on the reservation only served to intensify a political alliance between many residents on Pine Ridge and AIM. Further opportunities for the movement’s mobilisation on Pine Ridge were provided by the establishment of the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organisation (OSCRO).120 By early 1973, OSCRO had attempted to nullify Richard Wilson’s brutal regime through contact with the FBI and the US Justice Department. When they received no support from the state, the organisation instigated an impeachment process against Wilson (Churchill 1997: 248). He was charged with perpetrating a campaign of violence and terror; the misuse of tribal funds; and failing to protect both the interests and rights of the people on Pine Ridge.121 In a move that caused widespread dismay, the BIA announced that Richard Wilson himself would chair the impeachment proceedings. The state, instead of diffusing the tension, sent a sixty-five member Special Operations Group (SOG, a large SWAT UNIT) of US marshals to the area to support the tribal administration (Churchill 1997: 248).122

The night before the impeachment process commenced, Richard Wilson ordered the arrest and jailed several tribal council members who were strongly opposed to his regime. On 23 February, Wilson was retained in office and he immediately ordered a ban on political meetings throughout the reservation (Weyler 1982: 74). Consequently, OSCRO decided it required further support for its campaign and one of its leaders, Pedro Bissonette, contacted AIM (Zimmerman 1976: 123).

120 OSCRO consisted of a number of Pine Ridge activists and ‘though independent, they had strong informal ties with AIM, in particular with Russell Means’ (Smith and Warrior 1996: 195). The driving force behind the organisation was a number of female Sioux elders (Reinhardt 2007: 173).
121 Wilson had further angered traditional Indians when he spoke in favour of reducing Sioux territory by over an eighth of its total land base. Negotiations were also well advanced between his administration and several energy corporations interested in the rich reserves of oil and uranium on the reservation (Weyler 1982: 70-72).
122 The Special Operations Group (SOG) was, according to Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, ‘a domestic version of the Green Berets, their activation required the specific approval of the President or the Attorney General’ (1996: 196).
By this time there was a virtual military clampdown on the reservation with the FBI, the state police, the US marshals, the BIA police and Wilson’s GOON squad consolidating their grip on Sioux land (Weyler 1982: 73). At a secret meeting organised by AIM on 26 February, Gladys Bissonette, Pedro’s aunt, appealed to Dennis Banks and Russell Means and argued that “we must take action today, not tomorrow” (Quoted in Banks and Erdoes 2004: 160).

At the end of the meeting, an Oglala Chief spoke passionately about the 1890 massacre and called on AIM to occupy Wounded Knee. The organisation decided to give a press conference about the state-sponsored violence on Pine Ridge at the historic site. As a result, on the morning of 27 February, approximately 200 AIM members arrived at Wounded Knee. However, the media event never took place as the GOON Squad established roadblocks into the area which prohibited access for journalists. All of these fortifications were reinforced by the SOG unit, the BIA police and the FBI (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 160). AIM members, surrounded by a formidable military apparatus, had no choice but to arm themselves with weapons procured at a local trading post. They then seized control of the village of Wounded Knee and immediately established an armed security perimeter fence. By nightfall, state forces had effectively sealed off the village and a 71 day siege was to commence (Smith and Warrior 1996: 205). It would entail the largest deployment of troops on US soil since the American Civil War.

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123 The organisation had set up a series of meetings across the reservation at the time. At these gatherings, the tribal administration was criticised for its subservience towards the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The BIA itself was attacked for its destruction of cultural heritage and the white community criticised for its virulent racism towards Indians and for treaty violations (Roos, Smith, Langley and McDonald 1980: 90). By this time, AIM endorsed traditional Indian ceremonial practices, condemned Christianity and promoted cultural distinctiveness (ibid: 93).

124 The morning after the 26 February meeting, Russell Means attempting to defuse the situation with Richard Wilson, was severely beaten by the GOON squad as he arrived to meet the tribal chairman (Churchill 1997: 249).
6.2.6 “A Vietnam Battlefield”: Veterans as Resources

The armed resistance by AIM at Wounded Knee was vitally supported by the expertise offered by Indian veterans of the Vietnam War. The organisation’s strongest support in membership terms came from those either embittered by time spent in jail or by those who served in the armed forces (Mattheissen 1992: 62). Within 24 hours of the Wounded Knee occupation, the area resembled a war zone as both sides established fortified positions (Dewing 1985: 101). Those inside the occupation site established a perimeter around the village and built bunkers and trenches in an imitation of those created by the American forces in South East-Asia. The Black Power leader, Angela Davis, who visited the site at the time, maintained that it resembled “a Vietnam battlefield” (Quoted in Holm 1996: 178).

During the conflict in Vietnam, many Native American troops began to see a parallel between the violence suffered by the Vietnamese and the violence perpetrated against their own people in the USA. Woody Kipp, from the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, was 19-years old when he sailed for Vietnam. He later maintained that:

> At some point during my stint in Vietnam, I began to realise that the hatred and contempt the Americans felt toward the non-technological Vietnamese peasants was the same hatred and contempt that had moved without conscience throughout the American West in the last century (Kipp 1997: 211).

Tom Holm refers to the high Native American enlistment rate in Vietnam. He points out that:

Indian Vietnam veterans did not enter military service to prove themselves “good Americans,” gain a degree or economic status, or become accepted by whites. Rather, according to the veterans themselves, they enlisted or accepted induction because they were patriots in the tribal sense of the word. To them, military service was part of an honourable family and/or tribal tradition. They wanted to be warriors — to protect their land and their people. And, in the tribal tradition of reciprocity, they wanted to gain respect from other Native Americans (1996: 118).
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The technical expertise provided by such veterans was invaluable. The 71-day siege could not have occurred without such experience. AIM’s security at the site was directed by a number of ex-military members including Stan Holder, Larry Anderson (twice decorated with the Purple Heart), Carter Camp and Stanley Wilson (Dewing 1985: 133).

Ultimately, AIM was forced into arming itself at Wounded Knee by the violence perpetrated by state and state-sponsored forces on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The organisation had never intended to employ weapons throughout its campaign. However, AIM sought to make a stance on Native American rights and justice issues on a site that had deep emotional and historical resonance for Indians. By 1973, the Pine Ridge Reservation had been a potential powder keg for well over a century. The land of the Sioux had been a flashpoint for the catastrophic policies pursued by the US government. Pine Ridge, with a population of approximately 12,000 Sioux Indians, was a ‘scandalous exhibit of economic racism’ and was effectively a ‘place of despair’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 145-146). AIM’s mobilisation on the reservation was according to movement member, Mary Crow Dog, ‘like a tornado’ as it ‘gave us a lift badly needed at the time. It defined our desires and expressed our innermost yearnings’ (Crow Dog and Erdoes 1990: 82). Vietnam Veteran Stan Holder maintained that “we were born out of defence for this nation; we’re not an offensive striking force at all; it’s more a brotherhood than any army with a chain of command. It’s a 180 degree change from the US military” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 84).
CHAPTER 7

Development – Comparing the Cases

‘A focus on colonialism is essential for a theory that can integrate race and racial oppression into a larger view of American social structure... It is a general law of colonial racial systems that the oppressing group has a licence to kill members of the “inferior” race without serious likelihood of punishment’

Robert Blauner (1972: 12, 39).

Introduction

This chapter will comparatively explore the role of violence in the development of AIM and the BPP. Throughout this lifecycle phase, the prevalence of state, structural and popular violence continued to propel movement mobilisation. Therefore, the central questions in this chapter are: employing Mill’s Methods, which permits us to focus on one particular variable; what were the similarities and differences in framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities during this stage of the organisation’s lifecycle? And, can we make a positive or negative case for the pertinence of these concepts for the development of our two movements?

7.1 METHOD OF AGREEMENT: MOVEMENT SIMILARITIES

7.1.1 Framing: State and Popular Violence

According to Imhonopi, Onifade and Urim, a social movement always sets out to frame ‘what is the problem or what they are critiquing’ (2013: 83). In our two cases, the persistent nature of police and racial violence was the diagnostic frame (Snow and Benford 2000: 616) advanced by AIM and the BPP throughout their developmental phase. The prevalence of such repression was identified as the primary source of movement discontent in both of these cases. As a result, the organisation’s membership repeatedly emphasised the external violence which threatened to engulf their communities. As Panther member Elbert Howard later pointed out ‘we [the BPP and AIM] were being oppressed and exploited by the same perpetrators’ (2009: 366).
During this lifecycle phase, the movement’s *diagnostic frame* was consistently underlined by incidents of violence, either through state or racially motivated attacks. In AIM’s case, the escalation of police brutality in Minneapolis between 1968 and 1969 only served to accentuate what the organisation had been *framing* all along. As AIM’s co-founder Eddie Benton-Banai pointed out “the police harassment was the big push. Actually the police did us a favour, even though it was not their intent.” (Quoted in Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 5). The police killings of Leroy Shenandoah and Philip Celay and the racial murders of Raymond Yellow Thunder, Wesley Bad Heart Bull and Richard Oakes all contributed towards AIM’s process of *diagnostic framing*. This *frame* pointed to the fact that there was tacit approval by the state in the light treatment historically shown to police officers and white citizens who killed Native Americans (Weyler 1982: 68). Consequently, this would confirm the validity of the argument that ‘*collective action frames* serve as accenting devices that either underscore and embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable’ (Snow and Benford 1992: 137).

This dynamic resonates strongly with the Panthers’ *framing* process between 1966 and 1969 which also pointed to the indiscriminate nature of state and popular violence against black citizens. The police killing of Denzil Dowell in San Francisco in 1967 was just one example of a pattern of unremitting violence. The murders of Martin Luther King and Bobby Hutton in April 1968 contributed significantly towards this narrative as the BPP continued to *frame* persistent state violence as the key grievance facing the black community. King’s assassination in Memphis only served to add weight to the party’s *framing* process. As Bobby Seale pointed out at the time, “Non-violence on the part of whom? On the part of the racists who’ve infected the police department? Who continue to brutalise and murder black people in the streets? No, we must defend ourselves, like Malcolm [X] said, by any means necessary” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 164). Writing in the aftermath of King’s assassination, Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver maintained ‘that white America could produce the assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King is
looked upon by black people — and not just those identified as black militants — as a final repudiation by white America of any hope of reconciliation’ (1969: 236). Cleaver’s argument would thus resonate with the notion that a social movement’s framing process enables ‘activists to articulate and align a vast array of events and experiences so that they hang together in a relatively unified and meaningful fashion’ (Snow and Benford 1992: 138).

The second part of the framing process, prognostic framing, occurs when an ‘organisation frames what is the desirable solution to the problem’ (Imhonopi, Onifade and Urim 2013: 83). Towards the end of this lifecycle phase, AIM framed armed self-defence as the means for countering external violence. The Panthers had arrived at the same conclusion almost from the get-go. BPP member Assata Shakur reflected this thinking when she argued that ‘with the Ku Klux Klan and all those other racists running around, black people have got to be suicidal if they don’t own and know how to operate a gun’ (1987: 223). By February 1973, with unremitting state-sponsored violence escalating on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, AIM was framing armed self-defence along similar lines.

Both organisation’s motivational frame, whereby a SMO supplies the rationale for engaging in collective action (Snow and Benford 2000: 617), revolved around the notion of black and Indian survival. This dynamic was most clearly seen in the fact that during this lifecycle phase both the BPP and AIM instigated what they termed survival programs (Alkebulan 2007: 28; Bonney 1977: 217). It was through this frame that both groups perceived their communities’ relationship to the US state.

\[126\] At a community meeting in the aftermath of the Denzil Dowell killing, ‘Newton and Seale calmly maintained that only through armed self-defence could the black community find security’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 52).
7.1.2 Resources: The Resource of Military Training

Resource mobilisation theorists (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Edwards and Kane 2014) have pointed to five different resource types in social movement mobilisation. One of these is human resources which include assets such as expertise, skills and experience (Edwards and Kane 2014: 213). J. Craig Jenkins emphasises the importance of what he terms ‘institutional resources’ for SMO efficacy (1983: 533). Throughout this lifecycle phase, the BPP and AIM utilised a similar institutional resource as members with military training were deployed to counteract external violence. As a result, veterans of the war in Vietnam were pivotal in the mobilisation against state, racial and violent counter-movements such as the Ku Klux Klan and the GOON squad.

The resource of military training had been employed by black self-defence groups for decades. As “Geronimo” Pratt points out, ‘I was born into a tradition of resistance’ (Ji Jaga 2001: 74). Consequently, Panther members who had served in Vietnam were increasingly relied upon during the developmental phase to mount a defensive guard against both state and racial terror. AIM’s capacity to mobilise an armed resistance at Wounded Knee in 1973 was also similarly enabled by the presence of a number of US armed forces veterans. Many of the organisation’s leaders were ex-soldiers, including Dennis Banks, John Trudell, Larry Anderson, Carter Camp and Bill Means (Holm 1996: 179). An article in the Native American newspaper Akwesasne Notes in 1973 summed up the association between ex-military Indians and the stand-off at Wounded Knee:

The young men defending Wounded Knee are militarily skilled and trained. Almost all are Vietnam Veterans and most of those were in the Special Forces — the Green Berets. In Southeast-Asia they learned about guerrilla warfare, courtesy of the US government, and now they are using what they learned for their own people (Quoted in Holm 1996: 179).

These ex-army figures, like their black counterparts, returned to the USA expecting equal treatment of rights with white veterans. However, many rapidly
grew disenchanted with the persistent violence that was directed against blacks and Indians in the USA. Upon returning home, these soldiers “brought with them new attitudes. They had succeeded; they had been treated as equals and expected that to continue” (Quoted in Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 257). Thus, the militant agenda promoted by AIM and the BPP was instantly attractive to those politicised by their experiences in South-East Asia and such individuals became a critical resource in the movement’s development during this lifecycle phase.

### 7.1.3 Opportunities: State and Racial Killings

*Political opportunity analysis* has highlighted the fact that social movements develop in response to a constant process of interaction between the organisation itself and the wider socio-political landscape they seek to transform (McAdam 1982: 40). AIM and the BPP represented constituencies that were not offered adequate protection by the state. As a result, *opportunities* for group development were significantly enabled due to the fact that black and Indian citizens contacted the organisations for support in countering persistent state and racial violence (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 52; Smith and Warrior 1996: 114). The perpetual brutalisation and killing of black people with impunity was a key reason behind the BPP’s expansion during this protest phase. Relatives and families of those that had suffered as a result of state violence were consistently stonewalled by a system which effectively turned a blind-eye to such repression.

According to William Gamson and David Meyer ‘opportunities sometimes present themselves with no movement provenance, but movements are active in structuring and creating political opportunity’ (1996: 276). Against this backdrop, the killings of Denzil Dowell, Raymond Yellow Thunder and Wesley Bad Heart Bull were significant events during the developmental phase as numerous openings and *opportunities* for movement growth occurred in both our two cases. After the killing of Denzil Dowell by a police officer in 1967, his

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127 One returning veteran noted that ‘We fought a white man’s war, you know, and the first thing that happens when I get back home is that some white kid, a girl, at the LA airport spits on me’ (Quoted in Holm 1996: 182).
family made repeated attempts to view his remains to determine the number of shots fired during the incident (Austin 2006: 77). When all official requests were turned down, the Dowell family felt that they had no choice but to contact the BPP in relation to the matter and subsequently the organisation ‘spoke with the neighbours and other community members, sought out witnesses, talked with the coroner’s office, and spoke with forensic experts’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 53). As a result of the Dowell killing and the events at Sacramento a month later, *opportunities* for movement mobilisation escalated rapidly. Huey Newton maintained that in the aftermath “we had more members that we could handle” and that “in a matter of months, we went from a small Bay Area [San Francisco] group to a national organisation” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 78).

Similarly, the interactive process with exogenous violence opened up *opportunities* for AIM’s development. The organisation was considerably assisted by the anger provoked throughout Indian country by a number of state and racial killings throughout 1972 and 1973 (Weyler 1982: 48-49). This would resonate with the argument that the response of the state ‘and their interactions with movements can count as a crucial (perceived) *opportunity* factor shaping the longer term career of the movement’ (Crossley 2002: 115). Therefore, in the case of the Raymond Yellow Thunder killing in 1972, his family ‘in the absence of meaningful interest or help from local authorities or the FBI, made the decision to call on AIM’ (Mattheissen 1992: 59). A similar process was repeated a year later when Wesley Bad Heart Bulls’ mother, Sarah, asked AIM to seek justice from the state authorities over her son’s killing (ibid: 62). This dynamic culminated in February 1973 when the residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota requested AIM’s support and protection from state and state-sponsored violence (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 160). Consequently, *opportunities* for the organisations development reached a point of maximum efficacy.
7.2 METHOD OF DIFFERENCE: MOVEMENT DIFFERENCES

7.2.1 Framing: Master Frames, Violence and Land

While violence was the prism through which both AIM and the BPP framed their grievances, one noticeable difference surfaced in the framing process during the developmental phase. This was in relation to what Snow and Benford term master frames (1992). These authors point out that while collective action frames perform a diagnostic function they can also ‘vary considerably in terms of the actual specification of blame’ (1992: 138). Subsequently, master frames ‘provide the interpretive medium through which collective actors associated with different movements within a cycle assign blame for the problem they are attempting to ameliorate’ (ibid: 139).

In the BPP’s case, they were influenced by the master frame which emerged within the black civil rights movement. While AIM was also impacted by such narratives, ‘it had to distinguish itself from the more dominant Christian views of the earlier civil rights movement’ and as a result, AIM leaders seized upon the notion of Indian territorial sovereignty ‘as key to resolving issues of land and resource development’ (Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 278-280). In contrast, African-Americans had long been dispossessed in the USA ‘due to their historical status as slaves’ (ibid: 258). Therefore, without a land base of their own, the state ‘was not obliged to “treat” with African-Americans on the same government to government level as was the case with American Indians’ (ibid). Consequently, by 1970 AIM had begun to ‘shift its focus from civil rights issues to an agenda more specifically attuned to the conditions afflicting Native North America’ (Churchill 1997: 243).

According to Snow and Benford ‘the potency of a master frame will also vary with the extent to which it is relevant to or resonates with the life world of adherents and constituents’ (1992: 140). The occupation at Alcatraz Island in 1969 and the repertoires employed by the so-called Indians of All-Tribes would substantially influence AIM’s developmental phase. The issue of illegal land
seizure had for centuries being the one grievance which unified Indian protest against the state. As Troy Johnson, Joane Nagel and Duane Champagne point out, Native American protest by the late 1960s and early 1970s ‘had a rich and long legacy of social movements. Most were tribally centred on treaty or land issues’ (1997: 19). In the aftermath of the Alcatraz takeover, the historical seizure of Indian territory and the breaking of lawful treaties by successive US governments was now framed as the key issue confronting the nascent militant organisation. AIM leaders began to frame the notion that land seizures were the cause of the structural violence which had decimated Native America (Churchill 1997: 245). As a result, the organisation expanded rapidly in the period after the takeover at Alcatraz Island as it was the ‘most important event in the post-reservation struggle for Indian land, treaty, and civil rights’ (Johnson 2007: 40). The issue of the possession of land was now the master frame through which AIM interpreted Indian grievance.

Due to this development, the organisation’s prognostic frame (Snow and Benford 2000: 616) differed somewhat to the BPP in that between 1970 and 1973, AIM framed the tactic of occupation as the solution to Indian grievance over land. This dynamic resonates with the belief that ‘tactical derivations and choices within a cycle of protest are affected in part by the movement’s master frame. A master frame implies both new ways of interpreting a situation as well as novel means of dealing with or confronting it’ (Snow and Benford 1992: 146). Thus, the combination of external violence in tandem with contentious issues relating to the possession of land culminated in the occupation at Wounded Knee in 1973. By this time, in return for federal support and for the funding of a paramilitary death squad, Richard Wilson had ceded Indian territory to state ownership ‘in blatant violation of the federal treaty with the Lakota people’ (Churchill 1997: 86). All of the conditions that existed on Pine Ridge in the early 1970s underlined

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128 As Ward Churchill points out, ‘American Indians — who, on the basis of known resources, comprised what should have been the wealthiest population group in North America — constituted by far the most impoverished sector of US society’ (1997: 244).
the *master frame* advanced by AIM which highlighted the fact that state violence and the illegal seizure of Indian land operated hand-in-hand.

### 7.2.2 Resources: Armed Self-Defence

Different approaches to the *resource* that was armed self-defence were evident during the developmental phase of our two cases. For instance, the BPP employed arms to combat external violence from the day the organization was formed. AIM did not utilise such a *resource* until a much later point in its lifecycle phase. I would argue that this difference can be explained with reference to the notion of *cultural resources* (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: Edwards and Kane 2014).

AIM was to set itself apart from the ideologies of other 1960s social movements (particularly the BPP and other left-wing organisations such as the Weather Underground) by drawing upon cultural and spiritual traditions (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 95). Resource mobilisation theorists have pointed to the fact that access to *cultural resources* is uneven with some SMOs better able to procure such *resources* than others (Edwards and Kane 2014: 217). AIM is one such SMO. As one of its members pointed out, the organisation was “first a spiritual movement, a religious rebirth, and then a rebirth of Indian dignity” (Quoted in Bonney 1977: 218). AIM was also to employ a *resource* different to many other social movements of the time in that throughout all the stages of its campaign, its leadership placed a significant emphasis on the direction given by tribal elders and indigenous religion.

One of the first Native religious leaders to endorse the organisation was a Lakota Sioux holy man called Leonard Crow Dog. He was later to become the movement’s spiritual leader (Mattheissen 1992: 40). Consequently, such *cultural resources* were intrinsic to the development of AIM’s ideology with Dennis Banks maintaining that “we have an Indian organisation that is doing fine, but it needs not only a political philosophy but also a spiritual meaning in order to be complete” (Quoted in Reinhardt 2007: 160). Taken together, these *specific*
cultural resources strongly informed the organisation’s approach to the use of armed self-defence and the utilisation of violence in general. Mayer N. Zald points out that ‘movement frames and ideologies grow out of existing cultural definitions’ (1996: 273), and between 1968 and early 1973, the development of AIM confirms the validity of this insight. As Russell Means points out, ‘deep down, I felt that none of us could ever grab an assault rifle and start to kill people…we will survive and even prosper only as long as we maintain and have respect for our traditions’ (Means and Wolf 1996: 207).

By contrast, throughout the developmental phase, the BPP’s ideological resources remained strongly Marxist. The reading list at Panther political education classes reflected the organisation’s ‘increasingly explicit embrace of Marxist, and especially Maoist, theory and ideology’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 232). This ideological perspective impacted strongly on the party’s approach to the resource of armed self-defence. From the outset, Huey Newton adopted one of Mao Tse-Tung’s quotations and employed it as the BPP’s motto: “We are advocates of the abolition of war; we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war; and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to pick up the gun” (Quoted in Papke 1994: 656). Unlike AIM, the Panthers’ development was significantly enabled by the resource of armed self-defence and while the movement had minimal access to political power and economic capital, ‘they were able to forcibly assert their political agenda through their armed confrontations with the state’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 391).

7.2.3 Opportunities: Armed Action, the BPP and Closing Political Opportunities

Political opportunity analysis has pointed to a number of factors which determine the availability of political opportunities at any given time. One of these is ‘the state’s capacity and propensity for repression’ (McAdam 1996: 27). Sidney Tarrow maintains that organisations that employ confrontational tactics draw repressive responses from state forces almost from their inception and as a result ‘movements not only create opportunities for themselves and their allies; they also create opportunities for opponents and elites’ (1996: 59). By employing
armed self-defence as a tactic from the day they were formed the state was able to utilise repression against the BPP from the outset. As a result, opportunities for movement development were closed down at a number of points during the developmental phase. As former party member Paul Alkebulan points out, the BPP — in stark contrast to AIM — ‘occupied a precarious position from its inception’ (2007: 27). Within a year of the Panthers’ establishment, the movement had attracted the attention of both the police and the Californian State Assembly. The legislation brought forward through the Mulford Act signified the state’s intention and its willingness to utilise all its resources in closing down opportunities for the BPP’s mobilisation. Thus, while on the one hand, the organisation continued to develop, ‘the tactic [armed self-defence] Newton and Seale used to build the organisation had been outlawed’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 62).

This was reflective of a wider dynamic that operated during this lifecycle phase in that opportunities for the BPP’s development seemed to open and close in parallel. While the movement’s membership increased and party chapters opened nationally (Alkebulan 2007: 46), the organisation also had to cope with the state’s targeting of the organisation’s leadership. During the developmental phase, this resulted in the imprisonment of Huey Newton and the exile of Eldridge Cleaver. As Curtis J. Austin points out ‘this insistence on exercising their right to bear arms pitted the members of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence against the most powerful government on earth’ (2006: 52). That such was the case underlines the validity of the argument that while movements may largely be born of environmental opportunities... their fate is heavily shaped by their own actions’ (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 15; emphasis in original).

In contrast, when AIM formed in 1968, Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt discussed the viability of an armed campaign. The movement deliberated over what Banks termed ‘necessary violence’ and whether or not they should arm themselves to combat police brutality (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 63). There was a concern that if such tactics were embraced, further opportunities for AIM’s
expansion would be affected.\textsuperscript{129} Support for such a course of action was also minimal within the Native American community (Birong 2009: 42). One Indian activist who took part in the Alcatraz occupation in 1969 argued that “I was dead set against guns on the island. My experiences at Berkeley [San Francisco] had shown me what happened to the Black Panthers after they were reported to be armed and militant. They were all killed” (Quoted in Jojola 2009: 82).

Our discussion here is consistent with the view that opportunities for social movement development must be navigated cautiously in that ‘insurgents must chart a course that avoids crippling repression on the one hand and tactical impotence on the other’ (McAdam 1982: 58). Dennis Banks maintained that he ‘rejected violence and some of the methods involving force adopted by the Panthers, but knew that AIM would do what we needed to do to achieve our ends’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 63). However, once the organisation embraced armed self-defence as a tactic and threatened corporate interests on Indian land in February 1973, the state’s benign position towards the organisation changed irrevocably.\textsuperscript{130}

\textit{Theoretical Implications}

From these findings, I wish to highlight weaknesses and strengths in relation to the three concepts utilised. Firstly, I will briefly examine some shortcomings in the theory as they relate to the development of our two movements.

The first weakness, already highlighted at the formational phase, but again relevant to the developmental phase, relates to the liberal assumptions which

\textsuperscript{129} AIM initially received varying degrees of support from state sources. Their social-service and legal-rights programs obtained financial assistance from the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity (Mattheissen 1992: 36). The movement’s survival schools also received state support and by February 1973 it is estimated that the organisation had obtained up to $400,000 from such sources. Consequently, such state assistance was instrumental in AIM’s ability to expand its membership base (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 57).

\textsuperscript{130} Peter Matthesen points out that the FBI’s appearance in Custer in early 1973 suggested to movement leaders that the ‘state and government authorities were concerned less with law and order’ and more with AIM’s discontent with land issues and the organisation’s ‘insistence on Indian sovereignty’ (1992: 63).
dominate much social movement theory (Mayer 1991). Fitzgerald and Rodgers point out that ‘social movement theory has predominantly analysed social movement organisations (SMOs) from a reform perspective, emphasising movement participants’ demands to be recognised by, and incorporated into, the dominant culture’ (2000: 573). However, in sharp contrast to this narrative, between 1968 and 1973, AIM took advantage of numerous cultural opportunities and pursued what was essentially a cultural nationalist project specific to Native Americans who ‘were concerned about the existence of their tribes as separate nations and demanded that their original status be respected’ (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 56). The BPP also assumed a position outside of liberal assumptions by embracing Marxism as a means to both counteract external violence and to undermine existing political structures. This dynamic would resonate with Alvin Gouldner’s assertion that there is a ‘gap between theory and practise, so common in the history of American radical movements’ (1970: 3).

A second weakness is specific to resource mobilisation. This points to a deficiency in explaining how groups with limited resources develop (Kerbo 1982; Piven and Cloward 1995). Harold Kerbo argues that the resource mobilisation approach is more suitable to what he terms ‘movements of affluence’ (1982: 645). RMT, along with its variant new social movement theory, has been described as a form of ‘middle class radicalism’ and that the underprivileged are side-lined in the analysis (Giddens and Sutton 2013: 1001-1002). The BPP and AIM, representing some of the poorest communities in the USA, and coping with a lack in what could be termed conventional resources, made significant strides during their developmental phase. In many respects, their experiences illustrate the inverse of what resource mobilisation theory proposes.

There was a creative use of resource employed during this lifecycle phase as our two cases drew on a number of resources which have been overlooked in much social movement analysis. These include resources such as military training and
the role played by *elders* in the black and Indian communities. Many SM studies have also suggested that ‘leaders tend to come from the educated middle and upper classes’ (Morris and Staggenborg 2004: 174). However, this assertion was most certainly not reflected in the leadership of AIM or the BPP — as can be clearly seen by the backgrounds of key figures such as Russell Means, George Jackson and Fred Hampton who all emerged during the developmental phase.

Turning to the *strengths* of the three concepts, we saw how *framing* permitted us to point to where external violence contributed towards the *diagnostic frame* employed by both the BPP and AIM. Ongoing state violence essentially propelled movement mobilisation throughout this lifecycle phase. In the case of the BPP, the killing of Denzil Dowell in 1967 highlighted the Panther *frame* that unaccountable state violence was the central *grievance* facing the black community in the USA. State brutality and violence also formed a key part of what was AIM’s *diagnostic frame* and the police murders of Philip Celay and Leroy Shenadoah in 1972 accentuated this fact. A shared *framing* similarity in our two cases was the articulation of a belief that the state would never equally protect black and Indian lives.

*Diagnostic framing* was beneficial as it enabled us to highlight the racial killings which were key elements in AIM’s development. The murders of Raymond Yellow Thunder and Wesley Bad Heart Bull had an unmistakeable effect on the group’s mobilisation. The expansion of AIM’s *diagnostic frame* to include both racial violence and land seizures (after the Alcatraz occupation) exponentially increased the movement’s support base. Structural violence, whether on the streets or in the prisons, also continued to shape both organisations’ *diagnostic frame* as one of the *strengths of framing* is to pinpoint the ‘articulation of grievances, the

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131 “Geronimo” Pratt from the BPP recalled the advice passed on to him by veterans of both World War II and the Korean War in relation to armed self-defence. He later recalled that “we had no police protection; our cops were the elders... they were our underground, our soul and backbone... by the time our elders finished amping me up, I was ready to take on the whole KKK single-handed” (Quoted in Olsen 2000: 25-26). Dennis Banks maintains that it was the *elders* at Pine Ridge who suggested that ‘there comes a time when one must fight’ and as a result the 71 day siege at Wounded Knee commenced (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 159-161).
dynamics of recruitment and mobilisation, and the maintenance of solidarity and collective identity’ (Williams 2004: 94). As a consequence to the endemic structural expropriation which blighted the black and Indian communities, both movements during the developmental phase expanded their *prognostic frame* to include the notion of *survival programs*.

A key *framing strength* is that it allowed us to interpret how both AIM and the BPP *framed* the necessity for armed self-defence after significant events during this lifecycle phase. In the wake of Martin Luther King’s assassination, BPP leaders articulated the belief that the path of non-violence was no longer viable. In my opinion, this is a good example of how the opening of *opportunities* can validate a *framing* position in that Dr. King’s killing seem to confirm for many African-Americans what the Panthers’ *prognostic frame* had been all along. This *frame* consistently stated that armed action was the only response to external violence. AIM also embraced the *framing* of armed self-defence throughout this protest stage as state and state-sponsored violence erupted on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. These events would underline a *framing strength* which points to the fact that ‘frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organise experience and guide action’ (Snow and Benford 2000: 614).

Two particular *strengths* of *resource mobilisation* are pertinent for the developmental phase of our two cases. The first is the emphasis RM places on *how* social movements organise in the first place (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Jenkins 1983). As Edwards and McCarthy point out, ‘resource mobilisation theory is at root aimed at better understanding *how* groups are able…to pursue social change goals’ (2004: 118). The second is the importance it attaches to *social-organisational resources* such as *social networks* for movement mobilisation (Oberschall 1973). According to Nick Crossley ‘many movements will grow out of pre-established networks, communities and organisations’ and that these avenues of support provide ‘the bonds of solidarity out of which a movement [can] grow. They provide pre-existing lines of communication’
This specific resource was hugely influential during the development of AIM and the BPP as social networks or pre-existing networks were apparent in AIM’s use of occupation as a tactic after the Alcatraz occupation and in the Panthers’ use of the right to bear arms against external violence. These examples would underline the correlation between a group’s repertoire of contention (Tilly 1978) and pre-existing networks. Consequently, the significance of social-organisational resources was repeatedly on view during the developmental phase whether it was through the resource of armed action, military training, liberation schools or the diffusion (Soule 2004) of police patrols and occupation as a tactic by AIM.

Political opportunity structure analysis was supportive during the developmental phase for three reasons. First of all, our two cases would highlight the association between state repression and the opening of opportunities for movement development (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982). This was clearly seen in the growth of both the BPP and AIM after police killings throughout this period. It was perhaps most noticeable in the Panthers’ dramatic proliferation after Martin Luther King’s assassination as virtually all of black America believed that the state was implicit in his killing (Cleaver 1969; Yellin 1999; Pepper 2008).132

The second advantage of this analysis regards the opportunity-related process of tactical innovation/tactical adaptation (McAdam 1983). This theoretical notion permits us to view how our two groups and the state engaged in a reciprocal process of tactical shifts, designed to outmanoeuvre the other. These dynamics were pivotal to the development of these movements and were most clearly seen in the events leading up to the protest at Sacramento in 1967 and the period between AIM occupying the BIA headquarters in late 1972 and their takeover at

132 The association between state repression and the opening of movement opportunities was also on view during the Huey P. Newton imprisonment. Newton’s incarceration over a confrontation with police officers only served to highlight the grievance that was police violence. As a result, the BPP ‘turned the state’s accusations against Newton around, using the case to mobilise support and put America on trial’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 102). Consequently, Newton’s incarceration and the period leading up to his trial precipitated ‘the era of the party’s most significant growth’ (Austin 2006: 88).
Wounded Knee in February 1973. There was a consistent process of *tactical innovation/adaptation* between the two movements and the state during the developmental phase. The third POS *strength* relates to the fact that *expanding political opportunities* ‘create a potential for the exercise of political leverage which indigenous organisations seek to exploit’ (McAdam 1983: 737). McAdams argument would confirm what we outlined during this lifecycle phase in that the political milieu created by the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War continued to open *opportunities* for movement development. This dynamic would resonate with the belief that ‘the national level is still the most significant one as far as the political context for the mobilisation of social movements is concerned’ (Kriesi 2004: 73).

Overall then, while the *weaknesses* mentioned above point to a limited number of shortcomings in the theory, I would nonetheless make a *positive case* for the relevance of *framing, resource mobilisation* and *political opportunities* in illuminating the violence which propelled movement development in our two cases. The progression of AIM and the BPP was critically motivated because external violence continued to be *framed* as the key *grievance* facing these organisations during this lifecycle phase. These threats emanated overwhelmingly from a combination of state and state-sponsored forces. Armed self-defence was deemed to be the most appropriate *resource* in the battle against such repression and the *opportunities* that opened as a result of external violence provided the key stimulating factors necessary for movement expansion here. There was an equal analytical effectiveness between all three concepts as they permitted us to interpret how exogenous violence is a critical factor when examining social movement development.
CHAPTER 8

The Decline of the BPP

‘The use of violence to counter the force of the state wherever it occurred — in the Haymarket affair, in Coeey’s Army, the American Federation of Labour Dynamiters, Centralia Steel unionization, by the Wobblies of the West — all came to a frustrating and dismal end… the state unleashed a steady stream of counter-violence’

Irving Louis Horowitz (Quoted in Rose 1969: 48).

“If you aren’t careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing”

Malcolm X (Quoted in Berger 2006: 70).

Introduction

This chapter will examine the role of violence in the decline of the BPP between 1969 and 1973. It will be argued that three factors significantly contributed towards the organisation’s demise. The first of these was the state’s direct campaign of executing Panther members. Central to this dynamic was the role played by the FBI’s counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO) (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002). Initially set up in 1956 to target various left-wing movements within the USA, COINTELPRO’s remit was extended throughout the 1960s to neutralise the effectiveness of both the civil rights movement and later the BPP’s mobilisation. In addition, from the earliest days of his presidency, Richard Nixon became personally interested in suppressing the Panthers campaign as he had been elected with strong support from numerous white supremacist groups (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 210). Within such a hostile environment, it was only a matter of time before the state instigated a campaign of murder against key BPP figures. The killings of Fred Hampton,

According to former Panther Elaine Brown ‘a post-war anti-communist paranoia was constructed by J. Edgar Hoover, a friend and manipulator of every president since the 1920s. It was okay to round up and jail or even kill communists and communist sympathizers. Whoever they might be, they were enemies of freedom’ (1992: 234-235).
Mark Clark and George Jackson are testimony to the manner violence ultimately had for BPP cohesion and persistence (Brown 1992: 313).

The second factor was the state’s collusion in external violence. By 1969 the organisation had being effectively criminalised by the US government (Alkebulan 2007: 86). The FBI’s war on the Panthers’ Southern Californian chapter for instance was strongly indicative of the violent consequences that unfolded for the party across the USA. As the branch in Los Angeles expanded, state forces went all out in a campaign to remove the leadership of Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter, John Huggins and Elmer Gerard “Geronimo” Pratt. To achieve this end, a primary tactic was the fostering of violent hostilities with rival black political groups (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 218). Thus, in order to stifle the BPP in Southern California and to prevent any further political development, the FBI encouraged a feud between local Panthers and another black nationalist movement called the US organization (Alkebulan 2007: 84).¹³⁴ This feud led directly to the killings of Alprentice Carter and John Huggins. Due to the effectiveness of his military expertise in both defending BPP offices and in training party members, the FBI also removed Geronimo Pratt from the leadership of the organization (Austin 2006: 245). It was during this lifecycle phase that Newsweek magazine was to pose the question “Is there some sort of government conspiracy afoot to exterminate the Black Panthers?” (Quoted in Olsen 2000: 64-65).

The third relevant factor to be considered is that state violence and repression ultimately forced a split within Panther ranks. Responding to high levels of violence, there were those within the organization who maintained that even the threat of armed action against the state was counterproductive. The opposing

¹³⁴ Led by an individual called Ron Karenga, the US organization was a Black Nationalist movement in Los Angeles. According to Alkebulan:

The US organization was the classic cultural nationalist group. It preferred all-black alliances while arguing that Marxism was a white-oriented political philosophy, unsuitable for the black community. US accused the BPP of being racial sell-outs, and the political atmosphere became very heated (2007: 84).
view was that the levels of violence convinced many that a clandestine offensive was even more essential (Umoja 1999: 138). With numerous court cases pending, many party members felt it would be more beneficial to continue its campaign underground rather than be imprisoned for life on trumped up charges (ibid: 139). The party was now effectively split down the middle and this schism would create factions on the West Coast loyal to Huey Newton and a faction on the East Coast loyal to Eldridge Cleaver. The BPP organization on the East Coast would go on to be involved with an escalated offensive campaign by the Black Liberation Army (BLA), which between 1971 and 1973 engaged in what was termed a “defensive/offensive” war against the state (ibid: 144). In this context, five years after the initial emergence of the BPP, the instigating factors for movement formation in black militant circles remained valid. The black community still needed protection against police violence, as during the two years of BLA’s brief campaign over a 1,000 unarmed black civilians, many of them children, were killed at the hands of the police across the USA (Berger 2006: 203).

By 1973, what remained of the BPP was effectively faced with two options: reform and take the route of conventional political protest or be violently destroyed. Perhaps fatally for the movement’s survival, BPP leaders never thought their campaign was important enough to merit the disproportionate violence and repression which befell it. “Geronimo” Pratt would later admit that the Panthers’ membership really believed that what they were doing was right and they found it difficult to grasp that others could find fault in a campaign which included a free breakfast program (Abu-Jamal 2008: 211). Therefore, the key questions in this chapter are: what role did violence play in the decline of the Panthers between 1969 and 1973? How was the violence framed by the movement as it disintegrated? What resources were employed to counteract it? And, what opportunities opened/closed due to its persistence?
8.1 MOVEMENT DISINTEGRATION: 1969 - 1971

8.1.1 COINTELPRO: The State commences its War against Movement Resources

As early as 1967 and 1968, the director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, had instructed field agents nationally to create factionalism within the ranks of the BPP. It was believed such a tactic would neutralise their growing organisational capacity (Austin 2006: xxvi). The FBI’s counter-intelligence program COINTELPRO had previously been utilised to thwart the efforts of the civil rights movement. Doing little to restrain the violence directed daily at black leaders by right-wing extremist groups, the FBI instead instigated a campaign of harassment to discredit Dr. Martin Luther King. According to the FBI’s own records, they sent the civil rights leader fake letters, taped his personal phone calls, tried to blackmail him, made several threats against his life and at one point suggested that he commit suicide (Abu-Jamal 2008: 121). This intimidation continued until King’s death, which inspired widespread belief that the FBI was directly involved in his assassination (Pepper 2008).

After the killing of Martin Luther King in 1968, the state turned its attention to the Black Panthers. Ironically, no element of the organisation’s tactics were considered more threatening than the free breakfast for children program (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 211). This initiative had gathered together a BPP support network that included Christian churches, the business community, moderate black and white liberal supporters, and Hollywood celebrities. For instance, a

135 According to Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr. agents within COINTELPRO alleged that ‘King was under communist influence or that he was having extramarital affairs… Though the FBI persisted in its efforts to discredit King, the campaign against him waned from December 1964 until 1967, when he came out against the Vietnam War’ (2013: 200).
136 An FBI memo released a month before Martin Luther King’s assassination warned of the threat posed by the ascent of a charismatic black leader and that the agency should do all in its power to ‘prevent the rise of a ‘messiah’ who could unify, and electrify the militant Black Nationalist movement… King could be a very real contender for this position should he abandon his supported ‘obedience’ to ‘white liberal doctrines’ (non-violence) and embrace Black Nationalism” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 202).
137 A number of Hollywood stars like Jane Fonda and Jean Seberg donated both moral and financial support to the BPP’s breakfast programs in Los Angeles. FBI agents also set out to undermine and terminate this avenue of support. In one case, they planted an article in the Los Angeles Times alleging that Seberg was pregnant with a BPP member’s child. The false
Father Frank Curran in San Diego was one of the first supporters of the Panthers’ breakfast initiative. However, FBI field agents, posing as outraged local parishioners, contacted Curran’s superiors to protest about the church’s involvement with the organization. Shortly after, the priest was transferred to New Mexico (Alkebulan 2007: 32). Local police departments throughout the USA also became involved in the neutralising efforts as they spread rumours accusing the BPP of using poisoned food in the breakfast program (ibid: 33). According to Bobby Seale:

The cops in Los Angeles and several other places have walked in on the free breakfast for children program to try to intimidate the children and the party. They come down there with their guns, they draw a gun or two, say a few words and walk all over the place, with shotguns in their hands… It’s an attempt to scare the people away from sending their children to the breakfast program (1970: 412, 418-419).

By 1969, J. Edgar Hoover had announced that “the Black Panther Party without question, [represented] the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.”138 (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 210). The state’s intention was not to facilitate movement progression on any level and consequently a process of escalating violence was unleashed. Former FBI agent Wesley Swearingen maintained that ‘We in the FBI were the ones who violated the constitution... I knew then that the FBI was out of control, but I could not stop it

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138 This declaration was hugely influenced by the tactical success of the BPP’s survival programs. Hoover referred to this development in May 1969 when he argued that the main focus of the FBI should be in cutting lines of support for the Panthers within moderate circles:

You state that the bureau under the CIP [COINTELPRO] should not attack programs of community interest such as the [Black Panther Party’s] “Breakfast for Children”. You state this because many prominent “humanitarians”, both black and white, are interested in the program as well as churches which are actively supporting it. You have obviously missed the point (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 1990: 145).
because no one would have believed me, not even J. Edgar Hoover’s severest critics’ (1995: 29).

8.1.2 Opportunities Closed 1: State-Sponsored Killings in Southern California

On 5 August 1968, the police killed three BPP captains in the Watts district of LA (Brown 1992: 151). On 1 January 1969, another party captain, Frank Diggs, who was reputedly the leader of the LA chapter’s underground wing, was also shot dead by the police (ibid: 155). Around the same time, the LAPD’s urban counter-insurgency task force (which became known as the Panther Unit) instigated a violent wave of repression against the organization in Southern California. Party members were arrested on dubious charges, and at night, those held would be moved from precinct to precinct so relatives could not post bail for them (Olsen 2000: 43).

One of the state’s primary tactics in decimating the BPP was the fanning of violent hostilities with rival black social movements. This tactic was employed with devastating consequences in Los Angeles in 1969. During the previous year, the Panthers and another black group called the US organisation had been engaged in an acrimonious fight for power and influence within African-American circles (Alkebulan 2007: 84). The state was intent on capitalising on such friction. In response to J. Edgar Hoover’s call to create dissension in black militant ranks, the LA office of the FBI reported back to the director as follows:

The Los Angeles office is currently preparing an anonymous letter for bureau approval which will be sent to the Los Angeles Black Panther Party supposedly from a member of the US organization in which it will be stated that the youth group of the US organization is aware of the [Black Panther Party] ‘contract’ to kill Ron Karenga, leader of US, and US members in retaliation have made plans to ambush leaders of the BPP in Los Angeles. It is hoped this counter-intelligence measure will result in a vendetta (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 218).

The FBI in LA added fuel to the fire by then sending anonymous death threats, forged letters and a series of derogatory cartoons to the leaderships of both the US Organization and the BPP. As Paul Alkebulan points out ‘the psychological
warfare created the mutual impression that each group wanted to attack the other’
(2007: 84). A number of beatings and shootouts occurred between both
movements up until 17 January 1969, when members of the US organization shot
and killed BPP leaders “Bunchy” Carter and John Huggins (ibid).

In the aftermath, no one from the US organization was arrested despite the fact
that witnesses to the killings pointed to movement members as culpable. On the
other hand, “Geronimo” Pratt, Ericka Huggins (John Huggins’ wife) and more
than 75 other local BPP members were rounded up and detained (Austin 2006:
228). The Panther leadership argued that their members had been targeted
relentlessly by the police, while state surveillance on the US organization was
virtually non-existent. Also, unlike the US organization, the BPP had initiated
food and community programs in the black ghettos and it was believed that
because of such initiatives, state violence was regularly unleashed against group
members (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 220). This repression initially took the
form of sporadic raids on party offices and then escalated to armed attacks on
Panther homes in Los Angeles.

The LA police department was to use the killings of “Bunchy” Carter and John
Huggins as a pretext to confiscate party files and to carry out investigations, not
just on BPP members, but on prominent financial supporters in Hollywood
(Olsen 2000: 46). After 72 hours of interrogation, all charges against the arrested
Panthers were dropped due to a lack of any substantial evidence (ibid: 47).
However, the state-sponsored killings of the two men were a considerable blow
to the BPP in the Los Angeles area. The incident was also to foster divisive and
debilitating warfare within the black community itself (Alkebulan 2007: 85).
Years later, the local COINTELPRO chief, Richard W. Held, was to take credit
for provoking the violent tensions which precipitated the shootings. The activities
of the FBI in encouraging feuds with rival groups were completely unknown to
BPP members at the time. These methods would only come to the surface in the
mid-1970s, by which time the Panthers were effectively destroyed (ibid: 83-86).
8.1.3 “Geronimo” Pratt: The Neutralising of the Military Training Resource

The second part of the state’s campaign to destroy the BPP’s organizational capacity in Southern California was to nullify the effectiveness of “Geronimo” Pratt. Throughout 1969 and 1970, the ex-military veteran continued to assist party members nationally in devising defensive strategies to cope with the unrelenting violence unleashed against the organization by state forces (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 223). However, a BPP statement at the time argued that Pratt had been targeted for extreme repression by the state and that he had been beaten and shot at several times by the police since January 1969. During the same period he had been unjustly jailed 37 times (ibid: 356-357). Pratt later recalled that “one of the main reasons the pigs [police] have been keen on me is that I trained with special forces at Fort Bragg and endured three wars, four now” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 244-245).

In 1971, “Geronimo” Pratt was falsely charged and convicted of an unsolved 1969 murder of a woman called Caroline Olsen in California. Julius Butler, a police informer, offered the crucial evidence that convicted him. Throughout the trail, the FBI was aware of Pratt’s innocence. Their surveillance on him at the time of the Olsen murder placed him some 300 miles away from the scene of the killing (Austin 2006: 245). Former FBI agent Wesley Swearingen maintained that:

My supervisor and several agents on the racial squad knew that Pratt was innocent because the FBI had wiretap logs proving that Pratt was in the San Francisco area several hours before the shooting of Caroline Olsen and that he was there the day after the murder… Yet

139 According to Elaine Brown, in California by the late 1960s, the Panthers had a considerable arsenal at its disposal. She maintains there were...

Literally thousands of weapons. There were large numbers of AR-18 and AR-18 short automatic rifles, .308 scoped rifles, .3030 Winchesters, .375 Magnum and other big-game rifles, .30 calibre Garands, M-15s and M-16s and other assorted automatic and semi-automatic rifles, Thompson machine guns, M-59 Sante Fe troopers, Boys .55-calibre anti-tank gun, M-60 fully automatic machine guns, innumerable shotguns and M-79 grenade launchers (1992: 13).
the FBI withheld this information from the court and the jury (1995: 85-86).

In a statement to the press the BPP said of Pratt, “Due to what the US [government] knew he could do with the very knowledge they had given him and with his brilliant mind and devotion to his people, he suffered the severest attacks by the local and national police from that time on” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 357). During his tours of duty in South-East Asia, “Geronimo” Pratt had participated in a number of highly classified missions. He was awarded eighteen combat decorations including the Silver Star, the Bronze Star (for valor), the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and the Purple Heart before been honorably discharged. These commendations were all achieved before he was 21 years of age (Austin 2006: 241). However, on 28 July 1972, he was convicted for a crime both the government and those prosecuting him knew he did not commit and, as a result, was to serve nearly 30 years in prison (ibid: 246).

8.1.4 Opportunities Closed 2: The Killing of Fred Hampton

By the spring of 1969, Panther leader Huey Newton was in prison, convicted on manslaughter charges in relation to Officer John Frey’s killing. He was sentenced to between two to fifteen years behind bars (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 199). Newton was incarcerated despite serious questions raised in relation to the nature of his conviction. According to Curtis J. Austin ‘the trial exposed a mountain of evidence that should have acquitted Newton’ but it was ignored due to the ‘highly charged political overtones of the case’ (2006: 113). During the trial, it emerged that all the shots fired on the night came from police guns (ibid: 114). With Newton removed from the equation, the state’s focus turned towards nullifying the influence of another key party figure, Eldridge Cleaver. Facing arrest and detention for his part in the April 1968 shoot-out in Oakland, Cleaver fled first to Cuba and then to newly independent Algeria insisting that the authorities in the USA would have had him killed in prison (ibid: 187). Elsewhere, an Illinois court brought conspiracy charges against Bobby Seale for a speech he made at a protest rally to coincide with the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in
1968 (ibid: 94). Thus, by the summer of 1969, the state had achieved its goal of effectively creating a leadership void at the heart of the Panthers.

In parallel with these developments, Fred Hampton and the Chicago BPP had built up a formidable organizational structure with a growing membership and allies within both the black and white community. The FBI, however, were particularly concerned about the rise of another charismatic leader within the ranks of the black militant group (Alkebulan 2007: 84). According to Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall ‘as the Panther leadership across the country began to be decimated by the impact of COINTELPRO, Hampton’s prominence in the national hierarchy increased rapidly and dramatically’ (2002: 64).

On 4 June 1969, the police and the FBI carried out a violent raid on the BPP headquarters in Chicago. Heavily armed and without search warrants, they destroyed the office and arrested the eight party members present. They caused more than $20,000 in property damage and also confiscated the $3,000 kept on the premises which the BPP hoped to use to fund a health center. The police then set fire to the food intended for use in the breakfast program and the medical supplies which had been donated to the organization for their health clinics (Austin 2006: 212). During this period, J. Edgar Hoover had issued a directive to the Chicago office of the FBI urging its agents to “destroy what the [BPP] stands for” and above all to “eradicate its serve the people programs.” (Quoted in Abu-Jamal 2008: 149).

While on a speaking tour to California in November 1969, Fred Hampton learned he was to be made the BPP’s Chief of Staff as well as its key spokesperson. When the authorities became aware of such a move, the FBI devised a plan to ensure his charismatic leadership in Chicago would never take hold on a national level.

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140 His trial, along with seven other defendants, ended in October 1970 with all conspiracy charges dismissed (Austin 2006: 94-95).

141 After Fred Hampton’s conviction for robbing the ice cream van, he was released on bail. Civil rights attorney Jean Williams ‘planned to appeal Hampton’s conviction on the grounds that newspaper articles about the Panthers during the trial had prejudiced the jury’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 230).
(Fraley and Roushanzamir 2004: 150). Earlier in 1969, a young black male called William O’Neal had been placed as an informer in the BPP’s Chicago headquarters.\textsuperscript{142} He eventually became Fred Hampton’s bodyguard and furnished the FBI with a detailed plan of Hampton’s apartment. At 4.30 am on 4 December 1969, 14 police officers from the Special Prosecutions Unit (SPU) arrived at Hampton’s residence. O’Neal had alleged that there were illegal weapons on the premises and he would, unknown to Hampton, drug the Panther leader with a strong dose of barbiturates (Austin 2006: 217).\textsuperscript{143} The SPU were armed with one .357 caliber pistol, five shotguns, a carbine, nineteen .38 caliber pistols and a Thompson machine gun (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 238).

In a matter of minutes, Fred Hampton was dead, shot twice in the head as he slept. Another Panther leader, 22 year-old Mark Clark, was also killed instantly. According to Curtis J. Austin ‘the extraordinary violence directed at the individuals in this apartment reminded some Panthers who served in the armed services of their tours in Vietnam’ (2006: 190). Deborah Johnson, Hampton’s pregnant girlfriend climbed over her partner’s body to avoid being shot. Seven other BPP members present were then arrested on charges relating to the unlawful use of weapons and attempted murder (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 238). Johnson was grabbed by the hair and dragged out the door of the couple’s apartment. All those who survived were immediately brought to police headquarters. In the aftermath, William O’Neal collected a $300 reward for his services while the BPP infrastructure in Chicago never recovered after Hampton’s assassination (Alkebulan 2007: 56). A Commission of Investigation set up afterwards to examine the events found that the weapons possessed by Panther members in the apartment were in fact legally registered (Austin 2006: 221). It was estimated that the police may have fired nearly one hundred shots

\textsuperscript{142} O’Neal had been arrested on relatively minor charges and during this period had been recruited by the FBI. He was promised that his charges would be dropped and that he would be paid a monthly stipend if he joined the Panthers in Chicago (Abu-Jamal 2008: 148).

\textsuperscript{143} The raids on the Panther offices in Chicago throughout 1969 were carried out because the police maintained there were illegal weapons stored in the chapter HQ. One of O’Neal’s duties for the FBI was to procure such armaments and secretly stash them in the BPP building. This was purportedly carried out to justify police raids (Austin 2006: 207-10).
during the raid. The report found that “the hour of the raid, the failure to give reasonable warning to the occupants, the over-arming of the police, the wildly excessive use of gunfire” were all the more applicable to a “wartime military commando raid than the service of a search warrant” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 218-219).

8.1.5 Opportunities Closed 3: The Killing of George Jackson

By the late 1960s, the state was increasingly concerned about the radicalisation process that was occurring within the prison system and the opportunities that this development afforded for the BPP’s expansion. At the time ‘more than 50% of the inmates in America’s prisons were black — more than five times the population ratio of blacks’ (Brown 1992: 269). Consequently, state forces were intent on shutting down Panther effectiveness, whether on the streets, or within the prison system.

In January 1969, George Jackson and W. L. Nolen (the man who introduced him to revolutionary politics) were transferred from San Quentin to Soledad Prison. By now, both men considered themselves to be political prisoners which ‘signified a higher status for Panthers and the struggle they represented’ (Alkebulan 2007: 62). George Jackson was committed to extending revolutionary activity beyond the prison walls as he believed that there was a fascist war directed against black people and that between 1967 and 1970 they had been the ones “doing all the dying” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 108). Popular violence was also rife within the prison system and was regularly fueled by collusion between right-wing extremist groups and prison guards. In January 1970, W.L Nolen and two other black inmates were shot and killed by a guard called Opie G. Miller. The incident occurred during a riot that involved fighting between black convicts and members from a white supremacist organization called the Aryan Brotherhood (Alkebulan 2007: 63).

After the killings, George Jackson became increasingly confrontational with officials within the prison itself. The BPP Field Marshal argued that black
inmates required protection from racial violence (Cummins 1994: 164). A grand jury eventually found that Opie G. Miller’s actions were on the grounds of justifiable homicide. Subsequently, Jackson and two accomplices, Fleeta Drumgo and John Cluchette, killed a prison guard in retaliation and they became widely known as the Soledad Brothers (ibid: 165). In early 1971, the BPP’s leadership revealed the extent of the organization’s prison structure under George Jackson’s leadership. By this time, Jackson was a well-known figure in radical circles around the world with his prison letters and essays acquiring huge publicity throughout 1970 and 1971 (Alkebulan 2007: 63). The collection known as Soledad Brother confirmed his ‘growing influence not only as a Marxist theorist but also as a vital spokesman for political prisoners everywhere’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 374). He became a compelling symbol for the BPP and the wider international campaign supporting political prisoners (ibid: 375).

In August 1971, George Jackson was executed along with a number of other prisoners during an escape attempt. According to Paul Alkebulan his ‘death prompted many conspiracy theories about how the government had provoked an escape and then killed him’ (2007: 64). Panther leader Elaine Brown maintained that George Jackson was Huey Newton’s hero and in a conversation she had afterwards with the BPP leader she states that ‘Huey was now telling me, that the blood we had shed was more than our party could continually endure. The loss of George had brought the lessons home’ (Brown 1992: 313).

8.1.6 The Narrowing of Opportunities: Violence and its effects on Group Cohesion
According to an editorial in the Nation magazine in 1970 “it is becoming increasingly apparent that a campaign of repression and assassination is being carried out against the Black Panthers and that a continuance of this course will see the entire leadership behind bars or dead” (Quoted in Courtright 1974: 250). In parallel with the violence, a policy of active criminalisation was pursued against the organization by the state. As a result of such repressive tactics, movement solidarity within the BPP began to fragment. COINTELPRO agents regularly made anonymous phone calls to party offices nationally, falsely
claiming that particular members were police informers. Such ploys led to beatings and further acts of violence with a number of individuals disappearing for fear of party retribution (Alkebulan 2007: 86). State forces were by now actively fueling and creating a dynamic in the hope that violence would increase rather than decrease within Panther ranks.

Throughout 1970, state violence against the BPP precipitated an internal organizational debate on the efficacy of armed action. As a result, the movement’s ideological cohesion began to fragment. In an exchange with Eldridge Cleaver during that period, key party figure Elaine Brown argued that “the party can’t do battle with the pigs alone... Take a look at our losses if nothing else, Eldridge... Our own people are becoming afraid of us. Every time the pigs attack us, the whole community suffers” (Quoted in Brown 1992: 223). Many of Huey Newton’s closest comrades and associates were now either imprisoned or dead and the party’s co-founder began to argue that the organization should moderate its armed image and focus instead on their community programs. As Akinyele Omowale Umoja points out ‘the overwhelming repression of the BPP contributed to Newton’s decision to move away from his original position on armed struggle’ (1999: 139). Consequently, the Panthers’ distinctive uniform of beret and black leather jacket was discarded as many within the organization believed that it made them an open target for state violence (Austin 2006: 297). According to Huey Newton “if we stayed on the pigs and the gun, per se, not only would the party go down, the people’s spirit would be crushed as they watched” (Quoted in Austin 2006: 248).

Eldridge Cleaver, removed from the crushing effects of state repression in Algiers, favored an escalation of armed action. He argued that the community programs were reformist in intent and he continued to advocate for a Latin-American style guerrilla campaign. As a result, the relationship between Newton and Cleaver turned increasingly bitter (Abu-Jamal 2008: 223). Three months
after Newton’s release from prison, the notion of armed repertoires were sidelined in favor of the party’s community programs with Newton admitting “we’ve rejected the rhetoric of the gun; it got about forty of us killed and sent hundreds of us to prison” (Quoted in Courtright 1974: 25).

The reality was that the BPP had never been engaged in an offensive military campaign against the state. As Jeffries and Nissam-Sabat argue “the party’s posture was defensive in nature. The Panthers did not advocate violence, but instead dared to say openly that we will defend ourselves by arms if driven to that point” (Quoted in Boycoff and Gies 2010: 295; emphasis in original). Former party member Paul Alkebulan points out that ‘the government was never in danger from the BPP’s or anyone else’s military activity’ (2007: 127). Even so, by 1969 more than 350 party activists were arrested and jailed for considerable lengths of time without bail. It is also estimated that over 40 BPP members were killed by the police during the same period (Jeffries 2006: 122-123).

Panther members were now fully aware of the lethal consequences for any form of armed challenge to the state. According to Paul Alkebulan ‘The BPP encountered unrelieved police hostility everywhere, whether it was Boston, North Carolina, New Orleans, Los Angeles, or Baltimore’ (2007: 74). The relationship between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver turned increasingly bitter as the divisions over the use of violence widened. Cleaver openly criticized David Hilliard, who by now was the party’s chief-of-staff and a close ally of Newton. Cleaver argued that Hilliard represented what he termed the right-wing of the party. Hilliard, on the other hand, argued that because of state repression, armed action as a strategic tactic was no longer viable (Hilliard and Cole 1992: 284). Those BPP members inclined to escalate armed action accused both

144 On 5 August 1970, Huey Newton was released from prison on a ‘technicality’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 353). However, any sign of a cohesive leadership within the party was unachievable as Eldridge Cleaver was still exiled in Algeria. At the same time, Bobby Seale was facing conspiracy charges for having instigated the riot at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968 (ibid).

145 All social movements depend on financial resources to sustain a viable campaign. The BPP were no different in this respect. By 1970 liberal white allies were donating considerable funds to the organisation. In the days after Fred Hampton’s assassination for instance, thousands of
Newton and Hilliard of departing from the movement’s original ideological position. At the same time, state violence was forcing an increasing number of party activists to retreat underground (Umoja 1999: 139).

8.2 MOVEMENT DISINTEGRATION: 1971-1973

8.2.1 Reform or Retreat Underground: State Violence Forces Movement Fracture

By 1971, Kingman Brewster, the President of Yale University, publicly queried “the ability of black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States” (Quoted in O’ Reilly 1989: 320). With the BPP’s leadership retreating from supporting any form of armed challenge, those Panther members forced underground were put into a difficult situation (Umoja 1999: 140). Perhaps the most significant party chapter to promote clandestine tactics was in New York City. In April 1969, the branch was raided as the District Attorney in the city alleged that plans were in place to bomb railroads, police stations and department stores. Twenty-one Panthers who later became known as the New York 21 were arrested on a number of charges (Alkebulan 2007: 65). Their incarceration over the following two years was to create further divisions and hostility within the organization. Not least was the Central Committee’s decision to jettison ‘even a rhetorical commitment to armed struggle’ (ibid: 66).

The battle was now firmly between those advocating the social democratic option and those promoting guerilla warfare. The New York chapter was ideologically closer to Eldridge Cleavers’ position. From Algiers, both Cleaver and the party’s Field Marshal, Donald Cox, continued to agitate for an escalation of an armed campaign. Writing in the Black Panther newspaper in January 1971, Cox maintained that guerilla units (self-defense groups) must be formed “in defense

dollars were given to the party. This, however, also increased further divisions within the movement between those advocating revolutionary action and those seeking to consolidate support within moderate circles (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 352-358).
against the 400 years of racist brutality, murder and exploitation” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 358). During this period, the New York 21 had also written of their concerns to Huey Newton and they submitted a number of articles to the Black Panther newspaper which were never published. As a result, they contacted the Weather Underground, a militant white organization who had commenced a series of bombings on the east coast of the USA. Many BPP members, particularly in New York, had identified the WU as the ‘vanguard of the revolution since Newton and his supporters had turned reformist’ (Austin 2006: 302).

In early 1971, as state violence escalated, Huey Newton and the Panther leadership began purging those members they believed were counter-revolutionary. According to Paul Alkebulan, COINTELPRO agents ‘not only took advantage of the party’s confusion but also continued to create turmoil with forged letters and constant rumor mongering’ (2007: 66). As a result, the New York 21 was expelled from the party while they were still in prison awaiting trial (Austin 2006: 301). However, as Assata Shakur later pointed out:

Nobody back then had ever heard of the counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO) set up by the FBI… No one could have known that the FBI’s COINTELPRO was attempting to destroy the Black Panther Party in particular and the black liberation movement in general, using divide-and-conquer tactics. The FBI’s COINTELPRO program consisted of turning members of organizations against each other, pitting one black organization against another… No one had the slightest idea that this whole scenario was carefully manipulated and orchestrated by the FBI (1987: 231-232).

8.2.2 Dissipating Resources and Opportunities: The Commencement of Factional Movement Violence

The state had consistently targeted the resource that constituted unified leadership within Panther ranks. Once this asset was fractured, it was now only a matter of time before the organization itself imploded. By March 1971, New York chapter members had forged an alliance with Eldridge Cleaver to oppose Huey Newton and his supporters. They attacked the Oakland leadership of
Newton and David Hilliard and accused them of revisionism, at a time when intense levels of state violence were forcing many BPP members underground (Umoja 1999: 139).

The BPP were now effectively split down the middle and this fracture would create groups on the West Coast loyal to Newton and on the East Coast, loyal to Cleaver. However, the dispute was continually fostered and inflamed by a consistent pattern of state violence, infiltration and misinformation (Abu-Jamal 2008: 216). A contemporary FBI internal memo drew attention to the level of success in dividing the BPP’s leadership. Portions of it read “since the differences between Newton and Cleaver now appear to be irreconcilable, no further counter-intelligence activity in this regard will be undertaken at this time, and now new targets must be established” (Quoted in Abu-Jamal 2008: 219).

Once both men arrived at an impassable juncture ideologically, the party itself went into freefall. Within weeks of the split, a murderous feud within the organization commenced. Robert Webb, an ex-military veteran from California who had aligned himself with the New York chapter was shot in Harlem in March 1971. Cleaver’s faction maintained that Newton had ordered his assassination. In retaliation, the circulation manager of the BPP newspaper, Sam Napier, was killed a month later (Alkebulan 2007: 94). Newton continued to have the support of other key party figures including Bobby Seale. The core of the organization also remained in Newton’s hands and he was to possess a critical organizational resource in the *Black Panther* newspaper. This was valuable not only as a communication tool for ideological debate but also because of the financial revenue it generated (Abu-Jamal 2008: 228-229). Through its pages, the de-

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146 The decision by Huey Newton to tactically concentrate on the party’s community programs was a radical alteration in the BPP’s political stance and the failure to sustain movement cohesion was not helped by the tactical shifts Newton unveiled in a relatively short period of time. As Paul Alkebulan points out this was once a movement who had ‘no qualms about being a revolutionary organization advocating armed resistance to the American government’ (2007: 79).
escalating armed image of the Panthers was unveiled throughout 1971. According to Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr.:

The first twelve issues of the *Black Panther* in 1971 through March 20 included 225 graphic images of weapons per issue. In sharp contrast the twelve issues published March 27 and hereafter contained only five portrayals of weapons, an average of less than one image every other issue (2013: 369).

8.2.3 “Ten Year Old Children are Shot Down in Our Streets”: The Ongoing Framing of State Violence

The split that occurred within the ranks of the BPP in 1971 would signal the demise of Huey Newton’s influence in New York and precipitate the ascension of violent repertoires, mainly on the East Coast of the USA. According to Paul Alkebulan ‘the dissidents wanted to establish what they considered to be a truly revolutionary organization with separate political and military wings’ (2007: 66). Many of these activists retreated underground to escalate the war against the state. In effect, there were now a number of groups claiming legitimacy as the heirs to the original Black Panther Party. A western branch in Oakland, an eastern chapter in the Bronx in New York City and the Black Liberation Army (BLA) which drew on activists from both the West and East Coast (Abu-Jamal 2008: 225).

BLA was particularly concerned about the police killings of black children and teenagers which continued unabated throughout 1971 and 1972. These deaths included a 10 year-old called Clifford Glover and an 11 year-old named Rickie Bolden in New York City. A 16 year-old girl called Rita Lloyd had also been murdered by the police in New Jersey (Umoja 1999: 144). One of those who left the Panthers to continue the struggle with BLA was Assata Shakur. She argued, in language very similar to Huey Newton in 1966, that:

> The idea of a Black Liberation Army emerged from conditions in black communities; conditions of poverty, indecent housing, massive unemployment, poor medical care and inferior education… The idea came about because ten year-old children are shot down in our streets. Black people are not free or equal in this country… The
concept of BLA arose because of the political, social and economic oppression of black people in this country. And where there is repression, there will be resistance (1987: 169).

On Malcolm X’s birthday in May 1971, BLA members shot and killed two police officers who were guarding the District Attorney’s home in New York.147 A number of days later, two other police officers were killed by the organization in the city. BLA’s campaign, however, was not just confined to the East Coast. In August 1971, movement members attacked two police stations in San Francisco killing one officer and wounding several others. Two months later, the organization shot a police officer in Atlanta and the following month they carried out a grenade attack on a police vehicle in the same city (Umoja 1999: 144). As Dan Berger points out ‘the organization had no compunctions against injuring the armed enforcers of the state (such as police), because of the murderous repression that had forced them under in the first place’ (2006: 163).

The state, however, was able to escalate its campaign of violence against BLA because the government convinced most people that their campaign was driven by lawlessness and violence. BLA’s resource and support network was also miniscule compared to that of the BPP. The Weather Underground was one of the few groups on the radical white-left who supported the movement’s campaign (Berger 2006: 164). In a repeat of the Panthers’ experience, state forces specifically targeted the group’s leadership.148 On 3 May 1973, Assata Shakur and two associates were stopped by the police in New Jersey. A shootout broke out and a police officer and one of Shakur’s accomplices were killed while she herself was seriously wounded. The police celebrated the capture of Shakur,

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147 The District Attorney, Frank Hogan, was in charge of the prosecution against the New York 21 (Umoja 1999: 144).
148 The FBI and the police initiated a “search and destroy” program for suspected BLA members (Umoja 1999: 145). One such counter-intelligence tactic was called “NEWKILL,” which would instigate even greater levels of repression and violence on BLA members on the East Coast (ibid).
maintaining that she was the “high priestess” of the “cop-hating” BLA (Quoted in Umoja 1999: 145).

At her trial, the prosecution produced no evidence to prove that Shakur had ever either handled or fired a shot during the incident. Her defense on the other hand presented evidence proving that she was shot twice in the back while her hands were up in the air in a surrender position (Umoja 1999: 145). Denied medical care for her wounds and despite the existence of ballistic evidence which proved she did not shoot a gun at the scene, a number of previous BLA offenses were pinned on her. She defeated them all except for the charge of killing the state trooper (Berger 2006: 245-246). Eventually, an all-white jury sentenced Shakur and one of her associates on the day, Sundiata Alcoli, to life in prison. While awaiting trial ‘she was held in draconian conditions in a men’s prison, denied visits and reading materials, housed with open white supremacists, and placed under constant surveillance with lights on in her cell 24 hrs. a day’ (ibid: 246).

By 1973, state forces had effectively destroyed the Black Liberation Army’s campaign. During its brief history, over 20 police officers had died at the hands of the organization while the police had killed 7 BLA members and captured 18 others whom it was believed formed the central core of the splinter group (Umoja 1999: 146). During the same time frame over 1,000 unarmed black civilians, including hundreds of children were murdered by the police (Berger 2006: 203). On 2 November 1979, Assata Shakur escaped from prison in New Jersey with the assistance of three armed visitors. Subsequently, she was to follow the path of previous black militant figures and eventually made her way to Cuba where she was granted political asylum. She resides there to this day (ibid: 246).

8.2.4 “The Oakland Police Department has got all the Guns”: The State Neutralises Movement Resources

In April 1973, Bobby Seale announced he was going to run for Mayor of Oakland while Elaine Brown, the BPP’s Minister for Information, would run for the city council. It was as Paul Alkebulan argues ‘a logical step because victory would
be seen as justification for the 1971 political transition’ (2007: 118). In a keynote speech in Merritt College in Oakland, where Seale and Huey Newton first met, Elaine Brown outlined the thinking behind the tactical alterations. The overwhelming nature of state violence was central to the movement’s decision to embrace conventional protest:

We’re talking about liberating the territory of Oakland... Are we ready to defend at this moment? I don’t think we are. The Oakland police department has got all the guns. There’s a practical problem, when you talk about liberating territory or establishing a provisional revolutionary government. Think about those issues when you start talking about implementing a revolutionary process in the United States of America, with its super-technological weapons where they do not have to commit a troop to take out the whole city, because they have “smart” bombs, helicopters, and all kinds of things so that it doesn’t even require the entrance of one troop. Think about that. We have to start talking about how to win, not how to get killed. We can begin by talking about voting in the city of Oakland, the Oakland elections, in April 1973, for Bobby Seale, for Elaine Brown (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 381).

Although Seale received an endorsement from Martin Luther King’s wife Coretta, and from the Reverend Jesse Jackson, he eventually lost the election. Elaine Brown also failed in her attempt; though both candidates performed extremely well, with Seale forcing a run-off with the incumbent mayor (Alkebulan 2007:119). Later in 1973, Huey Newton expelled Bobby Seale from the party and a year later Seale finally left the Panthers. Newton was to become another black militant figure to go into exile in Cuba after he was indicted on murder charges in 1974 (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 383).

149 In July 1972, the central committee issued an order to centralise all organisational resources in Oakland to support Seale’s campaign. As a result, party chapters closed throughout the country and many members resigned from the movement. The perception now was that the BPP was in decline (Abu-Jamal 2008: 224).
150 It has never been conclusively identified why Bobby Seale left the BPP. There are various speculations with Curtis J. Austin maintaining that the party’s co-founder resigned from the movement ‘under strange circumstances’ (2006: 330). Paul Alkebulan argues that Seale and his brother were ‘forced out for disloyalty’, presumably to Huey Newton (2007: 121).
In the aftermath, Elaine Brown assumed the leadership of the party which was by then operating as a fully-fledged social-democratic organization. When the Democrat Lionel Wilson became the first black Mayor of Oakland in May 1977, Brown and the BPP’s machinery contributed significantly to his campaign (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 385). However, in 1980 the Black Panther newspaper ceased publication and in 1982, the Black Panther Party officially ceased to operate as a political organization (Alkebulan 2007: xv).

Between 1966 and 1973 the Panthers had mobilised as a formidable militant force as it challenged the state and the tactics it employed to subdue the black population whether through police, racial or structural violence. Even after the organization took the route of political reform most members still ‘considered the state and the police to be brutal, unjust and illegitimate oppressors’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 394). External violence was still endemic within black ghettos when the movement folded in 1982. However, the obstacles facing a black militant organization succeeding in the USA still seemed insurmountable. According to Assata Shakur:

> Since we did not own the TV stations or newspapers, it was easy for the news media to portray us as monsters and terrorists. The police could terrorize the black community daily, yet if one black person successfully defended himself or herself against a police attack, they were called terrorists... All of us who saw our leaders murdered, our people shot down in cold blood, felt a need, a desire to fight back. One of the hardest lessons we had to learn is that revolutionary struggle is scientific rather than emotional. I’m not saying that we shouldn’t feel anything, but decisions can’t be based on love or in anger, they have to be based on the objective conditions and on what is the rational, unemotional thing to do (1987:241-243).
CHAPTER 9

The Decline of AIM

‘The perpetual enemy is perpetual terror, this time on the level of the state. The state is identified with the “apparatus”; that is to say with the sum total of mechanisms of conquest and repression’ Albert Camus (1956: 181).

‘Governments organize and, wherever possible, monopolize violence’ and that ‘the personnel of states purvey violence on a larger scale, more effectively, more efficiently’ Charles Tilly (1985: 171-173).

Introduction

This chapter will explore the role of violence in the decline of AIM between 1973 and 1976. It will be argued that three factors strongly contributed towards the movement’s demise.

The first was the violence employed by the state to crush the organisation’s occupation at Wounded Knee in 1973. Essentially, this was the beginning of the end for the movement as the militant Indian group was involved in a virtual war with the US government for nearly three months (Zimmerman 1976: 196). However, from the outset of the seventy-one day siege, AIM’s capacity for armed confrontation was minimal when compared to the resources held by state forces. Fire fights would sometimes last for twenty-four hour periods, with reports of over 10,000 bullets directed at the occupation site during these assaults (Dewing 1985: 145). The ground cover surrounding AIM’s perimeter was burned away by federal forces preventing access for food, medicine and ammunition. In total, more than 500,000 rounds of military ammunition were fired into the compound, which contained women and children, during the occupation. As a result, two AIM members were killed: Frank Clearwater on 16 April and Buddy Lamont, a
Chapter 9 – The Decline of AIM

Vietnam Veteran, on the 27th of that month (Churchill 1997: 249). State forces were also augmented in their efforts by groups promoting racial violence against Indians. There were reports that racist white ranchers were patrolling the perimeter at Wounded Knee while Richard Wilson's GOON Squad was not just supported by the BIA and the FBI, but by a number of right-wing extremists groups (Churchill 1992: 88). Ultimately, perhaps of greatest concern to the US government was that this surge in Indian activism was attempting to redistribute power and authority on reservations across the USA (Sayer 2000: 220). This was something the state was never going to allow to happen.

A second factor contributing to AIM’s demise was the state’s direct involvement and collusion in killing AIM members and supporters during this lifecycle phase. In the years after the Wounded Knee occupation, the situation on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota (where the organization held its strongest base of support) deteriorated to the extent that the US Commission on Civil Rights described the violent conditions as a “reign of terror” (Quoted in Churchill 1997: 251). Between 1973 and 1975 the yearly rate of murder on the Pine Ridge reservation was 170 per 100,000 (only counting documented political deaths). By comparison, the city of Detroit, which at that time was viewed as the “murder capital of the US,” had a rate of 20.2 per 100,000 in 1974. The US national average for the years under consideration was 9.7 per 100,000 (ibid: 268-269). Consequently, in the period under review, over 300 members and supporters of AIM were killed on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Over 350 others suffered physical assaults which included gunshot wounds and burns received as their homes were burned to the ground by the state funded GOON squad (Churchill 1992: 84). In fact, nowhere in the USA has there been a comparable rate of homicide at any point in the 20th century. To find counterparts to these levels of violence, one must turn to cases of US sponsored military coups in Latin America.

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151 Two of Buddy Lamont’s great grandparents had been killed in the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee (Weyler 1982: 93-94).
(ibid). Between 1973 and 1975, the state, through COINTELPRO, effectively ran “death squads” on the Pine Ridge Reservation (ibid: 95-96). This fact has since been corroborated by former members of the GOON squad itself (Churchill 1992).

The third factor responsible for the destruction of AIM was that the violence ultimately destroyed AIM’s cohesion and capacity to mobilise at an effective level. Two years after the Wounded Knee occupation, every AIM leader in the USA would either be in jail, driven underground or dead (Wilkinson 2009: 19). The state’s use of informers within AIM also threatened further rounds of violence as agent provocateurs often suggested that the movement escalate its violent armed campaign (Carley 1997: 167-168). Through such methods, the state sought to incite rather than defuse violence. Consequently, the group’s membership turned on each other and internal differences were nurtured and exploited by the FBI. This dynamic was most clearly seen in the state’s execution of AIM member Anna Mae Aquash in 1976 (Weyler 1982: 185). Virtually all of the organisation’s membership was caught up in a persisting spiral of arrests and trials. For instance, between February and May 1973, the state arrested 562 people on charges relating to the Wounded Knee takeover while no member of the GOON squad has ever been arrested or faced conviction for the violence that descended on Pine Ridge from the early to the mid-1970s (ibid: 1982: 95). On the other hand, AIM member Leonard Peltier is in prison to this day. The vast bulk of the evidence employed against him was either coerced or fabricated in an attempt by the state to destroy the organisation (Sanchez, Stuckey and Morris 1999).

During this lifecycle phase, as the state sought to decimate AIM, popular violence against Native Americans continued to go unchallenged as the spate of racial killings across the South-West in 1973 and 1974 testifies (Weyler 1982: 135-136). Therefore, the key questions in this chapter are: what role did violence play in the decline of AIM between 1973 and 1976? How was the violence framed by
the movement? What resources were utilised to counteract its existence? And, what opportunities opened/closed due to its persistence?

9.1 MOVEMENT DISINTEGRATION: 1973-1975

9.1.1 “We Took More Bullets in 71 Days than I Took for Two Years in Vietnam”: The State Targets Movement Resources

Once AIM’s siege at Wounded Knee commenced in February 1973, the state set out to decimate the challengers through sheer violent force. All of this would be directed on less than 300 AIM members and supporters inside the Wounded Knee compound (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 196). In terms of military equipment, there was no comparison as Vietnam Veteran Woody Kipp points out, ‘I longed for a good piece of military equipment such as we had in Vietnam’ (1997: 220-221). Roger Iron Cloud, another Vietnam Veteran who served with AIM’s security force at the site maintained that “we took more bullets in seventy-one days [at Wounded Knee] than I took in two years in Vietnam” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 83). At one point, movement members were forced to paint a lead pipe and cover it with an empty .50 caliber ammunition belt to make it look like a machine gun (ibid: 85). While there were a few dozen army veterans within AIM’s compound, the vast majority of those taking part in the occupation had no military expertise.

On the other hand, an armed command post was set up by state forces inside the local BIA building which housed gas masks, gas grenades, sniper rifles and grenade launchers. The regional director of the FBI and the US attorney for South Dakota were both present on the scene. Contact was also kept with the Director of Marshals in Washington DC on an hourly basis (Reinhardt 2007: 178). As Rex Weyler points out:

It was as real a war as had ever been fought, albeit militarily one-sided. The Indians armed with hunting rifles, .22’s and one Russian AK-47 brought back from Vietnam by a veteran, were surrounded by the most powerful military force in the world (1982: 82).
AIM also had to cope with the continued presence of Richard Wilson’s GOON Squad during the occupation. As Ward Churchill points out ‘many reservation residents believe (and several researchers have also concluded, by process of elimination) that the FBI not only equipped, but also provided field intelligence and other support to, the death squads operating on Pine Ridge’ (1992: 87). Duane Brewer, the second in command of the BIA police on the reservation later admitted that “the FBI was with the GOON’s because we were fighting the same thing — we weren’t supporting AIM” (Quoted in Churchill 1992: 89). Consequently, Brewer admits that the GOON Squad “had all the weaponry. We had fifteen AR-15s. We had long-range projectile smoke, [gas guns]. We had [tear gas] fogger. We had everything” (Quoted in Churchill 1992: 88). As a result, approximately 13 Indians were killed by the GOON Squad as they attempted to bring supplies into AIM’s compound. Their bodies were dumped in remote locations across the Pine Ridge Reservation (Churchill 1997: 250).

On 27 April, Vietnam Veteran Buddy Lamont, became the second AIM member to die during the occupation. As a result of the fire fight which killed Lamont ‘the village’s electricity was cut off. Wounded Knee had no power, no telephone, no running water, and very little food’ (Smith and Warrior 1996: 257). In the aftermath, the movement decided to lay down its arms. On 5 May, the two opposing sides reached an agreement. A promise was given by the state to review the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and a commitment was also given that the Justice Department would remove Richard Wilson as tribal chairman (Weyler 1982: 94). In return, a hand over of all weapons held by AIM would commence on 8 May. On the evening of 7 May, close to half of those who were inside the compound escaped through government lines. These included Russell Means and Dennis Banks. The latter, along with Carter Camp, elected not to sign any agreement with state officials. Troops entering the village on the morning of 8 May found

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152 Clyde Bellecourt had left the camp earlier with brother Vernon to raise further funds for the occupation (Magnuson 2013: 53).
seven rifles, five shotguns, several rifle barrels and just over 2,700 rounds of ammunition (Dewing 1985: 254).

Ultimately, the Fort Laramie treaty of 1868 would never be seriously discussed and no corruption by BIA employees ever investigated. One government official was to state that “the days of treaty making with the American Indian ended in 1871” (Quoted in Zimmerman 1976: 331). No further meetings ever took place between Sioux elders on Pine Ridge and state representatives. On the other hand, Richard Wilson, in a press conference given shortly after the occupation ended, maintained that the scale and ferocity of the assault by state forces was to ensure that “AIM [died] at Wounded Knee” (Quoted in Churchill 1997: 250). The Secretary of the US Interior, Rogers Morton, was now maintaining that AIM were “criminal” people who “do not represent a constituted group with whom the government can contract” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 94).

9.1.2 The State Targets Movement Resources

Throughout the summer of 1973, the FBI, through COINTELPRO, escalated its attempts to crush AIM. A number of movement leaders including Russell Means, Leonard Crow Dog and Stan Holder were arrested along with the OSCRO (Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization) leader, Pedro Bissonette. Dennis Banks was by this time living underground in Canada having escaped with a number of others from the Wounded Knee compound on the night of 7 May (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 11). By September the same year, FBI agents had collated some 316,000 investigative files on those who had taken part in the occupation (Churchill 1997: 250).

153 Lakota elders had always insisted that they did not wish to negotiate new treaties. Rather all they sought all along was that ‘the treaties that already exist be enforced’ (Zimmerman 1976: 331).

154 Throughout the summer of 1973, warrants were issued for the arrest of Dennis Banks. When the AIM leader felt secure that his bail money had been raised, he returned to the USA to face charges stemming from his role in the Wounded Knee takeover (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 212-213).
The previous July, AIM had held its annual convention in White Oak, Oklahoma. Even though organized in a state with the highest Indian population in the USA, the meeting was poorly attended. At the convention AIM pledged to continue its campaign to dismantle the system of state-sponsored tribal councils and the hated Bureau of Indian Affairs. That said, the leadership could not agree on a unified position when it came to countering the violence unleashed on the organization since the previous February. As a result, an escalation of armed struggle never seriously gained any traction within the movement (Mattheissen 1992: 84).

Throughout this period ‘the Justice Department launched an unprecedented legal assault on movement leaders, followers and supporters’ (Smith and Warrior 1996: 270). As AIM leader John Trudell pointed out, “we may be one of the few organizations in this country that basically every member of the organization was at one point, at one time or another, charged with some criminal act” (Quoted in Sanchez, Stuckey and Morris 1999: 33). The state was intent on bringing to trial every possible case it could, whether it was convinced it would win a conviction or not (ibid).

Initially the leaders of the Wounded Knee occupation, Dennis Banks, Russell Means, Clyde Bellecourt, Carter Camp, Leonard Crow Dog, Stan Holder and Pedro Bissonette were all indicted together. Banks and Means were then separated from the others and burdened with an enormous $150,000 bail. The trial of the two AIM leaders opened on 8 January 1974 in St. Paul, Minnesota (Mattheissen 1992: 87). During the same period over 1,200 men and women were arrested and detained nationally, either because they were members of AIM, critics of the Richard Wilson administration or in some way, however remote, connected with the takeover at Wounded Knee (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 213). It

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155 According to Dennis Banks:

There were four major trials and a number of minor ones stemming from the events at Wounded Knee. Two of the big ones were the so-called “leadership trials” in which the accused were Russell Means, Leonard Crow Dog, Stan Holder, Carter Camp, Pedro Bissonette, and me...The remaining five of us were originally to be tried as one group, but later we were separated (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 213).
has been argued that the organization was the target of the ‘largest mass political trial in United States history’ (Smith and Warrior 1996: 271).

While AIM members and its leaders were either forced underground or into prisons, Richard Wilson and the GOON squad ‘remained untouched by the long, but discriminating arm of the law’ (Weyler 1982: 95). In fact in the months after the Wounded Knee takeover, the GOON’s reignited their campaign of violence on Pine Ridge. According to Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, ‘when the occupation ended and AIM’s most pressing battles took place in the courtroom, the GOON’s once again had the upper hand and used the opportunity to settle many scores against movement activists and their allies’ (1996: 272).

9.1.3 The “Reign of Terror”: The Framing of State-Sponsored Violence on Pine Ridge

Despite the Justice Departments promise to pursue GOON Squad members through the courts, the violence on Pine Ridge continued unabated throughout 1973 and 1974.\textsuperscript{156} As Russell Means pointed out at the time “not a single charge has been filed against any of the oppressors, the BIA police and GOON squad; meanwhile, scores of Indians who have spoken out for liberation have been indicted and are facing many years in jail” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 121). In his resignation letter, David Holman, the commissioner of the South Dakota Criminal Justice Commission wrote:

I have become increasingly aware of the fact that Native Americans who hold traditional views and are political activists are singled out for special attention by the criminal justice system in South Dakota. Members of the American Indian Movement, in particular, are singled out for harassment (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 179).

The violence was not just limited to AIM members and supporters. For instance, on 27 February 1975, three white lawyers who represented a Wounded Knee defendant were attacked and beaten by members of the GOON squad at Pine

\textsuperscript{156} The victims included ‘Allison Little Fast Horse, a fifteen-year-old friend of the Bissonette family, [who] was found dead in a ditch with a bullet in his heart’ (Weyler 1982: 121).
Ridge airport (Weyler 1982: 172-173). The US attorney and the FBI were contacted about the incident but no investigation was ever undertaken. None of the killings on Pine Ridge were ever investigated by the FBI despite the fact that in numerous cases the assailants were identified by witnesses and recognised as members of the GOON squad (ibid).

Between 1973 and 1975, Richard Wilson continued to receive federal support as a ‘quid pro quo’ for his collaboration ‘in casting an appearance of legitimacy upon an illegal transfer of land to the federal government’ (Weyler 1982: 86; emphasis in original). However, when AIM stepped in to support the fight against the violence and corruption still rampant on the reservation, the GOON squad ‘shifted from intimidation tactics to outright death squad activities’ (Churchill 1992: 86). The Pine Ridge reservation, according to Dennis Banks, essentially became a ‘killing field’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 284). At AIM’s national convention at White Oak, Oklahoma in the autumn of 1973 the leadership could not agree a position on the threat posed by government terror and repression. A number spoke in favour of armed action. However, the vast majority felt such a course was ultimately doomed. Clyde Bellecourt, for one, had always opposed the use of violence and did not carry a weapon at Wounded Knee (Mattheissen 1992: 84). This decision did not deter ongoing state violence. Mark Lane, a lawyer representing the Wounded Knee Legal Offense/Defence Committee (WKLO/DA),157 maintained that when he went to the reservation to conduct an investigation into the harassment and violence he was “threatened at rifle point by Emil Richard who works for tribal council chairman ‘Dicky’ Wilson” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 106).

157 The Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offense Committee (WKLD/OC) survived on government food stamps. The WKLD/OC headquarters in Sioux Falls was a building that had a pending demolition order on it. In Lincoln, Nebraska the group both worked and lived at an abandoned Air Force Base on the city’s outskirts (Smith and Warrior 1996: 270-271). The committee maintained that by bringing such a considerable amount of cases to court the state was to ‘use the indictments and the court system to financially destroy AIM and the Red Power activism it fostered among Indian people’ (Johnson 2007: 81).
In all, over 300 AIM members and supporters were killed during the so-called “reign of terror” (Churchill 1992: 84). In the vast majority of the cases, the FBI undertook no active investigation into the murders and in effect turned a blind-eye to the violence.\textsuperscript{158} On the other hand, friends and associates of those murdered were falsely arrested and detained over the killings (Churchill 1997: 252). There was widespread collusion between the GOON squad and the BIA police. In one case, Duane Brewer both functioned as a GOON leader while also holding down the second-in-command position of the BIA police on Pine Ridge. His commanding officer, Delmar Eastman, also acted as the principal liaison between the reservation police and the FBI, who were effectively in charge of all GOON operations on Pine Ridge. It is estimated that between one-third and one-half of all BIA police personnel on the reservation doubled as GOON squad operatives (ibid: 254). According to Ward Churchill ‘in effect, the police were the killers, their crimes not only condoned but, for all practical intents and purposes, commanded and controlled by the FBI’ (ibid).

9.1.4 Opportunities Closed 1: The Killing of Pedro Bissonette

Throughout the summer of 1973, the state offered Pedro Bissonette, the leader of OSCRO,\textsuperscript{159} a deal while he was in prison awaiting charges relating to the Wounded Knee occupation. Bissonette would essentially be freed if he agreed to testify against the leaders of AIM. He refused the proposal which included a conspiracy to ‘solicit phony evidence in an attempt to frame Banks and Means’ (Weyler 1982: 107). As a result, the legal team representing Dennis Banks and Russell Means intended to call Bissonette to the stand to highlight the governments offer. This would support defense allegations that the state was conspiring to create false evidence in an attempt to convict both Banks and Means (ibid). Released on bail, Pedro Bissonette returned to the Pine Ridge Reservation.

\textsuperscript{158} The excuse given time and again by the FBI for its non-investigation stance was “lack of manpower” (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 175). However, between 1973 and 1975 the FBI on the Pine Ridge reservation had ‘the highest ratio of agents to citizens anywhere in the United States’ (ibid).

\textsuperscript{159} As John William Sayer points out ‘BIA officials saw OSCRO as an extension of AIM, whose presence they believed only increased the tensions on the reservation’ (2000: 31).
He informed a reporter that “I wanted to come home to work for my people, getting something done, and without getting pay for it. Something that would be good for every district out here, for the kids and the older generation” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 108). However, Bissonette was now under constant surveillance and he ignored advice from friends and supporters not to be either seen or to ever drive alone on the reservation (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 286). According to Dennis Banks ‘Pedro had created OSCRO, which opposed the Wilson dictatorship... He supported AIM and was a thorn in Dicky Wilson’s side. So he was set up to be killed’ (ibid).

On 17 October 1973, Pedro Bissonette was followed by two BIA policemen, Joe Clifford (also a known member of the GOON squad) and BIA police Chief Delmar Eastman, on a remote Pine Ridge road. After being stopped, Bissonette, who was unarmed, was executed and died from multiple gunshot wounds to his chest. The Indian rights campaigner had been shot point-blank at a range of under two feet (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 287). According to lawyers representing the WKLO/DC, “After a preliminary investigation, we believe it is cold-blooded murder” and that Joe Clifford was “the man that the BIA assigned to track down Pedro” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 108). Mark Lane, a lawyer representing the WKLO/DC, maintained that Bissonette had been on his way to meet Lane when he was killed. Lane also pointed out that when he viewed the victim’s remains the wounds were completely different than those reported by the BIA police (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 202).

As a result of such discrepancies, the Bissonette family immediately requested that the body be examined by an independent pathologist. Delmar Eastman, however, who was at the scene of the killing, had already ordered for the victim’s remains to be removed to await an autopsy by ‘two BIA — commissioned pathologists’ (Weyler 1982: 109). Consequently, the independent examination requested by the Bissonette family never occurred. On 20 October, a BIA-retained pathologist found that the cause of death confirmed Joe Clifford’s police
The body was then placed in a sealed coffin (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 203).

On 23 October, Pedro Bissonette was buried on Pine Ridge as armed BIA police observed from a ridge above the cemetery (Weyler 1982: 109). No investigation of his death was ever undertaken by the FBI. According to Dennis Banks:

We lost a great man there. The federal police killed Pedro in an assassination conspiracy, and the reason was obvious: he knew too much about Wilson and the BIA and about what the police were up to, and he intended to expose them. Also, I think they decided that if Pedro was dead, AIM could no longer function on the reservation (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 203).

Banks also goes on to argue that ‘with Pedro’s murder, the real terror began. Violence and bloodshed became almost daily events. None of the attackers ever worried about concealing their identities — they were under Wilson’s protection’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 287). A short time after, AIM members Clarence Cross and his brother, Vernal, were shot at by BIA police as they slept in their car. Clarence was killed while Vernal was seriously wounded. The state-backed “reign of terror” was now operating at a relentless pace. For instance, in the autumn of 1974, the GOON squad fired M-16’s into a family home and shot out the eye of a four-year old child. All of these victims were children of AIM members (ibid: 288). According to Rex Weyler:

The simple statistic of over 1,200 arrests of AIM members and supporters throughout the United States and zero arrests of vigilantes and GOON squad members following Wounded Knee was ample

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160 In a statement made to the Associated Press (AP) the morning after the killing a BIA superintendent maintained that...

Pine Ridge police began looking for Bissonette on a warrant on Wednesday afternoon [17 October]. Two police officers spotted him and tried to stop him, but Bissonette fired a shot at them and they gave pursuit. Later in the evening, two officers were making a routine check of a car, and found Bissonette inside. Pedro attempted to shoot one of the officers and was shot at fairly close range (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 201).

In the aftermath, no weapon was ever produced by the police to confirm these assertions (ibid).
indication to the Indians and to their lawyers that the government had no intention of using the law to ensure justice (1982: 105).

9.1.5 State Violence Forces a Change in Movement Tactics: The Ineffectual Path of Electoral Politics

In 1974, Russell Means attempted to oust Richard Wilson by running against the incumbent for the office of tribal chairman. If elected, Means promised to return the disputed Gunnery Range and other tribal land to the Sioux people (Weyler 1982: 109). The AIM leader won the initial presidential primary with Wilson in second place. This meant that both men would face each other in a February 1974 showdown. However, despite his clear earlier victory, Means lost the final election by 200 votes. Widespread corruption and violence were prevalent throughout the entire campaign (Reinhardt 2007: 207). Once the election was over, the United States Civil Rights Commission issued a report that argued that “widespread irregularities took place before, during and after the election, and we conclude that the results are therefore invalid” (Quoted in Reinhardt 2007: 207). The commission’s report also went on to point out that the election took place “in a climate of fear and tension” and the commission strongly criticised Richard Wilson for countless infractions (ibid). Wilson had vowed that if re-elected he would continue his reservation ban on the AIM “rabble-rousers” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 128).

161 According to Ward Churchill:

The Gunnery Range, comprising the north-western eighth of Pine Ridge, was an area “borrowed” from the Oglala by the War Department in 1942 as a place to train aerial gunners. It was to be returned at the end of World War II, but it never was. By the early 1970s, Oglala traditionalists had begun to agitate heavily for its recovery. The deposits [natural resources] had been secretly discovered in 1971, however, through a technologically elaborate survey and mapping project undertaken jointly by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and a little-known entity called the National Uranium Resource Evaluation Institute (NURE) (1997: 269).

Richard Wilson went along with the federal government’s attempts to annex Indian Territory in return for the state turning a blind-eye to the cronyism, nepotism and corruption of his tribal administration. He was also handsomely financially rewarded, both personally and with considerable funds directed towards equipping and training the GOON squad (ibid: 248).
On election night that February, the sound of GOON squad gunfire was heard all over the reservation. Nearly 20% of the votes cast were by non-enrolled members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe (in Wilson’s main base of support, over 30% of the ballots cast were by individuals not entitled to vote) (Mattheissen 1992: 128). There were also reports of inappropriate appointments made in relation to election judges and clerks and ballot boxes were allegedly tampered with (ibid). The United States Civil Rights Commission’s report went on to accuse Wilson and the BIA of committing eighteen misdemeanors relating to election fraud, all of which were indictable under federal law (Weyler 1982: 111). The commission also pointed towards the necessity for new elections (ibid).

However, the US Justice Department ignored the recommendations and officially recognised Richard Wilson as the chairman of the Oglala Sioux Tribe for a second consecutive period (Reinhardt 2007: 208). Without any protests from the Justice Department, Wilson ordered all of those who had voted for Means to leave the Pine Ridge reservation. The GOON squad then embarked on a fresh campaign of violence with AIM supporters, families and friends ‘attacked, beaten and run off the road in an ongoing series of “accidents”, many of them fatal’ (Mattheissen 1992: 128). According to AIM activist Lorelei Decora:

> The government can’t afford to have a man like Russ Means in charge of the reservation. AIM is down there telling Indians they don’t have to lease their land for two dollars an acre. AIM is telling them they can get their own cattle, that they can start their own economic base, and won’t have to be dependent on the government (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 128).

### 9.1.6 Opportunities Closed 2: The AIM Trials and the Persistence of Popular Violence

Early in 1974, the trial of Dennis Banks and Russell Means on charges relating to the Wounded Knee occupation commenced.\(^{162}\) On the day it opened, a huge

\(^{162}\) Leonard Crow Dog, Carter Camp and Stan Holder were tried separately in June 1975. Crow Dog would become the only leader of AIM that would spend time behind bars on charges relating to the Wounded Knee takeover. He would serve a few months in prison. All charges against Clyde Bellecourt were dismissed (Mattheissen 1992: 99).
demonstration of support was organized. Taking part were sixty-five Oglala Sioux leaders which included a few survivors from the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890. The defence intended to present Banks and Means as ‘political prisoners’ while the prosecution intended to portray them as common criminals who had terrorised a peaceful community (ibid: 88). Banks continued to defend the occupation and maintained that “let the people decide who is guilty of crimes at Wounded Knee. When the American people see evidence of poverty, brutal conditions, and shotgun murders, they will have no choice but to find the US government guilty” (Quoted in Banks and Erdoes 2004: 216).

As the trial progressed, the presiding judge, Alfred Nichol, became more and more concerned about the behavior of the state and at one point argued that he “could dismiss this case entirely on the grounds of governmental misconduct, which apparently appears to be deliberate” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 89). This assertion was as a result of the state’s prosecution team and their attempts to cover up illegal military involvement during the Wounded Knee takeover.163 Thus ‘by late August, six months into the trial, the prosecution had yet to connect either Banks or Means to any of the alleged crimes’ (Weyler 1982: 118).

On the other hand, further revelations by the defence team uncovered the state’s intention to both extract false testimony from witnesses and to deceive the court (Weyler 1982: 119). In one particular incident, it was revealed that two COINTELPRO agents, David Price and Ron Williams, had spent several days in a Wisconsin hotel, preparing one Indian witness named Louis Moves Camp, to present false evidence during the trial (ibid). Eventually, the government’s chief prosecutor in the case, Richard Hurd, was caught lying to the court and as a result, Judge Nichol moved to dismiss all charges against Banks and Means (ibid: 120). In his final summation Nichol argued that “I am forced to conclude that the

163 This was based on the testimony of the Justice Department Chief of Staff, Joseph Sneed, who admitted that there was no formal “line of authority” between the Justice Department and the Pentagon in relation to the siege at Wounded Knee (Weyler 1982: 117). As Rex Weyler points out ‘the eventual revelations concerning unconstitutional use of the military against US citizens without official presidential authorization were disclosed only when [Judge] Nichol had issued a court order’ (ibid).
prosecution acted in bad faith at various times throughout the course of the trial... Dismissal is, I believe, the appropriate cure for the pollution in this case” (Quoted in Banks and Erdoes 2004: 226).

The judge finished by issuing a scathing indictment of the state’s conduct and argued that “it is hard for me to believe that the FBI, which I have revered for so long, has stooped so low” (ibid). Ultimately, prosecutions arising from the occupation at Wounded Knee resulted in a small number of convictions which included trespass and “interference with postal inspectors in performance of their lawful duties” (Quoted in Churchill 1997: 251). However, virtually all of AIM’s leadership was caught up in a never ending spiral of arrests and trials.164 While cleared of all charges relating to the Wounded Knee takeover, Dennis Banks and Russell Means were continually tracked down on a succession of “criminal charges.”165 As Edmunds, Hoxie and Salisbury point out, ‘even when cases were dismissed, as they were in a highly publicised proceeding against Banks and Means in Minneapolis in 1974, the expense and effort involved left AIM severely damaged’ (2007: 433). The state on the other hand had ‘unlimited resources for numerous appeals and counter charges’ (Baylor 2008: 15).166

164 There was only a 7.7% conviction rate resulting from the Wounded Knee Trials compared to an average of 78.7% in the US District Courts. Ken Tilsen, a lawyer who represented a number of the defendants, maintained that these figures raised serious questions about the cogency of the prosecutions in the first place (Sayer 2000: 228).

165 An internal FBI memo stated at the time:

It should be noted that these investigations involving militant extremists [AIM leaders] are of such a nature that they will be tied up in court proceedings and under the court’s jurisdiction during the forthcoming summer and it is felt, will greatly contribute to inhibiting their activities (Quoted in Baylor 2008: 14).

166 AIM depended almost exclusively on financial donations from outside sources. A few (but not many) tribal governments contributed some monetary assistance but food, transportation etc., far exceeded these resources. A number of churches also donated money to the organization but AIM activists depended largely on the goodwill of Indian people who often hid them, fed them and provided money for fuel (Johnson 2007: 78). The movement also received support from celebrities such as Jane Fonda, Dick Gregory, Sammy Davis, Jr. and Marlon Brando (Carley 1997: 169). Brando declined his academy award for The Godfather in 1973 in support of those who occupied Wounded Knee (Smith and Warrior 1996: 235-236).
On 16 June 1975, Dennis Banks was once again brought to trial. This time it was from charges stemming from the riots in Custer, South Dakota in 1973. In relation to his opening statement Banks argued that ‘this was a purely political trial, and that, in trying me, they were trying AIM’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 292). On 26 July, Banks was found guilty of assault and riot charges and faced up to 15 years in prison. Awaiting sentence and out on bail he fled underground. He eventually made it to California where he ‘fought extradition back to South Dakota on the grounds he would be killed’ (Weyler 1982: 193). Banks was eventually given an amnesty under Californian law by then Governor Jerry Brown who refused to extradite the AIM leader to South Dakota (ibid). AIM’s effectiveness was further relinquished by the imprisonment of Russell Means on charges relating to the disturbances in Custer. As a result, he served a year in a South Dakota prison (Edmunds, Hoxie and Salisbury 2007: 434).

As the authorities sought to destroy the effectiveness of AIM, popular violence against ordinary non-political Native American’s continued to go unchallenged by the state. In May 1973, two Navajo Indian men, Kee Jones and George Dennison, were found murdered outside Gallup, New Mexico (NM) (Weyler 1982: 135). In February, 1974 another Navajo male, Gilbert Saunders, was found in the same area tortured to death. Two months later, John Harvey and Herman Benally were found dead north of Farmington in New Mexico. They had been tortured and burned to death (ibid). Two white youths later admitted killing the men. As a result, they both received two year sentences, only to be paroled a year later (ibid: 136).

In May 1974, an Indian man named Willie Harrison was found in the San Juan River in New Mexico. A month later, Andrew Acquie, Arnold Cellicon and Alfred Yazzie were found stabbed to death in Gallup (NM) (Weyler 1982: 136). As Peter Matthessien points out ‘in the preceding two years alone, ten defenseless Navajo Indians had been tortured, sexually mutilated, then killed’ (1992: 145). Minimal police activity was instigated after these killings and no one was ever charged in relation to the murders. On the other hand, at a demonstration in
Farmington in the summer of 1974, 34 Native Americans were arrested as they protested at the state’s disinterest in pursuing racist killers of Indians (Weyler 1982: 136).

9.2 MOVEMENT DISINTEGRATION: 1975-1976

9.2.1 Death Squads on Pine Ridge I: The Framing of Armed Self-Defense

Russell Means could not attend AIM’s national convention in Farmington, New Mexico in 1975 as he had been shot and wounded in the back by the BIA police (Mattheissen 1992:146). By the spring of that year, with unremitting GOON squad violence and terror, and with no adequate response from the state, traditional Indians on the Pine Ridge Reservation once again requested that AIM adopt a policy of armed self-defense to counter external violence (Churchill 1992: 93). According to William Muldrow of the US Commission on Civil Rights: “Acts of violence are commonplace. Numerous complaints were lodged in my office about FBI activities” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 313)

Victims of violence included Priscilla White Plume who was believed to have been killed by the GOON squad because of her criticism of Richard Wilson and her political activism on the reservation. The FBI not only declined to prosecute the case, but also refused point blank to carry out any form of investigative work in relation to the murder (Johnson 2007: 58-59). Another victim of the violence, Melvin Spider, was killed in a hit-and-run accident. Once again, AIM believed that he was murdered due to his association with the organization. A suspect was located and arrested but mysteriously the investigation was closed (ibid: 59).

In another case, Andrew Paul Stewart, a nephew of AIM’s spiritual leader, Leonard Crow Dog, was found dead from a gunshot wound to the head on 26 July, 1975. Once again, it was common knowledge that the FBI or GOON squad was actively involved in his killing. However, this case was also closed without any further investigation (Johnson 2007: 58-59). On 16 December 1975, AIM associate Robert Reddy was stabbed to death. Even though the FBI was provided with a credible suspect, it declined to examine the circumstances and no further
investigation ever took place. All in all, this pattern was indicative of a process involving over 300 AIM members and supporters from 1973-1976. According to Ward Churchill:

The Federal Bureau of Investigation played much the same role on Pine Ridge during the mid-1970s that the CIA has played vis à vis Roberto D’Aubisson’s hit teams in El Salvador throughout the 1980s. The GOON’s, for their part, fulfilled exactly the same requirements on the reservation that other death squads have played throughout Latin America over the past four decades and more. Structurally, the forms and functions assumed by all parties to such comparisons are essentially the same (1992: 95-96).167

Two years after the Wounded Knee occupation and under similar circumstances involving the unrelenting nature of state-sponsored violence, the case for armed self-defence was once again considered by AIM members. As Dennis Banks pointed out: ‘Pine Ridge had become the scene of a life-or-death struggle. It seemed to me that I should gather arms for our people to defend themselves since the law would not protect them’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 301).

9.2.2 Death Squads on Pine Ridge 2: The Resource of Armed Self-Defence

In November 1975, Dennis Banks (by now living underground) and a number of others including AIM member Anna Mae Aquash were stopped driving a van outside Portland, Oregon by a state trooper. The vehicles were reported to contain nine hand grenades, assorted detonation equipment, seven boxes of dynamite and fourteen firearms (Mattheissen 1992: 249-250). Banks escaped from the scene and eventually made his way to California. A reporter who interviewed Aquash after her arrest maintained that she said, “If they take me back to South Dakota, I’ll be murdered” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 252).

Another one of the AIM members who escaped that night was Leonard Peltier. Peltier was born in 1944 on the poverty-stricken Turtle Mountain reservation in

167 Roberto D’Aubisson was an extreme right-wing politician and a death-squad leader. The UN-created Truth Commission for El Salvador maintained he ordered the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980 (Brockett 2005).
North Dakota. He left school around the age of 10 and later moved to Seattle where he became involved in Native American activism. In 1975, he moved to the Pine Ridge reservation to assist the Lakota people in their battle against state and state-sponsored violence (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 87). Throughout that year ‘the Oglala’s who were targeted by Wilson’s men had come to conclude that armed self-defence was their only means of survival’ (Campbell 2008).

AIM had responded to the violence by creating defensive encampments on traditional Indian-owned properties throughout the reservation (Churchill 1992: 93). One of these camps was on land owned by Harry and Cecilia Jumping Bull. However, this property was selected by the FBI as a target to provoke a confrontation with AIM and finally break all militant resistance on the reservation (ibid). It was also the state’s intention to turn public opinion against any form of Indian activism on Pine Ridge.\footnote{On 1 April 1973, a nationwide poll had indicated that up to 93% of Americans were following the events at Wounded Knee and that 51% of those questioned said they supported the occupation even though armed weapons were employed. As Bill Zimmerman points out ‘a majority of the American people were in support of an armed revolt against the authority of the federal government’ (1976: 210).}

As a result, on 26 June 1975, two FBI agents, Jack R. Coler and Ronald Williams, were sent to the encampment to trigger a gun battle with AIM members. They entered the compound ‘in civilian clothes and allegedly did not identify themselves as law enforcement officers’ (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 87). The two men immediately opened fire on several of the Indians at the site. Very shortly afterwards, over a hundred more agents, BIA police, SWAT personnel and GOON squad members attempted to force their way onto the property. In the gun battle that ensued, both Coler and Williams and an AIM member named Joe Stuntz Killsright died (Churchill 1992: 93). The remaining Indians, including Peltier, escaped.\footnote{Ward Churchill maintains that the gun battle served two purposes. Firstly, the day after, 27 June, Richard Wilson illegally signed over the Sheep Mountain Gunnery Range to the National Forest Service without any public notice or outcry. Secondly, the US Senate’s Church Committee had been scheduled to commence hearings on the FBI pursuit of AIM in late June of that year. Due to the deaths of the two COINTELPRO agents, the land transfer was never investigated and the committee’s hearings never rescheduled (1992: 94).}
9.2.3 Opportunities Closed 3: The Killing of Anna Mae Aquash

According to Peter Mattheissen, ‘in the dark winter of 1975-76, the lawlessness on Pine Ridge intensified’ (1992: 254). Through it all, the state was aware of the violence perpetrated by the GOON squad and actively assisted the paramilitary outfit in any subsequent cover-ups (Churchill 1992). An example of this was the killing of key AIM member Anna Mae Aquash (Carley 1997: 166). Aquash became a victim of a lethal COINTELPRO tactic called “bad-jacketing” in which the FBI planted false rumors about specific individuals which subsequently created distrust, paranoia and chaos within AIM’s ranks (Johnson 2007: 50-51). This was achieved by a state-planted informer spreading a rumor that a particular loyal activist was in fact a government agent. Such tactics were employed to great effect against Anna Mae Aquash (Carley 1997: 168).

By this time, alongside the unremitting violence, two specific strategies utilised by the state had a hugely detrimental effect on AIM’s capacity to mobilise at an optimum level. The first was the constant drain on party resources in defending those who took part in the takeover at Wounded Knee. The second was the destruction wrought by state informers and social control agents within the organization (Baylor 1996: 246) as by 1975, the US government had three highly placed COINTELPRO agents working within AIM. The operative who inflicted most damage was Douglas Durham (Johnson 2007: 50).

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170 Aquash initially became involved with AIM when the organization seized control of the Mayflower II in November 1970. She also participated in the 1972 Trail of Broken Treaties March to Washington DC. By 1973, she was a full time member of the organization (Johnson 2007: 53-54).

171 According to Pat Ballanger, one of the co-founders of AIM, “[The Wounded Knee Trials] absorbed all our energy for years. It was raising bail for those guys, getting attorneys, raising attorney’s fees, developing defense committees… Moving witnesses from one side of the country to the other for these trials” (Quoted in Baylor 2008: 14).

172 Durham, passing off as “one-fourth Chippewa” had initially entered the Wounded Knee compound in 1973 with press credentials from a supposed left-wing newspaper in Des Moines (Mattheissen 1992: 87). Once the occupation finished, Durham went on to become the national security director for the movement. He also became a close aide to Dennis Banks (Weyler 1982: 170). Durham was in charge of the WKLD/OC office during the trials of Banks and Russell Means and as a result, became intimately aware of defense strategies. For this, he received $1,100 a month from the FBI as well as the $100,000 AIM activists maintained he stole from the organization while in charge of all external contributions to the group (Mattheissen 1992: 122).
In the early 1960s, Durham had joined the Des Moines police force after a short stint in the Marines. He was fired from that position in 1964 because of his connections to the criminal underworld and his involvement in prostitution and the selling of stolen goods (Weyler 1982: 170). Michael Carley points out that after the Wounded Knee occupation ‘agent provocateurs often proposed reckless and violent activities’ (1997: 167). He maintains that...

On every available occasion, Durham attempted to incite AIM members to violent actions. One example includes his suggestion that AIM should kidnap South Dakota Attorney General, William Janklow, in order to generate support for the movement. The proposal was vetoed by Means and other AIM leaders, but such actions not only fractured the movement but fed into the FBI propaganda campaign to discredit AIM as a violent, extremist organization (ibid: 168).

One of those who had suspicions about Durham for a long time was Anna Mae Aquash and from the start she ‘suspected Durham of being a troublemaker’ (Weyler 1982: 169). Previously, in 1974, Aquash had been sent to Los Angeles to set up a West Coast office for AIM. Douglas Durham was there as well and almost immediately ‘undermined her fund-raising efforts’ (Mattheissen 1992: 111). According to a former movement activist, “Anna Mae just couldn’t stand Doug: she was on to him” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 117). Another AIM member, Dino Butler, maintains that “there’s no doubt in my mind that Durham set up all that trouble out there (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 116).

Dennis Banks later pointed out that through informers like Douglas Durham “the government set the stage for anybody in the movement to think that Anna Mae was a fed [an FBI member]... it was people who fell into an idea” (Quoted in Konigsberg 2014). In June 1975, at AIM’s national convention in Farmington, New Mexico, Aquash was confronted by two movement members and accused of being an FBI operative. However, shortly afterwards one of the men, Robert Robideau, maintained that they were “satisfied she was not an agent” (Quoted in

It is also now widely accepted that Durham extorted money from various Christian Churches while posing as a leader of AIM (ibid: 125).
Johnson 2007: 56). Around the same time, Aquash told her lawyer, Candy Hamilton, that David Price, a COINTELPRO agent, had told her that if she did not pass on information about AIM leaders she would be “dead within a year” (Quoted in Weyler 1982: 185).

On 24 February 1976, the body of Anna Mae Aquash was discovered on the Pine Ridge reservation. As the murder rate on Sioux land was the highest in the USA by the mid-1970s ‘locals were not at all surprised when Anna Mae Aquash turned up dead” (Konigsberg 2014). At the time of her death, in circumstances similar to Pedro Bissonette, Aquash was getting ready to testify against the government and accuse COINTELPRO agent, David Price, of falsely soliciting testimony from her and threatening to have her killed if she refused to cooperate with the state (Weyler 1982: 192). The condition of Aquash’s remains indicated that she had been dead for up to two months. David Price was present when the body was discovered, but failed to identify the remains. The victim’s hands were then cut off and sent to a FBI lab for fingerprint analysis (ibid: 193). A BIA medical practitioner, W.O. Brown, (the same pathologist who analyzed the remains of Pedro Bissonette) performed an autopsy and maintained that the cause of death was exposure (Johnson 2007: 56). Brown ruled out foul play ‘citing the absence of any signs of physical violence’ (Mattheissen 1992: 256).

On 2 March a “Jane Doe” (since identified as Anna Mae Aquash) was buried on the orders of the Pine Ridge police (Mattheissen 1992: 256). According to the mortician Tom Chamberlain “It was the darndest thing I ever saw, an unidentified corpse buried without a death certificate or burial permit” (Quoted in Weyler 2005). However, no associate of Aquash believed she died of exposure. A friend, Roslynn Jumping Bull, maintained that “she had to be murdered or something, she’s not that dumb, to be walking out there all alone” (Quoted in Matthissen 1992: 257). At the request of AIM and the Aquash family, the body was exhumed. The second autopsy revealed that her death resulted from a bullet to the back of the head (Johnson 2007: 56). Dr. Garry Peterson, resident pathologist at St. Paul Hospital, in Minnesota, maintained that Aquash had been executed by
a “metallic pellet... consistent with lead” which had been fired from a .38 handgun at point-blank range (ibid). Peterson maintained that the victim was “beaten” before her murder and that there also was “evidence of sexual contact” before she was killed (Quoted in Churchill 1992: 93). Officials from the US Commission on Civil Rights who examined the FBI’s autopsy found it “incredible” that the [bullet] wound “was not reported in the first autopsy and [this] gave rise to allegations that the FBI and/or BIA police had covered up the cause of her death” (Quoted in Weyler 2005).

The execution of Anna Mae Aquash is significant because the killing had a hugely debilitating effect on group cohesion within AIM. Due to the paranoia created by state informers, opposing elements within the organization accused the other of orchestrating her murder. The reality was that most movement members were completely in the dark about COINTELPRO operations until years later (Matthessen 1992: 262). For some reason, there was an in-depth investigation into Aquash’s murder by the FBI, when hundreds of other Indian deaths between 1973 and 1976 went completely unnoticed. As Peter Mattheissen queries ‘why had such a large group of law officers come to the [Aquash] death scene, one hundred miles out of Pine Ridge, when reports of dead bodies on Pine Ridge, routine and otherwise, had been common for years?’ (ibid: 259). Years later, former BIA policeman and GOON squad member, Duane Brewer, admitted that there was strong evidence linking Paul Herman, a BIA police investigator (and GOON affiliate), to the execution of Anna Mae Aquash (Churchill 1992: 92)

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173 Douglas Durham’s girlfriend, Jancita Eagle Deer, was killed in mysterious circumstances a few weeks after his public exposure as an FBI agent. Many believed he was responsible for her death (Mattheissen 1992: 119-120). As Peter Mattheissen points out ‘after two years of disruption and harassment by Durham and other informers, AIM was fragmented by fear of infiltration; as a national organization, it was virtually defunct’ (ibid: 125).
9.2.4 Opportunities Closed 4: 1976 - The Demise of AIM as a Militant Force.

On 30 January 1976, Byron DeSerca, the Oglala Sioux tribal attorney and vociferous critic of Richard Wilson’s regime, was shot and killed by GOON squad members. A Civil Rights Commission inquiry into his death pointed out that, “the FBI was notified, but the Bureau [FBI] did nothing but drive round the area” (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 205). The killing was indicative of the state and state-sponsored violence that had terrorised the Pine Ridge Reservation since the Wounded Knee occupation three years earlier. According to Rex Weyler, by 1976, “virtually every AIM leader in the country would be in jail, dead, or driven underground” (Quoted in Wilkinson 2009: 19). The movement was now essentially a fractured entity with different leaders in South Dakota, Minnesota and California (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 62).

In February 1976, Leonard Peltier was arrested in Canada and extradited to the United States. A year later he was sentenced to two consecutive terms of life imprisonment for the first degree murder of agents Coler and Williams (Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 88). The conviction has been vigorously protested ever since. A number of witnesses later admitted that testimony was coerced and fabricated by the FBI. Also, the prosecution could never actually prove that Peltier fired the fatal shots (ibid). On the back of a Freedom of Information ACT request, an examination was carried out on the FBI ballistics record of the shootings. The report concluded that the cartridge case from the crime scene

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174 By 1976, Dennis Banks was living underground. Russell Means had been arrested on thirteen separate occasions and was facing eight separate trials. Stan Holder, Carter Camp and Leonard Crow Dog were all convicted on charges relating to the Wounded Knee occupation and sent to prison (Smith and Warrior 1996: 272).

175 According to James Messerschmidt:

The FBI will fabricate and suppress evidence in order to tie [radical political] leaders up in the courts and in prison. The FBI also encourages agents to lie; one FBI memo stated that “it is immaterial whether facts exist to substantiate the charge. If facts are present, it aids in the success of the proposal... but disruption can be accomplished without facts to back it up” (1983: 118-19).
could not have come from Peltier’s rifle. This evidence was also withheld during the trial.\(^{176}\)

Amnesty International has since placed the Leonard Peltier case under the “unfair trials” category.\(^ {177}\) Furthermore, James Reynolds, a former US attorney who supervised the prosecution against Peltier has since admitted that the case against him “was a very thin case that likely would not be upheld by courts today.”\(^ {178}\)

The projected release date for Leonard Peltier is October, 2040 when he will be 96 years old. According to Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, ‘the lengths to which the Bureau [FBI] has demonstrably been prepared to go in order to keep Peltier in prison, a symbol of the FBI’s ultimate “victory” over AIM, speaks for itself. They have made of this man an example’ (2002: 327). Professor Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz places the state and state-sponsored violence against AIM in a wider context:

During the Nixon era [1968-1975], and during its adjunct Ford administration [1975-1976], hundreds of black organizers were murdered, destabilized or imprisoned. Nearly every case is now traceable to government intelligence sources and outright assassinations and frame-ups…The attack on Indian demonstrators and particularly on American Indian Movement activists was brutal and grisly, with a far greater ratio of deaths and imprisonments than any other movement” (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 353).

\(^{176}\) “As Clinton Contemplates Clemency for Leonard Peltier, a Debate between the FBI and Defence Attorneys.” Democracy Now. December 2000.


CHAPTER 10
Decline – Comparing the Cases

‘Every state has the necessary conditions for terrorism, namely, a staff of men obedient to the directors of the system and equipped with instruments of violence, as well as a population capable of experiencing fear’

‘People in power will defend themselves... the Black Panther Party don’t represent any power, the American Indian Movement doesn’t represent any power — so you can do anything you want to them’

Introduction

This chapter will comparatively explore the role of violence in the disintegration of AIM and the BPP. By 1973, the Panthers were effectively finished as an effective social movement force. Three years later, the same could be said for AIM. Employing Mill’s methods, we can now ask what were the similarities and differences in framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities for this phase of the two movements’ lifecycle? And, can we make a positive or negative case for the applicability of these concepts for the decline of our two cases?

10.1 METHOD OF AGREEMENT: MOVEMENT SIMILARITIES

10.1.1 Framing: State Violence and Counterframing

During the final phase of its lifecycle, AIM arrived at a similar point as the BPP in relation to the prognostic framing (Snow and Benford 2000: 616) of violence. Both groups had always diagnostically framed (ibid) state, structural and popular violence as the key stimulant for group mobilisation. However, from their inception in 1966, the Panthers had employed a prognostic frame promoting armed self-defence as a means to resist external violence (Newton 1973: 110). It was not until the Wounded Knee occupation in 1973 that AIM came to the same framing conclusion. Consequently, there were now similarities in their prognostic frame as both organisations specifically interpreted their actions through the prism of armed self-defence (Baylor 1996: 247).
The framing process during the decline phase has to be viewed in the context of the increased levels of violence which the state employed to destroy both movements.\textsuperscript{179} Both the BPP and AIM were greatly weakened when state and state-sponsored forces executed a number of key movement figures. Speaking about the activities of the FBI during the early to mid-1970s, Senator Philip A. Hart argued that “over the years we have been warned about the danger of subversive organisations, organisations that would threaten our liberties, The Bureau [FBI] did all of those things” (Quoted in Wise 1976: 320).

The attempts by the BPP and AIM to create a motivational frame (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) for armed self-defence triggered increased state violence (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002). COINTELPRO agents responded to any hint of armed action with increased terror. As a result, we find the state instigating a process of counterframing (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) whereby through media allies, it is able to influence the framing process and how the general public understands or interprets relevant events. In line with the way the criminalisation of social movements has long been accepted as a means to justify the most naked use of violence (Garver 1969: 5),\textsuperscript{180} the state framed the BPP and AIM as criminals and as communist subversives.\textsuperscript{181} According to Russell Means “in 1973, AIM and the Black Panther Party were ideological pariahs and labeled the most dangerous groups in America by the FBI. We were the ‘thought criminals’ of the day” (Quoted in Davis Whiteeyes 2009: 262).\textsuperscript{182} Brady Thomas Heiner points out that the ‘police felt it so important to keep black children from being

\textsuperscript{179} The framing of the Hampton and Clark killings in Chicago in 1969 was not just limited to the BPP as the Reverend Jesse Jackson writing in the Chicago Defender called the murders a state “crucifixion” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 244).

\textsuperscript{180} The state’s use of counterframing was successful as the killings on Pine Ridge between 1973 and 1976 ‘received no national news media coverage. However, the death of two FBI agents on 25 June, 1975 received immediate media coverage… There was selective coverage of violence here. This observation is reminiscent of the black civil rights movement’ (Baylor 1996: 247).

\textsuperscript{181} As Angela Davis points out in relation to the broader non-violent Black Power movement, “even when containing our resistance within the orbit of legality, we have been labeled criminals and have been methodically persecuted by a racist legal apparatus” (Quoted in Heiner 2007: 339).

\textsuperscript{182} Clyde Bellecourt also maintained that “there was an effort by those in charge to criminalize the movement, no matter what we did as Indian people to stand up against the police force or the local BIA” (Quoted in Bancroft and Wittstock 2013: 60).
served by the autonomous actions of their own community [BPP Breakfast Programs] that they explicitly fabricated a narrative of criminality in order to obstruct such action’ (2007: 330).

In the 1960s and 1970s in the USA, there was no better way to instigate direct state violence than by framing organizations as not just criminals, but criminals and communist activists. Thomas Reddin, the Police Chief of Los Angeles, articulated the general law enforcement analysis of the Black Power movement when he declared that “the present Negro movement is just as subversive as the past communist movements or just as dangerous as the organized crime movement” (Quoted in Escobar 1993: 1494). Richard ‘Dicky’ Wilson also repeatedly referred to AIM as “communists” and “criminals” (Mattheissen 1992: 64, 128). This would confirm the validity of Julio Rosado’s argument that any “deviation from political orthodoxy is typically presented as common criminal conduct” (Quoted in Berger 2006: 261). Therefore, the state’s process of counterframing is hugely significant, as it operated in parallel with a direct policy of violence against AIM and the BPP, particularly during the final stages of their lifecycle.

10.1.2 Resources: The State Targets the Resource of Military Training

The specific resource that was military training continued to play an important role in counteracting external violence during the final phase of the two movement’s lifecycle. In the case of the Black Panthers, this was exemplified by the organization’s chapter in Southern California where two of its key leaders, John Huggins and “Geronimo” Pratt were Vietnam Veterans. Both men interpreted the use of armed action strictly in terms of self-defense against exogenous violence. During his trial, “Geronimo” Pratt\(^{183}\) was asked in court to define the notion of self-defence in the context of the Panthers’ campaign. He argued that “it was based on the principle from an older organization [Deacons

\(^{183}\) An article in the Los Angeles Times pointed out “Geronimo is what many feared would be a disastrous by product of the Vietnam war, a black man trained as a soldier who returned home to turn his skills against the establishment” (Quoted in Olsen 2000: 65).
for Defense and Justice] that if a nation fails to protect its citizens then they cannot condemn those who take up the task themselves” (Quoted in Olsen 2000: 51-52).

The resource of military training was also to the fore during AIM’s occupation at Wounded Knee in 1973 as ex-army figures such as Stan Holder ‘began planning the defense of the village using strategies [Holder] learned in South East Asia’ (Smith and Warrior 1996: 206). Political Indian activism in the 1970s was filled with veterans from Vietnam, many of whom were decorated on more than one occasion (Mattheissen 1992: 51). Dennis Banks, John Trudell, Larry Anderson, Leonard Crow Dog and Carter Camp were just some of the movement’s leadership who had previously served in the armed forces. Buddy Lamont, who was killed during the occupation at Wounded Knee, was active in constructing Vietnam-style bunkers ‘which the Indians credit with saving many lives’ (ibid: 79).

All of these individuals were targeted by the state during the decline phase as it went to great lengths either thorough direct violence or criminal proceedings to shut down military training as a resource. Key figures from both organizations became mired in an endless round of court proceedings as they faced imprisonment, were forced into exile or driven underground. John Huggins’ murder was due to a state-inspired feud with rival groups (Bloom and Martin Jr.

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184 AIM may have argued that they had no choice but to adopt such a strategy in 1973 but a stark reality soon unfolded when it emerged that they did not have the military resources to cope with the armed strength of the GOON squad, the FBI, and the US army. The organization’s lawyer, Ken Tilsen (who was inside the compound at one point for two days), maintained that the occupation site took an estimated 20,000 rounds of fire over that forty-eight hour period alone (Weyler 1982: 84). Put simply, between 1973 and 1976, in terms of armed resources, AIM was completely overwhelmed.

185 AIM member Woody Kipp was consistently harassed and placed under constant surveillance by COINTELPRO agents (1997: 135). He maintained that he was ‘living in a country [the USA] whose people would use me for their own reasons [the Vietnam War] and then turn their guns on me when I no longer suited their purpose’ (ibid: 48).

186 As Troy Johnson points out, the state used ‘the indictments and the court system to financially destroy AIM and the Red Power activism it fostered among Indian people’ (2007: 81).

187 This would resonate with the argument that ‘with the mechanism of resource depletion, the state erodes the capacity of social movements, thereby diminishing the ability to engage in contentious politics’ (Boycott 2007: 294).
2013: 218). John Trudell’s wife, Tina, and their three children were later burned alive at their home in Nevada. Trudell insisted that his family was murdered by state forces due to his activities with AIM (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 362). When violence was not an option, or immediately achievable, the state turned to criminal proceedings. According to “Geronimo” Pratt:

> I did what I was told...teaching people how to defend themselves, what I had learned in the military... I took them and we had classes on how to defend themselves, and for that, I was attacked (Ji Jaga 2001: 75).\(^{188}\)

Commenting on the constant wave of trials and court proceedings he was involved in, Dennis Banks maintained that ‘as far as I was concerned, I should have stayed at Wounded Knee and fought it out to the death’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 212-13).

10.1.3 Opportunities: Racism and the State

During the final lifecycle stage, it became virtually impossible for both AIM and the BPP to either create or take advantage of available political opportunities. A major reason for this was that both the organizations’ membership and support base were targeted by state tactics that included executions (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002). Essentially, the movements were unable to cope with such violence and this dynamic confirms the POS perspective (McAdam 1982) that if social movements are to persist ‘they must above all resist social control efforts by the state’ (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 55).

However, I would argue that there was one other reason why the state closed down opportunities for movement persistence in these cases. Political opportunity structure proponents have maintained that available opportunities are influenced by a number of factors; one of which is the state’s capacity for repression (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Kriesi 2004). The lesson from our two organizations is that levels of state violence in the USA are based heavily along

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\(^{188}\) Geronimo Pratt was also known as Geronimo ji Jaga, an African term assigned to him by Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter in the late 1960s. Pratt would use this name in later years (Olsen 2000: 38).
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racial lines. *Opportunities* for these groups were shut down with such ferocity because AIM and the BPP represented ethnic minorities. As John Darby states ‘historically, the most common approach to handling inconvenient minorities’ has been ‘subjugation and extermination’ (2012: 28). In this context, Donatella della Porta points to what she terms the ‘soft surfacing’ or light treatment of the mainly white Weather Underground (WU) in contrast to the state violence experienced by the BPP (1995: 215-216). Former WU member, Bill Ayers, admits as much when he argues that “we were pursued and beaten, true, but our Black Panther comrades were being targeted and assassinated” (Quoted in Berger 2006: 274).189

In the case of AIM and the BPP, the state was intent on closing down *opportunities* for movement mobilisation once and for all. As the prison was an important feature in the birth of these groups, it would also be an important feature in their demise. Hence, the disproportionate sentences received by BPP and AIM members and the fact that “Geronimo” Pratt ‘served twenty-seven years in prison for crimes that FBI surveillance documents prove he did not commit’ (Berger 2006: 297). On the other hand, in the late 1970s, a number of Ku Klux Klan members murdered five anti-racist activists in North Carolina. They were also found to have been assisted in this act by the police. However, none of these individuals ever served a day in prison (ibid: 261). While direct violence was utilised against AIM and the BPP, the US state has traditionally employed much more benign methods of surveillance and prosecution in their dealings with right-wing extremists such as the KKK (Gurr 1986: 53). By contrast, all black and Indian activists who are in prison are considered criminals as the US state grants no political prisoner status (Berger 2006: 261).190 As former BPP leader Kathleen

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189 According to Dan Berger:

If people of colour were the despised targets of a racist America, the Weather Underground was made up of its darling children. Its members were largely college graduates, some with advanced degrees, from elite institutions like Brandeis, Columbia, and Swarthmore, and often on their way towards careers as doctors, lawyers, academics, and other professionals (2006: 150).
Cleaver points out “when I look back I see the penalty for the crimes of the state is not being paid by any of these perpetrators… We’re paying for their crimes” (quoted in Berger 2006: 298).

10.2 METHOD OF DIFFERENCE: MOVEMENT DIFFERENCES

10.2.1 Framing: The Ideological Framing of Violence

A key difference in the AIM and BPP campaigns was that clandestine violence emerged much more prominently in the case of the Panthers. This dynamic surfaced with the underground war waged by the Black Liberation Army in 1971. I would argue that this situation materialized because of two important variations in the framing process of the movements. The first factor was the historic use of armed action within the black community. This tactic had been framed as the solution to external violence by elements within black activism for decades. As Akinyele Omowale Umoja points out ‘the development of a clandestine military force had existed in different periods of the black freedom struggle in North America’ (1999: 133). This was not nearly so much the case with AIM as Indian protest groups since World War II had in the main considered all forms of armed action as detrimental and counterproductive (Cornell 1990: 198). There was a belief that it would only instigate further violence against Indians. Tribal politics was also conservative in outlook with tribal chiefs shunning any form of radical politics (Wilkinson 2009: 2). Thus, by the early 1970s, armed action was not a diagnostic frame in resisting state and popular violence.

To explain the offensive campaign of the Black Liberation Army, the ideological framing process of AIM and the BPP, which always differed in relation to the use of violence, needs to be considered. As David A. Snow points out, ideology can function as ‘a resource for the kind of sense-making, interpretive work

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190 Former BPP member, Sekou Odinga was released from prison in 2014 after serving 33 years behind bars. He maintains that Black Panther inmates “are in the worst prisons and the worst conditions and a lot of them are getting older and suffer from health problems” (quoted in Levin 2018).

191 Donatella della Porta refers to positive cases where ‘clandestine violence developed’ and to negative cases ‘in which clandestine violence did not develop’ (2013: 294).
associated with *framing*’ (2004: 385). The BPP had embraced Marxism from the outset and in particular revolutionary left-wing writings which advocated the employment of violence against state repression. While Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were inclined towards armed action as a defensive mechanism, Eldridge Cleaver made no secret of the fact that he believed it should be used offensively (Austin 2006: 76). According to Mumia Abu-Jamal ‘Cleaver was a devotee of the paramilitary *foco*, a form of organisation typified by the urban guerrilla campaigns waged throughout much of Latin America’ (2008: 223; emphasis in original).

Consequently, there was a wing of the BPP which had always *framed* the use of violence through the prism of ideological justification. The Black Liberation Army, according to an article in *Right On!* (a newspaper published by the East Coast Panthers), was “simply brothers and sisters who have gone underground to put all the revolutionary rhetoric and theory into practice” (Quoted in Rosenau 2013: 183). This was a key difference in the *framing process* of AIM and BLA in that the latter *framed* and interpreted the necessity for offensive violence in the form of ‘guerilla warfare [as] the best route to free black communities from oppression’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 387). AIM by contrast, always *framed* the use of arms in a defensive capacity. Thus, the *framing* dynamics in this context would underline the fact that left-wing ideologies are ‘*more favourable to the development of violence, and in particular the “seminilitary” and “clandestine” forms of violence*’ (Della Porta 1995: 50 emphasis in original).

10.2.2 **Resources: Competition for Power**

AIM utilised the *resource* of armed self-defence against external violence during the final stages of the movement’s lifecycle. They had been in existence for nearly five years before they utilised arms as a *resource*. The BPP, on the other hand, had embraced armed action from the day they were formed. I would argue that this variation can be partially explained with reference to the notion of *cultural resources* (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Edwards and Kane 2104), also highlighted as a comparative difference during the developmental phase.
According to Bob Edwards and Melinda Kane, *cultural resources* are ‘beliefs, values, identities, and behavioural norms of a group of people that orient and facilitate their actions in everyday life’ (2014: 215). This view of *cultural resources* resonates with AIM’s decline phase, for even as the organisation disintegrated it continued to espouse values relating to Indian tradition, culture and spirituality (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 95). Clyde Bellecourt, for one, always critiqued the use of violence for political goals. He argued that such struggles were “within the system, and the system had nothing to do with Indians. And we always felt that we had to have a spiritual foundation, a spiritual direction” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 40). Although AIM was inspired by the BPP and aware of other liberation struggles globally, its relationship to Marxism differed ‘due to its emphasis on Native spirituality’ (Berger 2006: 55).

However, what is clear from the final lifecycle phase is that variations in relation to the *resource* of armed action surfaced on a number of levels. Movement interaction with external violence was the one feature stimulating these differences. Firstly, AIM’s position on the *resource* of armed action altered. While Native culture and spirituality remained high on the organization’s agenda, this operated in tandem with a policy regarding armed self-defence. By 1975, against the backdrop of unremitting state violence, one traditional Indian elder on Pine Ridge informed Dennis Banks that “we need help. Our young men have no weapons or ammunition to defend the people, and we need some explosives” (Quoted in Banks and Erdoes 2004: 301). As a result, the organization was to respond positively to the request and amassed a considerable amount of

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192 Clyde Bellecourt remained committed to the notion of passive resistance and did not carry a weapon during the Wounded Knee occupation (Mattheissen 1992: 84).
193 This was apparent in the role played by the Lakota Sioux holy man, Leonard Crow Dog who acted as a bridge between AIM and traditional Indians at Wounded Knee. Even though his actual role during the occupation was as a ‘spiritual practitioner’ the FBI were intent on severing such *resources* and Crow Dog ‘quickly became a prime target for neutralisation’ (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 330). He was designated by the state — along with political figures such as Dennis Banks and Russell Means — as constituting the leadership group which had triggered the occupation in 1973 (ibid).

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weaponry in the following months to be used in a self-defence capacity (ibid: 303).

Secondly, while AIM’s position regarding the resource of armed action changed during this protest phase, the position of the BPP under Huey Newton’s leadership moved in the opposite direction (Austin 2006: 297). The overwhelming nature of state violence was central to the decision towards a social-democratic stance and ‘as the Oakland-based BPP [under Newton] moved in a more reformist direction, the harassment, government-sponsored military raids, and political internment subsided’ (Umoja 1999: 143).

This shift is also associated with a third resource variation in this context, one that did not occur during AIM’s decline phase, and can be associated with the RM-related notion of competition for power (McAdam et al., 2001: 67). Competition for power (or inter-group competition) can contribute towards tactical differentiation and stimulate an escalation of violence. Competition can become a propelling feature in social movement activity when resources are limited (Hazen 2009: 285). This factor contributed significantly towards the split in the BPP and the subsequent ascent of BLA. It was intrinsically associated with armed action as a resource. Once again there were variations in how violence should be employed, with BLA opposing both armed self-defense and a reformist social democratic route. Instead, it called for ‘immediate guerilla warfare against the state’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 371), maintaining that all-out revolutionary violence would ‘attract a broad following and eventually topple the capitalist economy and state’ (ibid: 359).

\[\text{Note:} \quad 194\text{ It is important to point out that BLA had a properly resourced structure in hand when it emerged in that it had access to a considerable arsenal of weapons. As Panther leader Elaine Brown points out, by the early 1970s the BPP had a sizeable store of arms at their disposal (1992: 13). No such resource was in existence for AIM. Therefore, when push came to shove and the state unleashed its immense repressive apparatus against these organisations, AIM’s capacity for launching an underground clandestine war against the state was very different.}\]
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10.2.3 Opportunities: Violence and Counter-Movements

Proponents of the political opportunity structure (Eisenger 1973; McAdam 1982, 1996; McAdam et al., 2001) have suggested that repression is a key determinant of social movement activity and that an SMO that uses violent tactics may be severely penalised for mobilizing in the first place (Davenport 2014: 29). In this context, there was one noticeable difference in the state’s strategy to close opportunities for movement persistence in these cases — this was the use of a paramilitary entity to violently destroy AIM. During the final phase of AIM’s lifecycle, the process of tactical innovation and adaptation (McAdam 1983) between the movement and the state altered dramatically. It has been observed that ‘the presence of counter-movements’ can have a considerable impact (Della Porta 2012: 246). The state’s decision to fund and equip what was essentially a ‘death squad’ (Churchill 1992) was unique in the repertoire of state violence that was employed against social movements in the USA throughout the 1960s and 1970s. No such paramilitary entity has appeared since.

Up until 1973, the state had generally employed quite a benign response to AIM’s campaign. This contrasted with the violence and repression employed against the BPP almost from the get-go (Seale 1970: 87). However, this situation changed rapidly once AIM focused its attention on issues regarding Indian land and treaty rights. By contrast, while the Panthers expressed a commitment to revolutionary change, black people did not historically have access to vast quantities of territory

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195 From early 1973, it was apparent that the FBI and the US Marshals Service offered total support to the GOON squad. This included giving the paramilitary force the right to establish its own roadblocks on the reservation, and the passing of restricted intelligence information to Richard Wilson and his cohorts (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 184). It also included the provision of ‘relatively sophisticated military communications gear, ammunition and the GOON’s first automatic weapons (military M-16 assault rifles)’ (ibid). All in all, between 1973 and 1975, the state pumped ‘an estimated $24 million annually into Wilsons coffers’ (ibid: 193).

196 POS analysis points out that an important factor affecting the state’s response to challengers ‘is the degree to which the movement poses a threat’ to state or opponent interests (McAdam 1982: 57). AIM, through its insistence on renegotiating Indian treaties, threatened the state’s control and exploitation of the significant energy resources which lay beneath Native American land (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 63).
and thus did not directly challenge and threaten state interests and resources in the same manner.

According to Hank Johnson ‘any given movement faces not just a fixed set of opportunities or an absence thereof but rather a dynamic play of responses by the state’ which can in turn ‘send a signal to movement participants of a change in the state’s position’ (2011: 43). We find the state’s campaign against AIM ‘most severe in South Dakota, where uranium leases in the Black Hills were secretly issued to corporate interests’ (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 64). The state decided to close down opportunities for AIM’s mobilisation in one specific region with the belief that it would destroy the organization nationally. Thus, the GOON squad was exclusively employed to violently decimate the movement. If the state’s capacity for repression (McAdam 1996) is one of the ways in which the political opportunity structure is measured then…

The situation on Pine Ridge [in the 1970s] closely resembled the conditions of death-squad repression prevailing in Latin America. The FBI’s fostering and use of pseudo-gangs or private armies, especially in the context of its secret cooperation with the military, in pursuit of its covert political agenda(s), truly seems to approximate

As John William Sayer points out:

Few political organizations can boast of going up against the White House, Congress, the FBI, the US Marshals, the Pentagon, the BIA, the Justice Department, the US Attorney’s Office, the 82nd Airborne, and various state and local law enforcement and prosecutorial branches, all within a period of less than ten years (2000: 227).

The adoption of armed self-defense by AIM also closed opportunities for group persistence in another critical way. Native Americans always had an ambiguous relationship with militant politics and particularly with the use of violence. According to Charles Wilkinson, ‘perhaps the most common response was to employ peaceful activism situationally’ (2009: 2). Most tribes and tribal leaders wanted nothing to do with confrontational forms of action. In some respects, AIM was trapped between two opposing forces. On the one hand, opportunities for movement growth had significantly been enabled by their links to the Pine Ridge Reservation as the Oglala and Lakota Sioux were historically renowned for their militancy (Matthessien 1992). As Van Gosse points out, AIM ‘were looking for a fight, to show that Indian peoples were still unbeaten. They found their battleground at the symbolic centre of Native America — the Sioux Reservation in South Dakota’ (2005: 138). However, on the other hand, many Indians throughout the USA ‘felt that AIM’s [perceived] left-wing orientation was incompatible with their ancestral Native American values’ (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 63). As a result, by 1976, AIM’s organizational base was virtually centered on Pine Ridge, thus making it easy for the state to violently shut down opportunities for movement mobilization in one specific locale.
the situation in such countries as Uruguay and Guatemala (Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 196).

**Theoretical Implications**

In this chapter, I drew on SM theory to comparatively examine the decline of AIM and the BPP. I will first briefly outline the *strengths* of *framing*, *resource mobilisation* and *political opportunities* in illuminating the violence which contributed towards the movement’s demise.

*Framing* was advantageous in the Panthers’ case as it permits us to view how differing approaches to the BPP’s process of *prognostic* and *motivational framing* (Snow and Benford 2000) contributed to the split which occurred in the organisation in 1971. This precipitated the ascent of the Black Liberation Army. By the early 1970s, Panther leaders including Huey Newton and David Hilliard, ceased to articulate the belief that armed self-defence was the *rational* course of action to take against the might of the US state. BLA leaders, on the other hand, initially disagreed with this position, but by 1973, their campaign was also neutralised by overwhelming levels of state violence and repression.

While AIM never split over the issue of violence, its leadership reached the same *motivational framing* conclusion as Huey Hewton and David Hilliard in that it was not *rational* to sustain a campaign of armed action against the US government. This decision was taken in light of the so-called “reign of terror” which devastated AIM’s effectiveness on the Pine Ridge Reservation (Churchill 1992). Another *strength* of *framing* during the final lifecycle phase was the use

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198 In this context, the notion of *rational choice* can have both *framing* and *opportunities* characteristics. David Hilliard is *framing* the idea that bringing down the US state is no longer considered feasible. This realisation was made in the wake of *opportunities* for BPP mobilization closing down. Thus, the argument here is that it was initially *rational* to take up arms to defend the black community against state violence and now it is thought *rational* to abandon that tactic because of state violence.

199 The support base for militant and left-wing politics in the USA is minimal to begin with. According to Ernest Evans ‘the failure of revolutionary violence in America stems from a key fact about American society. There have never been any mass-based movements of the extreme left in the United States’ (1983: 256).

200 The process of *motivational framing*, or the ‘rationale’ for engaging in collective action (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) proved to be a difficult task for AIM by the mid-1970s. The rationale in this case was quite clear as an ‘atmosphere of fear and violence’ stalked the Indian community at Pine Ridge (Mattheissen 1992: 313). *Motivational framing* amplifies ‘the severity and urgency’
of counterframing (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) by the state which allowed us to analyse how the US government criminalised both movements. Consequently, the process of counterframing prefaced a campaign of direct violence which expedited the movement’s demise.

Resource mobilisation and political opportunities also displayed strengths in that they permitted us to view that once resources began to drain from these groups; opportunities were shut down in parallel. As a result, possibilities for movement persistence were severely curtailed. Key resources that had sustained the AIM and BPP campaigns such as movement leadership, members with military training and access to modes of armed self-defence, were all targeted by the state one by one. Once this dynamic unfolded, opportunities for further development were closed down as movement resources and opportunities in our two cases were in a constant process of interaction. In my opinion, there has to be a fluid interplay between these two concepts. Once this fluidity ceased here, the potential for group persistence unravelled. However, this occurrence did not surface in a void. As Doug McAdam points out, for a social movement to survive ‘insurgents must be able to create a more enduring organisational structure to sustain insurgency’ (1982: 54). He goes on to point out that ‘what is missing from the above discussion is any acknowledgement of the enormous obstacles insurgents must overcome to succeed in this effort’ (ibid: 52).

Consequently, from the analysis of the decline phase, two conceptual weaknesses become apparent in the case of AIM and the BPP. The first relates to social movement theory and movement outcomes. Numerous scholars have pointed to deficiencies in this regard (Giugni 1998; Goodwin and Jasper 2003; Bosi and Giugni 2012; Davenport 2014). As Ruud Koopmans argues “to date, the

of threat (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) and this dynamic was repeatedly underlined by AIM members when they initiated the call for armed self-defense in 1975. However, the organization could not cope with the combined strength of state and state-sponsored forces and they ultimately ‘lacked the power to see that this framing [armed self-defense] of their actions prevailed’ (Baylor 1996: 247).
explanation of protest decline is perhaps the weakest chain in social movement theory and research” (Quoted in Davenport 2014: 13). One of the reasons for this is that SM theory has traditionally taken for granted a reform perspective and that ‘definitions of success or failure hinge upon whether or not the organisation succeeds in incorporating its participants into the existing political/economic structure’ (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000: 577). According to Margit Mayer, the liberal ideological assumptions that have shaped ‘American social movement practice have been incorporated into the premises and theories’ of much social movement research (1991: 476). This would resonate with Alvin Gouldner’s assertion that ‘it has become the essential role of the sociologist-as-liberal-technologue to foster the optimistic image of [Western] society as a system whose major problems are deemed altogether soluble within existing master institutions’ (1970: 501).

All this operates in tandem with a second conceptual weakness here. This relates to SM theory and the specific nature of state violence and repression. The three concepts utilised in this study offer various, but ultimately limited, analysis on exogenous violence in social movement decline. Within the framing approach, studies of the consequences for SMO mobilisation, or what Snow and Benford refer to as social movement ‘goal-attainment’ are negligible (2000: 632), as framing resides in the process of grievance identification (Della Porta 2012: 254), and of coming to a prognosis for such grievances (Snow and Benford 2000). In our two cases, it was very difficult for AIM and the BPP to adequately assess and frame the violence directed against them during the final lifecycle phase as the real extent of the state’s COINTELPRO activities did not surface until well after the group’s demise (Mattheissen 1992; Churchill and Vander Wall 2002). While the organisations were aware that the violence was certainly emanating from state or state affiliated quarters, they found it extremely difficult to satisfactorily frame a response to what was essentially an invisible and unknown force.

The resource mobilisation approach also displays deficiencies in relation to movement outcomes. Marco Giugni maintains that as resource mobilisation has
dominated the study of social movements, ‘it is therefore little surprising that research on movement outcomes [have] paid a lot of attention to the role of organisational characteristics of movements’ (1998: 374). RM’s key fulcrum is to point to the resources which sustain the why and the how of social movement mobilisation (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977). This perspective attributes an ‘SMO’s failure in achieving its stated goals to a lack of necessary resources’ (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 54). However, it does not adequately consider how external violence may drain the resources from the movement in the first place.

Most explanations in the social movement literature for movement decline has focused on the political opportunity structure (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 315) and the surrounding political environment ‘which may of course constrain as well as facilitate movements’ (ibid). Certainly, POS analysis highlights state repression and maintains that if an organisation is to have a durable existence it must successfully identify and resist the social control ventures by the state (McAdam 1982). However, much of the research on the link between movement opportunities and repression has centred on the policing of protest (Davenport 2014: 8). We find that ‘government actions (covert behaviour, such as torture and disappearances, as well as informants and agents provocateurs) are relatively ignored’ (ibid: 8-9).

While social movement theory can illuminate a number of factors pertinent to the demise of AIM and the BPP, it struggles to properly assess a campaign of state violence which included the execution of movement members and supporters. As Christian Davenport observes, an overwhelming social movement emphasis has been placed on ‘the evils done against governments (and citizens) by dissidents, rebels, and terrorists than to the evils done by presidents, the police, military, secret service, national guard, and death squads against those within their territorial jurisdiction’ (2007: 1). Thus, the problem with many strands of social movement theory is that it is too tied in its assumptions of the prevailing social order (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000: 573) and as a result ‘all theories of social
movements imply adherence to a more general model of institutionalised power’ (McAdam 1982: 231). Therefore, I would argue that the concepts of framing, resources and opportunities are not in themselves sufficient to account for the demise of AIM and the BPP.

The executions of Fred Hampton, Pedro Bissonette, Anna Mae Aquash and Mark Clark had a seismic effect on the capacity for AIM and the BPP to sustain their mobilisation. This is without mentioning the hundreds of other killings carried out by the state which essentially depleted the resource base of both organisations. In a perpetuation of a dynamic that existed at both formational and developmental phases, all of these murders went without any form of in-depth investigation by the state. As Ruth Blakeley points out more generally, state violence ‘is usually intended to achieve certain political objectives, particularly curtailing political opposition. When used in this way, state violence constitutes state terrorism’ (2012: 63). I too would argue that the central propelling force for movement decline in these cases was state terrorism. All other SMO disintegrative issues were as a result of this factor. Michael Stohl has suggested how:

In much Western political thought since the enlightenment, the concept of the state as neutral conflict manager or arbiter of social conflict within society is so ingrained that many have difficulty emotionally accepting the idea of state terrorism. Terrorism is something done by revolutionaries against the state. How could a government — at least a legitimate government — be thought to engage in terrorism? (2006: 4; emphasis in original).

The concept of state terrorism has been one which has not only appeared infrequently within the social movement literature but remains very much on the periphery of social and political thought. Ruth Blakeley points out that:

There has been considerable resistance within international relations scholarship to the notion that states can be perpetrators of terrorism, even though the vast majority of state violence, particularly against domestic populations, is intended to have a terrorising effect and
results in far higher casualties than non-state terrorism does (2012: 64).201

There have, however, been exceptions to the tendency not to consider state terrorism (Chomsky and Herman 1979; Mitchell, Stohl, Carleton and Lopez 1986; Gurr; 1986; Stohl 2006; Blakeley 2012). Ted Robert Gurr maintains that, ‘state terrorism should be seen as arising from conflict situations created by interactions among elites and their opponents’ (1986:45). Gurr goes on to point out that ‘violence by regimes is terroristic only if it is “instrumental,” which means designed to have a wider effect on some audience’ (ibid: 46). During the final lifecycle phase of our two cases, the state responded to the threat posed by the BPP and AIM with a campaign of violence which terrorised both their memberships and their potential memberships.202 As a result, the wider support networks which facilitated the movement’s formation and development were decapitated with resources depleted and opportunities shut down. This would confirm the validity of Ruth Blakeley’s argument that ‘a defining feature of state terrorism — and that which distinguishes it from other forms of state violence — is that it involves the illegal targeting of individuals that the state has a duty to protect with the aim of instilling fear in a target audience beyond the direct victim’ (2012: 63).

I would argue that the state’s campaign against AIM was especially ferocious in its intensity, with over 300 members and supporters being murdered on the Pine Ridge Reservation alone between 1973 and 1976. A specific feature of this violence was that a state-sponsored death squad was employed to carry out the killings on the state’s behest (Churchill 1992). Michael Stohl has pointed to what

201 Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman (1979) distinguish between what they term wholesale and retail terror. Wholesale terror points to the millions who have been victims of state terrorism in countries such as Guatemala, Chile, South Africa, East Timor, Peru, Rwanda and Argentina. While the authors argue that deaths as a result of wholesale terror far outstrip the deaths caused by retail terror (state challengers), it is the latter which receives most public, state, media and scholarly attention. As Michael Stohl points out ‘between 8.9 and 19.8 million people were killed in forty-eight episodes’ of state directed terrorism between 1945 and 1994 (2006: 2).

202 This would underline the argument that repression has the capacity to impose ‘a new logic on social movement activity… individuals must ask themselves: what could happen to me if I opt for dissent?’ (Boycott 2007: 299).
he refers to as *clandestine state terrorism* ‘which consists of state or private
groups being employed to undertake terrorist actions on behalf of the sponsoring
state’ (2006: 7).\(^{203}\) Once the US government had employed a process of
*counterframing* these organisations as criminals and communist subversives,
direct violence against them was given free rein. Stohl goes on to maintain that
‘almost all cases of state terror are preceded by campaigns which seek to
marginalise and dehumanise the potential victims and are further justified in the
name of national security’ (ibid: 17).

All in all, while our three concepts are appropriate to some extent when exploring
these movements decline, I would make a **negative** case for their applicability
when examining in totality the violence which precipitated group demise in these
two cases. In my opinion, AIM and the BPP disintegrated due to a campaign of
external violence, associated with theory relating to *state terrorism*. *Framing*,
*resource mobilisation* and *political opportunities* can only go so far in adequately
assessing the role of violence in their demise, as once the architecture of *state
terrorism* was unleashed, both **internally** and **externally**, the **resources** and
available **opportunities** for continued movement mobilisation quickly ebbed
away. Essentially, once a state with the military might of the USA decided that
AIM and the BPP challenged the status-quo, their capacity to *frame* grievances,
employ *resources* and create/or take advantage of *opportunities* were fatally
diminished.

\(^{203}\) Charles Tilly has maintained that when revolutionary social movements mobilise, the state
utilises its monopoly on the ‘concentrated means of coercion’ to defend elite interests (1985:
181). Tilly identifies a number of activities that the state employs to subjugate radical challengers
and two of these are of special interest in this context. The first is the repression of opposition,
which Tilly terms *state making*, and that involves ‘eliminating or neutralising their [the state]
rivals inside their territories’ (ibid). The second form of organised violence that Tilly maintains
the state employs is of particular interest in AIM’s case. This is what he terms *protection* and
which involves the protection of elite interests through ‘eliminating or neutralising the enemies
of their clients’ (ibid: 181). As a result, Tilly maintains that the state operates like ‘quintessential
protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy’ which in turn ‘qualify as our largest
examples of organised crime’ (ibid: 169).
CHAPTER 11

Conclusion

This study has attempted to comparatively examine the campaigns of the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party against the backdrop of how well social movement theory helps us compare two social movements that utilised armed tactics. The interactive effects of violence — state, structural and popular — on the two movement’s formation, development and decline have been examined. Three major concepts from social movement theory — framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities — have been employed to illuminate the violence during each of these three lifecycle phases. Similarities and differences in the two movement’s trajectories were then highlighted. John Stuart Mill’s method of agreement and method of difference was relied upon to conduct this strand of the analysis. On the basis of the comparison, some conceptual strengths and weaknesses associated with the three concepts and our two cases were identified. In this concluding chapter, I will first summarise my findings relating to the issue of violence during each lifecycle phase, using the conceptual prisms of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities. The similarities and differences in the separate stages of the two movements’ lifecycles will also be summarised, as will the theoretical implications this study has for the social movement concepts utilised.

11.1 CONCLUSION — VIOLENCE AND MOVEMENT FORMATION, DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN FRAMING, RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES

11.1.1 Formation: Framing

The Black Panther Party emerged within the cycle of protest that was the civil rights struggle. The alleviation of state, structural and popular violence was one of the key goals of the civil rights campaign. There was widespread agreement as to how this violence was to be diagnostically framed (Snow and Benford 2000:
616). However, differing approaches to the *prognostic frame* (ibid) always rippled beneath the surface of political black activism. On the one hand, Martin Luther King argued that the response to police and racial terror should be peaceful protest. By contrast, black militant figures such as Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X opted for armed self-defence. These tactical differences are reflective of what have been termed *framing wars* (Snow *et al.*, 1986; Snow and Benford 1992). Thus, on their formation in 1966, the BPP aligned itself with the militant wing of black activism and also framed armed action as the desirable solution to exogenous violence, particularly police violence.

I have argued that the notion of Black Power was a *master frame* (Snow and Benford 1992) articulated by some black activists. This frame was noticeably different to that advanced by the mainstream civil rights movement in that it promoted confrontational and militant politics. Later on, this same frame was taken up by Indian leaders to promote the idea of Red Power and it was within this narrative that AIM surfaced. *Frames* associated with justice and equality resonated with numerous Native American social movements at the time. As Charles Wilkinson points out, ‘one thing is sure, however one adds it up: the ends and means of the civil rights struggle became shaping forces in Indian America, just as they did in America as a whole’ (2009: 2). AIM emerged at the height of a period when external violence against ethnic minorities was very prominent in North America. This violence emanated from two sources: the state (in the form of the police force) and from white racially motivated groups (often in collusion with state actors).

The BPP and AIM both appeared within the ghettos of urban North America. The Panthers formed in Oakland, California while the Native American group surfaced in Minneapolis in Minnesota. The genesis for both movements resided within the process of internal migration within the US. All of the BPP’s leadership had familial roots in the Deep South (Abu Jamal 2008: 6) and most were forced to relocate during World War II as a result of violence from either the police or the Ku Klux Klan. AIM’s leadership were all associated with the
tribes of the northern plains whose territories had been ransacked by the state due to the abundant reserves of natural resources on Indian land. Thousands of Native Americans were forced off these reservations in the 1950s and ‘dumped into cities like Minneapolis’ (Mattheissen 1992: 35). The AIM and BPP process of framing structural violence was found to be similar, with the black and Indian districts of Oakland and Minneapolis being seen as marked by structural expropriation, poverty, unemployment, substandard housing and racism. The BPP saw the black ghettos as internal colonies of the USA in which persistent police violence underpinned repression (Alkebulan 2007: 14). Academic and AIM supporter, Ward Churchill, has also referred to Indian reservations as ‘internal colonies presently engaged to varying extents in anti-colonial struggles’ (1983: 198; emphasis in original).

The leadership of both movements framed the racial bias within the criminal justice system as a key movement grievance. Prison statistics from the 1960s clearly showed that blacks and Indians were imprisoned at a significantly higher rate than their white counterparts (Marable 1983: 320; Mattheissen 1992: 34). All of the key figures involved in the formation of our two groups had served time behind bars prior to their movement’s emergence.

AIM’s diagnostic frame differed to the BPP in that specific grievances relating to Native America were advanced by the organisation. Central here was the issue of land seizures which had historically been carried out through acts of state violence which some commentators have described as genocide (Brown 1970; Mann 2005). Key AIM figures made consistent reference to both the Indian Wars of the 1860s and 1870s, and particularly to the massacre of approximately 300 unarmed men, women and children at Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1890. Territorial dispossession was identified as the cause of the structural violence which had effectively decimated the Native American population by the late 1960s (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 105).

It has been argued that a key framing similarity during this lifecycle phase was that the BPP and AIM were first and foremost formed to counteract state
violence. These organisations would never have emerged in the absence of this factor. Police brutality was the primary diagnostic frame advanced by both groups as blacks in Oakland and Indians in Minneapolis were consistently subjected to what we termed persistent police violence. Arrests, harassment, beatings, torture and murder were a common feature of daily life in both communities. Popular violence was also framed in tandem with state repression. Movement leaders maintained that the US state was fundamentally racist towards blacks and Indians. Violence and racism were inextricably linked by both groups to the extent that it was impossible to perceive one without the other. While the prognostic frames for combating such terror may have differed (the Panthers stressed the notion of armed self-defence), the state’s role in instigating violence and repression was the primary reason these groups formed. As BPP member Elbert Howard argued, AIM ‘formed strong bonds with the Black Panther Party. They came to understand that we all had common social and economic conditions… police brutality, slum housing, an 80% unemployment rate, and racist and discriminatory state policies’ (2009: 366).

Ideology was found to be an important framing difference during our two movements’ formational phases. The BPP was to frame a response to external violence through the prism of Marxist-Leninist theory and writings. Their prognostic frame for exogenous violence therefore revolved around the use of armed self-defence, as promoted heavily in revolutionary Marxist thought. AIM, on the other hand, framed the belief that Indian culture, tradition and spirituality were essential elements for their mobilisation. This factor also strongly influenced AIM’s reluctance to use armed repertoires. Key AIM figure Russell Means pointed to the scepticism about left-wing ideologies within Native American communities when he maintained that ‘[Marxism] is a materialist doctrine which despises the American Indian spiritual tradition, our culture, our lifeways. Marx himself called us “precapitalists” and “primitive” ’ (1983: 26). Means went on to emphasise the framing differences with the BPP when he argued that ‘in order for us to really join forces with Marxism, we Indians would have to accept the national sacrifice of our homeland… we’d have to commit
cultural suicide and become industrialised, Europeanized… we would have to totally defeat ourselves’ (ibid: 27; emphasis in original).

11.1.2 Formation: Resources

When the BPP and AIM emerged, they employed a number of resources to combat external violence. Within the typology of resource types, human resources are highlighted as important as these resources include assets such as skills, expertise and experience (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 127). During the formative phase, the resource of military training to counter exogenous violence was hugely significant, particularly in the case of the BPP. Former military personnel had been a critical resource in the battle against racial violence, years before the Panthers emerged. A crucially important figure here was Robert F. Williams, a decorated veteran from World War II. In his memoir he argued that ‘racism in the USA is as much a world problem as Nazism… the racists in America are the most brutal people on earth’ (1962: 33). The founders of the BPP, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, were fully aware of armed self-defence units which had been enabled by military veterans throughout the southern states of the USA. Previous social movements in this respect such as the Lowndes County Freedom Organisation (which used the symbol of the Black Panther for the first time) and the Deacons for Defence and Justice were significant resource templates for the BPP; they made blacks across the USA aware of the necessity for armed self-defence. As Curtis J. Austin points out, ‘[like] Robert Williams, and the Deacons for Defence and Justice, the Black Panther Party was a continuation of that struggle’ (2006: xvii).

204 The notion of pre-existing networks was also an important resource utilised by AIM. Prior to the organisation’s formation, a number of Indian social movements, including the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), highlighted the issue of violence against the Native American population. This particular group also employed confrontational tactics to achieve its goals as ‘the roots of American Indian activism [in the 1960s] were buried in centuries of mistreatment of Indian people’ (Johnson 1996: 130). Predating the ascent of AIM, the NIYC appropriated tactics from the civil rights movement as Native protest groups increasingly ‘adopted the vocabulary and techniques of the blacks in order to get Indian issues covered by the media and attract the attention of the American public’ (ibid: 132).
In a similar vein, a key resource in the rising tide of Indian activism in the 1960s was provided by Native American veterans of the Vietnam War. The idea of Red Power was a militant equivalent of Black Power; and a key element in this movement was the role played by army veterans.\footnote{Many ex-soldiers utilised the educational benefits from having served in the armed forces and enrolled in colleges and universities to fill ‘the ranks of the rising Indian activism movement now emerging as Red Power’ (Johnson 1996: 134)} A number of pivotal AIM figures, including the organisation’s co-founder, Dennis Banks, had previously served in the armed forces and this resource was not lost on the organisation when they formed in 1968. Thus, the conflict in South East-Asia ‘was eventually acknowledged as a war fought by the poor and people of colour… the experience of Vietnam linked Indian and the other minority soldiers in various ways’ (Strauss 2009: 207).

*Moral resources* (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Edwards and Kane 2014) were identified as important for both the AIM and BPP formational phases. Such resources emphasise legitimacy, movement solidarity or what new social movement theorists refer to as *collective identity* (Melucci 1995). Personal experience of prison was a hugely motivating factor in the emergence of these groups. Inequities along racial lines within the criminal justice system were viewed by movement leaders as just another layer of the structural violence which was engulfing the black and Indian ghetto communities in the 1960s. The prison in essence became a resource for radicalisation. All of the founders of these groups — Huey Newton, Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt and Bobby Seale — had at one time or another been imprisoned before the movements emerged. This factor overlaps with another highlighted resource in group formation and that is movement leadership, included in the *human resource* type (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Edwards and Kane 2014). Ultimately, our two organisations would never have formed without the resource of charismatic leaders. These figures were all essentially radicalised through interaction with state, structural and popular violence. As a result, the resource of leadership was singled out as a key resource similarity during the first lifecycle phase.
By contrast, it was found that a key resource difference during the formational stage was the use of arms as a movement tactic. Initially both groups employed their own police patrols as a means to counter state violence. The resource-related notion of diffusion (Soule 2004) was considered important in this context, as AIM had appropriated the tactic of police patrols from the Panthers’ repertoire. However, the BPP utilised weapons to back up this strategy while AIM did not. Two reasons were given for this difference. The first was the fact that armed self-defence had been used by blacks against external violence for decades prior to the BPP’s emergence. A noticeable difference in this respect was that the Native American population (in the main) did not have to contend with a violent organisation like the Ku Klux Klan. In other words, there was a tradition of utilising the resource of armed self-defence within the black community. Charles Tilly’s (1978) repertoires of contention were highlighted in this context as they emphasise how people know how to access specific resources. As Sarah A. Soule points out ‘the repertoire of contention is the complete set of protest tactics available to a social movement at any given time’ (2004: 300).

Ideology was another important difference influencing the use of the resource of arms by our two organisations. Marxist-Leninist theory formed the backbone of the BPP’s ideological base. Central here was the use of armed action to counter state violence. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale were hugely influenced by the writings of Lenin, Mao-Tse Tung and Che Guevara. Of particular significance for the ghetto blacks’ condition in the USA were the writings of the Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon and the way he tied together notions regarding racism, colonialism and violence. On the other hand, Native American politics tended to be conservative and tribal elders steered well clear of militant forms of action (Wilkinson 2009: 2). AIM leaders were also strongly influenced by Native American culture and spiritual practices. When the movement emerged, it was less ideologically rigid than the BPP and it grounded its philosophies in traditional Indians values which rejected the use of violence (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 95-104). Therefore, when AIM surfaced in 1968 armed action was not initially embraced as a resource.
11.1.3 Formation: Opportunities

Turning to the *opportunities* concept and movement formation, it was concluded that the environment nurtured by the civil rights movement created numerous openings for the BPP and AIM. Themes relating to social justice and equality for blacks resonated not just within the African-American community but within numerous ethnic minority groups across the USA. Issues relating to structural and popular violence were also highlighted and moderate black leaders, such as Dr. Martin Luther King and John Lewis, made constant references to the oppressive brutality of police violence. Thus, as Bloom and Martin Jr. point out ‘without the success of the insurgent civil rights movement… the Black Power ferment from which the Black Panther Party emerged would not have existed’ (2013: 13).

Elsewhere, *opportunities* surfaced for the BPP through the emerging pattern of riots which raged across the USA throughout the 1960s. This disorder was overwhelmingly instigated by acts of police violence. Consequently, a young militant black population, radicalised through interaction with state violence, was available to the Panthers as they took form (Calloway 1977: 58). There were also the *opportunities* created by the ongoing war in Vietnam. BPP leader Huey Newton used the war against US forces in South-East Asia as an example for blacks in America to replicate. He argued that the African-American community must arm itself in defence “against the same racist army” that was terrorising the Vietnamese people (Quoted in Austin 2006: 80).

All these mentioned *opportunities*, particularly the milieu that sprang from the civil rights campaign, assisted in some way the emergence of AIM. As Charles Wilkinson points out ‘civil rights put wind beneath the wings of the Indian movement by forcing the nation to confront the virus of racism and the humanity of minority peoples’ (2009: 2). AIM also emerged within the hothouse environment of the 1960s urban ghetto. The widespread rioting provoked by state violence opened further *opportunities* for the ascent of Indian militancy. The Vietnam War provided the platform for the appearance of Red Power as Indian
veterans from the conflict were a considerable element behind its emergence (Johnson 1996: 130-131). We also found that *cultural opportunities* specific to the Native American population opened *opportunities* for movement formation in AIM’s case. The organisation’s leaders argued that violence had always been the tool by which the state had crushed the Indian population of North America. As a result, key movement figures pointed to the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 for example and, in my opinion, such events were *framed* as *specific* forms of *cultural genocide*.

While *discursive opportunities* (Koopmans and Statham 1999) relating to the prevalence of ideologies promoting left-wing revolutionary violence were deemed important in the Panthers’ case, there is no doubt about the significance of police violence in opening *opportunities* for movement instigation in our two cases. Conditions analogous to what McAdam (1982) terms *cognitive liberation* and *insurgent consciousness* were apparent in the black and Indian ghettos of Oakland and Minneapolis. The state, through the actions of the police, had lost legitimacy in the eyes of key movement figures such as Dennis Banks and Huey Newton. These individuals argued that their communities’ protection would only be achieved by particular social movement intervention. Essentially, these organisations would never have formed without the *opportunities* presented to them by the state, specifically in the form of *persistent police violence*. This dynamic confirms the validity of the argument that militant groups surface so that they can provide some form of protection from external violence (Goodwin 2001: 48).

The emergence of these groups resonates with the argument within POS analysis that militant organisations can surface when the political opportunity structure is *closed* (Eisenger 1973: 11). This factor was singled out as a key *opportunity similarity* for this lifecycle phase. These movements both emerged from communities that were excluded first and foremost through exogenous violence and racism but also through *closed* access to political capital and power. Structural violence was endemic within the black and Indian ghettos of Oakland.
and Minneapolis. Writing at the time, Thomas Rose painted a vivid picture of the urban ghettos that nurtured the ascent of AIM and the BPP. He maintained that ‘official violence (control) has been used for years to quell the aspirations, rights, and demands’ of these communities and that ‘the controllers — the government local and national guard — [use] violent control as a destructive technique, or authority and repression’ (1969: 47).

An important opportunity difference during this lifecycle phase was the fact that AIM, and Indian protest in general, consistently profited from opportunities created within black activism. This underlines the argument that political openings can occur due to the creation of external opportunities (Meyer and Evans 2014: 260). Within POS analysis, the term tactical innovation (McAdam 1983) is used to describe innovative tactics which can be appropriated by different social movements (Morris 2003). This feature was repeatedly apparent within Indian protest dynamics of the 1960s. We thus find the employment by the National Indian Youth Council of “fish-ins” which replicated the tactic of “sit-ins” first employed by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the Deep South. The second was the Red Power movement which was directly influenced by the calls for Black Power which had surfaced two years previously. And the third was AIM’s police patrols, replicated from similar BPP strategies and used to counter state violence in Minneapolis. In my opinion, it is doubtful whether AIM would have emerged in the form that it did without the opportunities that were opened as a result of black protest innovation.
11.1.4 Development: Framing

The pervasive nature of state violence and racism continued to be the key diagnostic frame for both organisations during their developmental phase. The killing of Denzil Dowell in April 1967 was a seminal event in the Panthers’ development and encapsulated the sense of black grievance towards the police in San Francisco. BPP leaders argued that community solidarity was necessary in the face of state violence and the party’s motivational frame (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) ‘emphasised that black people would never be safe and secure if they depended on the police to protect them’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 56). Similarly, the movement’s prognostic frame argued that ‘black people would only be safe if they took the situation into their own hands and defended themselves’ (ibid: 57).

Framing similarities between the BPP and AIM in relation to exogenous violence (whether state-instigated or racially motivated) were highlighted as significant during the two movements’ developmental phases. AIM also framed police violence, this time in Minneapolis, as the key grievance facing the Indian population there. As Christine Birong points out ‘police brutality was one of the main purposes for the establishment of the [American Indian Movement]. AIM leaders were quick to realise that police officer abuse of Minneapolis’ urban Indian population was one of their most serious community grievances’ (2009: 18). However, as AIM developed throughout the early 1970s, the organisation’s leaders diagnostically framed (Snow and Benford 2000: 616) police violence as not just a threat to Indians in Minneapolis, but a threat to Indians across the USA. The police killings of Leroy Shenadoah and Philip Celay in 1972 testified to the extension of this frame. The organisation also stressed the notion that the state consistently bestowed light treatment on the killers of innocent Indian civilians (Weyler 1982: 68).

Similarities relating to popular violence and movement frames were apparent throughout this lifecycle stage. While the two movements’ prognostic frame (Snow and Benford 2000: 616) to counter such violence continued to diverge,
the threat of racial violence against blacks and Indians was an ongoing interactive factor during the developmental phase. Key Panther figure “Geronimo” Pratt pointed out that he was sent throughout the USA by the BPP’s leadership to train party members and ordinary black citizens in countering the persistent threat of Ku Klux Klan violence (Olsen 2000: 44). AIM’s diagnostic frame (Snow and Benford 2000: 616) was underpinned by the brutal racial killings of Richard Oakes, Raymond Yellow Thunder and Wesley Bad Heart Bull in 1972 and 1973. These killings inspired the prognostic framing of occupation as a militant tactic, as evidenced by demonstrations organised by the movement at Washington DC, Gordon, Nebraska and Custer in South Dakota.

It cannot be overstated how significant the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in April 1968 was to the process of BPP framing. The killing of the black civil rights leader resonated with the Panthers’ frame that the path of nonviolence was no longer viable. Writing at the time, BPP leader Eldridge Cleaver summed up party thinking when he maintained that ‘to many of us it was clear that that door [non-violence] was never open. But we were willing to allow those who wanted to bang upon that door for entry, we were willing to sit back and let them do this’ (1969: 237). Cleaver went on to underline the BPP’s own prognostic frame when he stated that ‘it’s all dead now. Now there is the gun and the bomb, dynamite and the knife and they will be used liberally in America’ (ibid).

By contrast, between 1968 and 1973, armed action was never part of the framing position espoused by AIM. While militant tactics were promoted by the organisation, the group’s prognostic frame for Indian grievances included an emphasis on Native American culture and tradition. Essentially the movement framed an ideology, unique in many respects, which emphasised both spiritualism and militancy (Bonney 1977). However, it has been clearly shown how AIM’s prognostic frame for external violence altered substantially in response to the events on the Pine Ridge Reservation in early 1973. Consequently, the group’s motivational frame, providing the rationale for collective action (Snow and Benford 2000: 617), was transformed by the
unrelenting state and state-sponsored violence against Indians on the reservation. As movement co-founder Dennis Banks pointed out, the organisation could not *rationally* stand aside as ‘Pine Ridge was swarming with FBI agents and US marshals in blue jumpsuits. Already the first APC’s [anti-personnel carriers] — some carrying machine guns — were arriving… Wilson [Tribal Chairman] abolished all constitutional rights. Fear was spreading all across the rez [reservation]’ (Banks and Erdoes 2004: 158).

The *diagnostic frame* used to describe structural violence was again *similar* to the formational phase of the movement’s lifecycle. Poverty, unemployment, substandard housing and racial exclusion were repeatedly *framed* as BPP and AIM grievances. Consequently, the *framing of survival programs* as a remedy for the structural expropriation faced by blacks and Indians were shared by both groups during their developmental phases. A similar *diagnostic frame* was also employed to outline the racial bias which was evident against Indians and blacks within the courts and prison system. AIM leaders were essentially radicalised by their prison experience and the BPP’s organisational development benefited greatly by the addition of prison chapters in Soledad and San Quentin, and the recruitment of figures such as George Jackson. As Paul Alkebulan points out ‘the San Quentin branch had its origins in the African-American community’s long and contentious involvement with the legal establishment’ (2007: 60).

An important *framing difference* surfaced between the BPP and AIM during this lifecycle phase. After the Alcatraz occupation in 1969, the grievance of land became the central *frame* through which AIM promoted its agenda. State violence and the historic seizure of Indian territory was a *frame* that resonated with all Indians, no matter what tribe they emanated from. Therefore, in contrast to the BPP, AIM’s *prognostic frame* expanded to include the tactic of occupation. This expansion culminated in the takeover of Wounded Knee in 1973 in response to the use of state-sponsored violence over unfettered access to Sioux land on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.
11.1.5 Development: Resources

The resource of leadership became intrinsic to the development of AIM and the BPP. This resource can be categorised within the human and moral resources type (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Edwards and Kane 2014). A number of important figures joined both movements during their developmental phases. These included “Geronimo” Pratt and Fred Hampton of the BPP, while Russell Means was a significant addition to the ranks of AIM. All of these figures were radicalised through their experience of state, structural and popular violence. These organisations were essentially leadership driven and charismatic figures such as Huey Newton and Dennis Banks continued to play a hugely influential role as the movements developed. Thus, all of these mentioned individuals confirm the validity of the argument that the resource of moral commitment is an essential prerequisite for movement advancement (Oberschall 1973: 28).

The notion of resource diffusion (Soule 2004) became especially important in AIM’s development as the movement continued to borrow strategies from external sources to highlight state and structural violence. According to Sarah A. Soule ‘social movement actors frequently employ a flexible repertoire of contention that allows for the observation of other groups’ tactics and for the adoption of tactics believed to be effective’ (2004: 300; emphasis in original). The tactic of occupation was appropriated by AIM from the takeover on Alcatraz Island in 1969 while the resource of police patrols (copied from the template set by the Panthers in Oakland) continued to play an important role in movement development. It was found that the BPP also adopted tactics to combat external violence. For instance, the resource of liberation schools (set up during this phase), were first initiated by the civil rights movement in the most racially violent parts of North America in the early 1960s (Alkebulan 2007: 33). This is not to forget the example of resource diffusion and armed self-defence (again significant in Panther development), a tactic appropriated from the black armed self-defence groups of the 1950s and 1960s.
Cultural resources were deemed important to AIM’s development as the organisation increasingly emphasised the centrality of Indian culture, spirituality and identity in the movement’s philosophy (Bonney 1977). The decision to occupy Wounded Knee in the face of intense state violence in 1973 was primarily influenced by the fact that the site had strong cultural and historical significance to Indians across the USA. AIM’s capacity to achieve the takeover was considerably enabled by the presence of ex-army Indian servicemen. The resource of military training can therefore be pinpointed as a key resource similarity during this lifecycle phase. The military expertise offered by Dennis Banks, Larry Anderson, Woody Kipp, Carter Camp and Stan Holder, to name but a few, was a crucial resource during the 71-day siege. Such figures provided important logistical support in the battle against external violence (Dewing 1985: 133). The resource of military training was also highlighted as significant in the BPP’s development. Numerous party figures, including Bobby Seale, John Huggins and John Sloane were ex-army veterans and the addition of “Geronimo” Pratt, a two times decorated Special Armed Forces Commando, was particularly important during this lifecycle phase. As Curtis J. Austin points out, the pattern of ex-army figures joining the ranks of the BPP ‘mirrored the one that emerged after World War II more than two decades earlier. Black men learned in war what the streets and plantations could never teach them: military discipline and marksmanship’ (2006: 101).

Different approaches to the resource of armed self-defence were singled out as the key resource difference during this lifecycle phase. The BPP employed weapons once they formed in October 1966. AIM’s use of arms as a resource occurred at a much later point in their campaign. In my opinion, the reason for this difference was ideological. The Panthers were strongly influenced by Marxist-Leninist theory and writings. Central to these beliefs was the use of armed action to counter state and other forms of external violence. The BPP continued the tradition set by Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams who both fused notions regarding violence, racism and class struggle. Consequently, the BPP’s leadership was drawn to the guerrilla warfare methods espoused by figures such
as Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara and Mao Tse-Tung (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 310-12). In contrast, AIM primarily promoted a form of cultural nationalism throughout its developmental phase. While the organisation certainly embraced militant strategies, it shunned the resource of armed action due to the prominence it attached to Indian culture and spirituality. Thus, the resource of armed self-defence was not employed until nearly five years after its formation. By then, with traditional Indians on Pine Ridge facing daily violence from state and state-sponsored forces, AIM eventually embraced a resource which would have devastating consequences for movement persistence.

11.1.6 Development: Opportunities

It has been argued that immeasurable opportunities opened up for our two cases due to the consistent pattern of state and popular violence which was endemic during their developmental phases. The BPP increased its membership exponentially after the events surrounding the police killing of Denzil Dowell in 1967. The victim’s brother, George Dowell, who joined the organisation at the time, maintained that “black people need protection” and that the Panthers would provide it (Quoted in Austin 2006: 79). The POS related process of tactical innovation and tactical adaptation (McAdam 1983) was utilised in this context to outline how the BPP and the state engaged in a tactical battle to gain the upper hand after Denzil Dowell’s murder. These dynamics culminated in the stand-off at the Californian General Assembly in Sacramento where the Panthers staged their greatest publicity coup and numerous opportunities for movement mobilisation opened as a result. According to Curtis J. Austin ‘thousands of Americans were introduced to the small band of Oakland revolutionaries who would soon be catapulted into the leadership of the black struggle for self-determination’ (2006: xvi).

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206 Political opportunity structure analysis points to the fact that the degree of openness or closure within the political system is dictated by a number of factors. One of these is the capacity of the state for repression (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982).
The *opportunities* that opened for both groups as a result of exogenous violence were highlighted as the key *opportunity similarity* during this lifecycle phase. *Opportunities* for AIM’s development were also significantly enabled by the spate of murders that occurred throughout 1972 and 1973. Of particular significance were the brutal racial killings of Raymond Yellow Thunder in Gordon, Nebraska and Wesley Bad Heart Bull in Buffalo Gap, South Dakota. In the aftermath of both of these murders, AIM organised huge demonstrations in protest, not just in relation to these particular killings, but to highlight what it seemed were the accepted levels of racial violence used against Native Americans. Consequently, innumerable *opportunities* for movement mobilisation opened as the organisation gained a considerable foothold in Indian land, especially throughout northern plain states. These *opportunities* were to reach maximum effect with the movement’s expansion on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The militant tactics that AIM espoused against external violence found its strongest base of support on Sioux land, especially among ‘older people with family memories of the Indians’ great days, and from the many embittered young men who had served time in the armed services or in jail’ (Mattheissen 1992: 64).

Specific *opportunities* relevant to each organisation opened up during its developmental phase. In the BPP’s case, one such opportunity was the imprisonment of Huey Newton in 1968 on manslaughter charges relating to the killing of a police officer. In the aftermath of this event, *opportunities* for group mobilisation opened on two fronts. First, it created *opportunities* for the party to establish a substantial coalition of forces to promote the “Free Huey” campaign. And second, it created an environment whereby the organisation could argue that ‘Newton was resisting the long-perpetrated oppression of blacks by police when he was shot and imprisoned’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 102). Subsequently, the BPP ‘turned the state’s accusations against Newton around, using the case to mobilise support and put America on trial’ (ibid). The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King also opened *specific opportunities* to assist BPP development. It was argued that the state was directly involved in King’s assassination and many
black activists now began to question the efficacy of nonviolence. Panther leaders maintained that *opportunities* for ‘nonviolence [had] passed and a more useful strategy for black liberation needed to be employed. Few, if any, of the people who joined the party after King’s assassination disagreed with this position’ (Austin 2006: 164).

Specific *opportunities* also emerged throughout AIM’s developmental phase. The occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969 was a hugely significant event in the movement’s trajectory. It placed the issue of land seizures and the resulting structural violence which decimated Native America firmly on to the agenda. *Opportunities* for AIM’s mobilisation increased dramatically after the takeover as the event ‘ushered in a decade-long period of uncompromising and intensely confrontational American Indian political activism’ (Churchill 1997: 242). It was also found that *cultural opportunities* (McAdam 1996) opened for the movement during this period. Between 1970 and 1973, AIM leaders were increasingly drawn to Indian tradition, culture and practise. Thus, when the *opportunity* came to protect traditional Indians against state and state-sponsored violence on the Pine Ridge Reservation, the organisation finally embraced the tactics of armed self-defence. As one movement member pointed out “it was the traditional people who invited us down to Pine Ridge to help out in 1972 and 1973… we decided the symbolic place would be Wounded Knee” (Quoted in Mattheissen 1992: 67).

It has been concluded that an important *opportunity difference* during this lifecycle phase related to the state’s capacity for repression and its resulting effects on either *opening* or *closing political opportunities* (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982). The BPP were subjected to acts of state violence and repression at a much earlier point in its lifecycle than was AIM. It could be argued such violence literally started on the day the organisation emerged and it was a constant feature throughout the years of the group’s development. This repression was due to the

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I would argue that the case of AIM is a good example of how the employment of *cultural resources* opens *cultural opportunities.*
movement’s embrace of armed repertoires. Thus, there was a consistent pattern of opportunities both opening and closing in parallel for the Panthers during this lifecycle phase. On the one hand, while the movement expanded exponentially after Martin Luther King’s assassination, this was tempered by the fact that a year later all of its key leaders were either in prison, awaiting trial or forced into exile. By contrast, AIM maintained a consistent pattern of creating open opportunities as the organisation developed. This position, however, would alter dramatically once the movement challenged state and corporate interests in Indian land and employed armed self-defence to do so.

11.1.7 Decline: Framing

We saw at the beginning of the final lifecycle phase that the BPP’s diagnostic frame continued to highlight state, structural and popular violence as the key grievance propelling the movement’s campaign. However, differences emerged in the organisation’s framing process due to the unremitting nature of external violence, which was heighted by the state assisted killing of Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter and John Huggins in January 1969, and the state execution of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark later that same year. As Curtis J. Austin points out ‘using tactics from harassment, arrests and physical surveillance to long-term imprisonment and outright murder, [the state] through its Counter Intelligence Program [COINTELPRO], decimated the BPP, forcing it to take a more reformist route’ (2006: 191). The movement’s motivational frame (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) as articulated by key party figures such as Huey Newton and Chief of Staff David Hilliard, was that it was no longer rational to employ armed repertoires.

The process of how violence was framed during the final lifecycle phase had a huge influence on the split that occurred within Panther ranks in 1971. In contrast to the BPP, the Black Liberation Army (BLA) embraced the initial Panther

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208 While the Huey Newton led wing of the BPP disavowed armed struggle in 1971, this faction continued to frame the state as a violent and racist entity until the movement finally disintegrated in 1982 (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 384).
prognostic frame of armed action as the tactic to cope with exogenous violence. The BLA’s process of motivational framing pointed towards an escalation in the war against the state. This was against a backdrop where up to 1,000 unarmed black civilians, including many children, were killed by the police between 1971 and 1973 (Berger 2006: 203). In a clear divergence from Panther policy, the BLA’s “call to arms” (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) prioritised the rationale for offensive violence. In the two years that followed, BLA would engage in a range of insurrectionary action across the USA, with their direct guerrilla warfare methods ‘a world apart from the politics of armed self-defence upon which the Black Panther Party had thrived’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 388).

As for AIM, its process of diagnostic framing also evolved during the decline phase. Up to this point, acts of violence were not in the main directed at the movement’s membership. However, between 1973 and 1976, the group’s diagnostic frame altered considerably in response to a state-sponsored death squad operating on the Pine Ridge Reservation whose principal targets were AIM members and supporters. Over 300 people were killed in the period that afterwards became known as the “reign of terror” (Churchill 1997: 268-69). As a result, the movement’s process of prognostic framing became contested as the group as a whole could never agree on a set position regarding the framing of armed self-defence. Subsequently, this dynamic directly affected AIM’s process of motivational framing, something which also proved to be problematic during this lifecycle phase. On the one hand, the levels of violence on Pine Ridge triggered a “call to arms” (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) which suggested armed action as a tactic. However, the overwhelming odds against the success of such a tactic equally provoked calls for restraint. At the height of the violence during the final lifecycle phase, there were thus competing factions within AIM — one providing a rationale for engaging in armed self-defence — and one providing a rationale not to do so. This dynamic had a parallel in the differing positions taken by the BPP and the BLA.
The state’s process of *counterframing* was singled out as a key *framing similarity* during the final third phase of the two organisations’ lifecycle. By the early 1970s, AIM and the BPP were *framed* as two of the most dangerous groups in the USA by the FBI. With Panther membership and support rising, and AIM threatening corporate interests on Native American land, the state instigated tactics which resonate with what Snow and Benford refer to as *counterframing* (2000: 617). As a result, state forces through its media allies and its security networks, *counterframed* both movements as criminals and communist subversives. This process of *counterframing* operated in parallel with a campaign of state-directed violence which included the assassination and execution of AIM and BPP members.

While an important *framing difference* materialised during the decline phase which contributed towards the schism in the BPP and the ascent of the Black Liberation Army, no such dynamic occurred within the ranks of AIM. This was so because there were always differences in how the Panthers and AIM ideologically *framed* the use of violence. There was a tradition within black activism of *framing* armed struggle through the prism of revolutionary Marxism and the Panthers continued this process when they emerged. The BLA extended this *frame* by *framing offensive violence* as the only way to free blacks from state violence, racism and oppression. In contrast, these features were at no stage a factor in AIM’s campaign, thus underlining the validity of the argument which maintains that left-wing ideologies are more favourable to the appearance of clandestine forms of direct action (Della Porta 1995: 50).

### 11.1.8 Decline: Resources

AIM and the BPP continued to place a huge significance on the *resource* of movement leadership as the organisations entered their final phase. However, in the case of the Panthers this *resource* had already started to dissipate as Huey Newton was in prison, Bobby Seale was awaiting trial and Eldridge Cleaver had been forced into exile. By the end of 1971, two other key party leaders were dead. Fred Hampton had been executed by state forces in late 1969 and George Jackson
was murdered by prison guards two years later. These developments were an ominous forewarning of the fate awaiting AIM leaders as the state targeted this resource in a similar way from 1973 onwards. In the aftermath of the Wounded Knee occupation, Dennis Banks, Russell Means and a host of other key AIM figures were either driven underground, consumed with endless courtroom battles, or killed by state or state-sponsored forces.

We saw how the resource of armed self-defence had been utilised by both movements during their final lifecycle phase. However, this tactic ultimately had dire consequences for our two groups as it only attracted increased levels of state violence and repression. As early as 1970, the BPP had begun a process of dismantling this resource. Writing at the time, Huey Newton maintained that “we feel that we, the people are threatened with genocide because racism and fascism is rampant... but until such time that we can achieve that total transformation, we must exist. In order to exist, we must survive” (Quoted in Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 354). In a similar vein, AIM’s use of the resource that was armed self-defence at Wounded Knee unleashed three years of unrelenting violence against the movement and its support base. Essentially, the organisation did not have the armed resources to cope with the combined strength of the BIA police, the US marshals service, the FBI, the GOON squad, and battalions of US armed forces.

The state’s targeting of the resource that was military training was singled out as a crucial resource similarity during the decline phase. Two examples in the

209 According to Noam Chomsky:

A top secret Special Report for the president in June 1970 gives some insight into the motivation for the actions taken by the government to destroy the Black Panther Party. The report describes the party as “the most active and dangerous black extremist group in the United States.” Its “hard core members” were estimated at 800, but “a recent poll indicates that approximately 25 per cent of the black population has a great respect for the BPP, including 43 per cent of blacks under 21 years of age.” On the basis of such estimates of the potential of the party, the repressive apparatus of the state proceeded against it to ensure that it did not succeed in organizing as a substantial social or political force. We may add that in this case, government repression proved quite successful (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 63).
Panthers’ case was the treatment received by the Vietnam Veterans John Huggins and “Geronimo” Pratt. Huggins was killed in 1969 and Pratt was framed by the state for a murder he never committed and for which he served twenty-seven years in the California State Prison system. As Curtis J. Austin points out ‘the FBI, the Department of Defence, and other federal agencies sought to stop Pratt and his comrades before they seriously damaged the American infrastructure, or worse, attracted significant public support for their activities’ (2006: 244). The state’s methods in these cases resonated with the targeting of ex-army personnel in AIM as figures such as Dennis Banks, John Trudell, Larry Anderson, Stan Holder and Leonard Crow Dog were consistently harassed, arrested and imprisoned after the Wounded Knee takeover in 1973.

During the final lifecycle phase, we found that a key resource difference was associated with the RM-related concept of competition for power (McAdam et al., 2001: 67). Competition within social movements can surface when resources for group persistence are limited (Hazen 2009: 285). This feature materialised in the case of the BPP when competing factions emerged to try to gain control of the party’s resources. The emergence of the Black Liberation Army was a direct consequence of differences in the BPP regarding the resource of armed action. By contrast, there was no indication of a similar competition for power during AIM’s third lifecycle phase. While differences certainly emerged in relation to the resource of armed self-defence, it did not culminate in a situation where there was a schism in the primary organisation or the appearance of a separate body promoting clandestine violence.

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210 In 1987, Judge Fred Nichol, who presided over AIM’s leadership trials in 1974 pointed out that:

I ended [the Wounded Knee leadership case] with the firm conviction that the [the state] would go to any end in order to convict Mr. Banks… the total disregard of truth and fairness in the government’s attempt to “get” Dennis Banks “by hook or crook” did not stop at the doorstep of the FBI. The US attorney’s office was an active participant. The court was intentionally deceived (Quoted in Churchill and Vander Wall 2002: 348).
11.1.9 Decline: Opportunities

We found that closed structures (Kreisi 2004: 69-70) and political constraints (Tarrow 1998: 85) were the key opportunity-related dynamics influencing our two movements’ final lifecycle phase. The oxygen that had previously opened opportunities for group emergence and development was finally cut off. This was principally achieved through state violence. POS analysis has pointed to the degree of repression by the state as crucial in affecting available political opportunities (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982). SMOs must be able to withstand the social control efforts of the state. Essentially, opportunities for further mobilisation were submerged by external violence and as a result it was impossible to either create or avail of further opportunities for movement persistence. This pattern resonates with the argument ‘that the standard equation of increased repression [produces] a decline in mass protest’ and further resonates in the BPP’s case with ‘the splintering of the major protest organisations’ (Zwerman and Steinhoff 2005: 88). Ultimately, AIM and the Panthers had no answer to the state’s process of tactical adaptation (McAdam 1983), which ended in these cases with state strategies that included the execution of movement members.

It can be argued that opportunities for militant organisations in the USA are limited due to the minimal support base for radical social movements (Evans 1983). AIM’s embrace of militant repertoires closed off potential lines of support as many tribal council members were conservative and shunned tactics involving armed self-defence. The prime objective of these tribal council members was ‘to preserve age-old practises’ (Wilkinson 2009: 2). Similar opportunities were shut down in the Panthers’ case as ‘guerrilla warfare was never potentially practical in the United States… only a very small portion of the populace supported guerrilla warfare methods’ (Bloom and Martin Jr. 2013: 354).

However, it was also found that our two cases support the assertion that the state directs its harshest repression towards left-wing social movements and ethnic minorities (Tilly, Tilly and Tilly 1975; Piven and Cloward 1977; Gurr 1986;
Chapter 11 – Conclusion

Berger 2006). The capacity of the state for racism was singled out as a key *opportunity similarity* during this lifecycle phase. In contrast to the white, college-educated members of the Weather Underground; *opportunities* for movement persistence in AIM and the BPP were shut down by acts of state violence which reflected and underlined the racist nature of US state structures. Jeremy Varon emphasises this point when he argues that ‘the Weathermen were granted a kind of preferential treatment relative to [black and Indian radicals], who remained objects of fierce pursuit… security agencies curtailed their campaign against the Weather Underground and generally let the group… fade into obscurity’ (2007: 14).

It was found that a crucial *opportunity difference* related once again to the state’s capacity for repression (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982). Our two cases were subjected to the full force of the state’s security apparatus during their final lifecycle phase. This included action by the police (the BIA police in AIM’s case), the US marshals service, the FBI’s COINTELPRO, the Central Intelligence Agency, the US Justice and Defence Departments and (again in AIM’s case), divisions of the US armed forces. However, in an additional contrast to the BPP, AIM also had to cope with the paramilitary entity that was the GOON squad. In this context, though the Panthers were regarded as a

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211 Noam Chomsky also points to the association between racism and the state:

I’m white, I’m privileged, and that means I’m basically immune from punishment by power… so if you’re a black organizer in the ghetto, you don’t have much of it, and you’re in trouble — they can send the Chicago police in to murder you, like they did with Fred Hampton [a Black Panther assassinated by the FBI in 1969]. But if you’re a white professional like me, you can buy a lot of freedom (2003: 210).

212 Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall maintain that:

The idea that [the state] would support a “private army” might, at first glance, seem far-fetched. It is, however, not without precedent…[the state] made considerable use of the Pinkertons and *ad hoc* vigilante groups in breaking the backs of the various labour and radical organizations during the red scare period of 1918-22 and throughout the 1920s and 1930s. [The state’s] relation with the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama during the early-to mid-1960s — the period of greatest racist violence against civil rights workers in that state — certainly points in the same direction (2002: 181).
considerable threat by the state, they did not threaten corporate and state interests to the same extent. For its part, AIM posed a direct threat to economic interests through its insistence on renegotiating land treaties (Mattheissen 1992: 32). Therefore, the state decided to shut down opportunities for AIM’s mobilisation in one specific area of the USA (unlike the BPP who were targeted nationally) and as a result, over 300 movement members and supporters were killed by what was effectively a state-sponsored death squad (Churchill 1992).

11.2 CONCLUSION: THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

What can we conclude from the three conceptual frameworks which were utilised to study the role of violence in the campaigns of the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party? While social movement theory has tended to concentrate heavily on moderate groups seeking reform, the concepts of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities were nonetheless considered sufficiently promising to illuminate the violence across the three lifecycle phases of these minimally researched groups. How well has this proven to be the case? Some conceptual weaknesses associated with the formational, developmental and decline phases of the AIM and BPP campaigns will now be discussed, as well as the conceptual strengths which shed light on the violence during the three lifecycle phases.

11.2.1 Formation

The concept of framing is useful in so far as it highlights the process of grievance interpretation and identification (Snow and Benford 2000). However, grievance-associated analysis has customarily been identified with the collective behavioural approach to social movement theory (Tarrow 2011: 22); and one of the key criticisms of collective behavioural analysis is that it has traditionally taken for granted a pluralist and liberal conception of political access (Connolly 2006: 14). Resource mobilization theory also displays similar liberal assumptions and the role of radical ideology in SM formation has been downplayed. Most RM analysis concentrates on reformist organisations which seek inclusion within
existing political structures (Mayer 1991; Piven and Cloward 1995; Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000). By contrast, the formation of our two groups can only be understood with reference to a state propelled by violence, exclusion and racism.

A second conceptual shortcoming validates the criticisms levelled at RMT that it struggles to explain SMO formation where access to middle class resources is limited (Piven and Cloward 1977). RMT has tended to emphasise an entrepreneurial model of social movement emergence in that ‘the theory pictures social movements as operating within a competitive field of movements — a social movement industry’ (Giddens and Sutton 2013: 999). The formational phases of our two cases illustrate the critical importance of having access to resources outside the traditional set identified by resource mobilisation theory. The emergence of AIM and the BPP strongly diverge from the entrepreneurial associations of resource mobilisation analysis.

A third conceptual shortcoming regarding the formational phase is associated with the social control aspects of the political opportunity structure approach and the relative lack of attention payed to covert policing and persisting heavy-handed policing. It is of course true that the social movement literature on state repression has strongly emphasised the policing of protest or protest policing (Della Porta and Reiter (eds.) 1998; Earl 2003; Della Porta and Filleule 2004; Soule and Davenport 2009). However, the problem with protest policing where the formation of our two cases is concerned is that the term refers to the overt policing of demonstrations and protest events. Covert police response has attracted, in contrast, relatively little attention (Earl, McCarthy and Soule 2003: 582). Both AIM and the BPP formed due to what we termed persistent police violence, or ongoing violence which had nothing to do with social movement protest or demonstrations. The state’s tactics in this regard were essentially a form of institutional racism, negating the liberal consensus advanced by social movement theorists that democratic opportunities and pluralist ideals are available to all.
Turning to the strengths of the three concepts during the formational phase, framing was deemed significant in a number of ways. Firstly, analysis relating to master frames (Snow and Benford 1992) permitted us to argue that AIM and the BPP would not have emerged without the overarching frames promoted by the civil rights movement. The notion of framing wars (Snow et al., 1986; Snow and Benford 1992) was beneficial as it underlines how political opponents utilise different framing strategies to win potential support. Consequently, we saw that the BPP would not have emerged without Malcolm X’s framing of armed self-defence against exogenous violence. Framing was also highly significant as it allowed us to highlight what were shared movement grievances in our two cases. Of particular significance was the pinpointing of police violence as a primary diagnostic frame (Snow and Benford 2000: 616) and police patrols as the requisite prognostic frame (ibid).

Resource mobilisation was beneficial as all social movements require resources to instigate mobilisation. The notion of social-organisational resources (Edwards and McCarthy 2004) or pre-existing networks (Oberschall 1973; Jenkins 1983) were drawn upon as both AIM and the BPP built upon previous waves of protest within the black and Indian communities. The resource of military training confirms the validity of the argument that the resources of a social movement are heavily influenced by the available repertoires of contention (Tilly 1986). RMT also allowed us to pinpoint the significance of leadership (Morris and Staggenborg 2004) and collective identity (Melucci 1995) in the formation of our two cases. The RM-related notion of diffusion (Soule 2004) was also advantageous as the BPP and AIM appropriated tactics from external sources to counter violence. In the Panthers’ case, it was groups such as the Deacons for Defence and Justice, while I argued that AIM would not have emerged without the template set by the BPP in Oakland.

The strengths of political opportunities included analysis regarding cultural opportunities (McAdam 1996) and discursive opportunities (Koopmans and Statham 1999). The POS-related notions of cognitive liberation and insurgent
consciousness (McAdam 1982) allowed us to show how the state’s legitimacy was seen to be undermined by the widespread nature of police violence against blacks and Indians. As regards the wider political milieu, it is doubtful whether AIM and the BPP would have emerged in the guise they did without the opportunities that were opened as a result of the civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam. Therefore, taking all of these factors together, this thesis has made a positive case for the applicability of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities in illuminating the exogenous violence which stimulated the formation of our two cases.

11.2.2 Development

Similar conceptual weaknesses were identified as the BPP and AIM developed. The concepts of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities again can be seen as resting on liberal assumptions. One of these assumptions is that movements seek political inclusion during all stages of a movement’s lifecycle (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000). However, our two cases were essentially at war with the state and their example would support the view that:

While providing important insights in to SMOs, existing social movement theoretical literature is inadequate for understanding radical social movement organisations. The inadequacies of the dominant paradigms are multiple. One of the most significant problems with attempts to understand [radical groups] with existing theoretical models is that most moderate SMOs operate with a reform bias that views incorporation into the current political/economic system as the desired goal (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000: 574).

It was clearly apparent that during their developmental phases, both AIM and the BPP sought a fundamental restructuring of the political dispensation. Incorporation into existing political structures was the least of their concerns. The survival programs they initiated to cope with exogenous violence during this campaign phase testifies to this fact.

It was also once again evident throughout the developmental phase that the concept of resource mobilisation heavily emphasises either social movement
action by elites or social movement action with heavy elite support. The developmental phases of our two cases support the criticism that resource mobilisation displays a class bias (Kerbo 1982; Mayer 1991; Piven and Cloward 1995). Charles Perrow points to another deficiency when he states that ‘the striking thing about the movements of the 1950s and 1960s (and social movements in general) is that they were not business organisations and industries’ (1979: 201). The development of AIM and the BPP illustrate how social movements with considerable resource deficiencies can still make noteworthy progression. In our cases, this was achieved by exploiting resources that have been side-lined in much of the social movement literature. Military training once again emerged as an important resource, with the vast majority of soldiers who served in Vietnam coming from the lower-classes and ethnic minorities (Holm 1989).

The resource of “elders” within the black and Indian community was also singled out as important during this lifecycle phase. “Geronimo” Pratt maintained that black relations of his, who had served in the armed forces during World War II and the Korean War, insisted that he receive army training as a means to combat racial violence (Olsen 2000: 25-26). Similarly, AIM’s occupation at Wounded Knee in 1973 was influenced by Sioux elders who favoured armed self-defence against state and state-sponsored violence. As outlined in the narrative, there was a creative use of resource in operation here. Different resources were combined in the struggle against external violence. What this shows is that social movements are not always searching for ‘practical solutions to economic problems’ and ‘in order to account for this tone, we must look beyond economic interests to more deep-seated tendencies’ (Kornhauser 1959: 163).

Numerous conceptual strengths can be identified during the developmental phase. It was found that framing enabled us to highlight the external violence which propelled the development of both groups. The prevalence of state, structural and popular violence continued to contribute overwhelmingly to the framing process of both organisations. This dynamic was highlighted by the
police killings of unarmed black and Indian civilians such as Denzil Dowell, Leroy Shenodoah and Philip Celay. The brutal racial murders of Raymond Yellow Thunder and Wesley Bad Heart Bull accentuated AIM’s diagnostic frame which articulated the message that Native Americans lived under constant threat from a hostile white population. The notion of survival programs was framed in both of our cases during this lifecycle phase. A key advantage of framing was that it also permitted us to understand how both movements’ prognostic frames for violence were driven by important events during the developmental phase. The assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 highlighted the BPP’s prognostic frame for armed self-defence as they argued that the path of non-violence had run its course. AIM altered its position on the use of weapons during the developmental phase and its leaders also framed armed self-defence as necessary against the state and state-sponsored violence which threatened to engulf the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Resource mobilisation was beneficial throughout the developmental phase as one of its strengths is to point to the how of social movement organisation (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Jenkins 1983). This would confirm the argument which states that ‘putting resources at the centre of the analysis of social movement processes reemphasises the inextricable links between broader societal stratification processes and the ability of social groups to mobilise effectively for ongoing collective action’ (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 142).

RM was also advantageous due to the emphasis it places on social-organisational resources such as social networks for SMO development (Edwards and McCarthy 2004; Edwards and Kane 2014). This resource, highlighted during the formational phase, permitted us to view how pre-established networks were critical to the development of our two groups. AIM and the BPP are a prime example of social movements replicating previous social movements to counter exogenous violence. This was seen in a number of ways, including the Panthers’ use of the resource that was the right to bear arms and AIM’s employment of occupation as a tactic after the Alcatraz takeover in 1969. The RM-related notion
of diffusion (Soule 2004) was consistently stressed as an important analytical tool in this context.

There were three highlighted strengths in using the concept of opportunities during the developmental phase. Firstly, the expansion of AIM and the BPP underlines the association between repression and the opening of opportunities for movement development (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982). This was seen in the proliferation of both organisations after the state and racial killings of black and Indian citizens, and in the BPP’s case, the assassination of Martin Luther King. The second was the employment of tactical innovation and tactical adaptation (McAdam 1983) which permitted us to analyse how the state and our two groups engaged in a reciprocal process of tactical repositioning. While a third POS strength related to how the wider political environment opened opportunities for movement development here. Once again, the effects the civil rights struggle and its highlighting of external violence against ethnic minorities had on the development of our two cases cannot be overstated. As a result of these combined strengths, this thesis has made a positive case for the applicability of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities when analysing violence during the development of AIM and the BPP.

11.2.3 Decline

It was found during the decline phase that the weaknesses in the three social movement concepts outweighed their strengths. However, there were some advantages in that framing allowed us to analyse how different approaches to the BPP’s process of prognostic and motivational framing (Snow and Benford 2000) strongly contributed to the movements split in 1971. Virtually all of AIM’s leadership and the Panther wing under Huey Newton and David Hilliard eventually came to see that it was no longer rational to take up arms against the state. Framing was also beneficial as it supplied the notion of counterframing (Snow and Benford 2000: 617) which enabled us to view how the state’s criminalisation polices paved the way for direct violence against our two cases. The use of RM and POS was beneficial as we clearly saw how the draining of
movement *resources* and the closing of movement *opportunities* operated in parallel. In my opinion, based on the experience of our two cases, the use of *resources* and the creation of *opportunities* are inextricably linked and once this fluidity is fractured, social movement persistence becomes difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

That this thesis has made a *negative case* for the applicability of the three concepts for the *decline* phase reflects the reality that movement *outcomes* have been the least researched aspect within social movement theory (Giugni 1998; Goodwin and Jasper 2003; Bosi and Giugni 2012). A second conceptual *weakness* in relation to the demise of AIM and the BPP concerns the side-lining of external violence in social movement *decline* (Davenport 2014: 8-9). As Christian Davenport states ‘essentially little to nothing exists on the topic of the processes of exactly how social movements demobilize (i.e., how they die)’ (2014: 299). It was argued that the concepts of *framing*, *resource mobilisation* and *political opportunities*, as typically used in the SM literature, are not therefore sufficient in themselves to address social movement decline that is primarily driven through interaction with external violence.

The concept of *framing* has centred on processes of *grievance identification* and *grievance interpretation*. Its strengths reside in the *why* and *how* of social movement mobilisation, with deficiencies arising when explaining *movement outcomes*. As a result, there have been ‘calls for further investigation of the relationship between framing processes and the goal attainment efforts of different varieties of movements’ (Snow and Benford 2000: 632). In my opinion, it was virtually impossible for AIM and the BPP to satisfactorily *frame* the external violence which submerged both groups during their final lifecycle phase. AIM and BPP activists had no knowledge of the state’s sinister COINTELPRO activities as their acts of subterfuge did not emerge until long after the movements were destroyed (Mattheissen 1992; Churchill and Vander Wall 2002). Therefore, I would argue that it’s not possible to adequately conduct the process of
prognostic framing when you’re not completely aware of all the relevant circumstances.

The framework of resource mobilisation also concentrates on the why and how of SMO campaigns. RMT points to a lack of necessary resources as the source of social movement failure (Stotik, Shriver and Cable 1994: 54). For our purposes, however, this does not explain the fact that a key resource in these organisation’s trajectory was the movement’s membership, many of whom were initially radicalised in prison. To this day, numerous activists are still held within prison walls, serving unprecedented sentences (Levin 2018). Resource mobilisation was found to be particularly inadequate in explaining how external violence contributes to a depletion of movement resources. While the concept of political opportunities certainly identifies state repression as a factor in movement persistence, covert state activity involving torture, disappearance and executions as well as the state’s use of informers and agents provocateurs have been side-lined in much of the social movement research (Davenport 2014: 8-9). Social movement theory, viewing inclusion as the ultimate social movement goal, has been criticised for being too committed of the status quo in the decline phase (Fitzgerald and Rodgers 2000). The disintegration of AIM and the BPP supports Doug McAdam’s point relating to the close association between social movement theory and state and institutional power (1982: 231). Consequently, the concepts of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities need to be used differently to adequately assess the violent demise of AIM and the BPP.

This thesis aligns itself with the limited body of research which has highlighted state terrorism and clandestine state terrorism as an interactive feature in social movement decline (Chomsky and Herman 1979; Mitchell, Stohl, Carleton and Lopez (eds.) 1986; Gurr; 1986; Stohl 2006; Blakeley 2012). The concepts of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities I have argued, cannot in themselves account for a state campaign of violence which included the execution of figures such as Fred Hampton, Pedro Bissonette, Anna Mae Aquash.
and Mark Clark. These acts alone support the conviction that state terrorism is a calculated process of state or state-sponsored violence, which is intended to provoke fear in a target audience who identify with the victims. The ultimate goal of such violence is that the target audience will then fundamentally alter their behaviour (Blakeley 2012: 76). Acts associated with state terrorism curtailed the capacity of AIM and the BPP to adequately frame grievances, it depleted these movements’ resource base, and it shut down all available opportunities for group mobilisation in these two cases. Once these interactive facilities were neutralised, social movement persistence was no longer possible.

All in all, we started this study by posing the question: how well does social movement theory help us compare two SMOs that employed armed tactics? By way of final answer, I would argue that the concepts of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities made a considerable contribution in shedding light on external violence and the lifecycles of AIM and the BPP. I have shown that these three concepts, regardless of their liberal and pluralist assumptions, can be applied to armed social movements. They have proved themselves, however, more pertinent in illuminating exogenous violence during the formational and developmental phases of our two organisations. In order to deal with these groups’ decline, we found it necessary to supplement the analysis with theory relating to state terrorism. Nonetheless, I would make a positive case for the applicability of these three frameworks as their overall strengths still outweigh their weaknesses. By utilising framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities, I have succeeded in detecting similarities and differences throughout the lifecycles of our two groups. Ultimately, the three general concepts of framing, resource mobilisation and political opportunities have allowed us to highlight the fact that all social movements, armed or constitutional, still need to frame grievances, employ resources and create/or take advantage of opportunities.

At this point, I would like to briefly address a number of legacy issues in relation to the AIM and BPP campaigns and to the findings of this study. Firstly, while I
pointed to the significance of military training as a *resource* in group mobilisation, further research might usefully be based on interviews with ex-army AIM and BPP members. In particular, answers to questions regarding the relationship between the veteran’s radicalisation process in Vietnam and how this experience influenced perceptions of exogenous violence against ethnic minorities in the USA, should fill in gaps in our knowledge relating to *resources*.

Another relevant consideration is that AIM and the BPP emerged in the ferment of 1960’s radicalism. A key element in the radicalisation process in their cases was the environment created by the civil rights movement and the disorder triggered by the war in Vietnam. A number of other comparable armed groups emerged during this protest cycle, including the Red Brigades in Italy and the Red Army Fraction in Germany (Della Porta 1995). What is noticeable, in parallel with our cases, was the interaction between police violence and movement emergence which would underline the ‘positive relationship between repression and violence’ (White 1989: 1281). However, while AIM and the BPP overwhelmingly used *defensive* armed action against external violence they were ultimately crushed in a similar manner to the Red Brigades and the Red Army Fraction who both utilised *offensive* repertoires including bombings, kidnappings and bank robberies (Della Porta 1995). The important point to highlight in this context is that all perceived armed challenges to the status quo, whether through *defensive* or *offensive* tactics, run the risk of being violently destroyed by state forces.

What can also be said is that the fate of our two cases is not unique. Two other comparable examples, the Weather Underground (WU) (Berger 2006) and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) (White 1989) both surfaced during the same time period as AIM and the Panthers. While the WU and the PIRA emerged in response to exogenous violence and state repression, movement outcomes in both of these instances were noticeably different to AIM and the BPP. The mainly white Weather Underground even though decimated by state forces, was spared the worst excesses of state violence during their decline phase.
The differing variable in this case was race. As former member Donna Willmott points out “people could get away with a lot more and not be viewed as a suspect just because of the colour of their skins… that’s the privilege born to race and class” (Quoted in Berger 2006: 275). On the other hand, the Provisional IRA was militarily undefeated at the point it called a ceasefire in 1997. The differing variable in this context was that the PIRA and its political wing, Sinn Féin, were capable of pursuing a dual military and political strategy from the early 1980’s onwards. This approach was best encapsulated by Danny Morrison (a senior PIRA leader) when he argued that: “will anyone here object if, with a ballot paper in one hand and an Armalite in the other, we take power in Ireland?” (Quoted in English 2005: 224-225). Consequently, unlike AIM and the BPP, the tactic of conducting parallel military and electoral offensives has paid significant political dividends for Irish republicans (McAllister 2004).

The cases of AIM and the BPP are also relevant in investigating more generally social movement activity where issues of land injustice arise and social movement outcomes. According to Allison Davis Whiteeyes ‘sovereignty is the final dividing line between American Indians and the mass of American citizens’ (2009: 274). As a result, AIM embraced issues of sovereignty as the key approach to rectify problems relating to land and resource development (ibid: 278). In contrast, ‘lacking a land base, treaty base, or supranational citizenship base’ (ibid: 275), black social movements do not jeopardise state and corporate interests to the same extent as Indian groups. AIM’s mobilisation ‘was an immediate threat to the US government because of the tremendous amount of Indian land that was under government control and in disputed title’ (Weyler 1982: 36). This is the central reason for the ferocity of the state’s response during AIM’s decline phase. Disputes involving territorial claims highlight the relationship between degrees of state violence and social movement consequences.

Today both AIM and the BPP are shadows of their former selves. In the aftermath of the Wounded Knee occupation, AIM disintegrated as a national organisation. In its stead, individual state chapters of the movement emerged which are still in
existence as I write (Johnson 2007: 80). While there is no central leadership, and these chapters are not affiliated to each other, Indian activists still attempt to raise concerns about the US government’s perpetual failure to address the inequalities and injustices facing the Native American population (ibid). However, in the wider context, the Red Power Movement, of which AIM was an intrinsic element, triggered an unprecedented period of protest which focused sharp attention on issues relating to state, structural and racial violence. Ultimately, these protests ‘culminated in the transformation of national consciousness about American Indians and engendered a more open and confident sense of identity among people of Indian descent’ (Johnson, Champagne and Nagle 1997: 9).

In contrast, the BPP terminated all of its political activity in 1982 (Alkebulan 2007: xv). Seven years later a group calling itself the New Black Panther Party was formed in Dallas, Texas. However, the Huey P. Newton foundation dismissed the organisation as illegitimate and insisted that there ‘is no new Black Panther Party.’

The Panthers’ key contribution to black America was the tradition of combining political activism and militant struggle that it left in its wake, and the party’s ten-point program ‘remains as incendiary and intellectually defensible today as it was then, especially in our era of mass incarceration and structural joblessness’ (Harris 2015). Probably the greatest legacy of the BPP, and the wider Black Power movement in general, is their contribution to a protesting and dissenting consciousness. This continues to this day in the form of group’s such as Black Lives Matter. Created to monitor and control police violence, this organisation is testimony to the work and theories of Black Power advocates (Taylor 2019), as it argues that state violence against African Americans is as rampant as ever.

The American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party surfaced at a particular juncture in recent American history. There is no evidence to suggest that militant groups of this nature would appear today. However, the USA has increasingly become a bitterly divided society, with a widening gap between rich and poor. While capitalism moves on as strong as ever, state, structural and racial violence against ethnic minorities still exist to this day. As long as this situation prevails, no one can ever discount the emergence of armed social movements in the USA sometime in the future. Nonetheless, all challengers must bear in mind that the state’s capacity for violent repression and terrorism remains as implacable as ever.
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