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The prison abolition movement has made some significant headway in fighting the prison industrial complex in the United States over the past several years. However, the primary focus of the movement remains on the existence of prison facilities. There is a crucial need to address the role that local law enforcement play in the system of mass incarceration. Analyzing the relationship between the policing institution and the prison industrial complex offers insight into the pervasiveness of police violence and misconduct in the U.S. Local law enforcement developed alongside, and in service to, slavery and the prison industrial complex. Based on the genealogical analysis presented by Kristian Williams in his text Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America (2015), and the ethical frameworks of systemic oppression and institutional cruelty developed by philosophers Iris Marion Young and Phillip Hallie, I offer an ethical argument for police abolition in the U.S. In order to fully eradicate the injustices perpetuated by mass incarceration, we must also eliminate the institution that functions as one of its primary lifelines: police.
Protection or Control? An Ethical Argument for Police Abolition in the United States

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all of the people who have lost their lives at the hands of the policing institution. Your stories and experiences will not be forgotten.
Chapter 1- Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to offer a value analysis of our current policing institution and an argument for police abolition based on the examination of the symbiotic relationship between the prison industrial complex and the police force in the United States. I will use the terms “policing institution,” “police organization,” “modern police,” and “local law enforcement” interchangeably; but to be clear, I am speaking specifically about city police, state police, and sheriff’s offices. The reason I have chosen to focus on local departments is because they have historically posed the greatest immediate threat to the public in comparison to federal level organizations, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). As of September 2017, the police have killed 663 individuals in the U.S. ("Killed by Police 2017," 2017). Also, they are the oldest living relatives- so to speak- of the crime fighting organizations in our country. Therefore, I feel it is necessary to study the developmental history of the local policing organizations first before engaging in an examination of their offspring- FBI, CIA, etc. I will conduct a value analysis of modern policing based on the genealogy of the organization to demonstrate the intricate and entangled affinity between slavery, prisons and policing. In doing so, I hope to extend the current discourse on mass incarceration and prison abolition to include that of police abolition, as well. Most of the conversations surrounding the prison industrial complex and police violence frame these interconnected systems as two separate and distinct issues. This has caused an oversight of the crucial need to put these two conversations together in order to fight the collective injustices perpetuated by these institutions. Instead of viewing mass incarceration and police violence as two detached and unrelated dialogues, we must realize that they are two halves of the same body; and to do away with one means that we must do away with the other.
The prison industrial complex has gained a great deal of attention over the past several decades from scholars and community activists alike. The increasing conversation surrounding mass incarceration has paved the way for the prison abolition movement in the U.S. Prison abolitionists seek to eradicate the prison system and replace it with a more humane form of justice and rehabilitation. The foundational underpinnings of the prison abolition movement endorse the idea that mass incarceration is a direct by-product of white supremacy and slavery. Significant theories have been carefully pieced together to explain the rise of the prison industrial complex in the U.S. Angela Davis and Michelle Alexander have produced two of the most influential writings on the theory of mass incarceration that focus on the role of prisons in relation to race, gender, capitalism, and rhetoric.

The discourse surrounding the prison industrial complex addresses the role of the prison system and the organizations—political parties, private corporations, legislatures, government agencies, etc.—that support its maintenance. While critics of mass incarceration do present a comprehensive argument for prison abolition by addressing the peoples and groups involved in the perpetuation of the prison industrial complex, they tend to underestimate the influence of the policing institution. Professor and author Kristian Williams seeks to extend the notion of prison abolition to include the abolishment of policing in the U.S. throughout his text *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America* (2015). Williams’ applies the principles of the prison abolition movement to the policing system. Recent developments in the activist community have also helped to enlarge the fight against mass incarceration to include local law enforcement. Black Lives Matters, Say Her Name, and INCITE! are a few examples of the organizations against police violence that have recently emerged in response to the killings of underprivileged peoples in the U.S. There are three reasons that I believe police abolition must be incorporated
into the larger discussion surrounding prison abolition: first, the systems of mass incarceration and local law enforcement agencies work together to perpetuate specific types of oppressions and injustices. Second, prevailing incidents involving police misconduct and violence are beginning to reveal the distortion between policing and democracy. Lastly, given the growing social awareness of police violence, now is the time to capitalize on the space that has been created for abolitionists alternatives.

Police brutality and violence is not a novel social issue or epidemic. On the contrary, the use of force and violence to gain and maintain control has been an essential aspect of policing since its genesis. Technological developments have allowed us to capture and witness the severity and widespread nature of police brutality in the U.S. Although race is the primary predictive factor of police brutality, the probability and degree of violence varies according to the intersections of class, gender, sexuality, religion, etc. (Ritchie, 2006). Recent publicized accounts of police misconduct have encouraged people to question the ethics, roles, and duties of the institution (Sullivan, 2014).

A large portion of the population believes that the purpose of local policing is to control crime and enforce the law (Wadman, 2009). However, placing the discussion of the policing institution within the context of the prison industrial complex reveals a contrasting narrative. The rise of the police force created an organization that seeks to inhibit and restrain the freedoms of marginalized groups. During the antebellum era, southern white elites established targeted communities based on racial and group-specific beliefs. The lives and experiences of these communities have since then been determined by the system of white supremacy, socially justified rhetoric, and the organizations that enforce these ideologies. The principles underlying criminality and prevention are collateral consequences of slavery and capitalism (Williams,
While police violence is a historically racial issue, it has grown and manifested into an entire system of repression that enforces classist, sexist, and Eurocentric ideologies.

Understanding the influential relationship between mass incarceration and local law enforcement from a historical perspective offers insight into the development of the modern policing culture in the U.S. The policing model in the U.S. is unique in comparison to the rest of the world. The slave economy and the social conditions it created called for a distinct form of law enforcement in southern colonies. The first predecessors of modern police forces, slave patrols, were a result of slavery and white supremacy (Williams, 2015). It was their duty to protect southern plantation politics and the hierarchy that would be established by the system of slavery and white supremacy. The idea of a racial hierarchy in the U.S. did not exist prior to the institution of slavery. Family lineages and bloodlines established social status and power before the concept of race existed. Ancestry, rather than physical characteristics, dictated social categories of wealth and status. The establishment of slave labor in the south shifted the focus from bloodlines to race, as means of social categorization and control. Racial groups and the accompanying social norms, myths, and values created and supported a social hierarchy-planting the seed of white supremacy in the U.S. Race ignited and solidified the separation between poor white indentured servants, and Black slaves (McWhorter, 2009). The founding principles of white supremacy fixated on the notion of racial domination and control over the process of socialization. However, over time, political and economic factors altered the social hierarchy by introducing the component of monetary status.

Increasing divisions between classes cultivated conflict. Rather than addressing the factors of racism and the distribution of wealth, political elites blamed the lack of morality among the “dangerous classes” for the emerging issues (Williams, 2015). The southern-policing
model adapted to the changing social conditions in order to accommodate the transition from plantations to prisons. Modern policing continued to develop alongside, and in service to, the prison industrial complex. Repression is a common theme throughout the history of the policing institution. Police brutality and the killing of innocent people is more a tradition of law enforcement informed by historical conditions, than a contemporary crisis of isolated incidents in the U.S.

Tracing the links between the origins of the prison industrial complex and modern policing sheds a different light on the dominant narrative of local law enforcement. Analyzing the kinship between mass incarceration and policing enhances specific issues facing the prison abolition movement. The contributions of the policing institution should receive equal consideration if we are to dismantle the prison industrial complex. Law enforcement in the U.S. has historically played the role of the recruiters for mass incarceration. The eradication of prison systems should include the elimination of the policing institution. Kristin Williams’ *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America* (2015) presents a groundbreaking argument for police abolition within the framework of institutional repression. Williams provides a theoretical foundation that allows one to understand the reasoning behind police violence in the U.S. by emphasizing the use of repression/violence as a mechanism of control. While I am in complete support of Williams’ work, I contend that it only speaks to one type of oppression: violence. I aim to make his work more salient by placing it within the framework of systemic oppression, rather than just repression alone. Focusing solely on violence masks the other forms of oppression that are inherited aspects of the policing institution. Applying Iris Marion Young’s theory of systemic oppression to Williams’ work shows how exploitation, marginalization,
and powerlessness are also organic functions of policing in the U.S. Situating Williams’ genealogical account of policing within the context of systemic oppression continues to expose the contingent relationship between police, mass incarceration, and white supremacy. I suggest that systemic oppression, and its multiple manifestations, are founding principles upon which the policing system was constructed.

So far, I have discussed the need to bridge the gap between the discourses surrounding prison abolition and police abolition because of the collaborative history of the two institutions. I argue that the genealogies and developmental histories of slavery, the prison industrial complex and the policing institution are contingent, and require an analysis that evaluates the collective functions and duties of these two organizations in relation to slavery and white supremacy. I want to emphasize the importance of combining conversations between prison and police abolition so that we may work to develop truly effective alternatives. In chapter two, I will combine the work of two leading prison abolitionists, Angela Davis and Michelle Alexander, with the work of police abolitionist Kristian Williams to examine the parallels between mass incarceration and policing in the U.S. Angela Davis’ Are Prisons Obsolete? (2003) and Michelle Alexander’s The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (2012) provide a theoretical and historical premise of the prison industrial complex. To demonstrate the relationship between mass incarceration and policing, I turn to Williams’ Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America (2015). Williams applies a methodology similar to that of Davis and Alexander to examine and challenge the existence of the policing institution.

In chapter three, I apply a theory of systemic oppression and cruelty to modern policing to enhance Williams’ argument. I have developed my understanding of systemic oppression based on the philosophical account of Iris Marion Young. Her Five Faces of Oppression (1990)
will serve as the conceptual basis of my argument. In addition, I will explore Phillip Hallie’s notion of institutional cruelty in relation to systemic oppression and power relationships to address the issues surrounding police reformation. I draw from historical and contemporary examples of police models and practices based on Williams’ genealogical account to support and encourage the movement towards police abolition in the U.S. Chapter four consists of an intersectional analysis of the victims of police violence - specifically, women of color- and the effects of toxic masculinity within police culture. I conclude my assessment in chapter five by addressing potential rebuttals and concerns regarding the absence of police in contemporary society. These rebuttals include crime response and prevention, domestic violence and sexual assault, and mediation and conflict resolution. Lastly, I will propose alternatives to the modern policing system that are based on the theoretical framework of Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1993). I will also look to existing community-based alternative programs and organizations, such as The Audre Lorde Project and Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth.
Chapter 2- Literature Review

If the notions of democracy and oppression are mutually exclusive, how do we explain the development and success of an oppressive societal institution in the U.S.? In this chapter, I will frame the answers to this question by first examining the genesis of the prison industrial complex in the U.S. based on Angela Davis’ *Are Prisons Obsolete* (2003). Second, I will demonstrate how the system of mass incarceration has been discretely replicated throughout history under the façade of the post racial theory of colorblindness using Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2012). Third, I will discuss the kinship between the prison industrial complex and the policing institution in order to address the need to bridge the gap between the discourses surrounding prison abolition and police abolition using Kristian Williams’ latest edition of *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America* (2015). Lastly, I will present Iris Marion Young’s *Five Faces of Oppression* (1990) and Phillip Hallie’s essay *From Cruelty to Goodness* (1981) as theoretical paradigms for understanding how police engage in systemic oppression and cruelty.

The prison abolition movement differs from prison reform, in that it seeks to eradicate prison systems rather than improve the conditions of existing facilities. Ample support for prison abolition has spread throughout the academy and community as public awareness of the prison industrial complex continues to prevail (Davis, 2003 & 2011; Alexander, 2012; Johnson, 2017; Prison Activist Resource Center, 2017). The available information on mass incarceration and prison abolition, in general, corresponds in terms of content and tone. However, the phrases and language used to describe and define the characteristics of the prison industrial complex/mass incarceration vary across authors and organizations. I have compiled the
following list of terms that will be used throughout this thesis that I would like to stipulate upfront as to avoid any ambiguity:

- **Prison Industrial Complex/Mass Incarceration** - describes the overlapping interests of government and industrial elites that uses surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political issues (Davis, 2003).

- **White Supremacy** - a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of peoples of color by white peoples for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege (Martinez, 2017). It is important to note that white supremacy has evolved beyond racial domination; it is a socialization process that dehumanizes certain peoples in order to maintain the concentration of wealth and power to a small group of capitalist elites. “White supremacy represses economically. In a capitalist society, that means it works to strip away a person’s rights and reduce their capacity to advance their own interests, or the interests of their communities” (Coates as cited in Darville, 2016, par. 6).

- **Race** - a social construct without biological meaning; an ideology about human differences based on skin color (Lusca, 2008).

- **Social Stratification** - the hierarchal relationships between distinct groups, usually based on inequality and access to wealth, power and status (Cole, 2017).

- **Status Quo** - the established order of things; present customs, practices, and power relations (Botterweck, 2017).

- **Repression** - the act of using force to control someone or something (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
• **Genealogy** - a historical method that explains an aspect of human life by showing how it came into being; this technique identifies the social conditions and beliefs that lead to societal changes and developments (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013). Genealogy is based on the theory that the social conditions and the power relations under which something is created and developed offer insight to the true intentions and nature of that creation. This theoretical tool will serve as the foundation of my argument for police abolition based on the genealogical accounts of Davis, Alexander, and Williams to illustrate the need to put police abolition and prison abolition in conversation with one another.

• **Police Brutality/Violence** - a normative construction describing the use of illegal or deadly force and actions. Standards or judgments of police brutality vary according to the individual, community, agency, and jurisdiction involved (Williams, 2015).

• **Police Culture** - the attitudes and behaviors prevalent among the police force, often considered to be characterized by solidarity, loyalty and resistance to change, and sometimes alleged to be discriminatory and intolerant; a process of socialization (Oxford Living Dictionary, n.d.).

**Institutional Racism and Discrimination- Angela Davis’ *Are Prisons Obsolete?***

In order to understand the driving force behind prison abolitionists’ fight against mass incarceration one must look at the origins and history of the prison industrial complex. Unearthing the events and social conditions that fostered the birth and growth of mass incarceration allows us to make sense of our current punitive justice system. It is by confronting our nation's case of historical amnesia and learning from the past that we can see how the present came to be. Angela Davis’ *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003) provides a historical and socio-economic analysis of the prison industrial complex from a racial and social justice perspective.
This text draws connections between slavery and the design of the prison industrial complex. The prison industrial complex consists of a network of stakeholders that rely on the existence of mass incarceration to protect and maintain the status quo established during slavery (Davis, 2003). Davis calls attention to the systemic nature of the complex and demonstrates how physical characteristics, social mores, and capitalists’ interests have functioned as the primary pillars of mass incarceration—or, enslaved labor—in the United States. Her use of a racial and social justice approach provides context for understanding the prison industrial complex as a system of discrimination that transcends the power of racism alone. The basis of Davis’ argument is quite simple: prisons are, and have always been, intrinsically racist, sexist, and elitist institutions.

The link between crime and prisons has become inseparable in the minds of most people living in the U.S. “You do the crime; you do the time” is a widely accepted and publicized concept. If this logic is correct, then it makes sense that prison population rates would rise and fall in correspondence with crime rates. However, the peak of prison construction occurred during a period in which crime rates were steadily decreasing (Davis, 2003). The U.S. population is less than five percent of the global population, yet it houses twenty-three percent of the world’s prison population; two million people, out of a world total of nine million, are under some form of incapacitation in the U.S. (Davis, 2003). If crime rates and prison population rates do not positively correlate, one must begin to wonder, what is the driving force behind mass incarceration? Davis argues that prisons exist and persist for the same reasons that slavery did: social and economic control by way of systemic discrimination.

There are two types of stakeholders regarding mass incarceration: industrialists’ stakeholders and political stakeholders. Industrialists’ stakeholders are persons or businesses
with vested financial interests in the preservation of mass incarceration (Davis, 2003). The primary goal and motive of industrialists’ stakeholders are massive profit margins. Prison activists coined the term “prison industrial complex” after the earlier military industrial complex as a way to expose the capitalists’ interests behind mass incarceration and debunk the narrative of crime and punishment. “Instead, they argued, prison construction and the attendant drive to fill these new structures with human bodies have been driven by ideologies of racism and the pursuit of profit” (Davis, 2003, p. 84). There are substantial economic benefits for private corporations within the prison industrial complex. Private businesses that rely on a large labor pool can make a significant amount of money off prison labor.

For the tycoons who have invested in the prison industry, it has been like finding a pot of gold. They don’t have to worry about strikes or paying unemployment insurance, vacations or comp time. All of their workers are full-time, and never arrive late or are absent because of family problems; moreover, if they don’t like the pay of 25 cents an hour and refuse to work, they are locked up in isolation cells (Pelaez, 2008, par. 1).

Simply put, profits from prison labor contracts incentivize high prison population rates. The maintenance of mass incarceration comes down to the political stakeholders whose careers depend upon the existence of the prison industrial complex. Parties include, but are not limited to, law enforcement agents, prison guards, judicial staff and legislatures, and elected officials (Davis, 2003). Political stakeholders differ from profit stakeholders in the sense that they provide the services necessary to acquire raw materials - prisoners- to guarantee long-term growth of the prison system (Donzinger as cited in Davis, 2003). Financial success has had a massive influence on the notions of justice and legality in the U.S. Similar to slavery, the prison industrial complex allows the dominant group to legally exploit and profit off the bodies and labor of people of color.
Before further engaging in an analysis of Davis’ text, I feel as though it is necessary to explain the use of the Black/white binary as a predication for racism in the U.S. criminal justice system. It is critical to note that Blacks are not the only group targeted by our judicial institution.

Black, Latino, Native American, and many Asian youth are portrayed as the purveyors of violence, traffickers of drugs, and as envious of commodities that they have no right to possess. Young Black and Latina women are represented as sexually promiscuous and as indiscriminately propagating babies and poverty. Criminality and deviance are racialized. Surveillance is thus focused on communities of color, immigrants, the unemployed, the undereducated, the homeless, and in general on those who have a diminishing claim to social resources. Their claim to social resources continues to diminish in large part because law enforcement and penal measures increasingly devour these resources. The prison industrial complex has thus created a vicious cycle of punishment which only further impoverishes those whose impoverishment is supposedly "solved" by imprisonment (Davis, n.d., para. 21).

In 2003, Latin@s accounted for the majority of the prison population at 35.2 percent, followed by African Americans at 30 percent, and whites at 29.2 percent in California (Davis, 2003). The racialized histories of Latin@s, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and all racial, ethnic and religious groups have greatly affected the development and design of the U.S. punitive system. However, in the U.S., it is customary to discuss racism in terms of Black and white, causing a silencing and almost diminishing effect on the oppression experienced by non-Black people of color. While I am aware of the parochial dangers of endorsing the Black/white binary, I contend that the histories and experiences of Blacks in the U.S.- again, specifically in terms of the prison industrial complex- can be extended to all marginalized groups in the U.S. This is not to say that the Black experience can speak to all types of oppressions faced by marginalized groups throughout the prison industrial complex. Instead, it should serve as an example of the ways in which institutional oppression can affect non-white and poor groups of peoples. White supremacy creates a common environment for people of color and the poor in which they are
more likely to be subjected to acts of systemic discrimination. While they do share a common environment, the severity of their experiences depends on their position in the racial, financial, and social hierarchy. Racism, the founding principle of white supremacy, serves to establish the division between white and non-white peoples. It is not a synonym for “anti-Black” but rather “anti-non-white.” As the need for social control grew, the notions of race and racism expanded to include Natives and immigrants.

As real situations, the social construction of ‘race’ and whiteness and their social significance are intimately linked to the history of social organization in American society. Blumer observed that the organization of American “race” relations emerged from the intersection of three significant events in history. He opined that these events were “the conquest of the Indians, the forced importation of Africans, [and] the more or less solicited coming of Europeans, Asians, and Latinos” (Guess, 2006, p. 654).

Examples of shared experiences and grievances across marginalized groups include, but are not limited to, the imposed slavery and genocide of the Native Americans by early settlers, the similar working conditions between slaves and farm work for Latin@ laborers, and the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II. These examples speak to the ways in which our society has historically deemed non-white groups unworthy of autonomy to maintain control of the other based on group-specific beliefs and stereotypes. However, regarding the prison industrial complex, the enslavement of Blacks for centuries served as the gateway to modern mass incarceration.

Racial disparities are evident throughout every facet of the prison industrial complex: arrest rates, conviction and sentencing rates, prison populations, judicial representatives, and law enforcement agents skew in favor of the status quo. The color of a person’s skin has played a dominant role in the construction of mass incarceration, dating back to the antebellum era. Davis
aims to demonstrate the parallels between the use of chattel slavery and the use of prisons in modern society by turning to historian Adam Hirsch:

One may perceive in the penitentiary many reflections of chattel slavery as it was practiced in the South. Both institutions subordinated their subjects to the will of others. Like Southern slaves, prison inmates followed a daily routine specified by their superiors. Both institutions reduced their subjects to dependence on others for the supply of basic human services such as food and shelter. Both isolated their subjects from the general population by confining them to a fixed habitat. And both frequently coerced their subjects to work, often for longer hours and for less compensation than free laborers (as cited in Davis, 2003, p. 27).

According to Davis, the similarities between slavery and prisons are indications of a shared affinity between the two institutions. Davis notes that during the antebellum era society believed prisoners and slaves to have a stronger inclination towards participating in criminal activity. The association between slaves and crime would later become paramount to the preservation of racist beliefs and practices in the criminal justice system after the Civil War. “Particularly in the United States, race has always played a central role in constructing presumptions of criminality” (Davis, 2003, p. 28). The passing of the Thirteenth Amendment called for the end slavery and forced elite white southerners to produce an alternative system that would maintain their control over the freed Black population. Ironically, they found their redeeming feature in the very document that threatened their power.

The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude “except as punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted” (U.S. Const. amend XIII, 1865). The task of continuing the institution of slavery, then, became a matter of developing a set of racialized laws, policies, and enforcement agencies. The Black Codes served as the law of the land in southern states. Modeled after the original slave codes, the new legislation was the first step in the larger plan to suppress the freedoms of emancipated slaves. The Black Codes were clearly superficial in that they criminalized typically non-criminal
behaviors of Blacks; prohibited acts included vagrancy, absence from work, bearing arms, and insulting gestures (Davis, 2003). Thus, former slaves extricated from the gross conditions of plantation labor faced the threat of penal servitude for simply engaging in everyday life (Davis, 2003). Slavery, or imprisonment, became a legalized form of punishment under the U.S. justice system. The practice of assigning color to crime served as the primary tool for racial management. “With the abolition of slavery Blacks ceased to be slaves, but immediately became criminals- and as criminals they became slaves of the state” (Davis, 2005, p. 12). Following the Black Codes, the normalization of racist and oppressive judicial legislation continued throughout our criminal justice system. Michelle Alexander describes the process of replication through the use of colorblindness in the next section. The Jim Crow laws succeeded the Black Codes and remained in effect until the 1960’s. The establishment of racialized laws and policies drastically altered the prison populations in the U.S.

Prisons existed prior to the abolishment of slavery and housed, predominately, white southerners (Davis, 2003). However, after the passing of the thirteenth amendment and the creation of the Black Codes, the general perception of southern whites underwent the process of imputing crime to color (Davis, 2003). Scholar Saidiya Hartman offers a profound description of this process in her text *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997):

In positioning the Black as criminal, the state obfuscated its instrumental role in terror by projecting all culpability and wrongdoing onto the enslaved. The Black body was simply the site on which the ‘crimes’ of the dominant class and of the state were externalized in the form of a threat. The criminality imputed to Blacks disavowed white violence as a necessary response to the threatening agency of Blackness… White culpability was displaced as Black criminality, and violence was legitimated as the ruling principle of the social relations of slavery (p. 82). Violence towards people of color is an inherent component of the prison industrial complex.
Fear, intimidation, and brutality are necessary factors of oppressive power. Beatings, lynchings, and imprisonment are long-standing practices yielded against marginalized groups under the guise of just-deserts: the belief that justice entails a form of what is deserved, regardless of court sentencing.

Davis highlights the sexist implications of the violence produced during the antebellum era in relation to mass incarceration. The pioneering ideologies of slavery and prisons deeply entwine in terms of their racists values and practices. However, gender plays a large role in the type of punishment experienced by individuals throughout the prison industrial complex.

Gender dictated the treatment and experiences of slaves. For a majority of enslaved males, the primary form of retribution involved physical abuse, such as whippings and fatal beatings. Female slaves experienced subjection to sexual abuse by slaveholders, overseers, and other white men and women (National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox, 2007). Although whites categorized all slaves as subhuman, females bore the brunt of objectification:

If we expand our definition of punishment under slavery, we can say that the coerced sexual relationship between slave and master constituted a penalty exacted on women, if only for the sole reason that they were slaves. In other words, the deviance of the slave master was transferred to the slave woman, whom he victimized. Likewise, sexual abuse by prison guards is translated into the hypersexuality of women prisoners (Davis, 2003, p. 68).

Since the 1980’s, women of color have been the fastest growing sector of the prison population rate (Davis, 2003). The incarceration rate of Black women increased by 828 percent; Black women are eight times more likely to face imprisonment in the U.S. (National Alliance for the Advancement of Colored People Equal Justice Spring, 1998 as cited in “Women in Prison,” n.d.). Gendered violence is a unique dimension of institutional punishment against women. “Ideologies of sexuality- and particularly the intersection of race and sexuality- have had a profound effect on the representations of and treatment received by women of color both within
and outside prison” (Davis, 2003, p. 79). Women of color that are in prison are prone and subjected to sexual abuse, harassment, and threats and acts of rape on behalf of representatives of the state. Body cavity searches pose a great threat to imprisoned women. According to Davis, the use of strip searches in women’s prisons is an example of the routinization and normalization of sexual abuse (2003). Prison protocols place women in positions that make them vulnerable to sexual assault. The Human Rights Watch report of 2007 stated that fifteen percent of incarcerated females have been victims of prison sexual assault at the hands of prison staff and inmates (U.S. Justice Department). The violence experienced by women, especially those of color, in prisons is a direct result of perpetual racism and misogyny by the stakeholders of the prison industrial complex.

Dismantling the complexity of mass incarceration is beyond the ability of prison reform efforts. Davis is in favor of doing away with prisons and developing alternative programs for treating criminal behaviors. Prisons function as a form of institutional racism and discrimination. Mass incarceration and the use of prisons is an antiquated system of punishment that thrives on the dehumanization of marginalized groups. The prison system denies the ideologies of retribution and rehabilitation; instead, it endorses the ideologies of social control, profit, and power (Davis, 2003). Davis encourages abolitionists to take a multifaceted approach to ending the prison industrial complex. Removing prisons from society will not be enough:

It is a set of symbiotic relationships among correctional communities, transitional corporations, media conglomerates, guards’ unions, and legislative and court agendas. If it is true that the contemporary meaning of punishment is fashioned through these relationships, then the most effective abolitionist strategies will contest these relationships and pull them apart (Davis, 2003, p. 107).

_Are Prisons Obsolete_? is a profound and influential text within the discourse of prison abolition. Davis’ work weaves the present and past together, tracing intricate patterns of racism
and oppression throughout the criminal justice system. She presents the connections between slavery, sexism, and capitalism to the larger prison industrial complex. Davis provides the necessary context to begin discovering the true ephemeral nature of the system of mass incarceration. Although it may be difficult to imagine a life without prisons, she encourages us to remember that it was equally troublesome to imagining a life without slavery in the 17th century.

**Transitional Institutional Racism and Post-Racial Narratives - Michelle Alexander**

**Alexander’s The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness**

Michelle Alexander’s work builds directly off the theoretical concepts presented throughout Davis’ *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2012) offers a rhetorical analysis and a racial justice approach to deconstructing mass incarceration. While Davis’ text illustrates the structural components of the prison industrial complex, Alexander adds flesh to bones by revealing the obscure historical links between the monumental eras of our nation’s criminal justice system. She focuses on the continuum between the slave era, the Jim Crow era, and the ongoing war on drugs with an emphasis on the use of post-racial rhetoric, narratives, and theory.

Alexander presents a transitional theory of racism, arguing that institutional racist beliefs and practices undergo mutations to adapt to new social conditions, and discrimination to explain the development and growth of mass incarceration in the U.S. *The New Jim Crow* confronts our nation’s historical use of redesigned racist rhetoric, legislation, and practices that have come to shape the racial caste system and social dynamics of American society. It is crucial that we understand how oppressive institutions have managed to succeed in a “progressive” society
under the guise of justice for two reasons: first, it allows us to identify and evaluate the role and power of social myths; second, it will help us to avoid this process of replication in the future.

The conversation surrounding the racial progress in the U.S. is a story of recurring contradictions. The illusion of structural changes suggested by post-racial narratives fail to acknowledge the reality of racist intentions and ideologies underlying the justice system. This history of mass incarceration is the product of white supremacist systems that were put into place, and have since then been modified, to establish and maintain racial and social control. Each transition, from slavery to the Jim Crow era and the current era of mass incarceration-the new Jim Crow- are indications of intentional renovations of legalized discrimination, rather than national moral breakthroughs and improvements.

Arguably, the most important parallel between mass incarceration and Jim Crow is that both have served to define the meaning and significance of race in America. Indeed, a primary function of any racial caste system is to define the meaning of race in its time. Slavery defined what it meant to be Black (a slave), and Jim Crow defined what it meant to be Black (a second-class citizen). Today, mass incarceration defines the meaning of Blackness in America: Black people, especially Black men, are criminals. That is what is means to be Black (Alexander, 2012, p. 197).

Alexander attributes the success of these legalized systems of discrimination to the concept of colorblindness. She describes the principle of colorblindness as the use of post-racial language to justify our current conditions and institutions (2012). Although the actual practice of racial progress is lacking, the theory and idea of a post-racial America is pervasive. She contends that the key differences between the methods of control employed throughout the antebellum era and our present day criminal justice system reside chiefly in the language and rhetoric used to frame societal issues and solutions. Presenting a topic to a given society can directly influence the general beliefs of a nation. Framing effects can be both positive and negative. “In the public opinion field, however, framing usually takes a negative connotation
because framing effects suggest that distributions of public preferences are arbitrary, and that political elites can manipulate popular preferences to serve their own interests” (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 120).

According to Alexander, the ideologies and practice that shaped the institution of slavery did not end with the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment. Instead, they were merely reframed using post-racial narratives that perpetuated the notion of colorblindness by shifting the focus from racial control to public safety and crime prevention. Similar to the ways in which Davis traced the shared affinity of the structural organization of slavery and prisons, Alexander analyzes the language used throughout history to aid the transition from plantations to prisons. Southern elites enforced the rhetoric of race and racism to justify the institution of slavery. Racial categories functioned to create barriers between slaves and indentured servants, or poor whites (Alexander, 2012). She explains the purpose of race in the following excerpt:

When we look back over the course of our nation’s history, what we see again and again almost like clockwork are these predictable efforts by the wealthy elite to use race as a wedge. To pit poor whites against poor people of color for the benefit of the ruling elite. Many people don’t realize that even slavery as an institution—the emergence of an all-Black system of slavery—was to a large extent the result of plantation owners deliberately trying to pit poor whites against poor Blacks. And ensure that poor whites would not join in any kind of resistance, movement, struggle, or revolt with poor Blacks. They created an all-Black system of slavery that didn’t benefit whites by much, but at least whites were persuaded that they weren’t slaves and thus were inherently superior to Black folks. Throwing poor whites that scrap of a false sense of racial superiority was enough to prevent an interracial movement that would really challenge the system of plantation slavery (Alexander as cited in Pillischer, 2012, par. 12).

The maintenance of the racial caste system has been successful through the process of replication and modifications. The same politics of racial superiority and segregation fostered the growth of the Jim Crow laws and the era of mass incarceration.
As Davis noted, after the abolishment of slavery, southern elites required a new system of oppression to maintain racial control and power. Alexander focuses on the development of post-racial rhetoric used to rationalize and justify the replication of discriminatory laws. The language of the Black Codes reinforced the racial divisions and continued to increase tension between groups. The laws explicitly targeted Blacks, labeled them as criminals and bolstered the idea of white supremacy. The purpose of the codes was to replicate the system of slavery under the guise of criminal laws. The Jim Crow laws eventually replaced the Black Codes after the Reconstruction Era. Again, the growing idea of “racial progress” required updated legislation that was not overtly racist and still maintained the status quo. The Jim Crow laws legally protected segregation and the use of discrimination by way of colorblind narratives- avoiding the use of explicitly racial terms. “Once again, vagrancy laws and other laws defining activities such as ‘mischief’ and ‘insulting gestures’ as crimes were enforced vigorously against Blacks. The aggressive enforcement of these criminal offenses opened up an enormous market for convict leasing…”- or, neo-slavery (Alexander, 2012, p. 31). The expansion of colorblindness redefined what it meant to be Black and created new associations and stereotypes that would maintain the racial status quo established by slavery and the Black Codes.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 superficially eradicated the Jim Crow system of discrimination. While there was meaningful growth for people of color within the political and social realms, denying Black peoples access to economic opportunity remained the norm. Following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King attempted to unite all economically disadvantaged groups by shifting the focus to human rights through the Poor Peoples Movement. The Poor Peoples Movement addressed the issues of economic inequalities across all races. The merger between the Civil Rights Movement agenda and the Poor Peoples
Movement signaled growing relations between the lower-class whites and Blacks. This called for a new set of laws that would implicitly preserve the racial caste system. “Proponents of racial hierarchy found they could install a new racial caste system without violating the law or new limits of acceptable political discourse, by demanding ‘law and order’ rather than ‘segregation forever’” (Alexander, 2012, p. 40). Political elites utilized public safety propaganda to associate political activists with criminals who challenged law and order. Tactics included the portrayal of civil and social justice leaders as criminals as means to suppress opposing organizations. During the same period, the FBI began reporting increases in crime rates—which, contrary to popular belief, were due to a rise in the baby boomer population of young white men (Alexander, 2012). The pivotal moment in the development of the new system of control occurred in the 1970’s when the Nixon Administration, later succeeded by Reagan, declared a national “war on drugs.” The language used by the President to justify the need for government intervention was not truly representative of the problem and disregarded the groups of people that would be primarily targeted by this “war.” We cannot wage a war against a substance, for the drugs themselves have no value without human intervention. A “war against group-specific drug users and suppliers” would have been more appropriate.

“It may be surprising to some that drug crime was declining, not rising, when a drug war was declared” (Alexander, 2012, p. 7). Yet, prison populations continued to flourish at an unprecedented rate. Alexander, again, turns to post-racial narratives to explain the disconnection between theory and reality. The war on drugs was not an attack against illegal substances, but an attack against marginalized groups of people. Statistics show that drug use has been equal across races. However, the judicial system disproportionately targets people of color and the poor. Therefore, it was a war against specific groups of users and suppliers.
“Conservatives found they could finally justify an all-out war on an ‘enemy’ that had been racially defined years before” (Alexander, 2012, p. 52). The Reagan administration allocated millions of dollars to law enforcement agencies with the intention to increase the number of drug arrests (Alexander, 2012). The use of implicit racialized myths and stereotypes by the government and mainstream media has since then defined and portrayed people of color as the drug problem in the U.S.

The election of President Obama catapulted the level of colorblindness to an unprecedented state. Americans have declared triumph over racism based solely on the success of one person of color. Black exceptionalism is another example of the dangers of post-racial narratives and myths. Isolating examples of Black success distorts the ability to view the systemic nature of racism and oppression. Conditions for Blacks worsened under the Obama Administration. In 2012, Alexander noted “… more Black men are imprisoned today than at any other moment in our nation’s history. More are disenfranchised today than in 1870” (p. 180). Racial disparities across prison rates are not a result of drug crimes because white men are more likely to engage in drug crime than non-whites, but Black men face drug charges at rates up to fifty times greater than white men (Alexander, 2012). Similar to the conditions during the slave era and the Jim Crow era, mass incarceration continues to subject Black bodies to a system of legalized discrimination that enforces racist ideologies and practices. Like Davis, Alexander calls for a multifaceted approach to prison abolition in the U.S. “I argue that nothing short of a major social movement can successfully dismantle the new caste system” (Alexander, 2012, p. 18). She contends that the movement must consist of a thorough understanding of our nation’s racial history in order to combat colorblindness and prevent replications of the past.
Alexander’s theory of transitional racism and rhetoric demonstrates the genealogical nature of systems of discrimination that compromise the U.S. justice department. *The New Jim Crow* contributes to the larger discussion of the prison industrial complex by providing a historical and rhetorical approach to understanding mass incarceration from a racial justice perspective. Her ability to debunk post-racial narratives and myths surrounding mass incarceration calls the origins and intentions of the prison system into question. However, the focus of Alexander’s work remains on the existence of prisons and the experiences of Black men. To gain a full understanding of the prison industrial complex, we must take the contribution of other ruling institutions into consideration, especially the policing institution.

**Institutional Repression and Policing in the U.S.- Kristian William’s Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America**

The origins of local law enforcement in the U.S. are bound to those of slavery and mass incarceration. The initial predecessors of modern police served with the intent to function as mechanisms of control. *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America* (2015) puts forth an argument for police abolition. Williams contends that the modern police force is racist, elitist, undemocratic, authoritarian, and violent (2015). The growing demands of white supremacy and the prison industrial complex dictated the evolution of policing in the U.S. According to the author, police did not create racism; on the contrary, racism created the policing institution. What may have begun as a goal of racial control has evolved into the quest for total social domination. Providing a genealogical account of the institutional development of the police, Williams examines the relationship between law enforcement within the context of power and repression.
Analogous to Alexander’s work, *Our Enemies in Blue* applies a genealogical-transitional theory to the structuring of modern policing. He argues that the modifications of the founding principles and functions of racism, discrimination and control have allowed the original policing model of slave patrols to adapt to a changing society. Williams presents his definition of modern policing based on their essential features in order to identify the major influences and explain the forces that molded the institution we know today:

*Modern police* characteristics include:

1. the investment of responsibility for law enforcement in a single organization,
2. citywide jurisdiction and centralization,
3. an intended continuity in office and procedure,
4. a specialized policing function (meaning that the organization is mainly responsible for policing, not for keeping the streets clean, putting out fires, etc.),
5. twenty-four-hour service,
6. personnel paid on a salary basis rather than by fee, and
7. a preventative orientation (Williams, 2015, p. 54).

These traits listed are in order of relative significance, not chronological emergence. He suggests using these characteristics to organize policing predecessors along a continuum as being more or less modern, depending on the degree to which they meet the defining characteristics. This historical investigation establishes a useful foundation for understanding the role of police in the U.S.

Williams traces the lineage of modern policing to the institution of slavery and the original patrolling systems of southern colonies. The rise of southern plantation politics called for a distinct form of law enforcement that produced two of the defining characteristics of modern policing: *specialization and preventative policing*. Southern whites, primarily, plantation owners, were outnumbered by Black slaves. The differences between population sizes posed a direct threat to the system of white supremacy and the developing status quo. Political elites responded to the concerns of southern whites by creating a force specifically designed to
control the behavior of slaves- *specialized police function*. Local white authorities appointed slave patrols to police the enslaved Black population.

Faced with the difficulties of keeping a major portion of the population enslaved to the small elite, Southern society borrowed from the practices of the Caribbean, especially Barbados. There, slave owners used professional slave catchers and militias to capture runaways, while overseers were responsible for maintaining order on the plantations. The weaknesses of this system led to the creation of slave codes, laws directed specifically to the governing of slaves (Williams, 2015, p. 64).

Initially, the primary duties of patrollers consisted of capturing runaways and regulating the mobility of those traveling between plantations. However, growing fears of revolts caused the new enforcement to adopt a *preventative orientation*. The practice of preventative policing increased the presence of slave patrols in southern society. “Throughout all of the [Southern] states during the antebellum period, roving armed police patrols scoured the countryside day and night, intimidating, terrorizing, and brutalizing slaves into submission and meekness” (Wintersmith as cited in Williams, 2015, p. 69). The abolishment of slavery and the transition from country to city living altered the social dynamics of the south and required the established control mechanism of policing to adapt to the new changes.

The prevalence of urbanization and proto-industrialization gave way to the remaining five characteristics of modern policing. Increasing population rates, demographic changes and the expansion of municipal governments created new obstacles for maintaining the social hierarchies across the country:

In cities, industrialization and its accompanying entourage of social changes led to the breakdown of the informal means of social control that had proved (mostly) sufficient to that point. Cities thus produced advances in social control that the plantation system hadn’t needed and likely would have eschewed. In Southern cities like Charleston, the City Guards picked up where the patrols had fallen short, in the control of slaves (and freed Black people) on hire. In Northern cities, industrialization produced similar needs to control the workforce. Rather than
rely on personal authority and social deference (as on the plantation), or on the influence of the family and church (as in smaller New England towns), industrial cities of the North created governmental systems that were universalistic and routinized (Williams, 2015, p. 105).

The transition from slave patrols to City Guards in the south introduced new aspects to law enforcement. Municipal governments combined the values of southern plantation politics and northern machine politics to redesign policing. Through the process of experimentation and elimination, political elites around the U.S. worked together to transform law enforcement into a distinct institution. Specialization and preventative patrolling continued into the new force and the last five features of modern policing came to life. The urban model invested the responsibilities of law enforcement in a single organization, established citywide jurisdictions, provided twenty-four-hour services, formalized continuity in office and procedure, and was staffed by paid workers. Modern police departments- based on his definition- began to rise around the nation.

Essentially, the New York Police Department set the standard for modern policing in the U.S. In 1845, New York authorized its first centralized police department consisting of 800 officers (Williams, 2015). The massive body of law enforcement served to function under the control of the ruling political party. “The mayor’s power to appoint officers of all ranks made it clear that the new force would be politically driven” (Williams, 2015, p. 84). Police became a useful mechanism of control for political elites- the collusive relationship between those in office and the local law enforcement is what Williams refers to as machine politics. Operating as the muscle, officers were expected to protect and enforce the interests of those in power. “The police served the interests of political machines in three key ways: police jobs served as rewards for supporters; police controlled the elections; and police regulated illicit businesses, deciding
which would be allowed to operate under what conditions” (Williams, 2015, p. 93). The notion of economic control dominated political interests.

The growth of capitalism in the U.S. altered the system of social stratification and created a new class of workers. Race and economic status directed the status quo.

While sheer numbers and diversity of the population contributed to [the increasing complexity of American society], specialization (especially in the production and distribution of goods) increased social stratification were probably more important. These factors acted together to depress or reduce the standard of living for the greatest portion of the cities’ residents, creating conflict between economic classes and increasing friction between ethnic and religious groups (Williams, 2015, p. 103).

Those at the top of the new social order attributed the rise in conflict to the lack of morality among the poor—which now included racial groups and lower-class whites; completely disregarding the effects of the concentration of wealth and power. Questioning the morality of the poor and their ability to distinguish between right and wrong created the idea of dangerous classes and continued to establish the parameters of criminality. “Crime and criminality were thus constructed to reflect the ideological needs of elites. Criminality was less a matter of what people did than what they represented” (Williams, 2015, p. 107).

The assumption that urban crime created the need for police serves as the primary narrative for the institution of law enforcement in the U.S. The theory of “crime and disorder” suggests that the establishment of a police force is the natural social response to rising crime rates. According to Williams, this perspective on the development and functions of the policing institution is incorrect. Rather than create crime, cities actually promoted civility; as the population grew, crime rates decreased (Williams, 2015). As previously demonstrated, the influence of slavery and social conditions of the south played a primary role in the construction
of modern policing. Crime and disorder existed for centuries prior to the implementation of modern policing. Informal means of policing—citizen patrols—responded to public disturbances. “Public drunkenness was a serious problem in Boston as early as 1775, but a modern police force was not created there until 1838” (Williams, 2015, p. 109). The crime-and-disorder theory cannot explain why earlier waves of crime did not result in the production of a modern police force. Furthermore, he argues that it does not account for the reasons urban crime lead to modern policing and not an alternative system. There is little evidence that indicates crime was on the rise prior to the establishment of modern policing. There is proof of decreasing crime rates in areas such as Boston beginning around 1820 and continued to fall for the rest of the nineteenth century (Williams, 2015). Despite the levels of crime, the number of arrests increased drastically after the creation of modern policing. Most arrests were for misdemeanors, victimless crimes, and acts that threatened the public order. Examples include vagrancy, loitering, disorderly conduct, or simply being a member of the lower class (Williams, 2015). The principle and practice of social control seemed to dominate that of public safety.

In other words, the greatest portion of the actual business of law enforcement did not concern the protection of life and property, but the controlling of poor people, their habits, and their manners. The suppression of such disorderly conduct was only made possible by the introduction of the modern police. For the first time, more arrests were made on the initiative of the officer than in response to specific complaints (Williams, 2015, p. 109).

Rejecting the theory of crime-and-disorder, Williams contends that the modern police force was a result of several factors, all of which related to the maintenance of the social and economic status quo, and not a by-product of urban crime. Influential factors of modern policing include southern colonial law enforcement models, industrialization and urbanization, demands for social order, and northern machine politics.
Modern policing normalized the presence of the state in the U.S. Police departments were able to monopolize the means of violence in society under the claim to ensure protection. Violence is an inherent part of modern policing (Williams, 2015). The use of force has historically provided a direct means by which the state or dominant culture can impose its will onto the public. For example, slave patrols enforced the ideologies of white supremacy and racial domination by terrorizing the Black population into submission with the threat and act of violence. City guards served the interests of political machines by surrounding voting polls and brutalizing supporters of the opposed parties. The sole legal authority over the use of violence in modern policing means that the possibility of repression is implicit in every police encounter (Williams, 2015).

The origins and development of modern policing provides context for understanding police brutality today. The long-standing practice of eliminating threats to the racial and economic status by way of violence has proven to be an effective tool for social control. People of color and the poor are historical targets of the police force because of the myths created by slavery and industrialization. The idea of law enforcement agents as crime fighters causes the public to exaggerate the dangers of the job. “The fact that policing is risky, by this view, seems to justify in advance whatever measure the police feel necessary to employ. This point lies at the center of the Hero Defense” (Williams, 2015, p. 42). Justifying police violence leads to legitimization, thus making it more likely to occur. Serious incidents of police brutality tend to be explained away by the “Rotten Apple” theory- officers who abuse their power are a tiny minority and their actions should not be a reflection of the entire institution (Williams, 2015). The rotten apple theory individualizes the issue of police brutality and denies the existence of institutional repression perpetuated by the culture of the organization. This
perspective distorts the pervasive nature of police violence and shifts the attention away from the institution, protecting the organization. However, Williams demonstrates how police brutality is a systemic aspect of policing in the U.S.

The use of force and violence has become routine in policing. Due to the normative nature of police brutality, statistics regarding police violence and use of force are scarce, flawed, and incomplete (Williams, 2015). The distinction between legal use of force, excessive force, and illegal force depend on perception and experience, rather than explicitly sanctioned practices. “The question—the real question—is one of legitimacy. The larger conflict is a conflict of values” (Williams, 2015, p. 35). The available data on brutality is by no means an accurate representation of the use violence; however, the numbers are still cause for concern.

According to a Justice Department Survey, 19 percent of American adults (43.5 million people) had direct fact-to-face contact with the police in 2005. Of those surveyed, 1.6 percent reported the use of force or its threats. In other words, out of every hundred people the police came into contact with, they will threaten or hurt one or two of them. The rate is much higher for Blacks (4.4 percent) and Hispanics (2.3 percent) than for Whites (1.2 percent). The vast majority of the victims (83 percent) characterized the force as excessive. ‘One and a half percent’ is a polite way of saying ‘nearly a million.’ … Also in 2005, there were 57,546 officers assaulted in the course of their work, the equivalent of 11.9 assaults per hundred officers… Comparing the numbers, we find that the police use violence (546,000 times in 2005) nine times as often as they face it (57,546 times that year) (as cited in Williams, 2015, p. 38).

A recent report published by the Washington Post in 2015 analyzed the number of fatal police shootings in the U.S. The numbers surrounding police killings in 2015 correspond to the previous data on police brutality from 2005. The post examined 385 incidents of police shootings and killings:

Among The Post’s findings:
About half of the victims were white, half minority. But the demographics shifted sharply among the unarmed victims, two-thirds of whom were Black or Hispanic. Overall, Blacks were killed at three times the rate of whites or other
minorities when adjusting by the population of the census tracts where the shootings occurred. The vast majority of victims – more than 80 percent – were armed with potentially lethal objects, primarily guns, but also knives, machetes, revving vehicles and, in one case, a nail gun. Forty-nine people had no weapon, while the guns wielded by 13 others turned out to be toys. In all, 16 percent were either carrying a toy or were unarmed. The dead ranged in age from 16 to 83. Eight were children younger than 18, including Jessie Hernandez, 17, who was shot three times by Denver police officers as she and a carload of friends allegedly tried to run them down… About half of the time, police were responding to people seeking help with domestic disturbances and other complex social situations… Ninety-two victims – nearly a quarter of those killed – were identified by police or family members as mentally ill (Kindy, Jenkins, Rich, Alexander, & Lowery, 2015, par. 6).

Examining the intentions and effects of the pre-existing models of law enforcement-slash patrols and City Guards- offers insight as to why victims of police repression continue to be concentrated within the lower ranking classes of societal order. The rotten apple theory cannot explain patterns of repression. However, Williams’ genealogical account of modern policing demonstrates the pervasive nature of police brutality in terms of social control. Placing the role of police within the context of social repression and acquiescence provides an explanation for deadly events that have occurred over the past several decades. It is also useful in understanding the discriminatory practices utilized by law enforcement agents.

Williams’ suggested alternatives to policing are similar to both Davis’ and Alexander’s alternatives to prisons: multifaceted and community oriented. His alternatives require that we first address the conceptual flaws that plague the grand narrative of policing. He does so by illustrating the is-ought fallacy that serves as one of the primary obstacles towards police abolition. The is-ought dilemma of the grand narrative of policing resides in the assumption that the policing institution is a natural aspect of an increasingly modern society; the existence of police, is, implies that they ought to continue to exist. As he previously demonstrated, this is simply not true. However, the endorsement of this societal belief does not allow space for the
possibility of abolition or alternatives. In order to create a space for these discussions we must start by accepting the historical realities of policing; "...[T]he assumption that the police represent a social inevitability ignores the rules of logic: if we accept that police forces arose at a particular point in history, to address specific social conditions, then it follows that social change could also eliminate the institution" (Williams, 2015, p. 364).

If we acknowledge that the development of the policing organization was the result of intentional social forces, rather than a natural response to crime, we can then understand the true ephemeral nature of the institution in society. Williams encourages communities to redefine their notion of “crime” based on their specific needs. Instead of thinking of crime in terms of illegality, he suggests that communities conceptualize their ideas of “crime” according to their collective standards so that the power and authority of “crime” is transferred from the state to the public. For instance, some communities might not consider the use of cannabis a crime, but they do however consider mass evictions a crime (Williams, 2015). Regarding pragmatic alternatives to policing, Williams looks to previously existing organizations that addressed the societal issues that typically fall under the responsibility of the police. For example, Detroit Women Against Rape directly targeted problems of domestic violence and sexual assault. The organization was known for establishing street patrols, escorts, and engaging in crime intervention when possible (Williams, 2015). Also, in 1972, a mixed-race and class neighborhood in Philadelphia established the Citizens Local Alliance for a Safe Philadelphia to fight against street crimes in their community. The examples he provides are to serve as examples of communities designing programs based on their own needs, rather than passively accepting what the state tells them that they need. He encourages communities to look to these examples for guidance, not replication.
Underlying each of the organizations he discusses is the principle of community accountability—
a process in which community members come together to create and affirm values and practices that resist abuse and oppression, address abusive behavior transform political conditions so that all members have access to ongoing development, and provide safety and support (Williams, 2015). Essentially, the public has the power to create organizations that provide safety and support without the use of force and violence.

If we come to think about mass incarceration and policing based on the works presented by Davis, Alexander, and Williams, we can then acknowledge that there is a historical affinity that exists between the prison industrial complex and policing in our society. The system of slavery served as the predecessor of mass incarceration, which required establishment of slave patrols to control and maintain a working labor pool. As the system of slavery began to transition into the system of mass incarceration—by way of post-racial rhetoric and legislations—similarly, the slave patrols began to transition into the modern police force that we know today. The contingent relationship—though not mutually exclusive—between the two institutions, slavery and slave patrols, is why the system of mass incarceration and the police organization need to be placed into conversation with one another. Thinking in terms of genetics, these two institutions should be treated as siblings, who share the same parents—slavery and white supremacy. Mass incarceration and the policing organization work together to perpetuate the same systems of oppression and institutional cruelty.

Conceptualizing Systemic Oppression and Institutional Cruelty- Iris Marion Young’s Five Faces of Oppression and Phillip Hallie's From Cruelty to Goodness

The abolitionist perspectives of Davis, Alexander, and Williams are predicated upon the belief that our current justice system functions as a form of systemic oppression and embodies
the dehumanizing design of white supremacy. While Williams’ text takes the first steps towards incorporating the discussion on police abolition into the larger discourse of the prison industrial complex and abolition, his work focuses on one type of systemic oppression: institutional repression. However, that only represents one form of the oppressive acts carried out by the policing institution. The power of systemic oppression lies in its capacity to express itself in multiple forms—some of which are overt and easy to identify, and others that are implicitly normalized aspects of daily life (Young, 1990). Applying a theoretical framework of systemic oppression to the history of policing could help to gain a more holistic perspective of their role in the prison industrial complex. Our Enemies in Blue puts forth an alternative narrative of policing that rejects the crime-and-disorder theory of law enforcement in the U.S. and instead considers the influences of white supremacy and capitalism. Williams’ genealogical theory of the policing institution proposes an explanation for police brutality and the violent nature of the organization. However, his genealogical account can also be used to determine the relationship between modern policing and systemic oppression. In this last section of this chapter, I will analyze the theories of two philosophers, Iris Marion Young and Phillip Hallie, in order to better understand the nature of systemic oppression, cruelty, and the indications for police reform and alternatives.

**Systemic Oppression**

Philosopher Iris Marion Young provides an account for five forms of oppression in which she has identified and defined. These five formulations arose in response to social justice activists’ use of the term “oppression” to describe their marginalized positions in society in the U.S. Young argues that there is no single definition of oppression that could be applied or generalized the conditions of each group.
Entering the political discourse in which oppression is a central category involves adopting a general mode of analyzing and evaluating social structures and practices that is incommensurate with the language of liberal individualism that dominates political discourse in the United States (Young, 1990, p. 37).

Chapter two of Iris Young’s *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) introduces her take on structural oppression. Young defines oppression as the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because of a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the daily practices of a well-intentioned liberal society (1990). In general, society tends to view oppression as the act of corrupt dictator or government. Oppression, in these terms, cannot be used to describe contemporary systemic discrimination in the U.S.:

Dominant political discourse may use the term oppression to describe societies other than our own, usually Communist or purportedly Communist societies. Within this anti-Communist rhetoric both tyrannical and colonialist implications of the term appear. For the anti-Communist, Communism denotes precisely the exercise of brutal tyranny over a whole people by a few rulers, and the will to conquer the world, bringing hitherto independent peoples under tyranny. In dominant political discourse, it is not legitimate to use the term oppression to describe our society, because oppression is the evil perpetrated by Others (Young, 1990, p. 38).

Young bases her conceptualization of structural oppression on the social movements in the U.S. dating back to the 1960’s. The overall goals of her work are to systematize the concept of oppression so that it is representative of the lived experiences of all targeted groups.

She begins her task by first clarifying how oppression fits into a structural paradigm. As stated above, the tyrannical definition of oppression does not align itself with a democratic society. It is often used to describe colonization of the past, and circulates within contemporary political discourse merely to describe the actions of Others. However, the meaning of oppression was altered during the social movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s to describe the constraints placed upon certain groups as the result of normalized daily circumstances:
Oppression in this sense is structural, rather than the result of a few people’s choices or policies. Its causes are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules (Young, 1990, p. 39).

The collateral consequences of cultural stereotypes, media messages, political discourse and ordinary conversations all contribute to the immense injustices certain groups face. In addition, biased laws, policies, economic institutions, and government agencies produce and reproduce oppressions daily. One characterization of systemic oppression is that the oppressed group does not necessarily need the presence of an oppressive group to be negatively impacted. This is not to disregard the ability of individuals to intentionally cause harm to others, neither does it mean that there is not a beneficiary, or a privileged group in relation to the oppressed groups. Instead, Young demonstrates how intersections of discrimination contribute to different types of oppression.

“Because different factors, or combinations of factors, constitute the oppression of different groups, making their oppression irreducible, I believe it is not possible to give one essential definition of oppression” (Young, 1990, p. 40).

The groups of the social movements- Blacks, Chic@nos, Puerto Ricans, lesbians, gay men, and the disabled, for example- are not oppressed to the same degree, nor in the same manner. “In that abstract sense all oppressed people face a common condition. Beyond that, in any more specific sense, it is not possible to define a single set of criteria that describe the condition of oppression of the above groups” (Young, 1990, p. 40). For the purposes of this analysis, white supremacy is the common condition faced by all oppressed groups within the prison industrial complex. She suggests that oppression is a condition of social groups-collectives of people defined by the specific consequences that shape the ways in which others understand them in relation to themselves (1990). These collectives of people are demarcated by
differences in cultural values, practices, or ideologies. Therefore, social groups exist only in relation to another group, or groups. The individuals within each group share an affinity based on their memberships, giving way to group identifications. A person can change and switch groups, however, the group will represent them and are usually accompanied by a stereotype(s) or group narrative. To illustrate her point, Young turns to the sexual division of labor to demonstrate the creation of social groups between men and women. Social groups differ from traditional aggregates to the extent that “…a social group is defined not primarily by a set of shared attributes, but by a sense of identity” (1990, p. 41). Young provides a multifaceted definition that allows one to map different forms of oppression based on the realities of a given group. She is clear to state that these five accounts of oppression should all be taken into consideration equally- there is no hierarchy of oppression. The five definitions put forth by Young include: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. In so far as one of any of these five conditions can be applied to a group, it is sufficient to consider those peoples to be oppressed.

**Exploitation.** The first type of oppression consists of the fixed transferring of the results or products of the labor, resources, and energies of one social group to benefit another. It is a systematic method in the sense that the livelihood and the general well-being of the “have-nots” are constantly exhausted to preserve and enhance the power of the “haves” (Young, 1990, p. 46). Exploitation also includes the transferring of women's power to men in the form of sexual energies. Accordingly, there exists a sexualized, gendered, and racialized form of exploitation. The injustices of exploitation can best be understood under the model of systemic distributional inequalities. The disproportionate transfer of energies from one group to another is replicated
throughout social institutions, enabling few to accumulate wealth and status while others continue to lose. The process of exploitation is method of control.

**Marginalization.** Young describes the process of marginalization as the as the most troubling form of oppression, in that it denies a category of people access to participate effectively in society, placing them at high risk of material deprivation and eradication. Marginalization is a process of societal exclusion. Marginalization is not limited to racially labeled groups. This form of oppression can be extended to the experiences of the elderly, mentally ill peoples, adolescents, and the physically disabled. The material deprivation caused by marginalization is clearly unjust. Some societies have taken notice of this effect and issued welfare services. Be that as it may, the notion of welfare gives life to two more injustices caused by marginalization:

First, the provision of welfare itself produces new injustice by depriving those dependent on it of rights and freedoms that others have. Second, even when material deprivation is somewhat mitigated by the welfare state, marginalization is unjust because it blocks the opportunity to exercise capacities in socially defined and recognized ways (Young, 1990, p. 50)

Those who depend on the welfare system as a result of material deprivation are subjected to the invasive authority of the state and private administrators. They are given the task of developing and enforcing terms obtain services. The power of the authorities also includes the ability to construct the “needs” of the dependents, implicating a loss of individual choice. Lastly, the social structures and cultural ideologies of the U.S. society attach an oppressive stigma to those who have been labeled “marginal.”

**Powerlessness.** Closely related to marginalization, powerlessness is the lack of direct access to influence or participate in political decisions that dictate the trajectory of ones’ futures.
In the United States, as in other advanced capitalist countries, most workplaces are not organized democratically, direct participation in public policy decisions is rare, and policy implementation is, for the most part, hierarchical, imposing rules on bureaucrats and citizens. Thus, most people in these societies do not regularly participate in making decisions that affect the conditions of their lives and actions, and in this sense, most people lack significant power (Young, 1990, p. 52).

Concurrently, countless agents are given the power to make decisions for others-placing the power of determination in the hands of few. The powerless are placed in a position of subordination: forced to take orders without the right or ability to give them. The allocation of autonomy is minimal, and the availability of opportunities is scarce amongst the powerless group.

**Cultural Imperialism.** Young provides a significant twofold definition for this form of oppression. First, cultural imperialism involves forcing the cultural ideologies of the dominant group onto the rest of society by way of established norms and stereotypes that create a silencing effect. Second, those of whom the culture is imposed upon are placed in the paradoxical position of being invisible- silenced- and designated as different or outliers. The experiences of the dominant groups are generalized to represent the conditions of the entire society.

“Consequently, the difference of women from men, American Indians or Africans from Europeans, Jew from Christians, homosexuals from heterosexuals, workers from professionals, becomes reconstructed largely as deviance and inferiority” (Young, 1990, p. 55). These groups are categorized by historical stereotypes and societal myths that enforce divisions. Situated at the center of ambiguity, those living under cultural imperialism find themselves constantly evaluating their identities through the eyes of the dominant group.

**Violence.** Oppressed groups are forced to live in fear of random acts of violence in which the only goal is humiliation and dehumanization. This can be exemplified by the experiences of racial groups in the U.S. “Violence is systemic because it is directed at members
of a group simply because they are members of that group” (Young, 1990, p. 57). Violence can come in the form of physical and/or emotional abuse.

Theories of oppression that generalize the experiences of diverse groups tend to ignore the differences between the types of oppression each group faces. Young’s plural conceptualization of oppression seeks to provide a systemic explanation for racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and so on (Young, 1990). Rather than operating as a full theory of structural oppression, Young advises us to treat these five faces of oppression as criteria to determine whether a group or groups are “oppressed.” Again, the presence of any five of these conditions, in any combination, is an adequate measure of oppression. A common theme across each of Young’s formulations are dehumanizing power relationships. Phillip Hallie’s *From Cruelty to Goodness* (1981) demonstrates how the process of dehumanization is carried out by way of institutional cruelty.

**Institutional Cruelty**

Philip Hallie’s essay titled *From Cruelty to Goodness* (1981) contemplates the theory of institutionalized cruelty. Hallie analyzes the various approaches taken towards the topic of “cruelty” to determine its meaning in comparison to its antithesis- goodness. He conveys that cruelty is not only linked to physical pain, but to the abasement of dignity and self-respect, and the maintenance of unjust power relationships (1981). By way of ethical inquiry, Hallie explores institutional cruelty by comparing the ways in which the word had been used throughout history.

One approach to cruelty is placing it within the context of pain. The origin of the word is based on the Latin word *crudus*- meaning bloodshed. While torture and physical assault are indeed forms of cruelty, pain alone does not encompass the many forms of cruelty that transcend
physiology. Analyzing the use of cruelty by the Nazi’s, Hallie describes the difference between superficial cruelty- pain and bloodshed- and substantial cruelty- the obliteration of a person’s dignity and self-respect.

In excremental assault, in the process of keeping camp inmates from wiping themselves or from going to the latrine, and in making them drink water from a toilet bowl full of excreta (and the excreta of the guards at that) localizable pain is nothing. Deep humiliation is everything. We human beings believe in hierarchies, whether we are skeptics or not about human value (Hallie, 1981, p. 24).

Our human dignity requires that we consider ourselves to be above inhumane types of conditions. In order to function fully in our daily lives, Hallie argues that we must respect ourselves as being above fecal matter (1981, p. 24). It is when one comes to think of their person as inferior, that we as humans allow others to objectify us and subject our lives to their discretion. “And when our lives are so maimed we become things, slaves, instruments” (Hallie, 1981, p. 24). Superficial cruelty differs from substantial cruelty to the extent that it is explicit: both the victimizer and the victim are aware of the harm that is taking place within a given context. Substantial, or institutionalized cruelty functions in an abstruse manner.

Institutional cruelty promotes the process of internalized oppression. Victims come to see themselves through the eyes of their oppressors, while the victimizers come to views themselves as deserving of their superiority. A sense of commitment to this type of cruelty supersedes all sentimentality, and as a result, “…transforms cruelty and destruction into moral nobility, and commitment is the lifeblood of an institution” (Hallie, 1981, p. 24).

Hallie emphasizes the link between institutional cruelty and power relations. He looks to the institution of slavery to offer a demonstration of the ability to gain power over those who have lost their dignity and sense of self-respect. Fredrick Douglass’ Life and Times (1881)
describes the psychological forces behind the loss of autonomy as a result of institutionalized cruelty:

My faculties and powers of body and soul are not my own, but are the property of a fellow-mortal in no sense superior to me, except that he as the physical power to compel me to be owned and controlled by him. By the combined physical force of the community I am his slave- a slave for life (Douglass as cited in Hallie, 1981, p. 24).

Degrading language consecrated the slave owners’ power and was the primary tool in the psychological warfare against the slaves. Another crucial factor of cruelty resides in the maintenance of power differentials- imbalance of power based on differences in abilities. In addition, he discusses how a systemic power relationship, in which one party is under the control of another, cannot be made just through episodic acts of kindness. By this he means, that random acts of kindness on behalf of those in power is not enough to mend the damage done to the victims of the power relationship; the relationship still exists. According to Hallie, episodic kindness is not the opposite of institutional cruelty; the opposite would be freedom from the relationship itself (1981). As we can see, systemic cruelty cannot be reduced to an episodic matter. Institutional cruelty prevails through physical torture, psychological wreckage-internalized oppression- and power relationships wherein the weaker group is objectified and subjected to constant waves of dehumanizing humiliation.

Combining the contributions of Davis, Alexander, Williams, Marion-Young and Hallie provides a comprehensive basis for which to examine the policing institution in relation to the prison industrial complex. Davis’ historical and socioeconomic analysis describes the structural components and organizations that have contributed to the rise of mass incarceration in the U.S. Alexander’s text explains the replication process of prison systems over time by way of rhetorical revisions and post-racial ideologies. Williams illustrates the connections between
modern policing, white supremacy, and repression to argue in favor of police abolition. *Our Enemies in Blue* is one of few examples of writings that shifts the attention of the prison industrial complex to the policing institution. It is crucial that the conversation surrounding modern police be taken into the same consideration as prisons because they are two sides of the same coin. The history of mass incarceration and organizational discrimination informs contemporary police practices and poses a direct threat to the doctrines of democracy, equality, and justice.

Incorporating the philosophical paradigms of systemic oppression and institutional cruelty presented by Marion-Young and Hallie can help to strengthen and enhance the argument for police abolition by demonstrating how the policing organization engages in the maintenance of systemic oppression perpetuated by the prison industrial complex. In doing so, I hope to add an ethical dimension- an examination of the police in relation to systemic oppression and cruelty- to the discussion presented by Williams so that we can theoretically understand police violence, misconduct, and the overall function of policing in our society. The need for an ethical evaluation of police in the U.S. is crucial for determining if they cause more harm than good. And if they do cause more harm than good, what ought we, as a society, do in response?

In a nation that asserts democracy for all, it is our self-proclaimed responsibility to evaluate the social value of our leading institutions. In the following chapter, I will apply the notions of structural oppression and institutional cruelty to Williams’ theory of modern policing in hopes to contribute to the counter-narrative of law enforcement in the U.S. and strengthen the argument for police abolition.
Chapter 3- Systemic Oppression, Institutional Cruelty, and Policing in the U.S.

The basis of this thesis is as follows: the U.S. policing institution ought to be abolished because it is a systemically oppressive and cruel organization that supports the larger systems of mass incarceration and the status quo established by white supremacy. Throughout this chapter, I will demonstrate the reasoning behind my argument by extending Kristian Williams’ analysis to include other forms of oppression that are perpetuated by the policing institution that go beyond repression. I will place the discussion of the policing organization within the context of Iris Marion Young’s pluralistic theory of oppression and Phillip Hallie’s conceptualization of institutional cruelty. I will apply four out of the five definitions presented by Young that directly speak to the oppressions that have been embedded into the policing institution. Using Hallie's description of institutional cruelty, I identify the unjust power relationship that resides at the core of each type of oppression discussed. I will also use Hallie’s work to evaluate police reformation efforts. I will offer examples from the past and present that highlight the intricate historical bonds that exists between slavery, mass incarceration and policing in the U.S. My goal is to confront and challenge the post-racial grand narrative of policing in order to create space for future alternatives.

Iris Marion-Young’s *Five Faces of Oppression* (1990) explores oppression from a modern structural perspective. Traditionally, the term “oppression” has been used and understood in an overly simplistic manner that reduces the concept to the “…exercise of tyranny by a ruling group” (Young, 1990, p. 38). This traditional conceptualization of oppression individualizes the problem by focusing on the actions of one person or ruling group, rather than examining the societal influences- such as ingrained values, beliefs, and norms- that contribute to success of unjust power relationships. For example, Young demonstrates how the traditional
term would be applicable to a Communist society in which one group of people exercise tyranny over an entire society; but it would not apply to a democratic society like the U.S. Therefore, the traditional understanding of oppression cannot be used to describe the institutions that function as pillars of our society. However, Young developed her definitions of oppression to describe the several manifestations of group-based discrimination, specifically, in the U.S. Her theory elaborates the concept of oppression by demonstrating that it is not necessarily the result of a tyrannical power, but instead is the outcome of an amicable progressive society. Oppression, from Young’s perspective, goes beyond the individualistic limitations of the traditional definition by including the system of deeply embedded values, ideologies, and habits that constitute a society and its institutions. Young argues that oppression is systemic and can manifest itself in five different ways, four of which will be discussed throughout this chapter. Her theory demonstrates oppressions ability to express itself in overt and hidden forms. For example, the history of chattel slavery in the U.S. is a clearly overt form of oppression. On the contrary, internalized beliefs- such as our nations’ unconscious inclination to associate people of color and criminality- is an example of implicit oppression. Rather than assigning the blame to an individual or select group of people and policies, Young offers a theoretical framework that acknowledges systemic limits and controls that occur at a societal level. Within this framework, all members of a society contribute-to varying degrees- to systemic oppression by passively endorsing the norms, values, habits, and beliefs regarding their societal institutions and rules. “The conscious actions of many individuals daily contribute to maintaining and reproducing oppression, but those people are usually simply doing their jobs on living their lives, and do not understand themselves as agents of oppression” (Young, 1990, p. 39). In a democratic society, oppression is not the result of one ruling party, but instead the passive, often unconscious,
acceptance and replication of the embedded culture of the nation. Therefore, Young’s theory of oppression can be used to describe the culture and function of white supremacy and its accompanying institutions in the U.S.: slavery, mass incarceration and policing.

Phillip Hallie’s essay *From Cruelty to Goodness* (1981) compliments Young’s theory of oppression by demonstrating how the perpetuation and maintenance of unjust power relationships results in institutional cruelty. Similar to Young, he describes institutional cruelty as the “… subtlest kind of cruelty,” wherein consistent patterns of the humiliation and dehumanization of a group or groups of people become normalized and justified aspects of daily life (Hallie, 1981, p. 24). Combining the theoretical frameworks of Young and Hallie allows me to debunk the post-racial narratives of policing that attempt to justify the actions and purpose of local law enforcement. Young focuses on the role of the systemic/societal influences of oppression, while Hallie calls attention to the underlying power differentials of those influences that are perpetuated and maintained through the process of institutional cruelty. I have placed these two pieces of work in conversation with each other because it is impossible for me to imagine an instance in which oppression is occurring that is not cruel, or based on an underlying power relationship; meaning that there is no type of oppression that exists to benefit the victimized group or groups.

Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will apply four of Young’s five conceptualization of oppression to our policing institution: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and violence. In addition, I will utilize Hallie’s notion of institutional cruelty to call attention to the underlying power inequalities that reside at the roots of Young’s definitions. In doing so, I hope to offer support for Williams’ argument towards police abolition by providing examples of the many ways in which they engage in oppression. Employing Young’s definitions and Hallie’s
perspective of institutional cruelty to examine our policing organization, I argue that the state-mandated organization responsible for the protection and safety of the public is a prime example of a structurally oppressive and cruel institution.

**Exploitation**

Young defines the process ofexploitation in the following terms:

> The injustice of exploitation consists in social processes that bring about a transfer of energies from one group to another to produce unequal distributions, and in the way in which social institutions enable a few to accumulate while they constrain many more. The injustices of exploitation cannot be eliminated by redistribution of goods, for as long as institutionalized practices and structural relations remain unaltered, the process of transfer will re-create an unequal distribution of benefits (Young, 1990, p. 49).

Young’s definition is loosely based on Karl Marx’s theory of exploitation, in which the concept of exploitation is limited to the ideas of labor and classism. She builds upon his idea by incorporating the notions of gender and racial power inequalities into Marx’s economic theory of exploitation. She argues that exploitation transcends the realms of classism and can manifest itself in racially-specific and gender-specific forms. For example, due to overrepresentation, people of color have become the primary source for prison labor; wherein, inmates are typically paid around 93 cents per hour and the companies that are contacting their labor profit over $1.5 billion dollars per year (Bozelko, 2017). Prison labor is a racially-specific form of exploitation that consists of the transfer of energies whereby, predominately, people of color enhance the status of capitalistic corporations. Young describes gender-specific exploitation in the following terms:

> Women's oppression consists not merely in an inequality of status, power, and wealth resulting from men's excluding them from privileged activities. The freedom, power, status, and self-realization of men is possible precisely because women work for them. Gender exploitation has two aspects, transfer of the fruits
of material labor to men and transfer of nurturing and sexual energies to men (Young, 1990, p. 47).

She references the normalization of patriarchy, heteronormativity, and sexual assault against women as examples of gender-specific exploitation. Therefore, not only is the unequal transfer of labor from one group to another considered to be exploitative, but also the unequal transfer of energies. In the following section, I will demonstrate how the policing institution engages in exploitation in service to the prison industrial complex and the status quo established by white supremacy in the following three ways: community policing, civil forfeiture, sexual violence towards women.

The fixed transfer of the energies and labor of one social group to benefit another was the reason slavery was established in the U.S.

Slavery in America began when the first African slaves were brought to the North American colony of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, to aid in the production of such lucrative crops as tobacco. Slavery was practiced throughout the American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries, and African-American slaves helped build the economic foundations of the new nation. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 solidified the central importance of slavery to the South’s economy (History Channel, 2009 par. 1).

Davis and Alexander demonstrate how slavery transitioned into a system of mass incarceration while retaining its original founding principles, and Williams applies a similar logic to the policing institution. Exploitation is a natural and essential component of the prison industrial complex, and therefore, the policing institution. Police have a long-standing history of engaging in acts of exploitation that date back to the antebellum era. The first policing model –slave patrols- were designed to protect the institution of slavery. It was their duty to ensure that the labor pool of slaves remained disciplined and hardworking- resulting in steady profits for plantation owners. This was carried out through constant surveillance of the Black population
and the enforcement of arbitrary slave codes. Modern police assume a similar role by maintaining prison populations through community policing and consistent arrest rates. Arrest rates are the results of over surveillance, rather than indicators of crime (Williams, 2015). Over the past two decades, crime rates have reduced significantly, yet arrest rates have remained steady; a discrepancy that can be attributed to the lasting function of police as the recruiters of mass incarceration. With that being said, an increase in arrest rates will naturally result in higher prison populations. “For the major crime types handled at the state level, the probability that arrest would lead to prison rose over the three decades from 1980 to 2010” (Travis, Western, & National Research Council Committee on Law Justice, 2014, p. 51).

Williams’ analysis of community policing illustrates the connection between police violence and the presence of officers in poor and urban areas. However, applying Young’s definition of exploitation to his analysis shows how community policing can perpetuate more than one type of oppression. Community policing is an example of racial and labor exploitation against the public for the purpose of maintaining the larger prison industrial complex and the status quo. The demands of community policing may sound contradictory: “the police rely on community's support, but remain in control; community input should shape police priorities, but without granting the community power” (Williams, 2015, p. 338). Theoretically, the model of community policing was established in order to create a crime control “partnership” between the public and policing. Realistically, the policing organization has adopted zero-tolerance policing, broken window patrolling, and third-party patrolling targets group-specific communities under the guise of cooperation. These community policing practices have led to the over-surveillance of racial, ethnic, and low-income peoples, as well as the criminalization of, typically, non-criminal behaviors. Increasing police presence creates more opportunities for citations, physical
abuse, arrests, and incarceration (Williams, 2015). Williams argues that the effects of community policing, especially zero-tolerance policing and broken window patrolling, are more about public order and control than crime.

The effect is to criminalize an ever-wider range of public order offenses and minor nuisances—some of which might not even really be illegal. Hence, standard features of urban life that may previously have been considered mere irritations, inconveniences, annoyances or eccentricities, suddenly become matters for police attention (Williams, 2015, p. 341).

Again, it is important to note that the ideologies of white supremacy influence the notion of criminality— and therefore, the definition of crime or illegal acts. After the abolishment of slavery, the state has retained the power to define the parameters of freedom. Davis, Alexander, and Williams each demonstrate how the founding principles of slavery, and white supremacy, maintain their integrity throughout the prison industrial complex. Criminal laws and police practices are geared towards protecting the status quo by maintaining capitalist interests through ensuring the constant influx of prisoners for cheap labor. Community policing, indirectly, engages in a form of labor exploitation for the greater good of the prison industrial complex. Community policing further maintains the prison labor pool and status quo by playing an essential role in the process of gentrification. Williams argues that the historical alignment of capitalist interests, such as business owners and real estate developers, and police priorities is an indication of the implicit class and race biases that are embedded in the culture of policing.

"Gentrification’s political consequences are two-fold: not only does the issue conspicuously displace people of color, it also turns them into perceived intruders within their own communities" (Buxbaum, 2016, par. 5). Throughout the process of gentrification, wealthy upper-middle class individuals and families migrate into communities that are predominately
inhabited by the poor and people of color and proceed to alter the dynamics of those communities.

When new, wealthy residents move into historically poor neighborhoods, arrests and citations in those neighborhoods for trivial offenses increase dramatically, and on racial lines. Seattle Police Department data show an increase from 1,973 police reports in the Central District in 2008 to 3,206 reports in 2016. While 23 police reports were filed in 2008 regarding “disturbances,” 116 were filed in 2016 for the same category, suggesting increased police presence and activity as property values rise and new residents move in (Lin, 2017, par. 8).

Therefore, the power and control over the lifestyle, organizations, small and local businesses, and the history- or energies- established by people of color and the poor within these communities is being transferred to the wealthier residents, primarily through policing. Zero-tolerance policing and broken window patrolling reinforce and protect the division between the incoming residents and those being displaced. The practices of over-surveillance and the criminalization—which is at the discretion of the officers—of culturally specific behaviors are critical to the success of gentrification, and continues to place specific groups in jeopardy by increasing their changes of incarceration.

More directly, community policing exploits the resources of the poor and people of color. “Third-party policing, like many of the tactics that fall within the scope of community policing, operates by co-opting community resources and existing sources of power” (Williams, 2015, p. 337). Police utilize the resources available by using community’s members, organizations, and spaces to extend their power and surveillance over marginalized groups. Therefore, the energies of these communities are being disproportionately transferred to the policing institution for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing the power and status of local law enforcement.
Civil forfeiture is an example of labor exploitation carried out by the policing institution in which the monetary resources of a community are transferred to the force. The practice of seizing assets under the presumption of criminal activity, without necessarily charging the owner(s), has a significant financial impact on the poor and people of color. Confiscation of assets and property began during the antebellum era. Southern elites directed slave patrols to search the homes of Blacks and take everything that had value (Williams, 2015). The purpose of this practice during the antebellum era was to maintain full control over the slave population and the threat of revolts and rebellions by determining which items they could possess. Following the abolition of slavery, the practice of civil forfeiture was passed down to the successors of slave patrols, and has continued since. Although it originated as a tool for racial control, civil forfeiture began to encourage policing for profit. There are vast monetary incentives and benefits for police to seize assets from the public. "Only eight states bar the use of state forfeiture proceeds by law enforcement. In the other 42 states, at least 50 percent goes to law enforcement, and in 26 states, it is 100 percent. This provides opportunities for self-generating substantial agency resources" (Bullock, 2010, par. 10). Civil forfeiture laws and enforcement poses some of the greatest challenges to property rights today (Carpenter, Knepper, Erickson, & McDonald, 2015).

This policing practice grants officers the authority to seize any property related to criminal activity—regardless if the owner is guilty or innocent. Officers possess full discretion when deciding what crime has occurred and what items are involved. The benefits of this practice resulted in the wide-spread abuse of civil forfeiture enforcement:

Criminologists, economists and legal scholars who have studied forfeiture behavior have found evidence indicating that police departments are taking advantage of lenient forfeiture statutes to “pad their budgets.” Financial incentives may be particularly powerful for state and local law enforcement
agencies that have limited resources and are susceptible to changes in budget allocations. According to a 2008 investigative series on National Public Radio, some Texas sheriffs’ departments rely on forfeited money for up to one-third of their budgets (Institute for Justice, 2010, par. 11).

The war on drugs has served as the primary justification for the use of civil forfeiture in modern society. In 1984, the Reagan Administration passed the Comprehensive Crime Control Act under which police agencies were guaranteed "equitable sharing", which allocates a percentage of the seized assets to the local departments. "The amount of revenue deposited into the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund, for example, soared from $27 million in 1985 to $644 million in 1991--a more than twenty-fold increase" (Dunn, n.d., par. 13). Yet, the main victims of forfeiture are not drug dealers or criminals, but ordinary people who happened to find themselves in a predicament because they possessed something of value (Feulner, 2015). In addition, it has been proven that civil forfeiture enforcement primarily targets the poor, and therefore, limits financial mobility (Adorney, 2017). Michelle Alexander demonstrates how the war on drugs has racially and economically defined its opponents, and in that context, we can understand why specific groups have become the victims of forfeiture abuse.

Lastly, the policing organization participates in gender exploitation through sexual assault. The sexual energies of women are being transferred to appease the needs of the officers. Williams' briefly touches on the treatment of Black female slaves in relation to police violence: "Black women faced sexual abuse at the hands of patrollers, both when they were found on the road and during searches of their homes" (Williams, 2015, p. 70). Religious values and racial myths shaped police perspectives of women, especially those of color. Gender exploitation in the form of sexual violence is a byproduct of the sexist nature of the policing organization. According to a recent report published by The Associated Press, over a six-year period, 1,000 officers were fired for rape, sodomy, and other sexual assault.
(Sedensky & Merchant, 2015). Of course, this investigation only included cases that were reported. Other organizations, which I will discuss in the next chapter, such as INCITE! have delved further into the sexual abuse towards women, especially women of color, by police to demonstrate the systemic nature of this type of exploitation. It is crucial that we understand the cultural aspects of sexual violence within the policing institution:

Abuses that once may have been considered unrelated, solitary instances are now seen as relative. These officers aren’t necessarily just bad apples— their crimes are part of a broader cultural issue and law enforcement agencies act like microcosms of society at large, reflecting structural inequality in the United States (Tourjee, 2015, par. 1).

In chapter four, I will analyze the relationship between policing, sexism, and toxic masculinity to further illustrate the role of police and gender exploitation.

At the core of each type of exploitation that was previously discussed is the unjust power relationship that was established during slavery and maintained throughout the prison industrial complex by police. The unjust power relationship that resides at the root of police exploitation is predicated on the notion of control: police engage in acts of exploitation to determine and control the parameters of a group's autonomy by depleting their resources. According to Hallie's description, the maintenance of this power relationship in which the energies of one group is constantly being transferred to benefit another is a form of institutional cruelty.

**Marginalization**

Young frames marginalization as a process of exclusion: "Marginalization is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination" (1990, p. 50). Although, most of the marginalization that occurs in the U.S. is race-based, it can be applied to other groups as well: elderly, different-abled peoples, and
mentally ill peoples, for example. She argues that the limitations and control over social cooperation, communication and participation causes certain groups to be excluded from the larger societal voice. I will demonstrate how the policing organization engages in marginalization by excluding the experiences and realities of peripheral groups.

The practice of confining a group to a lower-standing and virtually marking them as insignificant or peripheral justified the institution of slavery and, now, mass incarceration. To understand the process of marginalization within the context of the prison industrial complex and policing, we must look to the power that resides in controlling social narratives. Davis and Alexander both explain how the success of slavery and mass incarceration are predicated on social constructs that were developed to establish and rationalize a racial and economic hierarchy. Social constructs are based on societal myths that reflect the values and ideologies of the status quo, and not reality. The notions of "race" and "criminality" are categories that were created for the purpose of maintaining a system of wealth, power and privilege. The grand narrative of the prison industrial complex and policing are based on the theory of "crime and disorder." Williams' debunks this theory throughout his work, arguing that prisons and police exist for the purpose of social control, rather than public safety. "In other words, the greatest portion of the actual business of law enforcement did not concern the protection of life and property, but the controlling of poor people, their habits, and their manners" (Williams, 2015, p. 109). Despite the lack of evidence regarding the effectiveness of prisons and police, the deeply embedded norms, stereotypes, and ideologies of their grand narratives continues to trump facts and reality. "Studies have shown that whites who associate crime with Blacks and Latinos are more likely to support punitive policies - including capital punishment and mandatory minimum sentencing - than whites with weaker racial associations of crime"
Therefore, the only stories that are given serious consideration, and shape the public's view, are those that align with the grand narrative of the prison industrial complex and policing; excluding, or marginalizing, the experiences of those effected by the larger systems and rendering their voices insignificant.

The control over the grand narrative of policing by the organization has increased the process of marginalization among the poor communities and people of color like never before. Police departments regularly issue statements to local news stations about incidents, investigations, and department operations. This means that the local police departments have the power and ability to control the public's perception of cases in which the officers were behaving illegally or immorally.

Police have begun to understand that managing conflict and public perception is a critical aspect of their daily activities. In light of both heightened scrutiny and the reality that police keep killing people, managing perceptions has become essential. The United States Conference of Mayors identified this as one of its core recommendations for improving relations between police departments and the communities they police. Police across the country have undertaken media trainings and are developing sophisticated media strategies that seek to manage events (If the River Swells, 2015, par. 1).

Rather than addressing the issue of police violence and misconduct, officers are being trained to shape and limit the details of these incidents. One of the most recent examples of this type of marginalization can be seen throughout the relationship between the policing organization and the Black Lives Matter Movement. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement has engaged in a number of peaceful protests since the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012. In 2017, the BLM Movement was awarded a global peace prize for championing justice and equality (Murdock, 2017). Yet, in September 2017, the Philadelphia Police Union President, John McNesby, referred to the BLM Movement as "… a pack of rabid animals" (Murdock, 2017, par. 1). While the rest of the world can see the true, non-violent, intentions of the BLM Movement, the U.S.
police have continuously categorized them as a hate or terrorist group. It is their ideological attempt to counter the claims and efforts put forth by BLM by falling back on the antiquated criminal stereotypes of Black people in the U.S. Police have often referred to this group of activists as "thugs," revealing the stereotypes that they perpetuate regarding people of color (Street, 2016, par. 1). In addition, active and retired officers have joined together to form the "Blue Lives Matter" group in response to the Black Lives Matter Movement to end police brutality against the African American community. It crucial to note that the BLM has never insinuated that police officers' lives do not matter, they are only presenting a problem that speaks to their realities and lived experiences. Yet, the Blue Lives Matter groups have taken it upon themselves to directly challenge the BLM Movement. Ironically, though, 71 percent of the officers that were killed in 2016 had been shot by white men (King, 2016). Therefore, I would argue that the response to the Black Lives Movement is just another attempt to reinforce the grand narrative of policing that is predicated upon social constructs and myths. It is a peripheral practice that marginalizes the voices of the victims of police violence and misconduct, and therefore, depletes their ability to fully participate in social change and cooperation.

The unjust power relationship that resides at the root of marginalization is the role of police ensuring that marginalized groups remain in a lower-standing position by controlling the ways society perceives and interacts with them. The use of language and narratives to establish control can be traced back to slavery. Hallie uses the relationship between the slave and the owner to demonstrate his point:

Their language sanctified if it did not create their power ascendancy over the Blacks, and one of the most important projects of the slave-holders and their allies was that of seeing to it that the Blacks themselves thought of themselves in just these powerless terms. They utilized the language to convince not only the whites but the Blacks themselves that Blacks were weak in mind, in will power, and in worth (1981, p. 25).
Rhetoric and myths are powerful tools that must be analyzed in relation to the genesis and growth of the police department in order to identify the distortion between the grand narrative and the realities of policing in the U.S.

**Powerlessness**

Young, once again, turns to Marxist theory of socialism to formulate her definition of powerlessness:

> In the United States, as in other advanced capitalist countries, most workplaces are not organized democratically, direct participation in public policy decisions is rare, and policy implementation is for the most part hierarchical, imposing rules on bureaucrats and citizens. Thus most people in these societies do not regularly participate in making decisions that affect the conditions of their lives and actions, and in this sense most people lack significant power (1990, p. 52).

Some groups have power while others do not. Moreover, she lists three injustices that are associated with powerlessness: inhibition of one's capacities, lack of decision making power over one's life, and exposure to disrespectful treatment because of the status one occupies (Young, 1990). The latter of these injustices will be the primary focus of my analysis on police and powerlessness.

Abusing and disrespecting certain groups is an inherent part of policing in the U.S. Throughout Williams' genealogy, he highlights the development of the social construction of the "dangerous classes" and the associated internalized beliefs that guide police behaviors and practices. As the notion of criminality expanded to include the working class following the abolition of slavery, group-specific stereotypes were also incorporated to the larger identity politics of policing. The poor, which includes whites and people of color, became the primary targets of police abuse and disrespect simply because of their social and economic status.

Crime and criminality were thus constructed to reflect the ideological needs of elites. Criminality was less a matter of what people did than of what
they *represented*. The idea of the dangerous classes was intimately tied to the prevailing economic order in each place, and had profound implications for the systems of social control they adopted (Williams, 2015, p. 107).

This remains true today. The ways in which a person or group is treated is dependent upon their position in the social hierarchy. "The people most likely to experience high rates of violence and heavy police presence in their communities have limited resources, social capital, and political voice" (La Vigne, Fontaine, & Dwidevi, 2017, par. 2). The intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, etc..., primarily dictate the outcomes of police interactions. Disrespect carried out by police can take on many forms, but it tends to manifest itself in two ways: excessive use of force and death. In general, there are patterns of disrespect associated with each of these categories: economically, the policing organization tends to target the poor and working classes. In 2015, journalist Zaid Jilani published a report regarding the economic status of the victims of police violence in which he found that 95 percent of police killings occurred in neighborhoods with incomes below $100,000. Racially, people of color are more likely to be abused by police, regardless of their economic status, in the U.S. Another study conducted in 2016 showed that police are 50 percent more likely to use force on Blacks and Hispanics than they are on whites (Owen, 2016). Sexuality wise, a 2013 report focused on anti-LGBTQ violence found that 48 percent of the LGBTQ violence survivors had experienced police misconduct, including unjustified arrests, use of excessive force and entrapment (Mallory, Hasenbush, & Sears, 2015). Realistically, people or groups do not fall into only one social category. The interdependent nature of these social categories overlaps and relate to the type of discrimination(s) a person or group is likely to experience. Therefore, the chances of becoming victims of police misconduct, or disrespect, is heightened when more of these
identities intersect. For example, a lower-class, transgender, person of color is more likely to be victimized by police than an upper-class cisgender individual.

The disrespectful treatment of specific groups by the policing institution is possible because of the unjust power relationship between the organization certain communities: police have the power to abuse their authority, while their victims do not. Police are rarely held accountable for their actions, while their victims must suffer from the initial abuse and the following neglect. The "blue code" of silence within the policing institution is not a myth, but a harsh reality of this profession.

The National Institute of Ethics in a study commissioned by the International Association of Police Chiefs surveyed hundreds of cops in 21 states. They found that nearly 80 percent of cops said that a code of silence exists, more than half said it didn’t bother them, almost half admitted that the code was strongest when excessive force was used, and half also admitted they had witnessed misconduct by another officer but kept their mouths shut about it. Why? Because in many cases they were told to keep quiet by other officers and in even more cases by department higher-ups. And if they didn’t they were scared stiff that they would be ostracized; the officer who committed the misconduct would be disciplined or fired; or worse, they’d be fired, or at the very least would be “Blackballed,” or that their bosses would simply blow their complaint off (Hutchinson, 2017, par. 4).

People or groups are placed into a position of powerlessness by police, which results in the normalization of disrespectful treatment towards specific communities and social categories. The cases of police brutality that are reported are minimized and the officer is given a slap on the wrist: "[b]rutality complaints are far more common than police homicides, but overall, few officers are indicted for unjustified use of force, and even fewer are convicted" (Bouie, 2014, par. 9). The notion and demographic application of powerlessness within the context of policing can help us to understand the pervasive nature of police violence.

Violence
"Finally, many groups suffer the oppression of systemic violence. Members of some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property, which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person” (Young, 1990, p. 56). Young argues that violence is a social practice that has undergone the process of normalization. People are aware that it is happening and justify the prevalence based on the notion of just-deserts; meaning that some people deserve violence more than others. The pervasiveness of police violence is predicated upon this very idea of just-deserts. However, if we consider the process of powerlessness, we can come to see that violence towards certain groups is an inherent part of the policing institution.

Williams’ entire account conceptualizes police violence as a source of control in the U.S.:

The police represent the most direct means by which the state imposes its will on the citizenry. When persuasion, indoctrination, moral pressure, and incentive measures all fail—there are the police. They are armed, trained, and authorized to use force. With varying degrees of subtlety, this colors their every action. Like the possibility of arrest, the threat of violence is implicit in every police encounter. Violence, as well as the law, is what they represent (Williams, 2015, p. 32).

month in 2016. The identifying characteristics of groups can either increase or reduce the chances of experiencing brutality or death at the hands of police officers. The Los Angeles Times published a comprehensive list of Black men and women killed by police (Funke & Susman, 2016). The list is extensive and cites cases of police homicides that involved the use of guns, stun guns, illegal chokeholds, and physical assault. The detailed accounts of police violence towards the Black community contradict the post-racial narratives used to deny existence of racism in current society.

The type of violence experienced by an individual or group is largely dependent upon the gender of the victim or victims. White supremacy transitioned into a system of domination that expanded to include the positioning of women in society. Increasing stratification produced and incorporated patriarchal beliefs into the social hierarchy. The social mores of the Protestant ruling class and the sexualization of female slaves established sexist roles and behaviors for women in the U.S. (Williams, 2015). Sexual assault represents a gendered form of police violence. In chapter four, I will provide an intersectional analysis of the unique relationship between gendered police violence in the U.S. that focuses on the experiences of women of color.

There is no doubt that the underlying unjust power relationship at the core of police violence is about control and dehumanization. Violence is the most overt form of institutional cruelty, in which the physical relationship between the slave and owner have been replicated and modified throughout the various transitions of policing in the U.S. The routinization and justification of police brutality represents the organizations dedication to this power relationship.

Placing an analysis of local law enforcement within the context of systemic oppression and institutional cruelty exposes the ingrained fallacies of the policing narrative. Combining the
concepts put forth by Young and Hallie enhances Williams' genealogy and argument for police abolition in the U.S. Not only does the organization represent a repressive institution that is innately violent, but it also works to perpetuate systemic exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness that were established by slavery and mass incarceration. Each system of oppression that is maintained by the police force represents the maintenance of the unjust power differential that exists across various identities such as class, race, and gender. Hallie argues that insofar as these unequal power dynamics remain intact, then cruelty will continue to exist; "The opposite of cruelty, I learned, was freedom from that unbalanced power relationship" (Hallie, 1981, p. 25). Therefore, as long and the policing institution continues to exist, so will the systems of oppression and institutional cruelty in which they preserve.

Hallie's analysis is also useful in debunking the recent police reformation craze in the U.S. In response to the outcry against police over the past several years, departments have begun to reform the organization to attempt to reduce police violence. For example, North Carolina has recently acquired six Black female police chiefs in an effort to diversify their staff so that they better reflect the communities they patrol (Buncombe, 2017). Increasing community policing, the use of body cameras, and ethical training are also widespread police reform ideas. Discussions surrounding policy revisions and strict enforcement are too being considered. However, according to Hallie, all of these police reforms efforts- or episodic acts of kindness- are pandering.

In studying slavery in America and the concentration camps of central Europe I found that kindness could be the ultimate cruelty, especially when it was given within that unbalanced power relationship. A kind overseer or a kind camp guard can exacerbate cruelty, can remind his victim that there are other relationships than the relationship of cruelty, and can make the victim deeply bitter, especially when he sees the self-satisfied smile of his victimizer. He is being cruelly treated when he is given a penny or a bun after having endured the crushing and grinding of his mental and bodily wellbeing (Hallie, 1981, p. 25).
Again, the opposite of institutional cruelty is not kindness, instead it is freedom from the unjust power relationship. Police reform efforts are surface-leveled and temporary solutions to the deeply embedded oppressive culture of law enforcement in the U.S. The goal should not be to create a kinder police force, but instead to eliminate the power differential that they represent in our democratic society.

In the following chapter, I will continue to challenge the grand narrative of policing by focusing on the experiences of women of color whose voices have been the most marginalized throughout the discourse surrounding the effects of policing in the U.S. I will also briefly discuss the toxic effects that the policing culture has on its employees. In order to understand the severity of these power dynamics, we must listen and incorporate the stories and experiences of the powerless.
Chapter 4- Silenced Voices

Public awareness surrounding police violence is becoming more prevalent on a daily basis in the U.S. National media outlets, social media applications, and public dialogues have placed police brutality against marginalized groups at the center of the national discourse. However, the conversations regarding these incidents are limited in their scope. Black males have become the poster children for police brutality in the U.S. The discourse surrounding police violence has declared every twenty-eight hours a Black male is killed by police in America. (Carruthers, 2014). Social justice organizations, developed by Black women, such as the Black Lives Matter campaign following the death of teenager Trayvon Martin in 2012 are prevailing. The mission of the Black Lives Matter movement is inclusive of all Black people: “Rooted in the experiences of Black people in this country who actively resist our de-humanization, Black Lives Matter is a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society” (“About the Black Lives Matter Network,” n.d.). However, the movement itself has primarily focused on the experiences of Black men. The nation is aware of the stories involving, but not limited to, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and Sam DuBose. However, the narrative of police violence excludes the experiences of Cau Bich Tran, Malaika Brooks, Jaisha Akins, Jalea Lamot, and other female victims. Tran, Brooks, Akins, and Lamot are all women of color who and victim of police assault or killings in the U.S. (Ritchie, 2006).

Community activists launched the Say Her Name campaign to address the oversights of the stories of women of color and police brutality, but coverage of their experiences remain scarce. The lack of attention assigned to women of color within the discourse of police violence is largely due to the types of approaches and perspectives utilized when studying the policing
institution. Applying an intersectional feminist lens to police brutality serves to unearth the stories of women of color and provides context for understanding their unique interactions with police officers.

In 1993, civil rights activist and scholar Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the notion of intersectionality in response to the issues surrounding identity politics at the time. Much like the current studies of police brutality, identity politics lacked depth and had an excluding effect:

The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite - that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences. In the context of violence against women, the elision of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. Moreover, ignoring the difference within groups contributes to tension among groups, another problem of identity politics that bears on efforts to politicize violence against women… Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so when the practices expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling (Crenshaw, 1993, p. 1242).

The problem that Crenshaw identifies is the very same problem that exists within the conversations regarding police violence in the U.S.; racism has dominated the conversation thus far. While there is no doubt that racism plays a role in police brutality, focusing solely on race mystifies the ways in which oppression manifest itself based on overlapping identities. Crenshaw developed the concept of intersectionality to observe how various identities and structural realities intersect and interact to shape the multiple dimensions of a lived experience. Examples of intersecting identities include race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, etc. In order to grasp the understanding of police brutality in the U.S. we must consider how the various aspects and characteristics of an individual predict the type of violence they will experience at the hands of police officers. Violence directed towards women of color manifests itself in very
distinct ways that result from the intersecting identities of the victim and the patriarchal violence embedded within the policing culture.

American author, feminist and social activist bell hooks describes patriarchal violence in relation to the historical widespread rape culture in the U.S. “We live in a culture that condones and celebrates rape. Within a phallocentric patriarchal state, the rape of women by men is a ritual that daily perpetuates and maintains sexist oppression and exploitation” (hooks, 1994, p. 128). Rape culture channels sexism through acts of patriarchal violence such as rape, spouse abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. Therefore, in a sexist culture, violence is critical to maintaining patriarchy-an exploitative relationship between men and women. Patriarchal violence structured the gender relations and roles in our nation.

As Stephanie Coontz remarks, "Fond paternalistic indulgence of women who conformed to domestic ideals was intimately connected with extreme condemnation of those who were outside the bonds of patronage and dependence on which the relations of men and women were based.” As a result, women were held to higher standards and subjected to harsher treatment when they stepped outside the bounds of their role (as cited in Williams, 2015, p. 111-112).

Gendered violence helps to reinforce the gender binary, gender norms, and heteronormativity. There is a psychological aspect involved in the enactment of patriarchal violence that hooks refers to as “internalized oppression”- analogous to Hallie’s formulation. Those who identify as heterosexual males have a stake in the continuation of the rape culture in the U.S. According to hooks, the culture deems heterosexual males most desirable in both the social and sexual realms. Therefore, men who are less privileged in terms of economic or racial stratification, for example, find solace in the act of patriarchal violence.

[T]he assertion of sexist domination is their only expressive access to the patriarchal power they are told all men should possess as their gendered birthright… So much of their sense of value and self-esteem is hooked into the
patriarchal macho image; these brothers are not about to surrender their ‘dick-
thing’ masculinity (hooks, 1994, p. 129).

Utilizing the notions of intersectionality and patriarchal violence when discussing police brutality can provide a truly inclusive image of our current state of affairs. Contrary to popular belief, police murder women of color—especially queer and transwomen—at the same rate as their male counterparts (Michaels, 2015). In addition to the murder rates, sexual assault and abuse by police are more common for women of color (United Nations Human Rights Committee, 2006). The historical sexualization and exoticization of women of color dates back to the antebellum era. Davis discussed the relationship between slavery, gender and punishment received by slaves. The effects and values of the white male gaze and patriarchy have had a profound effect on the treatment of women of color throughout every facet of society, including the ideologies and practices of the policing institution. Race, gender, sexuality and nationality structure the daily interactions between women of color and police officers.

Enforcement of racialized gender boundaries and regulation of sexual conduct are two cornerstones of police interactions with women of color. From enforcement of historical laws prohibiting people from wearing apparel associated with a different gender, to present day enforcement of social expectations regarding use of gender-segregated facilities such as restrooms, law enforcement agents have explicitly policed the borders of the binary gender system. Additionally, police officers engage in subconscious gender policing: departure from socially constructed forms of ‘appropriate’ gender expression is perceived as grounds for suspicion and securing submission to gender roles (Ritchie, 2006, p. 142).

INCITE!—a national network of radical feminist—published a report on the relationship between women of color and police in the U.S. The findings of the report are clear indications of the sexist nature of the institution. For example, police target women that are more masculine in comparison to the norm at a higher rate (Ritchie, 2006). Verbal abuse, invasive searches, and use of excess force are common during encounters with officers for women who fail to comply
with the gender roles. They are also more likely to experience abuse while in custody and denied protection when crimes are committed against them (Ritchie, 2006). Police, in general, tend to view transwomen, lesbians, and low-income women of color as masculine. Racial and gender stereotypes inform police expectations. Again, it is crucial to remember that these stereotypes date back to the slave era- painting women of color as wild sexual animals in need of domestication. “…[O]fficers often appear to be acting based on perceptions of Black women as ‘animalistic’ women possessing superhuman force, Latina women as ‘hot-tempered mommas,’ Asian women as ‘devious,’ knife-wielding martial arts experts, and so on” (Ritchie, 2006, p. 147).

Police also regulate the expression of “appropriate” sexual conduct. The Sex Workers Project in New York City provided significant insights to the lives of sex workers and their interactions with police.

… 30% of street-based sex workers and 14% of indoor sex workers interviewed reported violence by police officers. Reported incidents included officers physically grabbing and kicking prostitutes, as well as beating them; one incident of rape; one woman was stalked by a police officer; and throwing food. Sexual harassment included fondling of body parts; giving women cigarettes in exchange for sex; and police offering not to arrest a prostitute for sexual services (Sex Workers Project, 2003, p. 6).

Police can charge an individual as a sex worker based on the presence of a single condom on a person. Officers accuse transwomen and low-income women of color of sex work at higher rates in the U.S. Conformity tactics, typically aimed at lesbians, include sexual harassment and assault. Officers regularly ask lesbians if they “would like to know how it felt to be with a man” (Ritchie, 2006, p. 143). Even routine traffic stops are gender specific for women of color. “For instance, in 2001, a rash of traffic stops of Latina women took place in a low-income community in Suffolk County, Long Island, during which women would be forced to perform sexual acts
and/or strip in public” (Ritchie, 2006, p. 146). Nationality also directs police violence. Local law enforcement agents and Border Patrol agents consistently rape Latina women.

Patriarchal violence through rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment are the most gender-specific manifestations of police violence against women of color. Victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are not exempt from the patriarchal violence that plagues the policing institution. Officers place women of color in a position of powerlessness when they subject them to further violence while responding to their calls. “Often, police brutality against women of color and their families occurs when they seek assistance in the context of domestic violence or sexual assault” (Ritchie, 2006, p. 150). Police officers reserve full discretion- informed by racial and gendered stereotypes- to determine who is the victim and the perpetrator of domestic violence or sexual assault. Many women of color who have called police in response to abuse and are at their most vulnerable have reported physical assault, sexual assault, and sexual harassment on behalf of the responding officers. Incidents of police brutality within the context of domestic violence or sexual assault highlight the nature of the governing stereotypes that dictate the manner in which police view and treat women of color.

The significant eras of the policing institutions history have also had a unique effect on the lives of women of color. The “war on drugs,” “war on terror,” and “quality of life” policing have targeted women based on their race, class, and nationality. The war on drugs, declared in 1971, identified drug abuse as “public enemy number one." The stereotypes of the “crack head mother” and women of color as “drug mules” arose and increased the list of racialized gender myths utilized by the policing institution. The consequences of the war on drugs for women of color included death, assault, mandatory prison sentences, loss of child custody, loss of access to public welfare, and denial of access to government loans for higher education (Ritchie, 2006).
Arbitrary stops, strip searches, incapacitation without evidence, and bribes for sexual favors in exchange for leniency became more common for women of color.

In South Seattle, Washington, in October 1997, Theresa Henderson, like Frankie Perkins, was choked to death by police who alleged that she tried to swallow a small amount of cocaine and claimed that they were merely attempting to recover ‘evidence.’ Dantee Daniels, a pregnant Black woman arrested for dealing drugs in June of 1997 by New Jersey police officers, was shot to death by officers as she sat in the squad car, after an alleged ‘scuffle.’ Witnesses deny that Ms. Daniels was involved in any drug transaction at the time of her death. (Ritchie, 2016, p. 151-152).

The war on terror created a hostile environment for Arab, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Muslim women in the U.S. Myths and images of these women as suicide bombers and cultural martyrs became widespread and commonly accepted representations of their lives. Following the events of 9/11, terrorist investigations targeted Arab, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Muslim women to terrorism. Street and airport profiling has been increasing for women of color, especially those who wear the hijab. Police officers target women who they perceive to be involved in terrorist activities use excessive use of force, violence, and religious persecution.

Gender, sexuality, race, and nationality function as precursors for police violence against women of color. It is only when each of these intersecting identities are viewed as overlapping contributions to oppression that one can fully encompass how police brutality functions in our society. An intersectional analysis of the policing institution that goes beyond race creates a space for the voices and experiences of women of color. The police interactions between men of color and women of color are vastly different and speak to different forms of systemic oppressions. Solutions for police violence need to consider racism, sexism, heteronormativity and patriarchal violence.

The patriarchal violence maintained and demonstrated by the policing institution has serious detrimental effects on women of color, but it also targets another group whose
experiences and stories remain silenced by the larger discourse of police violence: the police officers themselves. The policing culture that fosters the growth of the exploitative relationship between men and women has a dehumanizing effect on the actor of patriarchal violence. The assertion of sexist dominance comes at the cost of a person’s mental and emotional health. Toxic masculinity reigns supreme in a patriarchal culture like the policing institution. It imposes gender norms, values, and standards that hinder the officers’ ability to correctly channel emotions and promote unhealthy coping mechanisms. Males or those placed in a masculine role, feel the need to overcompensate their masculinity when their position is threatened. This leads to the excessive use of force, rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment. Sexual aggression is a collateral consequence of toxic masculinity. Domination, inside and outside of the bedroom is a general expectation for men, or those in a masculine role (hooks, 1994). There is pressure placed on these individuals to play the “manly” role. The lack of an avid sexual drive is reason for belittlement and harassment. The expectation and enactment of this sexual drive influences officers’ interactions with women and individuals who fail to conform to the gender binary and norms. Officers internalize the values of sexual aggression and carry them into their homes. “Research suggests that family violence is two to four times higher in the law enforcement community than in the general population” (Friedersdorf, 2014, par. 1). Incidents of spousal and family abuse, murder, and murder-suicides are common and underreported amongst the families of law enforcement officers. However, like the experiences of women of color, these stories do not make media headlines. The mental and emotional well-being of police officers depletes on a daily basis. The number one killer of police in the U.S. is suicide (Kulbarsh, 2016).

Almost 1 in 4 police officers has thoughts of suicide at some point in their life. And in the smallest departments, the suicide rate of officers is almost four
times the national average. The suicide rate for police officers is four times higher than the rate for firefighters. Between 7-19% of police officers have symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder. In comparison, only 3.5% of the general population experiences PTSD. More police die by suicide than by homicide: the number of police suicides is 2.3 times that of homicides (National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d., par. 2).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and alcohol abuse are only a few examples of mental health conditions that plague the policing institution (NAMI, n.d.). The pillars of sexism, patriarchal violence, and sexist ideologies upon which the policing culture was built are a serious cause for concern; not only for women of color, but the police officers that are assigned to carry out and maintain patriarchy, racism, and heteronormativity.

The current discourse on police brutality in the U.S. denies the experiences of women of color and local law enforcement agents. Race is not the only factor informing police violence. Considerations of overlapping identities, sexism, and the manifestation of patriarchal violence are necessary conceptions within the grand narrative and analyses of police brutality. Understanding the lived experiences of women of color and police officers provides an alternative, pluralistic perspective of the many ways in which police violence functions along the lines of gendered and racialized practices. We must incorporate the stories of these silenced into the study of policing in the U.S.

In chapter five, I will conclude my assessment by addressing the post-racial climate of the policing narrative in the U.S., and potential rebuttals and concerns regarding police abolition. I will also offer alternative suggestions to policing that focus on the general well-being of all communities. Lastly, I will make recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5- Police Abolition in the U.S.

In this chapter I will address a critique of Williams’ work to offer further support for his argument. I will also discuss the issue of police reformation in a post-racial climate based on a speech given by former FBI director, James B. Comey and Phillip Hallie's concept of institutional cruelty. Lastly, I will consider the dominant rebuttals against police abolition and offer recommendations for future research.

The theory of police abolition in the U.S. faces an expected and reasonable amount of opposition and resistance. Critics of Williams’ work accuse him of making sweeping generalizations, oversimplification, and lack of proof that police reform is not an effective solution to police brutality (Publishers Weekly, 2004). To claim that Williams’ arguments are unfounded is a difficult statement to support. Williams provides a theoretical framework of historical repression to offer reasoning for his position, and gives empirical examples for each of his claims. He examines the developmental histories of various locations, demographics, and social conditions throughout time to demonstrate the long-standing and mutually beneficial relationship between those in power and local law enforcement. Out of a total 546 pages, 145 pages consist of endnotes and research citations from which Williams’ developed his argument. To say that Williams’ work generalizes, oversimplifies and lacks proof that reforming a historically discriminatory institution will not bring about change and social justice is a claim lacking in evidence itself.

Regarding reformation efforts, we cannot reform an inherently oppressive institution that maintains a set of unjust power relationships in a post-racial environment. We live in a time where police officers can kill a Black child in a public park because they “feared for their lives”
without addressing the historical root issues of racism and stereotypes that influenced their actions. Police authorities themselves do not believe that racism plays a role in policing (Brennan, 2017, par. 11). Former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, James B. Comey, delivered a speech in 2015 in which he claims that police are not racist against minorities. According to Comey, police officers are generally good people who fall into “mental shortcuts that lead to racism” (2015). He argues that these mental shortcuts occur because young men of color commit the majority of street crime. Comey acknowledges the racist past of the policing institution but claims that it has remained in the past, except for the ingrained biases passed on from generation to generation.

A mental shortcut becomes almost irresistible and maybe even rational by some lights. The two young Black men on one side of the street look like so many others the officer has locked up. Two white men on the other side of the street—even in the same clothes—do not. The officer does not make the same association about the two white guys, whether that officer is white or Black. And that drives different behavior. The officer turns toward one side of the street and not the other. We need to come to grips with the fact that this behavior complicates the relationship between police and the communities they serve (Comey, 2015, par. 21).

Comey’s speech, like many post-racial narratives, is full of contradictions. The mental shortcuts he speaks of are examples of racist police practices and proof that the past is still very much alive. Profiling people because of the color of their skin is racist. “Race-based policing contributes to the overrepresentation of minorities (especially Black people) at every stage of the criminal legal process” (Williams, 2015, p. 140). Comey's argument endorses the rotten-apply theory by suggesting that individual officer happen to fall into racist practices because of criminal demographic trends. What he fails to acknowledge is the role of over-surveillance, the racial and economic influences underlying criminal discourse and legislation, and the historical and contemporary relationship between policing and white supremacy in the U.S. However, the
most alarming portion of Comeys’ speech is his belief that biases are an instinctual or natural aspect of being human. He refers to a song titled “Everyone’s a Little Bit Racist” to justify his claims:

Look around and you will find
No one's really color blind.
Maybe it's a fact
We all should face
Everyone makes judgments
Based on race.
You should be grateful I did not try to sing that.
But if we can't help our latent biases, we can help our behavior in response to those instinctive reactions, which is why we work to design systems and processes that overcome that very human part of us all (Comey, 2015, par. 15).

To state that racial biases are natural by-products of being human completely disregards the fact that race is a social construction that served as a control mechanism for southern plantation owners. Racial categories worked to divide the lower classes and prevent rebellions during the antebellum era. Creating and normalizing a racial hierarchy justified the dehumanization of slaves and the institution of slavery; a legacy that lives on today. Paulo Freire demonstrates the relationship between the dangers of normalizing group-specific constructs, myths/stereotypes and oppression in his text titled Pedagogy of the Oppressed:

Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history; but it is not an historical vocation. Indeed, to admit of dehumanization as an historical vocation would lead to cynicism or total despair. The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons would be meaningless. This struggle is only possible because dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed (Freire, 1993, p. 44).

Therefore, I would argue that the mental short cuts utilized by individual officers is the result of being exposed to the oppressive policing culture in the U.S. and the unjust ideologies that have
been passed down from historical predecessors—rather than assigning the blame to people of color for “committing the majority of street crimes.” Friere’s excerpt also speaks to the presence of the policing institution in the U.S.

The oppressive institution that is the police force in the U.S. is not a natural aspect of an increasing modernizing society. It is a direct result of an unjust order established by white supremacy and the system of slavery. The policing organization is not a concrete necessity for public safety and justice, but instead a necessity for the success of a system of oppression—the prison industrial complex. Assuming that the policing institution in the U.S. is a “historical vocation”—work that should be done—means accepting and legitimizing the history and genealogy of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and violence within the organization.

Accepting the role of the institution in U.S. society means endorsing the idea that certain groups of peoples are less human and “naturally” inclined to criminal acts; disregarding the fact that laws dictate criminality, and race and wealth dictate the laws. It is only until we, as a society, realize that targeting and controlling specific groups is not “human vocation” that we can begin to address the issue of police violence, oppression and abolition in the U.S. effectively. The problem with the idea of police reformation is that it fails to acknowledge the long-standing dehumanizing power relationship that exists between police and marginalized groups. Attempting to improve an institution that is innately oppressive or cruel, by establishing policies and practices that are geared towards creating a kinder organization ignores the foundation of oppression upon which the policing organization was built. Reform efforts assume that the toxic history of policing in the U.S. no longer has any power or influence over the current organization and its officers. However, as Williams’—and even Comey—demonstrated, that is simply not true. Like people, police practices and policies carry a genetic heritage that dates back to slavery
in the U.S. Attempting to reorganize the policing institution, while maintaining the same functions (crime control and response) so that it is more humane is the equivalent to placing a band aid over a gunshot wound- ignoring and misdiagnosing the severity of the problem, overlooking the pain experienced by the victim, and denying that the bullet is still in the body and needs to be removed. The solution to ending an oppressive organization is not reformation, or developing more humane ways to control the population; it's abolition.

The opposite of cruelty is not kindness. The opposite of the cruelty of the overseer in American slavery was not the kindness of that overseer for a moment or for a day. An episodic kindness is not the opposite of institutional cruelty. The opposite of institutionalized cruelty is freedom from the cruel relationship (Hallie, 1981, p. 25).

I can fully sympathize with the fears of abolishing a system that has become a normalized aspect of daily life. When I first encountered the theory of police abolition, the idea of living in an environment of crime without protection was troublesome. However, once I understood the organization in terms of its historical intentions, influences and roles, I was able to identify the distortions between the grand narrative and reality. Social myths or narratives thrive and function as the missing puzzle piece when theory and practice clash. Under the rotten apple theory- the dominant narrative for police violence to date- systemic oppression is individualized and responsibility is assigned to the officer instead of the institution. The crime-and-disorder theory attributes criminality to individual actions and lack of morality instead of historically biased legislation and enforcement practices that target marginalized groups. Yet the grand narrative of policing in the U.S. continues to portray officer's crime fighters and the protectors of society. The widely accepted role of police as the keepers of law and order in the U.S. invokes a sense of fear when discussing the notion of police abolition. The next section consists of a list of
concerns and rebuttals that I have complied based on writings and conversations that I have engaged in, both, first hand and/or vicariously.

**Rebuttals for Police Abolition in the U.S.**

**Crime response and prevention.** Violent crimes and property protection are two topics that I encounter quite frequently when suggesting police abolition. In response to President Trump’s stance on increasing crime-fighting resources, the Pew Research Center conducted a study that lead to five facts about crime in the U.S. First, “violent crime in the U.S. has fallen sharply over the past quarter century” (Gramlich, 2017, par. 2). The study does not indicate the reasoning behind the decrease in violent crime rates, or crime rates in general, and there is no real consensus among researchers about the cause of this trend (Ford, 2016). Therefore, there is no way to attribute the decline in violent crime to the role of policing in the U.S. Second, “property crime has declined significantly over the long term” (Gramlich, 2017, par. 3). Again, we know little about the cause of the decrease in property crimes. Third, “public perceptions about crime in the U.S. often don’t align with the data” (Gramlich, 2017, par. 4). Despite the fact that data and statistics reveal a steady decrease in crime, opinion surveys indicate that Americans believe crime is continuously rising. “In a Pew Research Center survey in late 2016, 57% of registered voters said crime had gotten worse since 2008, even though BJS and FBI data show that violent and property crime rates declined by double-digit percentages during that span” (Gramlich, 2017, par. 4). Fourth, “there are large geographic variations in crime rates” (Gramlich, 2017, par. 5). Population density and economic conditions typically found in urban areas are influential factors of crime, according to the FBI. Lastly, “many crimes are not reported to police” (Gramlich, 2017, par. 6). Generally, about half of violent crimes and one-third of property crimes go unreported. An annual survey administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics ask victims of
crime about their reporting habits. In 2015, the survey showed that half of violent crimes and one-third of property crimes go unreported each year because victims felt that the police were not helpful and/or that crime is a personal problem (Langton, Berzofsky, Krebs, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012).

The findings from the Pew Research Center study are helpful in changing the public's perspective of crime in the U.S. Crime is decreasing, and generally prevalent in impoverished areas. If this is the case, then police are not the solution to crime response or prevention. Poor people and people of color compromise the majority of urban populations and experience crime at higher rates, but are less likely to call the police (Langton, Berzofsky, Krebs, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012). Therefore, because they experience the most crime but do not turn to police for help, I would argue that police are involved in the process of crime response and prevention at a much lesser rate than the public assumes. If crime occurs more in overpopulated and impoverished areas, addressing issues of inequality and wealth distribution would be a more effective approach to fighting crime. There is no evidence that suggests increasing the number of officers in urban and impoverished areas would lead to a decrease in crime. On the contrary, Williams’ demonstrates the exploitative relationship between community policing and the public.

**Domestic violence and sexual assault.** Police approaches to domestic violence and sexual assault have proven to be ineffective and damaging for the victims involved.

For instance, under mandatory arrest laws, there have been numerous incidents where police officers called to domestic incidents have arrested the woman who is being battered. Many undocumented women have reported cases of sexual and domestic violence, only to find themselves deported. A tough law and order agenda also leads to long punitive sentences for women convicted of killing their batterers (Critical Resistance-Incite!, 2003, p. 142).
Victims of domestic violence face potential consequences for reporting their offenders. Under reporting of domestic violence is common in the U.S. “African-American women only make up about 13 percent of U.S. women, but comprise about half of female homicide victims — the majority of whom were killed by current or former boyfriends or husbands” (Guerra, 2013, par. 1). Again, the historical violent relationship between police and the Black community causes a large portion of domestic violence cases to go unreported. Additionally, as discussed in the previous chapter, families of police are two to four times more likely to experience domestic violence than the general population (Friedersdorf, 2014). Forty percent of cops admit to being violent with their spouse or children, and 86 percent of those officers remained on active duty even after previous arrests for domestic violence (Roslin & Hope, 2015).

Sexual assault victims are also less likely to report incidents to police. A 2002 study revealed 63 percent of rapes, and 74 percent of completed and attempted sexual assaults against females went unreported (Rennison). Common reasons for not reporting sexual assaults include self-blame or guilt, shame and embarrassment, fear of not being believed or being accused of playing a role in the crime, and lack of trust in the criminal justice system (DuMont, Miller, & Myhr, 2003). Furthermore, sexual assault rates are significantly higher for police, as well. The study conducted by the Cato Institute revealed that sexual misconduct is the second greatest of all civilian complaints nationwide against police officers (Packman, 2011).

**Mediation and conflict-resolution.** The role of policing in reducing and mediating conflicts depends largely on the defining characteristics of the involved parties. As previously discussed, police discretion and general initial evaluations of a situation are informed by the preconceived notions of race, sexuality, gender, class, nationality, etc. Police discretion is an inevitable aspect of police-citizen encounters. Before police can engage in any form of conflict-
resolution they must evaluate the situation and identify the problem. Researchers generally agree that situational and organizational factors influence police discretion ("Police Officer Behavior," n.d.). Situational factors include suspect and victim characteristics (race, sex, age, demeanor, etc.), context characteristics (location, by-standers, media presence, etc.), and legal characteristics (evidence and seriousness of the offense) ("Police Officer Behavior," n.d.). Organizational factors are characteristics of the institution that influence police behavior (policies, procedures, models and culture). One study shows that police are more likely to arrest suspects when policing proactively- general patrolling; not responding to a call or complaint (Sherman, 1980 as cited in "Police Officer Behavior," n.d.). Community policing, broken-window policing, stop and frisk, and zero tolerance policing are examples of proactive policing. Community policing increases police-citizen encounters, especially in low-income areas. In most poor neighborhoods of the U.S., four out of five residents are Black or Hispanic (Ludwig as cited in Mullainathan, 2015). Therefore, people of color are more likely to encounter proactive policing and be arrested. Given the racial and economic history of the policing institution in the U.S., police discretion can serve as a precursor to abuse and brutality. Non-violent situations that have resulted in the death of unarmed citizens are examples of the dangers of proactive policing. In 2016, police killed 169 unarmed people in the U.S. (Swaine & McCarthy, 2017). Popularized incidents- Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Yvette Smith, and Alton Sterling- represent a fraction of cases in which officers reacted to a situation- proactively and responsively- that resulted in the death of unarmed people of color. Killing people of color is a deep-rooted tradition of police in the U.S.

If we are to understand the phenomenon of police brutality, we must get beyond particular cases. We can better understand the actions of individual officers if we understand the institution of which they are a part. That institution, in turn, can best be examined if we have and understanding of its origins, its social function,
and its relation to larger systems like capitalism and White supremacy (Williams, 2015, p. 32).

Potential for abuse is present in every police encounter, even those that are not predicated upon racial or economic biases. Individuals living with mental illnesses are also vulnerable to the negative outcomes of police discretion. In 2014, the Treatment Advocacy Center published a study that analyzed police killings over a span of 40 years (1980-2008), and found that half of the people killed by police each year have mental health problems (Torrey, Zdanowicz, Kennard, Lamb, Eslinger, Biasotti, & Fuller). In general, given the statistics, I contend that police lack the necessary skills to defuse non-violent situations without the use of force.

Alternatives to Policing in the U.S.

The movement towards police abolition must begin with an honest discussion about the social function of policing in the U.S. In order to eradicate a system and avoid replicating cycles of oppression, the public must be aware of the historical and contemporary role of police in relation to the prison industrial complex and white supremacy. I agree with Davis, Alexander, and Williams in that the process of abolition and the alternatives must be multifaceted and focused on community needs. Community needs, problems and solutions need to be developed by the individuals who reside in each neighborhood, not the government. I suggest that the state transfer the authority, power, and resources of public safety to the community. However, before developing and organizing alternative community programs to policing, the first stage of abolition should start with dialogue and reflection. True dialogue involves the consideration of all groups, especially those who have been historically oppressed. The traditional use of dialogue in the U.S. serves as a mechanism for the oppressors- those in power tell others how society will function. Yet, practicing true dialogue creates a safe space for all voices to be heard.
Dialogue is the encounter between [humans], mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their world and those whose right to speak has been denied to them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression (Friere, 1993, p. 88).

It is the responsibility of the community members and the oppressed to liberate themselves and their oppressors in order to establish a democratic society. As a society, we have placed an enormous amount of duties upon police officers that fall outside of crime and prevention. We expect police officers to address societal problems that they are not trained to solve, or merely understand. For example, mental health issues, drug addiction, family and/or domestic issues, and educational obedience are not subjects that are covered throughout the six-month police academy. Police are constantly sent out to calls that would typically require the expertise of a social worker, counselor, educator, or health professional.

Although there is no immediate solution or replacement for policing in the U.S., there are community-based programs that are engaging in the first steps towards abolition by working to reduce the need for police. For example, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth is a community organization in California that aims to reduce crime rates, recidivism, and reform academic disciplinary measures. RJOY works to alter the ways in which schools think about justice so that the focus is on healing, rather than punishment and retribution. This program has proven to reduce suspensions, expulsions, violence, juvenile arrests and incarceration in participating schools.

The Audre Lorde Project in New York City is a community advocacy center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non-Conforming People of Color (LGBTSTGNCPOC). Their goal is to eliminate the injustices faced by LGBTSTGNCPOC
through mobilization, educational resources, and representation. Their Safe Outside the System program is an attempt to decrease the amount of police intervention by creating safe spaces and providing a toolkit that offers alternative community-based solutions to issues that would typically be handled by police officers.

In Durham, North Carolina, the UBUNTU! group focuses on the issues surrounding domestic violence and sexual assault. UBUNTU! is a survivor-led organization that provides education, support, and accountability for victims of sexual violence. They provide both immediate support and long-term community oriented transformation projects to reduce sexual violence. Their guiding principles are based on healing and prevention, instead of retribution.

CURE Violence takes a medical approach to addressing issues of community violence by framing it as a health issue. They argue that the key to reducing violence is through disease control and psychological techniques. This organization challenges the grand narrative of criminality by suggesting that violence is not an inherent part of a “bad” person, but a by-product of health issues. CURE Violence offers a model that encourages one-on-one early intervention for individuals that are at risk for violence, and has been implemented in over fifty cities in the U.S.

Lastly, Chain Reaction is a voluntary research and educational program based in Chicago for youth that focuses solely on alternatives to policing. They create a safe space for young people, especially young people of color, to imagine and develop suggestions for a future without police. The organization offers a curriculum and a toolkit of resources for communities interested in joining the project. Police abolition is a process that will have to occur overtime, and this program gives power to the generation that has the potential to be at the apex of the movement.
The previous organizations should serve as templates and/or guides for future solutions. Each community is unique and requires solutions that are tailored to their specific realities. I suggest that local leaders, activist organizations, and professionals or experts from various fields join together to create and explore options for maintaining safety and the integrity of each community.

**Future Recommendations**

Throughout this thesis, I have focused on the genealogical development of the policing institution in relation to the prison industrial complex to frame my argument for police abolition in the U.S. I base my understandings of the prison industrial complex and policing on the works of Angela Davis, who explains the structural organization of the prison industrial complex in terms of race, capitalism and sexism; Michelle Alexander, who demonstrates the replication process of slavery and mass incarceration through the use of colorblind narratives and rhetoric; and Kristian Williams, who takes the first step towards bridging the gap between prison abolition and police abolition in the U.S. by exposing the strong kinship between the two and placing the conversation of police within the context of repression. I have attempted to extend Williams’ work to include other forms of oppressions that go beyond repression based on Iris Marion Young’s’ conceptualizations of systemic oppression.

Although I have taken a historical approach to the notion of police abolition, there are other analytical methods that can offer further support for police abolition. For instance, a transnational analysis, in which one compares the U.S. policing institution to others around the world, could add another dimension to the notion of police abolition. Angela Davis’ *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (2015) is a prime example that examines the similarities between the social conditions of Ferguson to those of
Palestine in regards to state violence and oppression. The notion of police abolition is one that can be examined by various academic fields; for example, studying the psychological effects of police violence, the economic value of the organization, the impact that policing has on public health, or an empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of policing-all of which are beyond the scope of this thesis.

**A Call to Action**

Now is the time to seize the opportunity to change our societal landscape by capitalizing on the discourse surrounding policing in the U.S. Understanding that police oppression transcends the boundaries of racism and has a detrimental impact on all civilians is the first crucial step towards developing effective police alternatives in the process of dismantling the prison industrial complex. It is up to us as members of a democratic nation to reclaim the powers of public safety from the state organizations that have abused it to maintain larger systems of control. I acknowledge the breadth, difficulties, and complexities that would accompany the abolition of police in the U.S., however, I am more concerned about the consequences of allowing history to repeat itself.

Although the theoretical and pragmatic work regarding police abolition is in its foundational stages, the work towards prison abolition has been well under way. I encourage all prison abolitionists to begin placing a greater emphasis on the role of policing in mass incarceration so that we can work to effectively develop solutions. In terms of the public, the responsibilities of removing and replacing oppressive organizations falls upon all our shoulders. Silence is consent. The injustices perpetuated by the policing organization can be prevented if we choose to make the necessary changes. I urge communities to establish grassroot programs or implement existing programs that focus on the notion of police abolition. For example, the
“Know Your Rights” campaign has been developed by the American Civil Liberties Union and it provides educational tools and information directly addressing the issues of policing in the U.S. The resources provided by this campaign can be incorporated into a larger community discussions or workshops to allow people to evaluate their local police departments. Whatever the engagement may be, I recommend utilizing existing resources so that all conversations can begin from a place of knowledge, rather than emotions or ignorance.


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