FROM STALWART SEGREGATION TO RELUCTANT MODERATION:
RACIAL BOUNDARY-WORK AND THE PROCESS OF STATE RESPONSE

by

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ABSTRACT

States maintain order through the production and maintenance of classification systems that divide groups of people through boundaries, intentionally or inadvertently. The successful continuation of this boundary-work depends on the maintenance of state domination and hegemony. However, hegemony is always susceptible to challenge, and domination is a costly way to maintain power in a democratic system. In a case study of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, this research asks how the boundary-work of political elites, as a sense-making process meant to ensure order, was initiated, maintained, and altered during a crisis of racial hegemony. I examine how this organization, formed in 1956 by the Mississippi legislature to protect state sovereignty and segregation, transformed itself from an agency obsessed with the maintenance of a racial boundary to one committed to racial moderation. I also ask how the process through which the Commission responded to a crisis in racial hegemony informs our understanding of how elites accommodate change to stay in power. Files from the Sovereignty Commission regarding public relations and investigations are analyzed to understand the publicly visible and privately hidden strategies of the organization. Particular attention is paid to the discourse of these files, which provides insight into how cultural schemas are related to response. The analysis shows that a context of multiple audiences, and lack of full sovereignty, makes domination costly and the generation of consent complicated. White political elites lost the battle to maintain segregation, but ultimately retained power through the transformation of mutually constituting schemas and resources that composed the racial boundary between blacks and whites.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In 1956, the Mississippi legislature, embattled by the Brown v. Board of Education ruling which declared school segregation unconstitutional, formed the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission by granting it the power "do and perform any and all acts and things deemed necessary and proper to protect the sovereignty of the State of Mississippi." Over the course of the organization's first meetings, the broad powers granted in this mandate would be funneled primarily into a public relations program and an investigative program. And in divvying up its biennial budget from the legislature over the next ten years, the Sovereignty Commission would consistently grant more money to its public relations program, which eventually sold multiple "messages from Mississippi" to both non-southern and local audiences.

In one of the first pamphlets aimed at explaining the necessity of segregation to the non-southern audience, the Commission included the words of former President Abraham Lincoln. The pamphlet, "Mississippi is Educating Without Integrating," noted that "The Great Emancipator" had once told a crowd of 500 African-Americans in 1862:

"You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. Whether it be right or wrong, I need not discuss; but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both. Your race suffers by living among us, while ours suffers from your presence. In a word, we suffer on each side. If this be admitted, it affords a reason, at least, why we should be separated."

Lincoln's words were used to support the following claim:

1 Mississippi House of Representatives Bill No. 880
2 "Mississippi is Educating Without Integrating," 1960, SCR (Sovereignty Commission Record) # 99-139-0-3-1-1-1 to 5-1-1, p. 5
The heavy ratio of Negro population to whites in Mississippi—42 to 58 percent—has inspired a social system of segregation under which both races make progress without forced associations which might create suspicion and chaos and retard the progress now being made.3

Almost one hundred years apart, very similar claims were made by white political elites who classified two categories of people as inherently different, justifying a social system of racial boundaries that would supposedly engender tolerance, order, and progress. These claims powerfully illustrate the fact that states and their actors have the authority to classify and order the social world in a process that typically produces “freedoms” for some and “unfreedoms” for others (Scott 1998:7; Foucault 1977). However, hegemonic systems of classification, as structures that govern social practices, are never safe from disruption and change (Douglas 1986; Gramsci 1999 [1971]; Sewell 1992, 1996; Scott 1990). Though the Sovereignty Commission began its work with the stalwart defense of segregation exemplified by the above quotes, it reluctantly came to support moderation in both its public message and its private actions. While this change was largely determined by the broader political context, the process through which the organization responded to challenges shows how white political elites retained power through the transformation of mutually constituting schemas and resources that composed the racial boundary.

During segregation, cultural schemas and material resources (Sewell 1992: 13) simultaneously made sense of the black and white boundary as one of inherent difference and “validated” that boundary through the differential “accumulation of resources” that privileged whites and disadvantaged blacks. By the mid-1950s, when the Sovereignty Commission was created, southern states had long-relied on systems of racial

3 Ibid.
classification to justify the division of blacks and whites, both conceptually and materially. White political elites in the South controlled the schemas that made sense of the boundary, “[determined] which persons and groups [had] access to which resources, and …[adjudicated] conflicts that [arose] in the course of action” (Sewell 1996: 842).

When the Supreme Court issued Brown, “white Mississippians … developed a siege mentality so pervasive it encompassed virtually every citizen and institution” (Dittmer 1994: 58). In an effort to retain the boundary that was interlocking with the white state structure, Mississippi created the Sovereignty Commission. Though the Commission ultimately lost the battle to maintain segregation, the state largely won the war by reconstructing power, and the racial boundary, through cultural “repair-work” in a way that allowed white political elites to survive. This process is explained through an analysis of the Sovereignty Commission’s public and private discourse and actions, showing that a context of multiple audiences, and lack of full sovereignty, makes domination costly and the generation of consent complicated.

Coercion, Hegemony, and Boundary-work

Domination is always a costly way to maintain rule, while hegemony is the most efficient way to ensure legitimate power (Gramsci 1999 [1971]). In other words, state power is more legitimate if those who are subordinate do “not develop political consciousness of their own subordination or of broader political inequalities” (Gaventa 1980: 18), because their thoughts are actually “[influenced, shaped, or determined]” by the dominant group (Lukes 1974: 23). Seemingly in contrast with its historical image as a violent and coercive place, Mississippi actually had fewer Jim Crow laws in
comparison to other Southern states. Historian Neil McMillen (1989) attributes this fact to the power of custom and the confidence of whites in the everyday enforcement of ritualistic black deferment to whites (also see Oshinsky 1996). Although Mississippi was a place where blacks often feared violent repercussions for any apparent challenge to the system of segregation, it was also a place where white powerholders relied on hegemony to perpetuate their power. In other words, rather than depend solely on state-mandated coercion to maintain segregation, white powerholders also predominately relied on the “acceptance by the ruled of a ‘conception of the world’ which belongs to the rulers” (Fiori quoted in Carnoy 1984: page). White powerholders took for granted that their legitimacy would be maintained with continued support from local blacks of a way of life that separated the two races in both material and conceptual ways.

Yet, hegemony is always “rife with contradictions and subject to struggle” (Carnoy 1984: 70; see also Scott 1990). The Brown ruling and the burgeoning civil rights movement effectively challenged the hegemony of white segregationists in Mississippi. Gramsci wrote that such a crisis of hegemony:

\[
\text{\ldots occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses\ldots or because huge masses\ldots have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to revolution. A ‘crisis of authority’ is spoken of: this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or general crisis of the State [1999 (1971): 210].}
\]

The “hidden” resistance of local blacks surfaced, as they began to publicly voice opposition to the racial boundary that had produced their subordination (Scott 1990).

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4 For an excellent, thorough history of the Jim Crow system and its impact on race relations in Mississippi, see McMillen (1989).
According to Gramsci’s theory of the state, such a crisis should be met with coercion, or acts of domination that repress contestation. If this is the case, why then did Mississippi, deeply entrenched in protecting the hegemonic order that ensured continued white domination, primarily respond with legal measures and the creation of an agency committed to public relations work? To answer this question, we must challenge an Gramsci’s assumption that domination equals sovereignty. In other words, polities are often constrained in the exercise of power. Even nation-states may be persuaded to alter policies and practices if pressured by international public opinion (Dudziak 2000). Therefore, assumptions about the unqualified nature of domination have led to a limited understanding of how elites respond to political challenges.

Accordingly, Mississippi’s response to challenge was shaped by a variety of forces. The conservative white political elites who ruled Mississippi were first beholden to local white segregationists, but also faced the threat of intervention from the federal government. In addition, political elites sought to win the support of both the non-southern public and local conservative blacks. Finally, the white powerholders of Mississippi wanted to suppress growing insurgency within the state among local blacks and send a message to moderate whites that sympathy for the resistance was futile. In the changing context of these multiple pressures, the relevance of audiences shifted as the federal government increased its coercive power and moderate whites questioned continued insistence on segregation for economic progress. The Commission ultimately condemned its initial allies—the local white segregationists—in support of a more accommodationist stance and an alliance with moderate white business elites.
State response to a weakening or a crisis of hegemony is shaped not only by multiple audiences, but also by the fact that powerholders' "[conceptions] of the world" are fundamentally being contested. Challenges to segregation during the civil rights movement targeted the racial boundary that defined and supported the rule of white political elites. Thus, challengers sought to change the distribution of resources, like voting rights or public restrooms, but they also rejected consent to cultural schemas that legitimated white power. Put differently, as local insurgency and federal intervention effectively challenged inequities in resource distribution, they also challenged the meanings embodied in those inequities. The goal of the Sovereignty Commission was to preserve white control of resources, as well as the schemas that were supported by and embedded in those resources. Ultimately, the Commission engaged in boundary-work to defend, and then embed, the racial boundary in more legitimate schema, ensuring continued white privilege and political power.

Ideological strategies were therefore privileged over coercive ones in Mississippi's process of response, because the overarching goal was to protect the sense-making process of a cultural nature that legitimated the white power structure. Reflecting on the vetoing of Sovereignty Commission funding in 1973, Erle Johnston, a long-time leader of the organization, said: "...by 1973 it wasn't fashionable to crack the whip over blacks. 1967 was the last racist campaign we had."\textsuperscript{5} Whereas politicians had to publicly support segregation to be elected for office in 1956, less than twenty years later this practice had become taboo, "unfashionable". Thus, changing institutional rules (Olick

\textsuperscript{5} Erle Johnson Oral History, Mississippi Oral History Program, Volume 276, Part II, 1993, p.83. McCain Library, University of Southern Mississippi.)
and Levy 1997: 923; also see Skrentny 1996), initiated in a context of multiple relevant audiences, constrained the sense-making process of white powerholders.

What do we know about how political elites respond to these changing rules, eventually modifying discourse and response? Gramsci's theory of the state recognizes that to change the dominant group's hegemony, the masses have to develop a counter-hegemony (1999 [1971]: 5-15, 210-211, 229-235). While blacks did not completely overthrow white powerholders, they did develop a counter-hegemony and indigenous organizations that, in concert with federal intervention, forced white powerholders to change their way of making sense of the social order; white political elites actually began to promote reluctant racial moderation. Gramsci's work focuses on the steps through which challengers develop a counter-hegemony, yet he tells us little about the process through which elites defend their position. In a state of crisis, elites try to maintain hegemonic position—beyond coercion—by controlling, or at least re-defining, the sense-making process in their own terms. If we only focus on the coercive qualities of response, we miss how states engage in this sense-making process. Analysis of discourse, both of the public and private spheres of response, answers lingering theoretical questions about the state, repression, and contestation.

Scholars have found that new cultural tools generated by social movements have the ability to generate material and cultural change, but what happens to the cultural schemas that inform dominant group action once challenges arise? What happens as institutional rules and resource distribution change and challenging forces present new "sense-making processes" (Spillman 2002)? Do political elites exhibit evidence, in their
own sense-making process, that their cultural schemas have been altered? Does the 
group that so often has the power to assert boundaries change? If so, how and why? One 
way to investigate this question is to ask how boundary-work is managed by elites during 
periods of contestation, both publicly and privately. This approach engenders an 
understanding of how states “see” (Scott 1998) once their systems of classification, 
sustained through hegemony, are challenged.

Because it would have been too costly for governmental legitimacy to defend 
segregation through overt coercion, Mississippi chose another path of defense by creating 
the Sovereignty Commission, which engaged in both coercive and ideological strategies. 
However, the process of response was altered over time as the Commission tried to 
maneuver between the conflicting demands of recalcitrant whites within the state and 
other audiences who supported conformity to federal decisions. Because the Sovereignty 
Commission was trying to maintain consent from below and from above, it engaged in 
racial boundary-work, or the articulation and defense of racial boundaries. In what was 
essentially cultural repair-work, white polities elites embedded the racial boundary in 
more amenable cultural schemas, like sovereignty, justice, and individual rights. To 
retain political power, white political elites altered once explicitly racist boundary-work 
to legitimate continued patterns of segregated resources and relationships.

*From Stalwart Segregation to Reluctant Moderation*

Once the civil rights movement and the federal government initiated a challenge 
to the racial boundary that undergirded the political power of southern whites, resistance 
intensified in multiple arenas and forms. Law enforcement officers across the South
responded with arrests, beatings, and fire hoses, and private segregationist groups responded with economic coercion, burning crosses, and firebombs. The state legislature of Mississippi responded with the Sovereignty Commission, the first organization to frame its defense of segregation in a defense of sovereignty (Katagiri 2001). In context of the historical changes that were taking place, this organization seemed doomed to fail, although its creators, supporters, and employees long-resisted acknowledgement that complete success was a fantasy. I argue above that the fate of the organization, as overdetermined by the rapidly changing political context, is less important than what the process of Commission response tells us about theories of hegemony, the state, and race. Below, I suggest that the story of how the Sovereignty Commission transformed itself in the process of response, becoming increasingly aware of its losing position in the battle, is an interesting empirical puzzle, related to the theoretical issues previewed in this chapter, but also worthy of brief attention for its own sake.

Until the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission files were opened in 1998 (they were sealed in 1977), the organization was typically little more than a passing reference in studies of the Civil Rights Movement. In James Silver’s 1963 accounting of Mississippi’s repressive political climate, aptly titled The Closed Society, the Commission is characterized as “a sanctioning structure of society that is advantageous to those in control” (8). Silver’s information about the Commission came primarily from newspaper accounts and from stories of personal attacks by the organization on those who challenged segregation and the state actors who supported it. Little information was available about the range of Commission strategies, although it was positioned alongside
other segregationist defenders, like the White Citizens Councils, as an organization that reminded dissenters, black and white, of "the advisability of keeping [their mouths] shut" (151). Only five years after Silver characterized the Commission as an agent of a "police state" (1963: 151), a local journalist who leaned to the political left commented on one of the "best kept secrets of the Mississippi state government"—the new role of the Commission in "establishing racial communications and smoothly instituting changes in racial patterns". In a span of only five years, did the Sovereignty Commission transform itself from an agency obsessed with the maintenance of racial boundaries to one committed to reconciliation? Did the state so easily alter its system of order, such that racial boundaries were no longer relevant? In the chapters that follow, I describe in more detail how these changes developed.

**Overview of the Chapters**

Chapter Two will develop the theoretical background for this project and more clearly identify the theoretical contributions. It begins by posing the formation of the Sovereignty Commission as a strange response: why, when faced with challenges to racial boundaries that supported white political power, did the state of Mississippi respond with the creation of an organization whose activities were largely composed of non-coercive activities? Gramsci’s theory of the state and Tilly’s theory of boundary-work are combined to make sense of the Commission’s strategies of response as shaped by multiple audiences and changing rules of legitimacy.

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Chapter Three provides an overview of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission and situates it within the local political culture. The organization was hailed as a pioneer by other southern states during the Civil Rights Movement. Formed in 1956, it engaged in public relations and investigations to protect racial boundaries and states rights until continuous funding was vetoed in 1973. Through both of these programs, the state made claims regarding segregation and sovereignty, although this process changed over time as the institutional rules of legitimacy changed.

To explain the organization’s role as a state project, I describe the Commission’s history from its conception to its dissolution. As a state tool in the fight to maintain segregation, the Commission had direct ties to the gubernatorial administration and state legislature. The Commission was formed and funded by the legislature, and the governor was officially in charge, although there was an appointed director. Complicating the Commission’s position as a state organization was its close ties to non-state groups, like the White Citizen’s Councils. This relationship was strained over time in both directions by the difficulty of maintaining legitimacy with multiple audiences as a governmental body and as an organization committed to the preservation of a racial boundary.

Chapter Four marks the beginning of this project’s empirical analysis in an examination of the Commission’s public discourse. James Scott (1990), in his study of resistance to hegemony by oppressed groups, briefly notes that dominant groups must engage in public performances to maintain their legitimate claim to power. As a state actor, the Sovereignty Commission worked to produce public relations material that would justify a defense of racial boundaries to a wider audience that grew increasingly
critical of segregation. This chapter examines the public transcript of discursive response that was issued by the state during the Civil Rights Movement to contest challenges to the racial boundary. Speaking to both local and national audiences, the Commission drew on a range of cultural schemas to win and retain hegemonic support of the racial boundary that was intertwined with the white state structure. In this chapter, I chart the use of these schemas, noting changes over time and the forces responsible for those changes. Because it had to account to and for different audiences, the Commission’s public discourse blended seemingly incongruous cultural schemas to make sense of segregation, states rights, and governmental legitimacy in the same breath. Additionally, one section of this chapter discusses the Commission’s relationship with conservative African-Americans within the state and the distribution of their material. This aspect of state response indicates the lengths to which this state reached to support the public image of an oppressed group’s collusion in hegemonic white power.

In addition to carrying out a public relations program, the Commission also worked behind-the-scenes to manage and defend the racial boundary. The files of this organization reveal how investigators monitored threats to the racial order in order to preserve segregation and hopefully undermine the movement. Omi and Winant (1994) note that before a black collective identity was forged with the movement, blacks often avoided “white intrusion and surveillance” by masking themselves with public transcripts of acquiescence and loyalty (Scott 1990: 100). With the public revelation of contestation, the state used the Commission to monitor challenges to white hegemony. Stories and visual images of the Civil Rights Movement portray how Southern governments managed
public displays of power by giving speeches that insisted on the legitimacy of states’
rights or by standing in the doorways of schools to prevent integration. Chapters Five
and Six offer analyses of the less visible actions of the Mississippi government that took
Commission investigators behind-the-scenes to monitor boundary violations, compile
information, and attempt to undermine the movement. They also enable a comparison
between how boundaries are managed by dominant groups in both the public and private
sphere.

Chapter Five, in an analysis of a selective sample of county-level investigations,
analyzes how the recognition and investigation of boundary violations varied across
locations. A Microsoft Access database was created for the coding of descriptive and
textual data regarding boundary definition and defense over time. Data from a selective
sample of sixteen counties are analyzed to determine how racial boundary violations were
defined over time, how players in the contest were evaluated by white political elites, and
how the racial situation in each county was assessed. The selective sample of counties
accounts for the character of boundary-work, and of state response, as a function of both
movement strength and the level of white violence. Therefore, analysis over time
indicates whether state was more responsive to violence or to the movement, the force
that continually challenged segregation. I also sort investigative actions according to the
typology of boundary violations identified in the previous chapter to better account for
the mechanisms that motivated action. I find that contrary to the typical perception that
repression is a visible, knee jerk response intended to undermine challenges, political
elites have more complicated responses. Constrained by the need to maintain legitimacy
with multiple audiences, political elites responded not just to challenges to political authority, but to cultural authority as well. Especially when trying to preserve systems of contested meaning, authority structures might resort to more covert forms of control, guided by their own blind commitment to preserving a culturally ingrained way of life.

Using the same selective sample of county-level investigations as in the above chapter, Chapter Six examines how white powerholders used discursive strategies of condemnation and commendation to defend racial boundaries. It also asks whether and why cracks came to exist in these strategies and what this tells us about the mechanisms through which racial boundaries are activated, challenged, and altered. Additionally, this chapter focuses on how discursive strategies reinforced or challenged the “cultural membership” of whiteness.

Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings, but also turns to larger questions regarding Sovereignty Commission significance. Did the Sovereignty Commission fulfill any of its goals, although it failed to halt integration or “encroachment,” or was the organization ultimately extraneous? How does this study further our understanding of how governments manage racial boundaries, during disruption or during stasis? Finally, what does this case suggest as a response to the question: Do movements matter?

Ultimately, this case tells a story about boundaries between black and white, between state sovereignty and federal intervention, between justice and injustice, between order and disorder, and between change and resistance. This is a story about how cultural schemas are articulated and altered in a process of boundary-work to ultimately retain political power and resource control. In addition, it is a story of how boundary-work is
constrained by multiple audiences and legitimacy struggles. While sociologists have attended to questions of how boundaries are reproduced at the micro-level in human interactions and at the state level through policy-making, they have paid less attention to how boundaries are challenged, defended, and altered in the response of political elites to a crisis of hegemony.
CHAPTER 2
COSTLY COERCION, COMPlicated HEgemony

The civil rights literature establishes Mississippi as the southern state that was most difficult to penetrate and organize (Andrews forthcoming; McAdam 1986; McMillen 1989). Fearful of reprisals, local blacks were extremely hesitant to challenge white political, economic, and social domination. When they did, they often lost their jobs, their homes, and sometimes, their lives. Accordingly, the historical legacy of Mississippi has become its racist, violent past. Studies of the civil rights movement attest to the lasting effects of direct, overt repression on the mobilization of activism and outcomes of the movement (Andrews forthcoming; Barkan 1984). However, it is equally important to recognize that not just violence was used to keep blacks subordinate. The cultural code so strongly mandated black subservience to whites that the state had fewer Jim Crow laws than other southern states. This suggests that beyond violent coercion and legal regulation, a hegemonic order made white domination and black submission common-sense. Thus, in examining the case of how political elites responded to contestation, it is important to think about how they tried to preserve both dominance and hegemony.

The case of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission suggests that the story of contestation and repression is more complex than the dominant narrative of “movements act, states respond”. If the Sovereignty Commission is simply understood as a repressive force that made collective action more risky (Tilly 1978), either as a cog in the machine of direct movement repression, or as a handmaiden of non-state
segregationist organizations, like the White Citizens Councils (Luders 2001), the complexity of state response is undertheorized, particularly on a cultural level.

Contrary to what we might expect from Gramsci’s theory of the state, Mississippi’s political elites, acting in their role as members of the government, did not respond solely with direct coercion once hegemony became weakened and contested. In an assessment of Gramsci’s theory of the state, Carnoy (1984: 76) writes:

Without power (control) in the arena of struggle over consciousness, Gramsci argues, the bourgeoisie will try to fall back on the coercive power of the State as its primary instrument of domination. Otherwise, coercive forces remain in the background, acting as a system of enforcement and threat but not overt coercion.

Why didn’t the state respond predominantly with overt coercion once challenges became visible and sustained? As the federal government began to hand down favorable integration decisions and the civil rights movement began to build, the Mississippi legislature answered with the Sovereignty Commission. In a sense, the government did not have the structural or cultural capacity to deal with the threat of desegregation. As long as resistance had been sporadic and ignored by the federal government, coercive responses worked. Yet once challenges became sustained and supported by powerful third parties, coercion became more costly. Like many powerholders, political elites in Mississippi were not sovereign, but were significantly constrained in their choices by subordination to the federal government. This empirical fact challenges Gramsci’s assumption that sovereignty accompanies domination. Coercion is always an expensive way to maintain power, but it is particularly so when coercion increases the risk of intervention from above.

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7 Thanks to Mitchell Stevens and Philip Klinkner for making this point.
Second, focusing only on how states respond with coercion to challenges ignores the fact that powerholders are vested in a defense of hegemony. In fact, Mississippi segregationist powerholders refused to acknowledge that their way of making sense of the world through a racial boundary was effectively contested from below. While the state could do little to resist federal intervention, its powerholders, entrenched in their defense of hegemony, were unwilling to recognize or acknowledge that local blacks were actively involved in resisting the segregationist racial hegemony. Thus, the organization engaged in boundary-work to maintain segregation, but this cultural work of sense-making was often in conflict with the need to maintain legitimacy with multiple audiences. I argue that the presence of relevant multiple audiences generated legitimacy struggles for the Sovereignty Commission, complicating its boundary-work. Therefore, the Commission drew from multiple cultural schemas that were often incongruous to protect white political power and resource control.

*The Process of Response: Hegemony and Coercion*

When confronted with the challenges that threatened the distribution of resources along racial lines, Mississippi began to require that voter registration applicants interpret a section of the state constitution, granting county registrars discretion in judging applicants, typically to judge black applicants ineligible (Dittmer 1994: 53). The state also passed an amendment to counter the mandate of desegregation; schools could be abolished rather than desegregated. A "breach of the peace" statute enacted by the law also imposed penalties on anyone "disobedient" to the laws, traditions, and customs of the state (Dittmer 1994: 59). Mississippi had already created a School Equalization
Program in anticipation of the *Brown* decision, designating a significant amount of state funding to the improvement of black educational facilities and programs for the purpose of maintaining separate, but at least more equal, facilities (Katagiri 2001). And in early 1956, the legislature also approved the Interposition Resolution, which officially declared the government’s intention to ignore the Supreme Court rulings. Thus, as the first visible threat to white hegemony was issued, the state of Mississippi initially responded with legal acts as an exercise in power (Gaventa 1980; Gramsci 1999 [1971]; Lukes 1974). Rather than coercively moving in a proactive way to silence dissenters, the state established legal measures of domination—not as coercive as violence, but not as subtly hegemonic as consent. This suggests that once dissension becomes visible, democratic polities are hard-pressed to respond with coercion, contrary to what we would expect from the work of Gramsci (1999 [1971]) and Scott (1990), who assume that domination equals sovereignty. This assumption misses the complexity of how political bodies respond when they are both superordinate and subordinate and suggests the need to acknowledge that multiple relevant audiences affect response. In such a context, the legitimate exercise of domination becomes even more costly, and the maintenance of hegemony, more complicated.

Subordinate to the federal government and superordinate to its citizens, Mississippi lacked full sovereignty, and thus lacked full authority over coercion as an instrument of domination. Accordingly, the crisis of white hegemony was not just caused by contestation from below, but also by contestation from above. This context helps to
explain why the Commission shied away from directly coercive strategies, but instead focused on strategies that might retain hegemony.

To carry out the Commission’s mandate to protect sovereignty and segregation, board members created two primary channels of response: public relations work and investigations. This decision can be explained by considering and extending Scott’s (1990) work on domination and subordination. The public relations program functioned as the public transcript of the Commission, intentionally constructed to project a “self-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen” (Scott 1990: 18). In Gramsci’s terms, the public relations program can be considered the strategy through which white political elites tried to maintain control over cultural, sense-making processes. What Scott misses in his analysis of domination is the importance of the private transcripts for elites, which we fortunately gain access to through the files of the Sovereignty Commission’s investigative actions. The decision by Commission board members to employ investigative strategies implies that they were aware that threats existed to hegemonic control. Investigative actions and other backstage work, kept hidden from public scrutiny, performed the double duty of sustaining an elite perception of hegemony and hiding the contradiction that elites were not entirely confident in its continuation, symbolized in the very act of monitoring threats. This entire process was undertaken to defend and reconstitute the racial boundary (Sewell 1996) in relations and patterns of action outside of formal state institutions. In other words, the actions of these two transcripts were undertaken to manage legitimacy struggles engendered by relevant, divergent audiences.
The actions of the Sovereignty Commission were not only complicated by the threat of intervention from above and the need to maintain consent from below, but they were also affected by other relevant audiences. The local audience, over which the Mississippi government had relative control, was not coherent. In the beginning, the Sovereignty Commission, as an agent of the state, sought to suppress insurgency from local blacks and moderate whites, secure assent from the non-southern public that a racial boundary was a necessity, and gain support from local conservative blacks and white segregationists, allies in the battle to retain segregation. Thus, to varying degrees, Mississippi relied on relations and patterns of action outside of its formal state structure to maintain both domination and hegemony. However, the nature of one major alliance shifted. White segregationist groups, the audience that ultimately was responsible for the Commission’s creation, became expensive allies, because their own coercive strategies legitimated federal intervention and threatened economic progress within the state. Consequently, the Commission “cooled-off” this audience and allied itself with another, once an indirect target of suppression tactics—white moderates.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the context in which the Sovereignty Commission had to negotiate response to retain control of the racial boundary that structured white hegemony and power. The Sovereignty Commission, as the locus through which response was issued, is located in the center. The arrows indicate the direction of coercive or ideological strategies. The italicized labels next to the arrows indicate the general response strategy enacted toward (or executed from) the particular audience, located at the opposite end of the arrow. Italicized labels on either side of both local white
segregationists and local moderates illustrate the changing strategies enacted in relation to these two groups.

Figure 2.1: Relations and Patterns of Actions in the Process State Response

While the diagram illustrates the relations and patterns of actions that constituted the process of state response, it does not clearly relate these actions to Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. The state of Mississippi did not avoid coercion from above, and it did not entirely abandon actions that attempted domination of insurgency within the state. In other words, while the Commission did not only practice coercion, it also did not limit its response to strategies that might retain hegemony. Thus, Table 2.1 classifies the patterns of Commission action in a typology of strategy types. Again, the shifting strategies taken toward local white audiences is indicated by arrows.
Table 2.1: Classification of Sovereignty Commission Strategies by Audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coercive</th>
<th>Ideological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suppression of movement challenges</td>
<td>Enrollment of local black conservatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dampening of local white segregationists ← Support from local white segregationists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dampening of local white moderates → Reassurance of local white moderates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Imposed by federal government)</td>
<td>Seek support from national audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, it is important to recognize that coercion is costly because political bodies often lack sovereignty and respond to crises in a context of audiences characterized by shifting relevance and divergent needs; this context, in turn, shapes the use of responsive actions. Additionally, this context shapes the cultural work of response, which must be examined if the state is defined as a "synthesis of consent and coercion" (Carnoy 1984:73). In other words, if a major function of states is to maintain not only control over domination, but also over sense-making processes, then we know little about how this function informs response to crises of hegemony. Thus, the study of state response benefits from an analysis of not only the strategies powerholders pursue to answer challenges, but also of the discourse articulated in the cultural work of response.

*Hegemony, Sense-making, and Boundary-Work*

The cultural work of political elites in response to threats can be conceptualized as "processes of sense-making" engaged in to maintain power (Spillman 2002:1). States always engage in sense-making work, typically to "reinforce—or at least sustain—existing categories of inequality" (Tilly 1998: 203). In particular, states seek control by imposing legibility, or classification schemes, as "the practices of rule seek to transform
the world to fit the categories" (Clemens and Cook 1999: 454). Clemens and Cook (1999: 454) suggest that a critical question to answer in regard to such practices is whether they "enhance or undermine" hegemonic control and the continuation of power.

To unpack the above paragraph and begin to answer the question of how the Commission's response speaks to the issues raised within, let us turn to the relevance of boundary-work for the maintenance of power and hegemony. Classification schemes imposed by states to institute and maintain order, and to control meaning, are often based in the construction of oppositional categories, which are marked by boundaries (Foucault 1978, 1977; Tilly 1998; Bourdieu 1984; DiMaggio 1997). The maintenance of these boundaries is important for the sustenance of state power because they may serve to legitimate inequality, define social relations, and allot resources. For example, theories of the welfare state have shown that policies sort the poor into categories through two primary mechanisms of boundary-work: first by directly classifying and disadvantaging groups (Boris 1995; Naples 1997) and second, by building policies around an ideal type of individual and therefore excluding "non-ideal" types of people (Fraser and Gordon 1994; Orloff 1994). Often, such policies have reinforced boundaries that separate categories of race and gender (Little 1999; Naples 1997; Quadagno 1994). For example, southern politicians used their political power to prevent black laborers from receiving Social Security benefits under President Roosevelt (Quadagno 1988). White politicians retained local control of how federal resources were allocated, and the boundary between white and black ensured that blacks would not gain equal material rights. In short, boundary-work is composed of intentional or inadvertent (Tilly 1998) actions undertaken
to define group categories and identities, organize interactions, and allocate material resources. Because boundaries "govern practices" and are composed of interlocking cultural schemas, resource distribution, and modes of power, they can be seen as structures (Sewell 1996: 842).

These works recognize that while states have power to define the meaning of racial boundaries and categories of people, social groups are not stick figures that always line up to play their designated roles (i.e. see Nagel 1986). Once challenges to unequal categories are visible, states respond by trying to defend and maintain the boundaries that define them. Accordingly, the Sovereignty Commission acted to defend the hegemonic rules that "made sense" of racial boundaries by issuing public messages to different audiences and by evaluating players in backstage actions. Thus, even though the eventual fate of the Commission was largely determined by the wider political context, the process through which it managed contestation and engaged in boundary-work is important for understanding how political elites defend and maintain power.

Recent studies in political sociology and social movements have paid much attention to the cultural work of states, as well as of their opposition. While movements often seek to gain access to the political system or material rights and resources (Andrews 1997, 2001; McAdam 1982), Gamson (1988: 219) notes that movements also invoke struggles over legitimacy, culture, and "official myths and metaphors." Movements challenge the hegemonic order, making public their resistance to dominant cultural norms and beliefs (Scott 1990; Steinberg 1999). Social movement scholars have increasingly explored how counter-hegemonic ideologies and cultural rules are created in the process
of collective action, with particular attention to discourse, frames, and claim-making (for example, see Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, and Rucht 2002; Steinberg 1999; Babb 1996; Ellingson 1995). Yet, comparatively little attention is given to how elites perceive challenges and how their sense-making process unfolds during contestation. Edelman (1988; 1977; 1964) has thoroughly explored the symbolic power of discourse, but his focus is largely on how control is imposed through elite discourse, rather than on the fact that contestation does occur, forcing elites to defend their “symbolic politics”. In the task of thinking about the process of contention, it is equally important to understand how the process of response unfolds in the discursive arena of political elites, where taken-for-granted cultural rules inform action (Skrentny 1996). There, in the language of authority structures, we find that the construction, defense, and alteration of boundaries are informed by cultural meaning.

Most research that examines either the classification work of states, or the contestation of meaning that arises in response to the state’s stucturation and enforcement of “a racially unjust social order” (Omi and Winant 1994: 78; see also Tilly 1998), turns to some form of discourse analysis, although approaches vary greatly, lacking uniformity in the definition of concepts and methodological approaches. A general rule seems to be that discourse, however defined, is a cultural symbol that embodies meaning (Swidler 1986; Griswold 1987). But depending on subject matter, an author's theoretical tradition,
or research goals, this discourse might be analyzed as frames, scripts, and/or schemata, which may be seen to represent culture, ideology, and/or hegemony.8

Scholars who focus on the cultural work of social movements, or on the contestation of cultural work between challengers, opponents, or events, often conceptualize discourse as frames (for example, see Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 1986; Babb 1996; Ellingson 1995). Others follow a similar path, but criticize the concept of frames as problematic for multiple reasons (Steinberg 1999). Johnston (2002: 64), in trying to distinguish between frame and discourse analysis, simultaneously defines a frame as a script and a schema, which in this case means that frames are “hierarchically organized.” Babb (1996: 1034) summarizes typical definitions of frames by calling them “interpretive devices that people use to make sense of the raw data of experience...frames render events meaningful and thereby serve as a basis for collective action.” Most scholars seem to view frames as a cultural resource, but they specifically regard them as ideological tools, or parts of “articulated, self-conscious belief and ritual [systems], aspiring to offer a unified answer to the problems of social action” (Swidler 2001: 96).

In my research, conceptualizing the sense-making work of political elites as framing was not a suitable choice. Political elites did not engage in framing in the same sense that movement actors do; they were not punctuating ideas and ignoring others to interactively construct an ideology that would motivate people to act. While this is certainly a part of how sense-making played a role, in the sense that “ideology comes into

8 For a detailed elaboration of what they see as the difference between culture, hegemony, and ideology, see Platt and Williams (2003).
play when cultural meanings and the structuring of the social world run into trouble”
(Platt and Williams 2003: 333), it did not constitute the whole process of response. The
concept of a frame is limiting for this case, in that it does not do a superior job of
conceptualizing the range of sense-making work engaged in by elites, from constructing a
public message to evaluating players involved in the contest over racial boundaries.
Additionally, frames do not recognize the “transposability” of discourse (Steinberg
1999), which is problematic if a theoretical motivation for studying this case is to
understand how boundary-work either reproduces or undermines the power of political
elites.

Consequently, this work is informed by a more general perspective on cultural
work that is amenable to explaining how sense-making processes are initiated, altered,
and maintained in multiple ways during a crisis of hegemony. Sewell’s (1992)
elaboration of the work of Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1977) offers the clearest
theoretical tools for thinking about elite domination and hegemonic power might be
defended in a sense-making process. Sewell’s (1992: 27) version of structuration theory
holds that, “structures...are constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemas and sets
of resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that
action.” This perspective is useful because it recognizes the “profundely cultural”
(Sewell 1992: 27) nature of structures in the concept of schemas, but also acknowledges
that these “cultural [components are]...embedded in, or sustained by, or enacted through
resources and/or social networks” (Clemens and Cook 1999: 447). In short, the concepts of schema and resources connect the relationship between cultural meaning and the material. Without meaning to inform the material, and without material to give form to meaning, structures cannot endure. I call the strategies used to defend and maintain hegemony “ideological strategies,” since this term denotes that what was once “commonsense” is now contested and therefore articulated (Swidler 2001).

In this research, I will ask how the Sovereignty Commission engaged in sense-making work to sustain mutually reinforcing cultural schemas and resources that together constituted a racial boundary that provided “freedom” for whites and “unfreedoms” for blacks. In the process of response, or cultural repair-work, the Commission drew on the transposable nature of schemas to transform the racial boundary and largely maintain control of resources. Since resources and schemas constitute each other, the forced alteration of resources that embodied the racial boundary translated into a necessary alteration of cultural schemas. In short, the articulation of the racial boundary, composed of both schemas and resources, was altered but not completely discarded. Rather, white political elites linked their continued legitimacy to other cultural schemas that would require as little alteration in the patterns of inequality as possible. Thus, the sense-making processes that white political elites undertook can be largely characterized as boundary-work, in the sense that they engaged in various strategies to maintain the racial boundary that ensured their privilege, from explicit articulation to linking it with more legitimate cultural schemas.

Additionally, DiMaggio (1997:265-269) suggests the term “schema” is the most “useful” way to analyze how culture is used “strategically”.

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9 Additionally, DiMaggio (1997:265-269) suggests the term “schema” is the most “useful” way to analyze how culture is used “strategically”.
As an illustration of the relationship between schemas and rules, consider the following episode from the Sovereignty Commission investigations. In the course of monitoring challenges to segregation and sovereignty, investigators occasionally offered advice to other officials. In January 1964, a state Senator asked one investigator what he thought about the City Board of Marshall County “agreeing to permit the Negroes … to integrate the public library of Holly Springs.” The investigator replied:

I told Senator Yarbrough at the time it was my thinking that when the City Board made concessions to a group of Negroes, other demands would follow from the same group and as far as I was personally concerned, I felt that we should holdfast our way of life until forced to retreat.\(^\text{10}\)

Though the City Board decided to concede to the demand, albeit by removing all seats from the library, this recommendation illustrates the guiding principle of Commission work: maintain segregation. The words “way of life” denote that not only were political elites defending resources (public space), but they were also defending a cultural schema embedded in unequal access to resources. And yet, within the same year, the Commission would advocate granting concessions, transforming the schemas and rules that had legitimated segregation. The broader institutional “rules of the game” (Skrenty 1996: 11; Spillman 1995) changed, largely due to pressure from the federal government and economic concerns. Therefore, the Commission’s discourse and actions show how boundary-work, as a sense-making process, both informed and was shaped by the process of contestation.

\(^{10}\) Investigative Report, January 13, 1964, SSR # 2-20-1-72-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p. 1
State Action and Boundary-Work

How might the relationship between boundary-work and strategies of response be elaborated? A starting point is Tilly’s (1998: 202) description of how states participate in the classification of people into categories:

In principle, we might distinguish between, on the one hand, direct incorporation of unequal categories into state structure and, on the other, state intervention to enforce or alter categorically unequal practices in organizations or arenas falling under the state’s jurisdiction.

In the first strategy, boundaries and inequality are directly built into the state structure. An excellent example of this is described in Burlough and Wipperman’s study of Nazi Germany, the “racial state.” Hitler’s Germany, they argue, was the “first state in world history whose dogma and practice was racism” (1991: 23). Ultimately, Hitler’s actions were guided by his belief that reproduction across races (Aryan and Jewish) would lead to Aryan extinction. The enactment of his beliefs as state policy began in a relative manner by removing non-Aryans from public service and the professions. By 1935, legislation was in place that would categorize Jewish people, setting a blueprint for segregation, discrimination, and ultimately, death. Scott (1998) paints a gruesome picture of how the very technical, modern method of mapping enabled Hitler to physically mark the geographical boundaries that included Jews. Under Hitler, Germany became organized along racial lines through racist state policy. His brutal policy of racial extermination did not appear with one executive order, but was achieved as the culmination of (gradual) policy-making. In a theoretical sense, Hitler and his policymakers constructed racial boundaries and infused them with rather insidious meaning in the guise of modernity and order.
The second strategy discussed by Tilly (1998) describes situations where state policies and mandates indirectly work through organizations, outside the state structure itself, but under state authority, enforce or alter boundaries. Tilly gives the example of the mandate to desegregate public accommodations. In this case, a federal law legislated the alteration of boundaries that separated blacks and whites in public places, like parks and swimming pools. Tilly notes that in reality, there is not a clear divide between the two strategies, since many cases involve elements of both.

It is useful to think about the relationship of boundary-work, as a sense-making process, to Gramsci’s theory of the state. Tilly’s scheme of state boundary-work maps onto Gramsci’s theory effectively. The idea that boundary-work is accomplished through direct state action or mediated through entities, spaces, or organizations under state jurisdiction is comparable to Gramsci’s depiction of two superstructural components of the state: civil society and political society: “These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of ‘hegemony’ which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of ‘direct domination’ or command exercised through the State and ‘juridical’ government” (1999 [1971]: 12). Civil society and political society compose the state, and hegemony is exercised through both levels (Carnoy 1984). Yet, political society has the capacity to exercise coercion as well. Both levels therefore must be integrated in order to maintain hegemony, bolstered with coercion, or the threat of coercion. Thus, the state’s response to contestation involves defending both the dominant culture as well as control over coercion (Weber 1978 [1956]).
Legitimacy of a state is maintained by controlling both hegemony and dominance. Seemingly, strategies of response would be carried out in accordance with this need. However, if the state depends on integration with non-state, allied forces to defend hegemonic boundaries, the legitimacy of the state is threatened if these forces undermine it by treading on political society's monopoly over coercive strategies (Weber 1978 [1956]). As Mississippi's incorporation of unequal categories into its structure broke down and it began to intervene to monitor and enforce the racial boundary, it remained silent regarding the actions of private groups, like the Ku Klux Klan and White Citizens Councils, which used coercive measures to maintain racial hegemony. However, as the actions of these private groups began to threaten Mississippi's legitimacy with the federal government, the non-southern public, and local moderate whites, the Sovereignty Commission shifted from commending their actions to condemning them. Additionally, its own public and private strategies of boundary work, carried out to maintain both domination and hegemony, were affected. Coercion was more costly than maintaining consent from the time integration challenges were issued, but it became more costly over time, even as hegemony was more visibly weakened. The process of boundary-work, therefore, was affected not only by the intervention of federal agents and outside investigators, but also by internal conflicts among elites. This context generated response more complicated than direct repression of movement action.

Table 2.2 illustrates how the combination of Tilly's interpretation of state boundary-work and Gramsci's theory of the state explains the complexity of state response to challenge. Using the case of the Sovereignty Commission, an agency that
resisted association with coercive activities although its mandate provided for the use of broad powers, the table classifies the strategies carried out by the organization to maintain domination and hegemony according to the paths through which states impose, enforce, or alter categories. Each cell will be considered in turn below, briefly describing how the following chapters address each type of strategy.

Table 2.2: Strategies of State Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path of Action</th>
<th>Type of State Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through State Structure</td>
<td>Construction of public messages for non-southern and local audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of challengers and racial groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation with non-state actors</td>
<td>Evaluation of private segregationist groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of relationship with conservative blacks and black press</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the table above suggests that state action was carried out in an attempt to maintain hegemony in relations and patterns of action outside the formal state structure. In Gramsci’s terms, strategies of response were enacted to control sense-making processes of a cultural nature, but also to bolster this hegemonic work through coercion. Concurrently, these strategies were enacted through the Commission as well as in relation to and in concert with actors indirectly tied to the political structure.
The first cell describes how the Sovereignty Commission acted on behalf of the State of Mississippi to directly maintain control over a hegemonic racial order. Return to the example above that details one investigator’s recommendation for how a local government should respond to a challenge. What is significant about the investigator emphatically stating, “we should holdfast to our way of life”? Studies of repression are often largely movement and event-focused, meaning that they examine some aspect of collective action events to explain why and how states respond with coercive measures (i.e., Davenport 1995; McAdam 1982; Tilly 1978; see Cunningham 2003 for recent exception). In their responses to contention, authority structures do more than simply try to quell threats to their political power—and the authority they have in that realm. They also struggle to retain their cultural power (Gaventa 1980; Lukes 1974) and dominant identity (Tilly 1998; Doane 1998). Once contestation is public, authority structures must articulate cultural schemas that may have gone unspoken in their taken-for-grantedness, or at least unreflected upon. As a result, the Sovereignty Commission engaged in strategies not only to control domination, but also to control hegemony over cultural schemas that served whites.

Directly, the Sovereignty Commission defended and sought to reconstitute hegemony in two ways. First, the organization engaged in a well-funded public relations campaign to defend sovereignty and segregation. For the non-southern audience, the Commission engaged in sense-making work by selling a message that segregation was the only solution in a state where the size of the black population was significant. Again, as the rules of legitimaey changed and struggles to maintain power ensued, the content
and audience of the message changed. The public message became less explicitly racist and more inwardly focused, encouraging restraint and moderation over resistance and segregation.

Second, the Commission's investigative documents show that evaluative strategies of commendation and condemnation were used to maintain hegemonic cultural schemas of racial meaning. However, this process changed over time, and boundaries marking oppositional categories were blurred, indicating weakened white hegemony.

These direct actions, undertaken by the Commission, were bolstered by what are typically conceived of as strategies of a coercive nature. Thus, the cell on the top right describes the typical narrative of social movement repression, whereby states directly use coercion to undermine challenge. While this research argues that the process of response is more complex, it is important to recognize that the Sovereignty Commission did carry out coercive, albeit largely covert, actions. Earl (2003) argues that one area of repression research deserving of attention is unobserved, coercive repression. The Commission's actions were at least intended to be covert, although Mississippians and those outside the state knew the Commission existed and that it worked to maintain segregation. However, the recent opening of the organization's files showed that many were unaware that the organization had actually infiltrated movement organizations and engaged in a range of other unobservable, discreetly coercive activities. For example, former activists were upset to learn that local blacks had been on the payroll of the Commission as informants. In addition, Commission reports proudly suggest that the organization played an integral role in the "resignation" of the president of a private, historically black college in
Mississippi who was involved in civil rights activities. Finally, the Commission also filtered information to the local press—black and white—in attempts to discredit movement activists. In short, there is no question that the local-state agency engaged in hidden, coercive activities in an attempt to undermine the civil rights movement. In short, the organization engaged in a range of covert activities in an attempt to damage the civil rights movement and its allies (Marx 1979).

Earl (2003) is correct in asserting that more research on such types of repression is needed for both empirical and theoretical reasons. Unfortunately, evidence is often a problem, as data on unobserved repression is often unavailable. Thus, the opening of the Sovereignty Commission files is interesting in and of itself, for the simple reason that the data are intriguing. Consequently, this organization’s effort at maintaining white political dominance and the status quo will show that the divide between public and private transcripts used to uphold legitimate rule is not always clearly marked (Scott 1990).

The data are also important, because they help elaborate a more complex understanding of the forces that shape strategies of repression. Earl (2003) clearly lays out the common approaches in repression research, and the case of the Sovereignty Commission does not fit simply into any available category. The reason is that this case points to a factor often unacknowledged in typical explanations: multiple audiences, or third parties. Repression is often seen as a knee-jerk reaction by one body to another. What this linear conceptualization misses is that other factors shape repressive strategies as well. For example, Cunningham (2003) argues that the allocation of repressive strategies depends not on characteristics of protesters or of protest events, but on the
nature of the organization responsible for repression. This research argues that beyond organizational characteristics, we must examine how third parties influence strategic choices.

Tilly (1998: 214-215) writes that “the complexity of responses by authorities and objects of claims” to social movements is always complicated by “third parties”.

Certainly, Mississippi saw the civil rights movement as a threat that “required attention”, but the state's response was more complicated. To begin, the Commission was formed in response to Brown, not in response to a strong movement extant within the state, although certainly Commission monitoring increased in response to movement activities. The key point is that the Sovereignty Commission, as an agent of the state of Mississippi, was limited in the repressive strategies it assumed because it was part of a federal system, albeit a system with which it was extremely incensed. Accordingly, the Commission's agents could not legitimately burn crosses in the front yards of white moderates or shoot weapons at blacks who tried to register to vote. The organization could only covertly attempt to undermine the movement. Because these strategies do not fit the visual image that corresponds with the word, “repression,” I use the more general term “state response.” Response almost always happens at multiple levels. But in this case, and in many others, multiple layers of government, law enforcement, and private citizens respond to challenges. This research argues that context is not only important in terms of opportunity structure (McAdam 1982) or organizational form (Cunningham

11 Similarly, third parties often play an important role in helping very powerless groups “leverage the state,” particularly in gaining access to social rights (Strong et al 2000).

12 These multiple layers will be elaborated in future research with Kenneth Andrews.
forthcoming), but also in terms of the presence of multiple relevant audiences. In the chapters that follow, I will show how this factor shaped Commission strategies at more than one level.

Third parties not only constrained direct coercion used by the Commission, but also played a supportive role in the process of defending dominance. Whites who were members of the state legislature, which created the Commission to be an instrument of domination, and whites who were members of private segregationist groups both had the same goal: the maintenance of a racial boundary. Thus, white segregationist groups, which were separate from what Gramsci calls “political society” but also closely tied to it, functioned as “private initiatives...[that tended] to the same end...the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes” (Gramsci 1999 [1971]: 258). As the chapters below will show, the Sovereignty Commission initially had a close, “working” relationship with White Citizens Councils, organizations composed of powerful white citizens that used coercive measures to discourage blacks from challenging hegemonic rules of racial interaction. In addition, the Commission channeled coercive strategies through local officials by providing them with information about challengers and suggestions for how to control disruptions to segregation. Local officials, in turn, could choose to accept or ignore the information and suggestions. However, the filtering of information made the Sovereignty Commission a mediator of repression, one that could not legitimately carry out actions itself, but could distribute coercive measures through local officials.
However, the character of the relationship between the Commission and these groups—private segregationist organizations and local officials—changed over time. Because the rules of governmental legitimacy changed, it became costly for the Commission to support the private groups. It also became costly to suggest that local officials do everything possible to resist change. Thus, strategies of both direct and indirect coercive action were constrained by changing rules of legitimacy.

In its relation to forces outside the state machinery, the Sovereignty Commission also worked to maintain hegemony. First, the Commission’s public message to non-southern audiences was silent regarding the violent coercion of private segregationist groups. In addition, Commission investigators offered praise for counties with strong Citizens Councils in their backstage reports. Such strategies affirmed white identity as the cultural norm by failing to criticize coercive actions, even praising the groups from “civil society” who worked in concert to maintain hegemony. By late 1964, however, the organization was warning local whites to refrain from joining private segregationist groups, because they threatened law and order and prevented progress. Investigators also became critical of organizations that threatened state legitimacy in the investigative documents of the private transcript. Due to changing rules of legitimacy, a constrained Commission became more concerned with protecting order than with defending the boundary that privileged whites and disadvantaged blacks.

The second ideological strategy used to maintain hegemony in relationships outside the state machinery engaged local conservative blacks. While the Commission largely ignored the agency of local blacks involved in protest, it recruited the enrollment
of local conservative blacks in its mission to maintain segregation. In particular, the Commission allied itself with the editors of the state’s major black newspapers, filtering its message through editorials written by black men in support of the racial boundary. This strategy was an attempt to demonstrate, both to national and local audiences, that successful black men supported the continued rule of white elites.

Through these ideological strategies, the Sovereignty Commission engaged in defense and transformation of the boundary between blacks and whites. In this process, the Commission also acted to defend white identity. McAdam (1982) tells us that a key factor in the development of oppositional groups is cognitive liberation, or the formation of a collective conscience that defines “us” as opposed to “them”. Similarly, as hegemony of the dominant group is effectively contested, the dominant group must react through the articulation and defense of its own identity. Doane (1998) argues that whites in the United States essentially have a “hidden ethnicity” that only becomes visible and active when challenged. Thus, whites only assert their ethnicity in reaction to threats from challengers. When activated, white ethnicity involves maintaining the belief that whites have “earned their place” and the right to defend the status quo of social organization (Blee 2002). Consequently, the analysis of how political elites engage in boundary-work is also an analysis of how whiteness, as a political identity (Tilly 1998), is defended.

In short, these strategies of response will explain how boundary-work, as a sense-making process, was initiated, maintained, and altered during Mississippi’s crisis of racial hegemony. This study thus recognizes that elites engage in cultural work when faced
with effective disruption, but more importantly, it shows that the analysis of coercion and hegemony is more complex than previously acknowledged by dominant theoretical explanations. Elites are rarely “unified and unproblematically sovereign,”¹³ rather, they may be constrained by a larger system of governance operating at multiple levels, the nature of their structure, or moral pressure exerted by external audiences. Therefore, if we dismiss the Sovereignty Commission as a coercive instrument of state domination doomed to fail in a wider political context that was rapidly changing, we miss the theoretical value of this case for illustrating the process through which elites accommodate change to stay in power.

¹³ Thanks to Elisabeth Clemens for this nice phrase.
CHAPTER 3
CASE AND METHOD

The creation of the Sovereignty Commission by the Mississippi legislature was justified by citing the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which reads: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people." White political elites in Mississippi argued that the federal government did not have the right to impose desegregation on the school system, which was under state power. Thus, the organization was motivated to protect sovereignty as a cultural schema that allowed for the separation of black and white bodies and the resultant reality of black disadvantage and white privilege. Systems of categorization, and the boundaries that mark them, have consequences, often ones of unequal resource distribution (Tilly 1998; Foucault 1977). The Civil Rights Movement and federal desegregation mandates disrupted the southern system of boundary demarcation in multiple ways, challenging segregation and demanding that southern governments abandon a taken-for-granted way of life (Omi and Winant 1994; Tilly 1998). Thus, the actions and discourse of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission tell us about how states engage in boundary-work as they try to maintain power in a context where external and internal audiences constrain action.

This chapter provides an overview of the Commission as a "critical case" (Snow and Trom 2002) and discusses the methodological approaches of the project. First, I discuss the political culture and history that shaped the creation of the Sovereignty Commission. Next, I describe the organization's formation, characteristics, and general
changes over time. Finally, the methods used to answer the theoretical issues raised in
the previous chapter are introduced.

Political culture and history

Racial boundaries in Mississippi were produced and reproduced over time
through state institutions, violence, legal codes, and symbolic rituals. In the wake of the
Civil War, the racial order was challenged. Hale (1999) argues that during slavery, the
political and legal status of slaves as property supported the belief that blacks were
inferior. In other words, the historical institution of slavery "made" the meaning of
"blackness" (see also Wacquant 2000). After the Civil War, the political and legal status
of slaves was destroyed, and whites were forced to articulate and enact boundaries that
would maintain white superiority as blacks gained temporary positions of political and
economic power (Hale 1999). Whites enforced an informal code of racial meaning
through etiquette and behavior. McMillen (1989) observes that even before Jim Crow
laws were enacted, this code was defined by a particular meaning of race: "Reviled as
inherently dull, servile, and vicious, set apart by habits of mind and social convention that
made skin color the mark of human worth, black Mississippians were Jim Crowed early,
well before a rising tide of extreme racism swept across the state after 1890 (5)."

The depth and power (Sewell 1992) of race as a force structuring human
interactions and institutions in Mississippi is captured by Key's (1949: 229) claim that,
"Northerners, provincials that they are, regard the South as one large Mississippi.
Southerners, with their eye for distinction, place Mississippi in a class by itself." While
all Southern states were resistant to the blurring of the boundary that divided blacks and
whites, Mississippi took pride in enforcing it in multiple ways. Mississippi led the nation in the nation in total lynchings, multiple lynchings, lynchings without arrest, and lynchings of women between 1889 and 1945 (McMillen 1989). It created a new constitution in 1890 that served as a model for other states in the effort to exclude blacks from equal participation in political life (McMillen 1989; Parker 1990). The state of Mississippi, known as the most repressive state for black people (Parker 1990), often forged a path for other segregationist states in the creation and maintenance of racial boundaries. These traits led one historian to call the state the "heartland of American apartheid" (McMillen 1989: 11).

In addition to this cultural code of racism, legal mandates kept blacks and whites separate in the public sphere. The revised Constitution of 1890 legally segregated schools. Codes enacted in 1880 and 1890 ensured that polling places were closed to blacks, and that other public and private places remained segregated (for example, hospitals, jail cells, and asylums). While intermarriage between blacks and whites was not illegal in Mississippi during Reconstruction, it rarely happened; customs held the boundaries of race in place. By 1890, intermarriage was prohibited by the state constitution, and turn-of-the-century phrases, such as "blood will tell," strictly warned against interracial sex (McMillen 1989). Anti-miscegenation laws were kept in place until 1967. The creation and maintenance of this law demonstrates how state entities have the power to create and reproduce racial boundaries over time, separating people based on socially constructed meaning.
By the mid-1950s, when the Sovereignty Commission was created, ominous signs hung over water fountains and restroom entrances, signaling which bodies, black or white, could partake of a drink of water or a visit to the toilet. For blacks, these signs were threatening and demeaning, because they could be punished for ignoring posted rules and because they were constantly denied entrance, reminded that their bodies were dirty, profane, and unequal. For whites, these signs were simply there, taken-for-granted as a logical way to order life. Like whites today have the privilege of walking freely into a clothing store without being suspected of shoplifting, whites then had the privilege of looking past the signs.

While the Civil Rights Movement was building support in other Southern states, Mississippi was a stronghold of segregation, difficult and dangerous to penetrate. Due to far-reaching white power, even black organizations like the church and the NAACP were weak (Dittmer 1994: 76-77). After the Brown decision, white upper-middle class citizens in the Delta region of Mississippi formed the first Citizens' Council. While the organization's concern was maintaining segregation without violence, Dittmer notes that the Councils, which had 25,000 dues-paying members in Mississippi within months of formation, "fostered and legitimized violent actions by individuals not overly concerned with questions of legality and image" (45-46). Essentially, the Councils were a milder version of the Ku Klux Klan, and they typically relied on measures of economic coercion to remind blacks to "keep their mouths shut." At every corner of the white power structure, blacks encountered resistance, or at least such serious threats of resistance that
the civil rights movement was slower to build momentum here than in other southern states.

Thus, political actors in Mississippi were “conditioned by significant pasts as well as by meaningful presents,” in their struggle to carry out the state’s role of maintaining order and racial boundaries (Olick and Levy 1997: 923). Within this local context, the Commission worked as an arm of the state as it struggled with changes at the national level, both in terms of public opinion and federal legislation.

_Segregation in the Name of Sovereignty: Organizational Formation_

Pressured by various forces, the federal government had enacted legislation during the mid-1950’s that would seemingly provide long-denied rights to black Mississippians, equalizing relations between whites and blacks. However, not only was the federal government _reluctant_ to enact and enforce such legislation, but Southern governments were _unwilling_ to let go of segregation and the boundaries that kept the system in place. Governmental bodies in the South faced a problem: both the federal government and the civil rights movement were disrupting their taken-for-granted way of life. Not only did these challenging forces target structural inequalities—like voting and poverty—but they also challenged the cultural understanding of race, deeply embedded in social customs, language, and beliefs. And with the structural and cultural meaning of race effectively contested, Southern states were forced to respond.

Perhaps the most significant response enacted by Mississippi was the creation of an organization with close ties to the Citizens’ Councils, the State Sovereignty Commission. In 1956, the state legislature created the State Sovereignty Commission in
reaction to the Brown decision and impending federal enforcement of desegregation. The Commission was given the task of defending State’s Rights and resisting encroachment (see mandate quoted in previous chapter). A local newspaper reporter observed:

A powerful new state agency...for maintaining segregation, is being organized under a cloud of uncertainty. That is because nobody has ever done before what it has set out to do...The commission has committed itself to being a watchdog of the state's pattern of racial segregation, a legal advisor to the Legislature, a secret investigator to spy on integration forces, a strong legal arm against integration forces and a general investigating body.14

While members of the Commission were named and general rules were laid out for obtaining and disbursing funds, no specifics were given for the rules and tasks of operation. Importantly, the Commission was given the power of subpoena, and the power to “enforce obedience” to any orders given. The plans set forth for the administration of the Commission changed over time, and the organization never turned into a nightstick-wielding police force. However, the mandate of House Bill No. 800 created a vehicle through which state power and funds were mobilized to fight both Federal intervention and any other “encroaching” groups. When asked by a historian if the purpose of the Commission was to prevent integration, Herman DeCell, who served as a State senator during this time period, reflected, “Well, to preserve state sovereignty [laughter].”15 The Sovereignty Commission was quickly dubbed the “segregation watchdog agency” by the press, even though this role was not an explicit direction of the organization’s mandate. Erle Johnston, who served as Public Relations Director and then

Director for the Commission from 1960 through 1967 recalled, “everything in the bill that created the Sovereignty Commission concerned itself with opposition to federal usurpation of powers that belonged to the states, [but segregation] was in there kind of subtly. It was fully understood.”

It should be noted that twenty-three members of the Mississippi House of Representatives objected to the creation of the Sovereignty Commission, fearing that it would be misused (Katagiri 2001: 7), but their dissenting voices were quickly stifled. Recalling the formation of the Sovereignty Commission, former Governor William Winter said that he first voted to form the Commission as a member of the House of Representatives in January of 1956 because he thought its stated intentions as a public relations agency were promising. However, Winter and a negligible minority became fearful that the agency’s state tax funds “could be made in support of and under the partial control of private persons, corporations or organizations”. This fear would turn out to be well-founded. Former Senator Joseph Wroten, who voted against the organization’s funding as well, said:

When the bill was first presented, it was presented as if it were just a group which would advocate constitutional government, orderly disposition of concerns about race relationships and the like. ...And in the midst of the tensions that Mississippi was facing when this bill first came up, I thought this will be a good thing. It would help to calm the waters and so forth. But that very night I learned, as did my colleagues, that this was something that was being sponsored by the white Citizens' Council movement. And I knew that it would be misused ...[it] would serve as a handmaiden for the white Citizens' Council; therefore, the reversal.

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And from that day forward in the light of what I had learned, I fought it with every resource at my command.\footnote{Joseph E. Wroten, Oral History, volume 476, Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive, McCain Library & Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, http://www.lib.usm.edu/~specol/crda/oh/wroten.htm.}

Fighting the Sovereignty Commission was no easy task. In fact, the most public voices in Mississippi felt that the organization was not doing enough to protect segregation. Clearly, most politicians and white citizens expected more than the protection of state sovereignty. They expected the defense and protection of segregation.

Like Hitler created the SS and SD to carry out his racist policies through interrogation and surveillance (Burlough and Wipperman 1991), the Mississippi legislature created the Sovereignty Commission to preserve segregation. While the Commission violated civil rights in its monitoring practices, it did not operate at the same level or with the same brutality as Hitler's Nazi forces. Though it is suspected that the Commission filtered information to local law enforcement officers that aided violence against civil rights workers, others have reflected on the agency as “largely a Keystone Kops operation, a bunch of bumbling would-be sleuths trying to prop up a dying system of white supremacy” (Minor 1998: 274). Commission investigators did get a lot of information wrong, and they missed a great deal as well. However, it is incorrect to dismiss this organization as a cartoonish. Before discussing strategies and impact, I turn to an overview of the Commission.

The Sovereignty Commission was organized around three departments: executive, public relations, and investigative.\footnote{Joseph E. Wroten, Oral History, volume 476, Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive, McCain Library & Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, http://www.lib.usm.edu/~specol/crda/oh/wroten.htm.} The executive department housed the business work
of the Commission and the position of Director, who was responsible for all Commission employees and activities. The Director was privy to all information obtained by the Commission and was responsible for collecting progress reports from agents, approving all public relations material, and serving as liaison to the Governor—who was defined as the official head of the Commission—and members of the legislature. The Commission was largely controlled by a twelve-member board that included the Governor as the Chair, the Lieutenant Governor, the Attorney General, the Speaker of the House, three members of the House, two members of the Senate, and three citizens appointed by the Governor.

Originally intended to be primarily a public relations agency, the Commission sought to "tell the truth" about Mississippi to the rest of the nation. When the organizational rules and layout were established, the public relations department was charged with collecting information about negative publicity on Mississippi and countering this with information about "relations between the races in Mississippi, [and] conditions relative to segregation of the races...". Of course, this information was collected and presented through a white perspective. For example, in 1960 the Commission produced a film titled, "Message from Mississippi." Using a documentary format, the film created a story of race relations in the state by highlighting one city,

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19 These departments were initially labeled: "a. Publicity, b. Investigative and Research, c. Administrative and Coordinating." "Organization and Administration: State Sovereignty Commission," SCR # 99-210-0-2-1-1-1 to 3-1-1.

interviewing white and African-American residents, and projecting an image of a state and its people perfectly content with the practice of segregation:

Members of the white and colored races share with pride in the progress of Mississippi, a sovereign state where free enterprise and individual rights are respected, where ambitions are developed and achieved by both races.²¹

The state was aware, especially over time, of negative publicity surrounding movement activities and segregation, and carrying out a public relations campaign within the state and across the nation became a means of defense against “encroachment”. The strategies of this department are the focus of the following chapter, which examines how the public discourse of the Commission changed over time.

Possibly the most controversial aspect of the Commission was its investigative department. While the Commission’s board met to discuss policy, suggest problem areas, and review work, the investigators carried out the actual monitoring of “racial activities.” At any given time, no more than three investigators carried out the duties of this department. In a document outlining the role of each Commission department, investigators were instructed to “obtain facts which will be of value in protecting the sovereignty of this State and preserving segregation in Mississippi.”²² By 1959, Zack van Landingham, a Commission investigator and former FBI agent, had developed filing system based on the one he had used at the FBI. The very sterile sounding document that outlined this system ended with a case classification schema, listing the areas of concern as follows:

²¹ “Message from Mississippi” (1960)
²² “Organization and Administration: State Sovereignty Commission,” SCR # 99-210-0-2-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.3
1. Race Agitators  
2. Integration Organizations  
3. (Name) – School Integration  
4. Civil Rights – Election  
5. Civil Rights – Violence  
6. Miscellaneous – Inquiry Concerning  
7. Administrative – Office  
8. Administrative – Personnel  
9. Administrative – Informants  
10. Publicity – General  
11. Criminal Cases  
12. Speeches

Later, the category “Subversion” was added to this list. Many of the documents contained in these files are clippings from publications or movement documents. There are hundreds of investigative reports, thousands of memos, and materials about office budget and policy. For example, Erle Johnston issued a memo as director in 1964 to the Secretary of State regarding janitor service. Johnston strongly reminded the Secretary, “As you will recall, it was the policy of the Sovereignty Commission and is still the policy not to give the colored janitors keys to the office for clean-up purposes after the staff had left for the day...” While investigators could not imagine local blacks as capable of leading “agitation,” the organization did not trust them to be alone with its private documents.

Investigators, who were often former law enforcement officers or employees of other “policing” agencies, were assigned specific tasks by the Director, but they also carried out routine checks on racial activity in Mississippi counties. They kept tabs on the NAACP and other movement organizations and campaigns, but they also closely

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23 Zack van Landingham memo to SSC director, SCR # 7-0-1-2-1-1-1 to 1-1-1, p.1  
24 Erle Johnston, Jr. memo to Honorable Heber Ladner, April 7, 1964, SCR # 99-36-0-49-1-1-1
monitored boundary violations other than protest activity. For example, agents were sent out to investigate the use of a white gas station restroom by a black man in Neshoba County,\textsuperscript{25} the birth of a potentially “mixed-race” baby to a white woman in Grenada County,\textsuperscript{26} and the “integrated swimming parties” of blacks and whites at Grenada Lake.\textsuperscript{27} One agent took a series of photographs at one bus station in Montgomery County after segregation signs were removed from the waiting areas and ticket counters.\textsuperscript{28} In January of 1963, one agent investigated the report that a white male was integrating nightclubs in Hinds County, “associating himself with the Negro patrons… and dancing with the Negro women along with other Negroes at this night club.”\textsuperscript{29} Investigative documents that detail Sovereignty Commission activities are therefore revealing of how the cultural meaning of racial boundaries informs political response to contestation. Chapters Five and Six focus on the actions of this department.

The degree to which these programs were emphasized depended on who sat in the Governor’s office (Roe-Simms 1999). Below, I briefly summarize major gubernatorial changes and subsequent administrative shifts and strategies within the Commission (for a comprehensive history of the Sovereignty Commission, see Katagiri 2001). Subsequent chapters will elaborate changes within the public relations and investigative departments, as well as dissension over the Commission and its strategies. To account for change over time, I categorized Commission investigations, propaganda, and other documents into

\textsuperscript{25} Investigative Report, October 16, 1963, SCR # 2-112-1-35-1-1-1 to 3-1-1.
\textsuperscript{26} Investigative Report, April 3, 1964, SCR # 2-21-1-67-1-1-1 to 7-1-1.
\textsuperscript{27} Memo from Zack van Landingham to Director, May 27, 1960, SCR # 2-21-1-7-1-1-1.
\textsuperscript{28} Investigative Report, November 6, 1961, SCR # 2-65-0-48-1-1-1 to 2-1-1.
\textsuperscript{29} Investigative Report, SCR # 2-55-10-31-1-1-1
three time periods, marked by shifts in the gubernatorial administration, civil rights strategies, and federal legislation.

1956-1959

Before the Sovereignty Commission existed, the Legislative Educational Advisory Committee (LEAC) was created in 1954 to develop policies to keep Mississippi schools segregated. The previously mentioned School Equalization Plan was enacted in 1955 under this committee’s watch, as the immediate concern of the legislature was resisting school desegregation orders, which the Supreme Court had ruled to be the responsibility of local school districts. In 1956, James Coleman was elected Governor of Mississippi, and he submitted a six-point plan to the LEAC that included the creation of a “permanent authority for maintenance of racial segregation with a full staff and funds for its operation to come out of tax money” (Katagiri 2001: xxxiv). By the end of March, the Sovereignty Commission had replaced the LEAC with more far-reaching powers and an initial two-year appropriation of $250,000.

Governor Coleman’s inaugural address expressed a commitment to segregation, but also to “sound judgment” (Katagiri 2001: 4). Under his direction, the Commission hired its first director, a public relations director, two investigators, and three full- and part-time secretaries. In addition, the Commission board approved the hiring of “secret investigators” who “might even be a Negro” to “serve as the eyes and the ears’ in the state’s fight against racial integration”. Controversy immediately arose over “double-dipping;” critics protested the payment to the first director, Ney Gore, a state legislator,

of both the Commission salary and a legislative salary. Gore retired from the Commission in May (Katagiri 2001). The organization immediately launched a public relations campaign to find and respond to adverse publicity, prepare and present publicity programs, and work with the investigative department to "obtain and prepare in an easily understood form all available statistics relating to integration and state sovereignty".31

During this formational period, the Commission also established connections with conservative Black leaders in the state, filtering publicity through their publications.

Beset with organizational problems about how to carry out its objectives, the Sovereignty Commission faced early criticism. One member of the Commission board reported that the organization was plagued with the same factionalism that characterized the relationship between the slightly more moderate Governor’s Democrats and the States-Righters.32 Another criticism stemmed from the fact that the Commission was more focused on public relations than on any actively visible fight against segregation. A state senator argued that the Commission was not worth its appropriation, as his own General Legislative Investigative Committee had been put in charge of investigating the NAACP. A local reporter wrote,

There was much talk this week...that the super-secret 'watchdog' agency over Mississippi's right to segregate is doomed. Because of the comparative racial calm in Mississippi, the commission has had little to do. The Commission points to lack of racial trouble as an indication of its effectiveness and value.33

31 SCR # 99-210-0-2-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.2
Four senators introduced a bill to abolish the Commission, but no action was taken. Shortly thereafter, the legislature granted the Sovereignty Commission the power to funnel state funds to the Citizens Councils, largely to support the Councils’ public relations program. In effect, the Sovereignty Commission was officially enlisting the collaboration of a non-state organization in the battle to maintain racial hegemony.

1960-1963

Criticism of the Commission continued. Charles Hills, a prominent segregationist journalist, wrote that the “idea for the Commission was good,” but that it had not been fully utilized. He noted, “Under a new governor and proper leadership, we believe that the Sovereignty Commission could be made to attend the business for which it was framed.”\(^{34}\) Hills and other critics got their wish. With the election of Ross Barnett as governor in 1959, his inauguration in 1960 brought changes to the Commission and an even stronger focus on promoting the necessity of segregation. With Barnett in power, the legislature picked up speed and started passing bills aimed at keeping segregation intact. House Bill 741 gave universities and colleges the ability to keep anyone from entering, remaining or graduating at their discretion. House Bill 431 prepared for marches and demonstrations by making the obstruction of streets, sidewalks, etc. illegal. There was also a Senate bill that would make interracial cohabitation or fornication illegal (Katagiri 2001). The Sovereignty Commission was given a third two-year appropriation of $350,000.

\(^{34}\) “Time to Go Offensively,” by Charles Hills, Clarion-Ledger, August 16, 1959.
Barnett had criticized the Commission and Governor Coleman for being weak and ineffective, and his administration became known as the one dominated by the Citizens' Council. This organization had gained much political power by 1960, and the state legislature was dominated by Council members committed to preservation of the status quo. Under Barnett, the Commission began funneling state funds to the Councils, drawing criticism but ultimately giving the organization over $200,000.

In January 1961, four Mississippians, including one black man, filed a lawsuit in federal court to cease Sovereignty Commission payments to the Citizens Councils. The group charged that public tax money was being used by a private group to "subvert and oppose the law of the land and to encourage violence to prevent the elimination of racial discrimination". The Councils protested, and its leader, WJ Simmons, insisted the money was being used by the non-violent group for television and radio programs that advocated states rights and segregation. The donation of Commission money to the Councils also provoked controversy within the Commission, largely due to the challenge from Erle Johnston, the new public relations director. Johnston, who recalls he "never did quite gee-haw" with Simmons, requested that the Councils document places where their programs were heard. Eventually, the lawsuit was dropped and the Commission

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35 The senate issued a resolution in praise of WJ Simmons, head of the Citizens Council in Mississippi, in 1960 (Katagiri 2001).
37 Ibid.
reduced the amount of money given to the Councils, but it would not be until the following administration that the “gifts” would cease.

The relationship between the Sovereignty Commission and the Citizens Council was not just a financial one. Erle Johnston recalled that W.J. Simmons was present at the first Commission meeting he attended, although he was not a member of the board. Council members made investigation requests and were called on during routine checks of county-level racial activity. Members of Citizens Council organizations across the state also provided information to the Sovereignty Commission. For example, in 1959, the Commission’s chief investigator, Zack van Landingham, met with WJ Simmons to discuss “generally the racial situation in the state and the activities of the NAACP, its leaders, as well as the Citizens’ Councils.” In the same meeting, Simmons reported that the Progressive Voters League was a “front organization of the NAACP” and provided a list of its leaders, members, and patrons and their addresses and telephone numbers. Simmons told van Landingham that he and the Citizens’ Councils “stood ready to assist the State Sovereignty Commission in any of its endeavors.”

The relationship between the two groups eventually broke down as dissension between the Councils and increasingly moderate Commission leaders increased.

The Sovereignty Commission also worked in concert with other organizations. At the local level, the Commission had very close ties with local law enforcement agencies and local government officials. While this relationship will be covered in great detail in the forthcoming analysis of investigations, it should be noted that throughout the

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39 Ibid.
40 Zack van Landingham memo to Director, January 29, 1959, SCR # 9-11-1-5-1-1-1
Commission’s existence, the organization exchanged information with local officials, who served as a primary source of information about racial activity throughout the state. At the state level, the Sovereignty Commission shared information and requested advice from other departments, including the Attorney General, the Mississippi Highway Patrol, the State Auditor, and the Governor’s Office. For example, the Commission often relied on the Highway Patrol to furnish information about suspects’ vehicle registration. Ties between the Sovereignty Commission and the federal government were much weaker. Erle Johnston recalled, “We did have a good liaison with the FBI. We furnished them all the information that we had. They don’t furnish information to anybody else, but we furnished information to them.” Thus, it is not clear whether or to what extent the FBI provided the Sovereignty Commission with any information. In fact, investigative reports show that the Commission was often critical of FBI encroachment on state control. By the mid-1960s, however, the Commission provided information to the Office of Economic Opportunity and the state’s US Senators in an effort to gain control of local poverty programs.

1964-1977

In 1964, Governor Paul Johnson was elected on a platform that asked Mississippians to “stand tall with Paul.” This campaign slogan was a reference to Johnson’s defiant doorway stance against the admission of James Meredith, a black man, to the University of Mississippi. As Lieutenant Governor under Ross Barnett, Paul

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42 The focal years for the analysis are 1964-1968.
Johnson had protested one of Meredith’s entrance attempts when the Governor was absent. However, once elected, Governor Johnson delivered an inaugural address that made the front page of the *New York Times* and set the tone for change in the Sovereignty Commission. He issued the following words that would be repeated in the Commission’s public relations campaign of the mid 1960s: “Hate, or prejudice or ignorance will not lead Mississippi while I sit in the Governor’s chair ... it will not be a rear-guard defense of yesterday...[but] it will be an all-out assault for our share of tomorrow” (Katagiri 2001: 143). After his election in 1964, Governor Johnson slowly appointed members to the Sovereignty Commission board, but did not complete appointments or call an official meeting until 1966 (Katagiri 2001). Legislators and journalists criticized the delay, but the Commission was not inactive.⁴³ Erle Johnston recalls that he and the Governor had an implicit agreement that Johnston could act on behalf of the Governor’s silence. Consequently, Erle Johnston used this silence to completely cut off funds to the Citizens Councils.⁴⁴

Erle Johnston, Jr., a Mississippi newspaper editor who was elected director in 1963 after serving as public relations director since 1960, came to dominate the organization under Paul B. Johnson’s administration from 1964 to 1968. Recalled as a person who was “practical” in his approach to race relations, Johnston tried to focus efforts on improving Mississippi’s image across the nation. In a memo to the Governor,

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⁴³ One Senate member introduced a bill during this time to abolish the Sovereignty Commission and create the Mississippi Information Agency. This did not happen. To appease legislators, Erle Johnston invited a select group of ten to visit the office, view the files, and note the progress (Katagiri 2001).
Johnston wrote that the original role of the Commission to “help preserve complete segregation” had become “somehow moot” with the desegregation of some facilities in the state. He noted that Mississippians were beginning to accept Johnson’s inaugural message. Additionally, Johnston began to encourage the cooperation of the Commission with business and industry forces to improve the image of the state in the eyes of economic interests. In a memo to Commission members, the legislature, and the Governor, Johnston suggested that the program would be more effective with a name change: “A new identity would be important for a prestige program.” Expressing a heightened concern with legitimacy due to recognition of federal laws, Johnston wanted to ensure outside audiences that economic progress had not slowed in the state due to movement disruption. Though Johnston was unsuccessful in his campaign to change the daunting name of the Sovereignty Commission to the “Mississippi Information Agency,” he was largely responsible for a shift in Commission strategies and discourse that lasted until the Commission began to fade in the early 1970s.45

By the time Erle Johnston resigned as director in 1968 under the new administration of Governor John Bell Williams, the volume of Sovereignty Commission activity had decreased considerably. Webb Burke, a former Highway Patrolman and FBI agent, was appointed director. With three investigators, the Commission focused on investigations and carried out few, if any, public relations activities. The agency began to keep track of Leftist organizations and even labor unions. In 1968, the Mississippi

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45 Memo from Erle Johnston to Governor Paul Johnson, October 12, 1964, Paul B. Johnson Family Papers (M 191, box 136), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
Sovereignty Commission formed the Interstate Sovereignty Commission with Louisiana and Alabama, although the group did not appear to be very effective. Other states had organized sovereignty commissions after Mississippi, but none ever utilized their organizations to the degree that Mississippi did (Katagiri 2001).

On October 29, 1969, the Supreme Court issued *Alexander v Holmes County Board of Education*, which said that “all deliberate speed” was no longer “constitutionally permissible.” In 1970, Governor Williams told Mississippians that massive integration was to take place in order to keep the public school system intact. Consequently, white academies were established around the state. By the early 1970s, appropriations for the Sovereignty Commission were trickling off. In 1973, Governor William Waller vetoed funding of the organization. Without money, the Sovereignty Commission could not last. With termination of the Commission impending, discussion commenced about what to do with the files. Though some wanted to burn the files, newly present black legislators, among others, opposed such action, and the files were put in care of the Secretary of State and stored in the Vital Records Center in Flora, Mississippi. On January 27, 1977, House Bill Number 276 won in a vote of 103 to 16, destroying the Commission and authorizing the Secretary of State to destroy the files entirely. Although the Senate agreed with the Commission’s termination, they had been swayed by the state’s archival board and Lieutenant Governor William Winter that the files should be preserved. The files were sealed for fifty years until 2027 by vote of 35 to 9. The House approved with a vote of 110 to 7. A new governor, Cliff Finch, signed the bill into law on March 4, 1977 (Katagiri 2001). The files were placed in a locked
vault, and only four employees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History had keys. Rules were created to prevent the leakage of Commission secrets. In addition to the stipulation that a person could not enter the vault alone, one faced a prison sentence of up to three years and a fine of $5000 for trying to examine the files or release information from them. However, controversy about the content of the files never ceased after 1977, and the files were opened in 1998. The story of their release opens the following section describing data and methodology.

Data and Methodology

Revealing Controversial Data

At the same time legislators were deciding how to handle the files after the Commission's closure, the Mississippi branch of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Edwin King, John Salter, and others filed a lawsuit with the U.S. District Court to have the files made publicly available. Though the local judge dismissed the complaint, the decision was reversed by the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. The lawsuit was then tangled up in the legal process for nearly twenty years, with plaintiffs in conflict about how the files should be opened. District Judge William H. Barbour divided the plaintiffs into two groups: those who wanted unlimited access and those who advocated for the privacy rights of those named in the files. On July 27, 1989, Judge


47 The privacy plaintiffs wanted those who were named in the files to be able to see their own files and then decide whether or not the public should have access to what had been written about them (Katagiri 2001).
Barbour ruled that the files should be made publicly available, but that persons named in the files should have the right to respond (Katagiri 2001).

While this legal battle was raging over the locked files, Governor Paul Johnson’s family papers were given to the William D. McCain Library and Archives at the University of Southern Mississippi in 1981. When the Governor passed away in 1985, his family papers were made publicly available. During the processing of the files, a staff writer for the state’s largest paper visited the archives and realized that many Sovereignty Commission records were contained in the Governor’s papers, but the special collections director decided that the records should be closed until the courts reached a decision about access. One day after Judge Barbour’s ruling, the chancery court decided that Governor Johnson’s papers were public record and should be available. Thus, even as the privacy plaintiffs fought to gain initial access to the locked files, the Jackson Clarion-Ledger beat everyone to the punch by fighting to gain access to the records held at the University of Southern Mississippi Archives (Katagiri 2001).

The files of the vault continued to be entangled in a legal battle. The two primary privacy plaintiffs, King and Salter, activists in the movement, argued that Judge Barbour’s ruling did not grant them enough privacy. The Fifth Circuit Court agreed and legal discussions followed regarding how to manage privacy rights. In addition, legislators did not seem willing to provide the funds that would be necessary to make the

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48 In 1988, the US Justice Department was granted the right to a confidential viewing of the files in order to determine whether the state had redrawn electoral districts to discriminate against blacks seeking judgeships. It is not clear what the outcome of this viewing was. (“Justice Department will get Sovereignty Commission’s files,” AP, The Sun Herald, October 21, 1988).
files publicly available. Finally, after continuous court battles, the Fifth Circuit Court supported Judge Barbour’s plan to alert those named in the files and grant them first access to the materials. Advertisements were run in some of the country’s largest national publications, informing people that if they thought they had been named, they would have the opportunity to ask the archives to keep documents referring to them sealed. At that point, a judge would determine whether or not they had the right to privacy as victims of the state (Katagiri 2001).

On March 17, 1998, nearly all of the Commission’s documents were made publicly available. The rest of the documents were still the subject of privacy litigation; by 2000, these documents would also be made available, save for the blacking-out of names protected under the order of privacy.49 On this day, the small room of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History was filled with reporters, former civil rights activists, and family members of those who had lost loved ones to civil rights violence. They took turns at three computers that held scanned copies of the Commission files; the actual records were not, and are still not, accessible to the public. The media released a flurry of articles as journalists and others tried to figure out whether and how the Commission mattered.

The maelstrom that followed the opening of the files has long since died down, and the files were recently made available to a worldwide audience through the Mississippi Department of Archives and History’s website. Since the opening of the files, historians and civil rights activists have used material from the files in articles, 49

Ironically, names of privacy plaintiffs are not blacked out in the files held at the University of Southern Mississippi Archives.
books, and memoirs. Sociologists and political scientists have relied on the reports of others and early viewings of the files to offer their interpretations of the organization's work (see Chapter Two). This project is the first study to systematically examine the discourse and strategies used by the Commission over time in order to answer theoretically motivated questions about states, repression, and race.

Value of the Case

Why is this case study a justifiable way to understand state response to challenges to categories of race? First, the brief review above of Mississippi’s political culture and history shows why the state itself is a critical case for the study of race and social change. In Mississippi, the boundaries of race were sharp, and reactions to challenges made them clearer. Mississippi served as a model for other Southern governments during the 1950s and 1960s by creating the State Sovereignty Commission. Although Mississippi was not the only state to create a commission or a legislative committee to try to circumvent federal rulings, it was the first to use “sovereignty” in naming its anti-civil rights strategy (Katagiri 2001). It became the most active agency of its kind in the south and was the first to carry out a massive public relations program. Not only did Mississippi forge the pathway in state repression, but it also was a threatening figure to local blacks, making the state so difficult to organize that it was one of the last locations for mobilization by national and regional groups (Robnett 1997; Morris 1984; McAdam 1982; Payne 1995). Focusing on this state, where boundaries were so clear, provides leverage in defining the political culture of segregation and the depths to which it was taken for granted. It also
enables research on one of the “pioneers” in segregation defense through examination of
the model for response on which other states drew.

Additionally, case studies can provide insight to difficult theoretical questions. Exa-
mining this case allows me to study how “a system of meaning and an institutional
structure backed by the political power of the state” regulated race through both its
discourse and actions (Merry 2000). While various parts of the state government may
have been involved in contesting challenges, this Commission was formed for the explicit
purpose of protecting state’s rights and maintaining segregation. This enables me to
concentrate on how an organization, run by the state, was specifically concerned with
racial categories, but had to carefully negotiate a defense of segregation within the
boundaries of legitimate state power—or at least the appearance of it. Political scientists
have suggested that the study of riot commission formation illuminates the “process of
reducing the political significance of racial crisis in America” (Lipsky and Olson 1977).
Lipsky and Olson recognize that the formation of commissions is not the only possible
elite response to racial crisis, but they argue that the politics of such commissions informs
us about response to black political demands. In this case, I have the opportunity to study
a commission that existed over a span of nearly twenty years, mandated to carry out a
range of duties in the name of the state. An examination of this Commission yields rich
longitudinal data about the process of state response. Finally, this research provides a
way to think theoretically about the political contestation of meaning at the state level and
the complexity of state response.
Data Description

Following the release of the data, many questioned how many documents had been destroyed before the files were sealed in 1977. One memo from 1965 shows that as director, Erle Johnston requested that the files be searched for any indication that the Commission was involved in preventing the registration of black voters. Suspect files were to be removed. A follow-up memo reported to the Governor’s office, “The files we considered incriminatory have been pulled and are now on the big table in the large office. We await your further instructions”. However, in a 1980 interview, Johnston insisted that nothing was found and no files were destroyed. Whatever the case, there is no clear evidence that files were destroyed. One archivist suggested that because there are no major gaps in the files, it is likely that if any files were destroyed, they are few in number.

When archivists began the time-intensive and expensive process of making the files publicly accessible, they followed the Commission’s original classification scheme as best as possible, noted above. The archivists added only three new classifications to account for unnumbered files. Each document was assigned an identification number with seven parts, largely based on the original Commission filing system. Many times,

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50 Memo from Erle Johnston, SCR # 99-62-0-33-1-1-1
51 Memo from Erle Johnston to Governor Paul Johnson, October 12, 1964, Paul B. Johnson Family Papers (M 191, box 137), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
53 Conversation with Sarah Roe-Simms, MDAH archivist.
54 “Records of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Search and Access,” March 1998 instructions, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.
documents are found in an "original" folder with copies in others. For example, a
document about a "race agitator" might be contained in his or her own folder as well as a
folder for the county in which he or she worked. However, even overlap is not consistent
in these files. Sometimes documents about race agitators only appear in the folder on the
person and not in the county folder. Ultimately, I encountered a massive amount of data
that would take an enormous amount of time to catalogue in its entirety.

A Systematic Approach to the Data

A study of how the state defended a system of racial boundaries through action
and discourse must disentangle the components of contestation. Thus, the primary
challenge of this research was to determine the most systematic approach for the analysis
of the Commission's strategies of response. In particular, I was concerned with empirical
questions that would shed light on the theoretical issues discussed in the previous chapter,
including: What motivated Commission response? How did the Commission see and
deфине problems? What public message did the Commission create about race relations in
Mississippi? Importantly, how did these things change over time? One approach would
have been to analyze the folders of persons identified as "race agitators," but as one
archivist told me, there are not actually many folders dedicated to one individual.55
Rather, names are typically dispersed throughout other folders. Another approach I
explored was analyzing the folders in "Integration Organizations" on the major players in
the movement, like the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee or the Congress of
Racial Equality. What I found was that while these folders contained some investigative

55 Conversation with Sarah Roe-Simms, MDAH archivist.
reports, much of what was contained included documents from these organizations and newspaper clippings. These things provide insight about civil rights organizations, but they did not provide enough information about Commission strategies. Finally, my ideal goal was to compare a list of problems reported to the Commission with issues actually investigated. However, there was no log of reported problems and investigated problems.

Consequently, the data collection and analysis were approached in two parts. First, I collected data on the public relations activities of the Sovereignty Commission. Much of this data was found under the classification “Speeches” and “Unnumbered miscellaneous.” Since public relations activities virtually ceased in 1967, all materials collected were produced between 1956 and 1967. These documents provide the very public record of how the Commission defended racial boundaries. In total, fifty-four texts, ranging in length from one to around twenty pages, were collected and coded, including speeches, pamphlets, one film, interviews, and letters to the editors of national publications. In some cases, documents were used as formats for multiple engagements and are identified in the analysis of Chapter Four. These texts are the direct result of the Commission’s construction of a public performance on behalf of the state of

\[ \text{Currently, the Sovereignty Commission files are available on two computers at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH). Some materials are also found in various manuscript collections at the McCain Library at the University of Southern Mississippi. During approximately six months of field research, spent primarily at MDAH, all public relations documents that I found were collected. Because some documents did not have identifying markers regarding where or if they were ever utilized, I coded only the materials that were clearly part of the active public relations campaigns. I did not code materials that were produced by others and distributed by the Commission as support for the legitimacy of claims, because I am primarily concerned with elite discourse. Thus, these materials are used them to supplement analysis.} \]
Mississippi. To account for change over time, documents were sorted by the three time periods noted above. A detailed discussion of the coding and analysis of these documents will be reserved for Chapter Four.

For the second part of data analysis, I decided to focus on investigative reports at the county-level as the unit of analysis. I wanted my analysis to best approximate the general approach taken by the Commission—to get at how the Commission was “seeing” on behalf of the state. Specifically, I wanted to examine the “hidden” or “private transcript” of Commission actions in order to compare it to the public discourse. After in-depth review of the files, it was clear that as a state agency, the Commission typically carried out surveillance at the local county level. The Commission was attuned to variation at the county-level in both its public presentations and private documents. With its volunteer speakers’ program, the Commission sent representatives across the US to defend segregation. It also produced a thirty-minute documentary about the segregated way of life in MS. To support the practicality of segregation, these materials displayed a map of the state, with counties highlighted depending on the black population. The darkest counties on this map were the ones with “a preponderance of colored citizens.”

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57 This sample appears to be representative, based on time spent reviewing Commission materials, but I hesitate to claim that it definitely is. I collected all materials that seemed to be part of the public relations campaign, but it is possible that I missed some texts due to the nature of the filing system, where thousands of documents exist but are not often cross-referenced. However, it is unlikely that such documents would strongly contradict the argument made here, as I thoroughly covered all “public relations” files.

58 Initially, I planned to analyze documents on a yearly basis. Two issues kept me from taking this approach. First, I wanted to mimic actual Commission strategies in this analysis, and based on changes in Commission leadership and programs, these time periods made the most strategic sense. Second, variation is most apparent when documents are grouped into these three time periods rather than analyzed annually, in part because of the nature of public relations campaigns.
presumably areas where the need for segregation—and order—was strongest. In addition, instructions to Commission employees noted that separate files would be kept on major cases and people, but that files were “being maintained on each county in Mississippi for the purpose of assembling any matters relating to a racial incident which takes place in the county”.59 Investigators were often given instructions to check on particular counties and investigations were often filed at this level. Finally, it was in the county files that I found the greatest range of data regarding the process of response. For some reason, county folders were classified according to the system noted above as “2. Integration Organizations.” Whereas other folders contained a hodgepodge of information, ranging from information about administration, to copies of classification cards, to envelopes and requests for information on the state, to newspaper articles, the county folders not only offered a replication of how the Commission organized its response, but they also included information on challenging incidents ranging from protest events to the use of restrooms reserved for whites by black men and women. Taking these two things into account, it was clear that the Commission was concerned with variation at the county level.

Thus, I drew a selective sample of sixteen counties from a population of eighty-two to ask whether Commission monitoring varied according to county-level characteristics. In addition, this sample also answers question about the characteristics of problems that motivated Commission response. The selection of counties disciplines the study and provides variation within the case. It also follows an established method of

59 "Report to the Mississippi State Legislature on Activities of the State Sovereignty Commission," SCR # 7-3-0-5-1-1-1 to 14-1-1, p.2
Counties were selected to account for variation in terms of movement strength and violence. To capture whether the Commission was concerned with areas—and became more concerned with areas—where there was greater violence, I used a variable constructed by David Colby (1987) to measure white violence at the county level from 1960 to 1969. I used his combined measure of violence against property, persons, and murder to operationalize the level of white violence. I then imposed categories on the range of violent acts to capture whether the level of violence was low in a particular county, medium, or high. To operationalize threats to racial boundaries at the county-level, I selected counties based on variation in movement strength. This variable is a composite index put together by Andy Andrews in his work on movement impact (see Appendix B for summary of this data). Table 3.1 provides a summary overview of the county sample.
Table 3.1: County-level Selective Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF VIOLENCE</th>
<th>MOVEMENT STRENGTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None-little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (less than 8 acts)</td>
<td>Yazoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hancock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (between 8 and 20 acts)</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (20 or more acts)</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grenada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each county, investigative reports were coded using a data-entry form created in Microsoft Access, which is a useful way of coding and analyzing textual data (Steinhoff, date unknown). Using this database allowed me to code a range of information about each document including basic information, specific characteristics, and detailed discursive data (See Appendix C). A total of 685 documents were coded at the county-level. Chapters Five and Six will provide greater detail about the information collected and analyzed.

In addition to the above data, I also analyzed summary documents issued by the Commission, including board meeting minutes and annual reports submitted to the legislature. These provided insight into backstage discussions about strategies and highlighted actions the Commission director viewed as successful and important. I also collected information about office budget and policy to supplement my analysis of change over time. Finally, interviews and oral histories supplement the analysis. Four
people with various perspectives on the Sovereignty Commission were interviewed by the author. In addition, transcripts from the oral history archives at the University of Southern Mississippi were analyzed. This material was used to understand perceptions of the Commission and conflicts between white elites over the organization’s strategies.
CHAPTER 4
LEGITIMACY STRUGGLES AND POLITICAL DISCURSIVE CHANGE

It may seem odd that faced with the effective contestation of the racial boundary that supported white political power, Mississippi would heavily invest in public relations work as a front-line defense of segregation. Yet, this strategy makes perfect sense in light of Mississippi’s lack of full sovereignty and the need to maintain legitimacy with multiple audiences—ideological strategies were a much less costly, and potentially more effective, way to proceed. Although the message from Mississippi was a losing one from the beginning, in that a well-funded public relations campaign could not defend against federal intervention, changes in the Sovereignty Commission’s public discourse reflect a transformation in the racial boundary that ultimately continued to support white political power.

An analysis of the Sovereignty Commission’s production of a public message provides insight into how the organization tried to gain assent from the non-southern public and local audiences in its work to maintain hegemony. Additionally, it shows how the boundary-work of political elites, as sense-making process meant to sustain power, is challenged by contextual changes and shifting relevant audiences. From its inception in 1956 to its demise in 1973, the Commission’s public discourse shifted from a stalwart defense of segregation to the reluctant promotion of accommodation. Significantly, the once-unspeakable voice of moderation became more audible, and the once-speakable insistence on segregation became near-taboo. I analyze newly available texts produced by the organization’s public relations department to show how once- legitimate cultural
schemas were effectively challenged as powerholders were forced to address multiple audiences. In order to retain power, and as much control of resources as possible, political elites had to link patterns of racial inequality to more legitimate cultural schemas.

**Elaboration of Method**

According to Sewell (1996: 842), “cultural schemas provide actors with meanings, motivations, and recipes for social action.” Race, as a schema, or “set of equivalence” (Sewell 1992:8) that established the oppositional category of black/white, had long been used by white elites in Mississippi to defend the social practice of segregation and define social relations. In the production of a public message, the Sovereignty Commission could have focused solely on this schema as a way to defend segregation. However, a context of multiple audiences and historical events (Sewell 1996), like the Brown decision and the violent admission of the first black man to an all-white Mississippi university, required the Commission to defend the racial boundary of black/white by linking actual patterns of racial inequality to more legitimate cultural schemata. This process helps explain the maintenance of white political power, despite the fact that blatant racism became “unfashionable.” Thus, the texts of the Commission’s public relations work can be analyzed to determine how representations of schemas (Sewell 1992) played a role in the state’s boundary-work to contest challenges and retain power.

As noted in Chapter Two, analysis for this chapter focuses on fifty-four texts produced and distributed by the Sovereignty Commission between 1956 and 1967. Other
studies of discourse and boundaries have involved, for example, deep readings of cultural symbols (Hunt 1984) and coding of interview materials and media forms (Hunt 1997; Lamont 2000). For this analysis, I wanted to determine the presence or absence of particular cultural tools used in the defense of racial boundaries and how this changed over time (Swidler 1986). Thus, I used interpretive methodology to decipher the “nuanced world of cultural meanings” to produce simplified coding categories and the basis of pattern-finding (Franzosi and Mohr 1997: 149; Olick and Levy 1997).

After multiple readings of these texts, I inductively generated a list of the cultural tools (Swidler 1986) used in construction of the Commission’s public message. My intention was to generate a list of the range of claims used by white political elites and then sort this list into general cultural schema used to defend segregation. These tools, which I call discursive elements, marked by sentences or small groupings of sentences, defended the state of Mississippi’s response to the challenges offered by the federal government and the Civil Rights Movement. These elements composed more general cultural schema engaged to defend the racial boundary. Following Babb (1996) and Gamson’s (1992) guidelines for coding textual material, documents were coded “1” if a particular discursive element was present and “0” if it was not. This method of content counting is used to compare the relative usage of particular discursive strategies in three time periods (Weber 1990). Discursive elements are not mutually exclusive; rather, they were used in combination to construct the public transcript.

Appendix A shows how the range of elements represented broader cultural schema. Five schemata were identified, as shown in Table 4.1, and are discussed in
detail below. I also coded discursive elements that mix schemas, producing a sixth category of discourse that combined claims and meanings in contradictory ways to make the revelation of once-silent discourse more acceptable (Steinberg 1999).  

Table 4.1: Description of Cultural Schema

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHEMA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legality</td>
<td>Discourse referring to legally resonant cultural logic of Constitutional rights and provisions, as well as governmental balance of power (e.g. “We believe the government is gradually cutting away rights originally reserved for the individual states”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Values</td>
<td>Discourse appealing to American ideals of justice, fairness, free enterprise, earned success, individualism, and freedom (e.g. “it is fundamentally American to hear both sides of a controversial issue”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Order</td>
<td>Discourse regarding the maintenance and preservation of law and order within the state; claims discord comes from the outside (e.g. “We believe in the maintenance of peace and the prevention of violence”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Discourse referring to race, including that regarding the values and characteristics of segregation (e.g. “colored citizens enjoy a paternalistic cooperation from the white citizen” and “the answer to the race problem, as we see it, is not physical contact, but spiritual understanding and mutual respect”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Discourse signifying reluctant accommodation to desegregation rulings and progress in spite of adversity (e.g. “The future of Mississippi will not be helped by those who bark criticism from the sidelines and oppose those who make honest efforts to maintain our progress”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Schema</td>
<td>Discourse blending elements from the above schemas (e.g. “although we doubt the constitutionality of forcing private businesses to accept unwanted clients or patrons, we have reluctantly desegregated our public accommodations”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant changes occurred in the Sovereignty Commission’s public discourse over time as the racial boundary was transformed, gradually embedded in other schema. To begin, I introduce the audiences that were important in shaping the trajectory of the Commission’s public message. These audiences are also important in shaping investigative actions, which are the focus of the next two chapters.

**Audiences**

It is true that political elites use the public stage to manufacture their image of coherence and presumably the submission of those who are ruled (Edelman 1964, 1977). However, it is also important to recognize that elites are not monolithic and that subordinate groups are often not complicit in their oppression or the maintenance of boundaries (Scott 1990). Social movement literature often focuses on how divisions regarding interests or structural concerns generate openings in the political opportunity structure for successful challenge (McAdam 1996). This chapter argues that a more nuanced understanding of elite division is necessary to understand the process through which political bodies respond to challenges of both a political and cultural nature. For example, as the official defender of Mississippi’s sovereignty, the Commission was expected to uphold segregationist principles but also had to solicit support from a presumably unsympathetic non-southern public. While managing the non-southern audience, the relationship between segregationist white elites and the Commission strained, as moderate white elites became a more relevant audience during the transition to integration and stalwart segregationists became “hot-heads”. In addition, the State of Mississippi’s ultimate subordination to the federal government required a shift from de-
legitimation of federal actions to reluctant accommodation (James 1988). Hence, Mississippi was involved in simultaneous projects of legitimation with multiple audiences and the suppression of change within the state. As political elites struggled to maintain legitimacy with multiple audiences, the political discourse on behalf of the State shifted.

Steinberg (1999) notes that strategic targets are not the only relevant audiences in discursive contests. Although powerholders may directly speak to specific audiences, other audiences bound the discursive field as well. To account for this observation, I categorize audiences as strategic or indirect. Strategic audiences were direct recipients of speeches and other propaganda and were seen as key groups with which political elites had to maintain legitimacy. Indirect audiences were not intentional recipients of Commission material, but were relevant for discursive strategies. Indirect audiences were used to legitimate Commission claims or targeted by de-legitimation strategies because of their actions.

**Strategic Audiences**

With the awareness that federal desegregation decisions targeted the southern way of life, the Sovereignty Commission sought to gain sympathy from the non-southern public and perceived it as an important ally in defending state sovereignty. In June 1956, Publicity Director Hal DeCell proposed activities for the Commission that would target “non-Southern” audiences and encourage them to learn about, either through speeches,
The non-southern audience was consistently a strategic target of Commission discursive strategies, and perceptions of its views shaped the message that was sold beyond Mississippi’s borders. Mailings were often sent to civic groups, newspapers, and schools. For example, when the Commission instituted a Speakers’ Bureau in 1960, they solicited invitations in a national mail-out of pamphlets to hundreds of non-southern civic organizations.

Within the state, the Sovereignty Commission had a largely supportive constituency of whites and little vocal opposition. Though the creation of the Commission was met with some dissension, it was strongly supported by most white legislators and local Citizens Councils. By early 1955, the Citizens Council, an organization formed in Mississippi in 1955 to use “legitimate” means to combat desegregation, dominated state politics (McMillen 1971). Local Citizens Councils were a politically powerful in-state audience, one that had a continuous, but increasingly discordant, relationship with the Commission. With this local constraint, the organization was charged with protecting the State’s sovereignty to maintain segregation and with eliciting empathy from a wider audience. However, the “relevant parts” of this local white constituency shifted over time in light of federal legislation and economic pressure.

Indirect Audiences

The audience of in-state blacks could be categorized as either strategic or indirect. On the one hand, the audience could be seen as strategic, in light of the fact that the Commission often colluded with black newspaper editors to publish editorials and

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61 “Minutes of the Meeting of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission,” June 20, 1956, SCR id # 99-14-0-4-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.3
articles supporting segregation. Such actions, as well as the distribution of editorials written by pro-segregation blacks, were crucial for trying to demonstrate black complicity with white rule. However, this audience was never a direct recipient of Commission discourse, in the sense that local whites and the non-southern public were. Rather, the Commission portrayed this audience as aligned against outside agitation, sending indirect messages that compliance with segregationist principles was appreciated.

While the majority of whites within the state were reportedly supportive of the Sovereignty Commission's defense of segregation, there was an audience of moderate whites who remained largely silenced in this "closed society" (Silver 1963). Twenty-three members of the Mississippi House of Representatives objected to the creation of the Sovereignty Commission, fearing that it would be misused and "serve as a handmaiden" for the White Citizens' Councils (Katagiri 2001: 7), but were quickly stifled. Those local whites who did join the movement faced violence and burning crosses. According to one white civil rights activist, the Commission sent symbolic messages to whites sympathetic to the movement through its words and actions. Ed King recalls that the Commission's public relations work was "very effective and dangerous," suggesting that the Commission did have a "chilling effect" on activists from within the state.62

Finally, covert white groups within the state increasingly posed a problem for the maintenance of law and order. Covert white groups included such groups as the Ku Klux Klan and to some degree, the Citizens Councils. Though Commission was relatively silent about these groups in early periods, it came to publicly warn Mississippians against

Thus, discourse regarding white covert groups was aimed at
delegitimation, because their actions threatened the legitimacy of Commission claims.

Table 4.2, below, summarizes the above discussion.

Table 4.2: Discursive Strategies According to Audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>RELEVANCE</th>
<th>DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGIC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-southern public</td>
<td>Perceived as important for gaining allegiance</td>
<td>Request for fairness and understanding; appeals to sense of Constitutional rights throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-state whites</td>
<td>The crucial political constituency</td>
<td>Appeals to segregationist culture, then shift to encouragement of order, Transition, and economic progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIRECT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-state blacks</td>
<td>Compliance indicates consent from below</td>
<td>Support of local blacks who defend segregation; refusal to acknowledge local black resistance as existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local white moderates</td>
<td>Successfully silenced in late 1950s and early 1960s by segregationist forces, but came to be a rising voice of reason</td>
<td>Not mentioned or targeted in discourse, but recipients of symbolic message to remain silent about support of civil rights (and sometimes investigative attacks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local white covert groups</td>
<td>Potential and actual threat to state’s claims of law and order</td>
<td>Targeted as “emotional” undercover groups that will not help the state’s cause; citizens encouraged to avoid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

63 Luders (2001) argues that the failure of southern governments to curtail the actions of white covert groups facilitated repression.
Audiences, Events, and Discourse

Table 4.3 presents general trends in the public relations operations of the Sovereignty Commission by time period. The second column provides information about major federal initiatives and civil rights events are noted in the third column. The last column displays the percentage of documents that utilized the cultural schema in each time period and breaks down themes by strategies audiences; it also notes the number of documents for that particular time period which contain the schema. For example, in the first period, the schema of Legality was present in 50% of these twenty documents, and the schema of Race was present in 95% of them. Documents could contain discourses of multiple schemas, so percentages do not total to 100. The reader should focus on the degree that certain schema were used within periods, as well as across periods.
Table 4.3: Sovereignty Commission Public Relations over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Critical Events</th>
<th>Discursive Element Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration)</td>
<td>Briggs v. Elliot (1955)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Legality 50% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>American Values 55% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Law &amp; Order 25% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Race 95% (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition – (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed Schema 25% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1963 (Barnett</td>
<td>Civil Rights Act of 1960</td>
<td>Total documents: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration)</td>
<td>Freedom Rides of 1961</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Order 10925 (1961)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Meredith (1962)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Order 11063 (1962)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Order 11114 (1963)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Legality 80% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>American Values 70% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Law &amp; Order 60% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Race 100% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition 10% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed Schema 60% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-1967 (Johnson</td>
<td>Freedom Summer (1964)</td>
<td>Total documents: 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration)</td>
<td>Civil Rights Act of 1964</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voting Rights Act of 1965</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Legality 96% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>American Values 88% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Law &amp; Order 88% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Race 38% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition 63% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed Schema 63% (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A graphic representation of schema counts by period is found in Figure 4.1. This figure shows that the usage of all schema increased over time, except for Race.

Significantly, as legitimacy struggles increased, the Commission moved away from the unreflective defense of segregation towards claims that promoted reluctant moderation, disguising racist beliefs within the schema of American values and by mixing schema.
Establishing a Stalwart Defense (1956-1959)

During the Sovereignty Commission's formative period, discursive strategies were largely a response to federal action. *Brown versus the Board of Education* (1954) and *Briggs versus Elliot* (1955) declared that separate but equal facilities were unconstitutional, and then that desegregation should happen with "all deliberate speed." Mississippi had already created a School Equalization Program in anticipation of the decision, designating a significant amount of state funding to the improvement of black educational facilities and programs for the purpose of maintaining separate, but at least more equal, facilities (Katagiri 2001). In early 1956, the legislature also approved the
Interposition Resolution, which officially declared the government’s intention to ignore the Supreme Court rulings. The same year, the Sovereignty Commission was created to prevent what Mississippi political elites saw as encroachment on states’ rights. Clearly, the call to preserve sovereignty was wedded to the cultural mandate to preserve segregation, and the Commission’s nascent public relations program sought to prove this to the non-southern public, the focal strategic audience for this time period. Walter Sillers, a Mississippi legislator, explained that the “battle” for Mississippi “must be won in 31 states north of the Mason and Dixon line” (Katagiri 2001: 12). As Governor Coleman noted, the goal was to show the target audience that Mississippi “‘doesn’t fry Negroes and eat them for breakfast.”’

Aware that the defense of segregation to national audiences had to be framed so that Mississippi did not appear reactionary and isolationist, the Commission appealed to the non-southern audience by emphasizing the Legality schema to refute the Brown decision (follow Table 4.4 for an encapsulated explanation of discursive change). In order to survive, states must comply with institutionalized rules regarding governance. Thus, the Commission constructed its case with the cultural tool of Constitutional rights and emphasized the necessity of state. Again, Walter Sillers explained this strategy as follows: “We will never win it on the race issue alone. It must be won by pointing out to the other states of the union ...that our cause is not merely racial, but fundamental in that we are fighting for the existence of our form of government” (Katagiri 2001: 12). In turn, the defense of the racial boundary was linked to the more legitimate schema of Legality.

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Table 4.4: Distribution of Discursive Strategies in Documents by Time Period (In percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legality</td>
<td>Used to defend MS as protector of constitutional rights with non-southern audience (broaden purpose)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to de-legitimate federal government actions</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to defend moderation with in-state audience</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Order</td>
<td>Used to legitimate MS commitment to maintenance of peace and governance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to de-legitimate activists/federal government</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to de-legitimate white covert groups</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to de-legitimate “hotheads”/extremists on both sides (one claim merges, does not differentiate)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Used to absolve MS of responsibility (victim)/target</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to request fairness with non-southern audience</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to affirm individual choice, earned success (to legitimate racial boundaries to non-southern audience)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to de-legitimate activists</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Used to justify racial boundaries</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to indicate black complicity</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to admit racial problems/inequality/mistreatment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to claim that racial problems are rare</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to de-legitimate integration groups</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Used to answer criticism from in-state whites</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to encourage moderation, patience, tolerance</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to signal progress, survival</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Schema</td>
<td>Used to equate protecting states rights with protecting segregation (or say racial problems are everywhere)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to equate federal rulings with attacks on values</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to explain violence as reaction to attack on way of life</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to construct reluctant accommodation to unconstitutional court orders</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Used to justify change in Commission’s position on racial boundaries, encourage racial communication, promote practical approach to race relations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Commission warned that the Supreme Court had overturned five previous rulings with *Brown*, upsetting judicial precedent and the balance of powers. Pamphlets argued that, “Mississippi’s fight is ... for the constitutional process of government by Congressional legislation based upon an awareness of the constitutional rights of the states.”

Thus, the Commission defended Mississippi as a protector of all states’ constitutional rights, rather than as an isolationist state fighting a lone battle. To defend the racial boundary, the Commission couched its appeal in defense of a boundary that all states would presumably appreciate—the boundary that prevented the federal government from intervening in the right of states to govern.

Another strategy the Commission used to appeal to the non-southern public in the wake of *Brown* cast Mississippi as a victim of unfair falsehoods and emphasized justice. With schema of *American Values*, known to successfully resonate with multiple types of audiences (e.g. Edelman 1988; Skrentny 1996), the Commission stated in its first pamphlet that Mississippi had been “denied a voice,” that all the State wanted was “fairness and a chance to present its side of the case.”

This schema was also used strategically to explain the lack of black voter registration in Mississippi to the non-southern public. The Commission argued that voting was a privilege, one that all Mississippians, black and white, could *earn*. This claim framed voting with a meritocratic discourse, suggesting equal opportunity actually existed in the State, and that all persons could earn the right to vote. Of course, this claim ignored the discriminatory

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65 “Don’t Stone Her Until You Hear Her Side,” 1956, SCR id # 99-140-0-11-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.3
66 “Don’t Stone Her Until You Hear Her Side,” 1956, SCR id # 99-140-0-11-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.1
way in which voter registration requirements were applied and exposed the State to criticism from the reality that blacks were often kept from registering. Significantly, the Commission was silent in regard to the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which established the Commission on Civil Rights and enabled it to investigate charges of disenfranchisement (Bardolph 1970).

To explain its condemnation of Brown and the federal government, the Commission heavily drew on the schema of Race that defined groups of people as inherently different based on skin color and/or ancestry. The dominance of this schema was shaped by Mississippi’s political culture, which was characterized by a taboo against advocating racial moderation. For example, to be elected, politicians had to firmly support segregation in all areas of life (Black 1976). The first pamphlet produced by the Sovereignty Commission was called “Don’t Stone Her Until You Hear Her Side,” and it contained the following remarks from Governor James Coleman: “We ask you to remember that by reason of the numbers involved, this problem is more acute here than in any other State in the Union.” Coleman was not explicit about this situation or problem that he spoke of. Because he was a privileged, white, political elite, he did not have to be clear, and he had no reason to think that others would not understand his message. For political elites, the “problem” facing the state was not poverty or voting discrepancies. The problem was a significant black population, a potential threat to white political domination (Blaylock 1967). Evidence shows that some members of the non-southern

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67 SCR id # 99-140-0-10-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.3
audience recognized this “problem” by suggesting they would face similar issues with a large black population.\textsuperscript{68}

To the non-southern public, Mississippi wanted to prove that segregation was the only viable solution to this problem. In an attempt to sell this system of social organization as a “practical necessity” to the non-southern public, the Commission sponsored a week-long visit in 1956 by twenty editors of New England papers to visit Mississippi and “breach the wall of sensational journalism which has stood for so long between the South and a national understanding of its problems.”\textsuperscript{69} The results of the tour were viewed so favorably that the Commission produced a collection of the editors’ writings for dissemination across the nation, called “Report to the People.” For the most part, visiting editors agreed with this aspect of the message, recognizing the state’s insistence on segregated schools and the slim likelihood of integration. This suggests that non-southern audiences, represented by this group, were at least receptive to the argument that Mississippi was better able to manage its people than any external force.

However, the visiting editors also produced the only discursive elements throughout all time periods that recognized black oppression and a desire for equal rights. Thus, the Commission’s appeal to non-southern audiences on the basis of the race boundary was marked as weak relatively early in this process. Articles written about the tour in newspapers like The New York Times and the Atlanta Journal noted that the

\textsuperscript{68} In the pamphlet, “Report to the People,” some editors claimed that northern cities, with relatively small black populations, could not understand Mississippi’s “unique” situation.\textsuperscript{69} “Report to the People,” SCR id #99-111-0-18-1-1- to 31-1-1, p.2
visiting editors were "split." Several editors observed racial tension and inequality after speaking with local black men and women who expressed their fear of registering to vote. The Commission published these negative claims in "Report to the People" to support the organization's commitment to a "fair hearing." Of course, the Commission's response was that while problems existed, they could best be solved by Mississippi alone—again, the racial boundary was linked to a more legitimate schema that emphasized the Constitutional right of sovereignty.

The non-southern public was made increasingly aware of racial inequality in the South as the Civil Rights Movement grew. As part of its public performance, the Sovereignty Commission refused to recognize the validity of this movement's charges, and it never saw nor admitted that local blacks were unhappy with segregation. Thus, the Commission strategically produced a public image of black complicity to both strategic audiences. In a speech to the Public Relations Association of Mississippi in 1959, Zack van Landingham, the head investigator, explained the work of the Sovereignty Commission, highlighting its primary function as maintaining segregation. This speech, or a variation of it, was given approximately twenty-two times from 1958 to 1959 around Mississippi to civic clubs, church groups, and parent-teacher associations. While Van Landingham criticized the NAACP, he also recognized "fine, level-headed

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70 "Yankee Editors' Opinions Split After Miss. 'Integration Tour'" , Atlanta Journal, October 14, 1956.
71 "State Sovereignty Commission," SCR # 7-0-1-56-1-1-1 to 3-1-1.
72 "Report to the Mississippi State Legislature on Activities of the State Sovereignty Commission." SCR id # 7-3-0-5-1-1-1 to 14-1-1, p.4
Negro citizens who ... realize that the best interest of the Negro race lies along segregated paths.\(^73\)

Both within and outside the State, the Sovereignty Commission also promoted the views of black leaders “in-step” with segregation. The Commission forged relationships with conservative black newspaper editors, including Percy Greene, who often reproducing their writings to attest to the “weakness of the NAACP in Mississippi” and the fact that both races were content with the practice of segregation.\(^74\) This strategy became part of the public relations campaign to manage racial boundaries and appear legitimate in the eyes of a suspect national audience, but it is important to note that such complicit actors were targeted as “Uncle Toms” by many in the local black community.\(^75\)

Not all black Mississippians agreed with Percy Greene’s assertion that the Commission was a “progressive step in the direction of first-class citizenship for all”.\(^76\) Also, privileged claims made by white elites about black lives were publicly subject to contradiction. In August 1956, newspapers in Chattanooga, New Orleans, and Memphis ran articles that described the exodus of “thousands” of Mississippi blacks for the North, where they desired better job opportunities, better housing, and voting rights.\(^77\)

\(^73\) “State Sovereignty Commission,” SCR # 7-0-1-56-1-1-1 to 12-1-1.
\(^74\) SCR id # 7-0-1-27-1-1-1 to 7-0-1-27-3-1-1, p.3
\(^75\) An article in the *Delta Democrat Times* on September 28, 1957, titled, “Moderation Stand Gives Negro Leaders Humes, Greene Hot Time” reported that these men, both newspaper owners who had received money from the Commission, were criticized by members of their own Race. The men replied that they would continue to work for the Commission to promote “better race relations and Negro progress, under segregation.”
\(^76\) *Jackson Daily News*, July 12, 1957
\(^77\) “Lots of Negroes Leave Mississippi,” *Chattanooga Times*, August 26, 1956.
evidence exposed claims regarding black complicity as inaccurate, de-legitimating, but not changing, the Commission’s defense of the racial boundary.

As the Sovereignty Commission’s capacity and public relations program grew in this early period, criticism arose from two opposing sides. When an NAACP official argued before a federal Senate subcommittee on constitutional rights that the organization was using government money to maintain segregation, Mississippi’s governor responded that the Commission was “an agency of ‘law and order’, established to maintain ‘peace and quiet’ in the Magnolia State”. The Governor’s statement highlights the Commission’s appeal to a Law and Order schema to justify the organization’s legitimacy and the state’s commitment to maintaining order. One pamphlet included a pledge from Governor Coleman that “…Mississippi will be a State of law and not of violence.” Throughout the public relations campaign, this claim confirmed the State’s commitment to providing order and managing its people. Interestingly, one speech given within the State noted the role the Commission had played in preventing the arrest of one civil rights activist. When it was learned that local “hotheads” planned to have him arrested, the Commission stepped in to prevent negative publicity. It would not be until the third period, however, that white covert groups would be targeted by de-legitimation strategies.

Another strain of criticism emerged from within the State during this period. In 1958, some legislators thought the Commission to be superfluous, but members of the organization “[pointed] to the lack of racial trouble as an indication of its effectiveness

and value”. While the organization survived a legislative debate about its worthiness, a local editorialist echoed the sentiments of stalwart segregationists in 1959 when he wrote that the Commission was an “ideal, but unused set-up.” He noted that the organization should be used for a “quiet and effective offensive against the integrators”. In addition, the Commission was criticized for taking what was viewed as a moderate position on the issue of integration. In 1957, the Sovereignty Commission board voted to recommend that the State Building Commission donate land for the construction of a new veterans hospital, which would be integrated. One board member, absent during the vote, reportedly said he would rather have no hospital at all than an integrated one. The local Citizens Council attacked the decision, saying that an integrated hospital should not be located in a neighborhood of white schools. This dissension revealed early signs of in-state tension as the Commission tried to manage a non-monolithic political elite with federal integration policies.

Importantly, the Commission did not utilize the Transition schema during the first period, indicating white elites’ inability to suggest the alteration of the racial boundary, or to see the counterpart to resistance. Change was seen as a route to social chaos; resistance was progress. Consequently, the Commission mixed schemas in its message to the non-southern audience to assert that a “way of life” could not be legislated, blending discourses of Legality, American Values, and Race. This strategy was to legitimate the

80 “Time to Go Offensively” by Charles Hill, Clarion-Ledger, August 16, 1959.
81 “Storm Continues on Sovereignty Commission Decision on Hospital,” Delta Democrat Times, June 2, 1957
Commission and link the boundary between blacks and whites to the right of states and individuals to choose the patterns of social action that best met their needs. However, the claim did not acknowledge that Jim Crow laws had created this naturalized way of life after Reconstruction (Yetman 1999: 106). The Commission had begun to “link issues in dubious and challengeable ways” (Edelman 1988: 117) to defend segregation to the national audience.

**Contention over Moderation (1960-1963)**

When Ross Barnett assumed the Governor’s office in 1960, the state government’s commitment to segregation was bolstered and ignited with Barnett’s fiery rhetoric. A champion of the Commission’s potential, Barnett strengthened its resolve to protect segregation. He also enabled the funneling of state funds through the Commission to local Citizens Councils. While the disbursal of Commission funds to the Councils drew criticism, the white covert groups ultimately received over $200,000 before funding ceased under a new administration in 1964. With close ties to the Councils, Barnett built the Commission into a “segregation watchdog”. Consequently, Commission discourse was constrained by a political culture committed to defending the racial boundary and its relationship to a white supremacist group that engaged in covert repression.

As in the first period, the public relations department was preoccupied with the non-southern public. In 1960, the Commission heightened its public relations program by forming the Speakers Bureau, designed to promote the message from Mississippi in
the "backyards" of Northerners. At a cost of $1500 per month, this program sent speakers across the nation until 1963, when it was disbanded to focus spending on the national campaign to defeat the Civil Rights Bill. Volunteers included doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and other professionals. When the program began, Erle Johnston, public relations director, drafted a speech for volunteers after soliciting ideas from leading Mississippians who were asked to answer the question, "what would you say up North if you were trying to defend Mississippi's segregation system?" This speech, and variations of it, served as the basis for over 120 speaking engagements. While this program was not expected to prevent integration or change laws, Johnston felt it was successful in "enlightening" non-southerners about race relations in Mississippi. As an accompaniment to the Speakers' Bureau, the Commission also produced a film, called "The Message from Mississippi". Like other materials, the film emphasized the black complicity, as blacks and whites told the story of "a social system under which both races attain their identities and achieve their own destinies without either race forcing itself upon the other."

Accordingly, the Race schema completely dominated this time period, offering "understandings about power, difference, and hierarchy that are claimed to be natural, accepted, or preferred" (Steinberg 1999: 745). As the Civil Rights Movement was

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84 Ibid.
85 Katagiri (2001: 82-84) offers a good description of the film, which was shown in 43 cities and 27 states by 1962.
protesting segregation across the South, the Commission was forced to respond. Gradually, the movement’s challenge was made visible within Mississippi through the Freedom Rides and James Meredith’s federally-forced integration of an all-white state university. These challenges were met with a discursive strategy that projected the South’s culturally-indoctrinated belief in white superiority to the non-southern audience. Thus, the public message reinforced not only the boundary between black and white, but also marked blacks as inferior. For example, to explain segregated drinking fountains and swimming pools, volunteers were to acknowledge that this material consequence of cultural boundaries was due to personal hygiene, recognizing that a “minority of Negroes are personally clean and have high morals.” The implication was that whites had superior standards of cleanliness and morality that would be contaminated by the presence of blacks (Douglas [1966] 1995). When asked, “Why do you believe the white race is superior?” volunteers were to reply, “For an answer to this question, one need only look at the history and progress and achievement of nations governed by white people and compare this with nations governed by non-whites.” These discursive choices illustrate how the Commission was constrained by a political culture entrenched in segregation, even as it struggled to maintain legitimacy with the national audience.

Heightening its defense of segregation as practical, the Commission continued to portray the in-state black audience as complicit. This strategy served to counter the increasingly visible images of blacks protesting segregated bus seating, disenfranchisement, and white paternalism. Since its inception, the Commission had

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86 “Questions Asked, and Answers Given, by Sovereignty Commission Volunteer Speakers,” SCR # 99-139-0-7-1-1-1 to 5-1-1, p.4.
collected data on black progress in the state, such as home ownership, teacher 
employment and pay, and the quality of black schools. This information was used in 
Commission speeches to reassure non-southern audiences that Mississippi was a place 
where black people wanted to live. Volunteer speakers claimed that blacks had 
voluntarily created segregation after Reconstruction: “They had the power to break down 
the racial barriers and to revise them in accordance with their own notions. They did not 
change them.” Non-southern audiences were told that blacks not only maintained the 
boundaries between the races themselves, but that they also preferred white paternalism 
(see Table 4.1). White elites attempted to squelch accusations of inequality and produced 
a public performance that emphasized the willing participation of blacks in the 
production and reproduction of racial boundaries.

The Commission, however, appeared to remain silent about counter-claims made 
by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in several 
cities where engagements were held. A Wisconsin NAACP branch issued a statement 
criticizing the local school board for allowing “subversive oratory” to be presented by the 
Sovereignty Commission to high school students. Refuting a volunteer speaker’s claim 
that segregation was mutually beneficial, the NAACP cited statistics showing Mississippi 
spent considerably less money on their black students than on their white students. They 
also argued against the Commission claim that voting was a right that should be earned, a 
justification of Mississippi’s voting laws. In May 1961, Aaron Henry, president of the

87 Erle Johnston Papers (M 391), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. 
McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
88 “NAACP Answer Mississippian,” Kenoshoba News, February 18, 1961
Mississippi NAACP, spoke in Burlington, Wisconsin, to refute the Commission speech made three months earlier. He argued that the State did not provide good job opportunities for black people, saying this made them unhappy. On another occasion, Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP, expressed “shock” at the invitation of Commission speakers by New York audiences. He criticized Mississippi’s treatment of blacks and pointed out that while non-southern audiences accepted these speakers, all-white Mississippi audiences would not have allowed speeches advocating integration.

Interestingly, Wilkins’ criticism was indirectly addressed by Commission representatives when U.S. Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, who ruled in favor of *Brown*, spoke at the University of Mississippi Law School in 1961. The Commission became involved in a small public scandal when it was learned that an unsigned note was sent to some officials and members of the state college board in a Sovereignty Commission envelope questioning Clark’s invitation, because he stood against Mississippi’s laws and customs. Though one Commission member publicly denounced the visit, Albert Jones, the Commission director, and Governor Barnett denied any knowledge of the memorandum. In his own paper, Erle Johnston wrote that Mississippi could not continue to expect hospitality in other parts of the country if they were “openly

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89 Unidentified article, SCR # 7-0-4-56-1-1-1
90 “Mississippi Officials Plug Segregation Here,” *New York Herald Tribune*, January 9, 1961. Only one black man ever spoke for the Commission. In fact, local dissension developed when Joseph Albright, a conservative, spoke on behalf of the Commission at Columbia University. Although Albright carried the segregationist message and was harassed by the liberal northern audience, Commission members did not want a “colored person” speaking on behalf of Mississippi. From that point onward, Commission members asked that volunteers be approved by the board, rather than by Johnston alone.
91 “Jones Mum on Mystery Dispatches,” *State-Times*, February 13, 1961
hostile to any speaker...who may differ with us.” However, he pointed out that the pro-
integration speaker would try to convince Mississippi to change, whereas the
Commission’s speakers did not try to convert Northerners to integration, but only asked
for understanding.\textsuperscript{92} Johnston argued that the Commission’s message did not impose a
way of life on others, which he admitted would be discriminatory.

During this period, the federal government gradually began to respond to the
demands of civil rights activists by passing executive orders that extended marginal peace
offerings to the movement and inflamed southern political elites. Many of these acts, like
the Civil Rights Act of 1960, were not directly addressed by the Commission, possibly
due to their symbolic nature. However, the Commission continued its condemnation of
Brown as “extra-legal” and discriminatory. Such discourse was intended to de-legitimate
the federal government and legitimate continued segregation by emphasizing the
sovereignty over intervention. For example, speakers were to say the Commission’s
message was “not an act of rebellion or defiance, but is the only lawful means by which a
sovereign state may assert its constitutional rights.”\textsuperscript{93}

During this period, actions of the federal government also stimulated a growing
strategy for defending segregation that used the \textit{American Values} schema. When
President Kennedy’s administration produced Executive Order 11603, which prohibited
discrimination in the sale or leasing of housing tied to federal funds, the Commission
called it an “alarming action” that “[discriminated] against homeowners who build their

\textsuperscript{92} “He Should Have Been Shown,” \textit{Scott County Times}, February 22, 1961
\textsuperscript{93} “The Message from Mississippi,” SCR # 99-139-0-41-1-1-1 to 13-1-1, p.5
residences under guarantees to each other that they would preserve the racial structure".\textsuperscript{94} One draft for volunteer speakers read, "Discrimination has become a controversial word in the American language. Although in our situation, the correct word is preference—exercising a right of choice."\textsuperscript{95} In such statements, justifications for the racial boundary were sold as part of the American doctrine of individual choice. This discursive strategy suggests that white political elites were aware of a shifting national understanding of race, one where advocating a racial boundary was becoming politically taboo but protecting justice as an American value was legitimate.

Critical civil rights events during this time period led to another discursive shift. During the Freedom Rides of 1960 and 1961, civil rights groups attempted to test the federal restriction against segregated interstate travel in Mississippi, but the Commission was relatively silent on these events. Where the Rides had led to massive resistance and violence in Alabama, the quick arrests of the travelers and the avoidance of white violence in Mississippi diminished negative publicity that would demand response. However, when James Meredith became the first black man to be admitted to an all-white State university after strong resistance from the local government and the intervention of federal troops, the Commission responded. These events contributed to the use of discursive elements that increasingly blamed outsiders for in-state violence and tension, downplaying the role of local whites in the violence to the non-southern audience that saw Mississippi as repressive. In fact, Johnston drafted different versions of the volunteer speech in response to the "Ole Miss crisis" (Katagiri 2001: 116). A new

\textsuperscript{94} "The Message from Mississippi," SCR # 99-139-0-41-1-1-1 to 13-1-1, p.8
\textsuperscript{95} "The Message from Mississippi, SCR id # 99-139-0-41-1-1-1 to 13-1-1, p.8
version claimed: "There was no disturbance, no injury, no death, so long as the State of Mississippi was permitted to be responsible for law and order in Mississippi. It was only when the federal authorities reacted hastily ... that violence, injury, death and destruction of property resulted." Where the rest of the world saw a violent event caused by local reaction to integration, the Commission argued that Mississippi's authority to maintain law and order had been usurped by federal powers. Mississippi's political elites tried to de-legitimate the federal government, insisting peace would prevail if segregation remained. The increased emphasis on the Law and Order schema, however, exposed the contradiction that whites within Mississippi had used violence to enforce racial boundaries for years.

Finally, discourses were merged to strengthen a defense of the racial boundary. Political elites often used the schemas of Legality and American Values in conjunction with the schema of Race to defend segregation to those perceived to be in opposition to it. The Commission combined these schemata in Period Two by suggesting that local laws and customs preserved the purity and dignity of both races. For instance, the Commission framed anti-miscegenation laws as the right of an individual state to maintain traditional laws and customs. Of course, this claim denied the right of an individual to marry the person of his or her choice, regardless of color. Thus, the Commission blended schema to protect the right to maintain a racial boundary within the right to maintain sovereignty and justice. In addition, the Commission melded claims regarding legality and race: "we have made no attempt to solve the problems of the

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96 "The Message from Mississippi," SCR # 99-139-0-41-1-1-1 to 13-1-1, p.10
Mexicans in the Southwest, the Asiatics on the West Coast, the Indians in the Midwest, or Puerto Ricans on the East Coast. We concede to the people who live closest to these problems the right to work out their own solutions with moral and ethical considerations." By blending discourses, the Commission linked cultural schema about states’ rights and segregation that could be seen as incongruous, constructing claims that might resonate more effectively with a non-southern audience but still represent the locally dominant culture.

Erie Johnston, who was largely responsible for creating the message from Mississippi, was aware that discursive strategies had to be carefully used, to avoid exposing the State to criticism. In late 1962, credibility with the non-southern audience was weakened when State Circuit Court Judge Sebe Dale spoke on behalf of the Commission at Brandeis University. Judge Dale had presided over the trial of a black man, Mack Charles Parker, who was accused of raping a white woman. Before he was able to stand trial, Parker had been taken from the jail by a group of local white men and lynched. After Dale’s talk, an audience member asked if the men who killed Parker would be caught. Instead of providing the formulaic answer that the event was an "unsolved crime," Judge Dale replied, "three of them [who lynched Parker] are already dead" (Katagiri 2001: 118). Commission discourse could not always silence contradictions and protect the state from the non-southern public’s awareness of violence in Mississippi. However, Johnston did try to minimize evidence that the maintenance of boundaries had negative material consequences. In January 1963, Johnston expressed

97 "The Message from Mississippi," SCR # 99-139-0-41-1-1-1 to 13-1-1, p.12
concern regarding one volunteer’s own proposal for a speech he would make in Illinois. Johnston was worried that the volunteer’s “recurring theme of ‘freedom’ etc., … would open the doors to sharp questions about ‘freedom’ for Negroes.” Johnston was pointedly concerned about exposing the disjuncture between the schemas used to defend the racial boundary. For example, because the schemata of Legality and American Values were transposable, Johnston feared external audiences might question the condition of the individual rights of black Mississippians as opposed to the rights of states, which was a significant part of the organization’s public discourse. Concealment and euphemization (Scott 1990:50-55) were therefore used as discursive strategies to support the conceptualization of blacks and whites as different, and of both groups as content with segregation.

An important shift began to happen during this time period, as internal contention among white elites developed over discursive strategies and criticism from the moderate white audience became more vocal. Although discourse was largely targeted at the non-southern audience during this period, one speech made within Mississippi fueled tensions among white political elites and signaled a major conflict between Johnston and the Citizens Council. In 1962, Erle Johnston was invited to give the high school commencement address at his alma mater. Violating the southern taboo against advocating racial moderation, he claimed, “It would seem far better to offer an inch of consideration across a table of harmony than to be forced to retreat further into an

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98 Letter from Erle Johnston to Elizabeth Arnold, Sovereignty Commission employee, on January 26, 1963. SCR # 7-0-6-81-1-1-1 through 3-1-1, p.1
atmosphere of friction and bitterness. Although the Mississippi NAACP blasted this speech, which offered a veiled attack on the NAACP and continued to promote segregation, local white elites felt Johnston had gone too far. Leaders of the Citizens Council accused Johnston of surrender, and a heated public battle of words developed between Johnston and William Simmons, a council leader. Interestingly, House Speaker Walter Sillers drafted a resolution in response that was approved by the Commission board members, with a few dissenting votes (Katagiri 2001). This resolution not only stated the Commission’s refusal to participate in the Johnston/Simmons war, but it also read: “...this Commission approves a policy of cooperation with Negroes in an effort to maintain segregation...in the best interest and welfare of both races but we do not concede that it is the only method by which such relations can be maintained.” By far, this was the most racially progressive statement made by the Commission board, yet it did not elicit immediate policy changes, nor did it condemn the practices of coercive private segregationist groups.

Although the stage was set for Johnston to either be fired or resign, he retained the support of Governor Barnett and remained in power. One year later, Johnston’s election as Commission director was protested by some Commission board members and the Women for Constitutional Government, because he had been “weak” on segregation (Katagiri 2001: 119). On reflection, Johnston said that he was trying to be a “practical segregationist as opposed to an unyielding resister or an emotional segregationist because

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99 Erle Johnston Papers (M 319, Box 9, p.GR-3), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
100 Albert Jones to Herman DeCell, July 20, 1962, SCR # 7-0-5-122-1-1-1
I knew that the time was coming."¹"¹⁰¹ Labeled a moderate by local papers and ostracized by fellow state employees, Johnston later recalled, "moderate was about the next worst word to being an integrationist."¹"¹⁰² A harsh line existed with the dominant in-state white audience between advocating integration and protecting segregation. Though Johnston actually supported segregation, his tempered approach and awareness of inevitable change caused problems. While volunteers for the Speakers’ Bureau could admit to the non-southern audience that the "southern white man was not without sin in his treatment of the Negro," the local white audience was not receptive to apologist or moderate discourse. Thus, while the Commission became more responsive to the non-southern public and federal pressure, internal contention grew as the public message began to shift.

After the controversy over the Grenada speech, Johnston suggested to Governor Barnett that the public relations department take a message of “racial harmony” to the Mississippi audience to encourage people to avoid “agitating, flag-waving, and emotionalism which only arouse resentment among the colored race and inspire them to look with favor on those outsiders who make wild promises.”¹"¹⁰³ This request was seemingly ignored, as this approach was never implemented under Barnett’s governance.

Finally, it was during this time period that moderate whites began to voice their opposition to the Commission more strongly. Bill Minor, a leading political reporter, noted, the Commission was a “subterfuge” for intimidating anyone, including white

¹⁰³ Letter to Governor Ross Barnett, June 6, 1962, SCR # 7-0-6-3-1-1-1 through 3-1-1.
Particular targets included a newspaper owner in the Delta region of the state, Hazel Brannon Smith. Smith, who often editorialized against the Commission, was targeted by the Commission as a supporter of integration (Silver 1963). Billy Barton, a student at the University of Mississippi, lost the editorship of the school newspaper when the Commission publicized reports that he was sympathetic to the movement. In its response to such dissenters, the Commission sent the symbolic message that moderation was not yet the rule.

The Message of Reluctant Moderation (1964-1967)

By early 1964, with the election of a "moderate" governor, the onset of Freedom Summer, and the creation of the Civil Rights Act, the Commission's public message changed significantly, abandoning former discursive elements and adding new ones, signaling a transformation in the state's boundary-work. Although elected on a segregationist platform, Governor Paul Johnson's inaugural address made the front page of the New York Times with its call for an end to hate and prejudice, symbolizing a commitment to change as opposed to resistance. The Governor retained Erle Johnston as Director but did not officially call a meeting until 1966, two years into his administration, and implicitly gave Johnston the freedom to pursue the moderate line he had begun to unveil in the previous period. Media-worthy movement campaigns and federal legislation meant the State was more constrained by its struggle to maintain legitimacy and law and order than by its political culture and local white conservatives. Attention shifted to the in-state audience and away from the non-southern public. Table 4.5

illustrates how this shift in audience relevance occurred over time. White covert groups became targeted by de-legitimation strategies, and the Commission urged the in-state audience to think about economic progress and moderation. While this change still involved attacking movement activists and desegregation, it signaled a transition period in the state’s defense of the racial boundary. More importantly, the Race schema became less prevalent, as political elites began to advocate transition. However, the Commission’s defense was linked with other more legitimate schema to disguise continued support for the racial boundary in other ways.

Table 4.5: Target Audience for each Time Period (as percentage of total documents coded for each period)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-southern</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-state</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
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A large part of this change was driven by a shift in in-state audience allegiance from conservative whites to moderate business elites who were concerned about the economic consequences of negative publicity. Due to the enactment and threat of boycotts against Mississippi products, the Commission worked with white business interests to foster an image of transition and progress. In Project B.I.G. (Business, Industry, Government), the groups worked together to counteract several national boycotts of Mississippi products and the threat of more to come. However, during the process of forging the alliance, the Sovereignty Commission had to convince local business interests that it was not a “super-snooping agency.” Although B.I.G. never
successfully functioned as a cohesive whole, the significant time spent in preparation and negotiation validated the Commission’s turn from racist discourse to a more moderate discourse regarding racial boundaries, private choice, and economic improvement.

Significant use of the Transition schema was a result of this shift in audience relevance and the gradual opening of the polity under a more moderate governor. Erle Johnston, Commission director, wrote in a memo to the Governor on October 12, 1964, that the original role of the organization to “help preserve complete segregation” had become “somehow moot” with federal laws and the desegregation of some facilities in the state. In an important sense, this memo marked a climax in the Commission’s story, signaling a crucial discursive shift. Though Johnston was unsuccessful in his campaign to change the daunting name of the Sovereignty Commission to the “Mississippi Information Agency,” he was largely responsible for shifting the public relations repertoire in response to external and internal changes. In 1965, he told a non-southern audience that the State was shifting to a “practical” position, which meant “that you’re not radical or liberal, and not moderate—moderate is a bad word. It just means you can’t stand up on a soapbox and say ‘never.’” Still confined by the local political culture, Johnston did not explicitly advocate moderation in public, but his clearly moderate stance signaled a transformation in the Commission’s approach to maintaining hegemony.

105 Memo from Erle Johnston to Governor Paul Johnson, October 12, 1964, Paul B. Johnston Family Papers (M 191, Box 136) Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
106 “Hopes to Improve Mississippi Image,” Kansas City Star, May 5, 1965
As the federal government issued far-reaching civil rights legislation with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Sovereignty Commission did not back down quietly, blending discursive elements in attempts to appease multiple audiences. To address in-state criticism that political elites were not doing enough to maintain segregation, and to acknowledge the State’s subordinate relationship to the federal government, Johnston had the following to say about federal actions: “To us, these laws and court orders are obnoxious, and we consider them dictatorial and unconstitutional, but we have been forced to make adjustments—reluctantly, and even bitterly, to maintain our reputation of a law abiding citizenry.”

Blending the schemata of Transition, Legality, and Law and Order, the Commission constructed reluctant accommodation to an in-state audience still resistant to change. Political elites did not want to appear defeated, but they also had to bow to federal pressure. The message still bitterly resisted federal intervention, and yet it also displayed a gradual acceptance of federal rulings and general change.

Accordingly, the Commission used the Legality schema to delegitimate federal rulings and defend compliance at the same time. In reaction to a 1965 addendum to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Commission explained that Mississippi had faced no “heavier cross” than the desegregation compliance plans being enforced by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which threatened to remove federal aid if school districts did not comply (with Form No. 441). However, while de-legitimizing the federal agency, the Commission also reminded the audience, “we cannot afford to lose

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107 Speech to Belzoni Rotary Club, SCR # 99-139-0-17-1-1 to 6-1-1, p.1
Due to the tension between conforming to this subordinate relationship and local cultural constraints, the Commission had to carefully frame accommodation.

Discursive changes are also observed in the American Values schema. First, as the Commission began to encourage reluctant accommodation, it asked its local audience to respect the American way. Local audiences were often reminded of Section 7 of the Mississippi Constitution, which prohibited withdrawal from the United States.109 This claim implied that because the State could not truly assert sovereignty without re-fighting the Civil War, local whites should remember their role as Americans. Rather than frame the Commission's new moderate stance as submissive, it was constructed as an appeal to patriotism. The cultural schema of American Values was no longer used to delegitimate criticism of Mississippi, but to encourage acceptance of change. Second, when the Voting Rights Act of 1965 threatened to remove local control of the election process, Mississippi passed a constitutional amendment to alter previous restrictions, like the poll tax and literacy requirement. To local white audiences, Johnston urged them to support this amendment, but also to exercise their civic duty: "The sacred right to vote is meaningless unless it is exercised at the polls. Those who are qualified to vote must make a choice."110 Because Johnston could not publicly denounce the impending extension of voting rights to black Mississippians, and because the Commission no longer explicitly stated that the size of the black population was a political threat, Johnston appealed to whites to exercise their duties as Americans. Explicit advocacy of

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108 "Speech before Hazlehurst Lions Club," February 14, 1965, SCR # 99-139-0-20-1-1-1 to 6-1-1, p.2
109 No label, SCR # 99-139-0-72-1-1-1 to 8-1-1, p.1
110 "Speech before Brandon Lions Club," SCR # 99-139-0-19-1-1-1 to 6-1-1, p.5
the racial boundary that separated access to material resources was officially taboo due to the rules of governmental legitimacy and therefore embedded in other cultural schema. As attention focused on the State and its violent ways during the Freedom Summer campaign, the American Values schema was also used to absolve Mississippi of responsibility for violence and de-legitimate civil rights activists. As Freedom Summer activists reported on situations encountered in Mississippi, like police brutality and poverty, the Commission portrayed the State as a target of "acrimonious falsehoods" uttered by "misguided" students to non-southern audiences. Johnston apparently also spent a great deal of time sending letters to newspapers around the country, refuting claims made by Freedom Summer volunteers about poverty and voter registration violations. In fact, in 1967, Johnston wrote to talk show host Johnny Carson, asking for equal air time to refute negative claims made by an unknown guest about Mississippi.\textsuperscript{111} As pointed criticism of Mississippi's material boundaries arose from "outsiders", the Sovereignty Commission appealed to cultural schema that privileged justice and fairness in an effort to shift victim status from blacks to the state itself. History shows this strategy was not very effective.

The Commission also intensified denunciation of the activists as subversives. In documents aimed at both strategic audiences, Freedom Summer participants were called Communists, sexual perverts, atheists, and violent perpetrators. The country still felt ripples from the McCarthy era, and the State sought to align its position with those who

\textsuperscript{111} Erle Johnston letter to Johnny Carson, August 24, 1967, Paul Johnson Family Papers, (M 191, Box 140), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
feared communist infiltration and attacks on American values by reinforcing the boundary between patriot and communist to preserve the right to maintain segregation. Under Johnston’s leadership, the Commission strategically sought information on activists that could be used to “drive them out” of the county in which they worked. Johnston compared the names of activists to lists produced by the House Un-American Activities Committee to search for communists with the following theory: “Negroes are very religious, and in many cases, if they thought the person that was leading them was a communist [or] an atheist, they would get away from him. We ran a bunch of them out of Mississippi that way because when they got exposed for what they were, they lost their influence: the blacks wouldn’t listen to them…” While it is improbable that this tactic had the boasted effect, activists were responsive to it. When Johnston’s editorial on Ted Seaver’s communist affiliations and negative impact appeared in a Vermont newspaper, Seaver responded in a letter to this paper of his home state, saying that the Sovereignty Commission was like a “kind of secret police…I am honored that they felt I was doing so much against segregation that I deserved a special investigative eye kept on me.”

As Freedom Summer volunteers moved into the State and highly publicized events of violence occurred, such as the murder of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, the Commission increased its emphasis on the Law and Order schema. For example, the Commission portrayed itself as a “public health service” that engaged in

"preventative medicine" to prevent racial disruptions.\textsuperscript{114} The Commission also knew that in order to uphold State legitimacy on a national level, it had to prevent negative publicity. While \textit{Law and Order} discursive elements during this time period increased the targeting of civil rights groups as "agitators" and affirmed the Commission's commitment to maintaining peace, another trend became significant and somewhat controversial, increasing tension among elites. A report of activities in the first half of 1964 that was given to the Governor and Commission board members noted that a speech given in May, just before Freedom Summer began, warned local citizens to:

leave problems in the hands of legal law enforcement personnel ... [and] also discouraged them from joining any secret undercover groups which attempt to circumvent the law and could get out of hand under emotional leadership. No reference was made to any particular group or organization.\textsuperscript{115}

While the Commission had remained relatively silent on such groups, like the Ku Klux Klan, it was now permissible to warn against their impact, although in a covert way. After the speech in Canton, a local paper wrote that Johnston had "urged Mississippians not to join secret white supremacist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan...[although he] did not mention the Klan by name".\textsuperscript{116} To local white civic groups, Johnston's veiled warning used the \textit{Law and Order} schema to delegitimate local segregationist groups. Upon reflection, Johnson noted that he used this tactic to distance the Sovereignty

\textsuperscript{114} "Address by Erle Johnston, Jr.", SCR # 99-139-0-22-1-1-1 to 7-1-1, p.1

\textsuperscript{115} "Report of Principal Activities and Policies from January 1, 1964, through April 31, 1964," SCR # 7-3-0-26-4-1-1 to 11-1-1, p.4

\textsuperscript{116} "Johnston says stay out of secret undercover groups," \textit{The Clarion-Ledger}, May 14, 1964
Commission from groups like the Ku Klux Klan. At the time, however, he was infuriated when reporters quoted him as directly criticizing such groups by name.

Moderate was still a bad word, although its message was implicitly being sent.

The most significant shift in the repertoire was away from the schema of Race.

The discursive aspect of boundary-work became couched in other themes, signifying a shift in the political discourse and response to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. To local audiences, Johnston would say that they were not giving up their "principles", because that was "how we feel in our hearts, not what we are forced to do with our hands." Such a statement signaled public compliance with transition, but also reinforced the racial project of segregation as one that could happen in people's minds and culture just as well as it could in a segregated way of life (Omi and Winant 1994). In other speeches, individualism was used as a blanket for continued racism and delegitimation of the looming Civil Rights Act:

Public facilities can be available to all citizens, but I reserve for myself and my family the right to choose—yes, even to discriminate—between friends and associates, my neighborhood, the TV program I watch, and the products I buy. This is the American way.

Though the discourses of Race were growing taboo, the unequal access to resources that they had defended were linked with other acceptable schemata. Federal mandates required that the state of Mississippi re-distribute resources so that blacks and whites had

118 "Attitudes in Mississippi," Speech To Symposium on the American South, p.14, Paul B. Johnston Family Papers (M 191, Box 137), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
equal access to them. As the resources that supported the racial boundary were altered, so too were the cultural schema that constituted them. However, the Commission made racism congruent with individualism, thus embedding taboo cultural schemas in others more amenable to the legitimate retention of white power.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the transformation of the public transcript constructed by the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission between 1956 and 1967, offering a systematic analysis of political discursive change. While the Commission’s efforts to maintain segregation through public relations activity were not successful, the process through which the message changed shows how white political elites engaged in cultural repair-work, using the transposable nature of schemas to transform the racial boundary and largely maintain control of resources.

At the beginning of the chapter, I noted that it might seem strange that once racial hegemony was effectively contested, the Sovereignty Commission, authorized by the legislature to do whatever necessary to maintain segregation and sovereignty, created a public relations department. While the state did not shun coercive tactics, it recognized its constraints as a political entity subservient to a higher one. Although Mississippi’s political elites could implicitly approve violent repression by not suppressing white violence against civil rights activists, it could not overtly participate. Otherwise, the public façade of legitimacy would deeply crack. Thus, the best the Commission could do, which happened to be the more cost-effective way to maintain legitimate power, was
try to reconstitute hegemony by controlling how people made sense of the racial boundary between blacks and whites.

In its public relations work, the Commission engaged in boundary-work, or tried to maintain control of the schemas and resources that composed the boundary between the two races. Yet, subordinate to federal mandates (although resistant as long as possible) and constrained by the need to maintain legitimacy with multiple audiences whose relevance changed over time, this boundary-work was complicated.

Initially forced by the federal government to articulate the schema that justified the unequal distribution of resources between whites and blacks, the Commission turned its attention to the non-southern public in the hopes of soliciting acquiescence with the necessity of segregation. Intentionally, the Commission drew from the Legality schema to justify boundary-maintenance as a sovereign right. In addition, the boundary was supported to the non-southern public with an American Values schema that emphasized fairness. However, the Commission’s early message also explicitly engaged the Race schema to explain why segregation was necessary. By the early 1960’s, internal contention developed within the Commission as public relations activity became more responsive to the non-southern audience and as early rumblings of moderation surfaced after disruptions in Mississippi. However, the Commission’s activities and discourse sent symbolic messages that moderation among local whites was not acceptable. The Race schema continued to dominate the public message, and the schema of Legality was increasingly used to de-legitimize the federal government and defend the racial boundary. The Law and Order schema became critical as Mississippi confronted the Freedom
Riders and the "invasion" of federal troops. Both of these groups were de-legitimated with discursive strategies that affirmed the State's commitment to peace and portrayed outsiders as instigators of violence. Between 1964 and 1967, the Commission became more closely aligned with moderate political elites, and propaganda was increasingly directed at the in-state audience, as the federal government passed powerful legislation and movement activity garnered national press with major events. Appeals to *Legality* and *American Values* now urged the in-state audience to accept transition, weakening an explicit defense of boundary-maintenance. *Race* discourses became more taboo in the public sphere, as political elites yielded to changes in resource distribution but suggested that the racial boundary could linger in people's hearts and minds. Finally, the mixing of schemata peaked as discourses were increasingly blurred to soften a shift in the political culture.

However, the entirety of the Commission's political discourse was not compliant with accommodation, and resistance lingered as boundary-defense was embedded in more amenable cultural schemas. Federal intervention was labeled discriminatory—illegal and unjust. Activists from outside the state were threats to order, alongside local segregationist groups. Finally, appeals to American values of justice, and of individual rights as opposed to communism, were used to affirm the right of every Mississippian to retain the racial boundary for himself or herself, so long as the laws were obeyed. In short, contextual changes and pressures from multiple audiences elicited alteration in the public defense of the racial boundary, but the linkage of boundary-work with other schemas ultimately protected the white state structure. Resources were re-distributed as
the federal government demanded, but whites largely retained control of them, justifying lingering inequalities by linking them with more legitimate cultural schemas that “[informed] their social use” (Sewell 1992: 12).
CHAPTER 5
SEEING LIKE A RACIAL STATE: MONITORING THE RACIAL BOUNDARY

The previous chapter discussed the finding that although the public relations department began with a staunchly segregationist message, it gradually came to espouse a more accommodationist position by the mid-1960s and urged local whites to practice restraint and accept federal mandates. The public relations campaign was carried out to try to maintain white elite hegemony, first by seeking assent from the non-southern audience and then by cooling off in-state groups who threatened state legitimacy. While segregation was not maintained, the public relations process shows evidence that white political elites adapted to accommodation in order to survive, in a sense by rearticulating (Sewell 1996) boundary-work.

Yet, the Sovereignty Commission was not just a public relations organization. Within a few organizational meetings, the Commission board also decided to hire investigators to monitor threats to the racial boundary. Although the organization engaged in boundary-work to try and maintain hegemony, it did not fully remove its coercive armor. This chapter examines how boundary-work was carried out in the private transcript of Commission action. Monitoring the racial boundary involved directly engaging in coercive strategies to perpetuate white political elites' control of resources and schema, but in ways more subtle than those of the Ku Klux Klan or the Citizens Council. Because of the state's subordinate position to the federal government, and because coercion is costly, the Commission engaged in tempered strategies of coercion and also worked through non-state agents to mediate repression. Additionally, the message from Mississippi was sent in a public arena with multiple audiences who
necessitated certain kinds of alteration; therefore, a question arises regarding the actions of white political elites carried out in a far less public sphere. Did a similar transformation occur in the backstage actions of investigations? While change was slower to happen in the private transcript, the organization’s tempered version of coercion worked in concert with ideological strategies to reconstitute hegemony. While the volume of Commission activity in this arena increased over time until 1967, the contest of this backstage work changed, pointing to how the state, and white political elite, adapted to change to retain power.

What is interesting about this coercive, backstage work? Contrary to what we would expect from Scott’s (1990) theory of domination, surveillance commenced when challenges became public. The creation and existence of the Sovereignty Commission meant that the surface appearance of a dominant group in control was visibly cracked. In response to challenge, the government instituted surveillance. However, the Commission’s legitimacy was compromised in various ways by multiple audiences. Although the Commission, as a state tool, essentially had the same objectives as the Ku Klux Klan or the White Citizens Councils, it could not use the same strategies to achieve the objective of continued segregation because it was a state organization that had to maintain legitimacy with multiple audiences. Who were its public audiences? The Commission had to maintain legitimacy with its local white constituency, who were by large (at least the ones who were safely vocal in the late 50s and early 60s), resistant to integration. It had to maintain legitimacy with the non-southern public, and to do this, it utilized a public relations program. It had to maintain legitimacy with the federal
government—the audience that controlled financial resources, and increasingly used this as leverage to force integration. Finally, it struggled to maintain legitimacy with those who challenged the racial order of Mississippi. Ultimately, the Commission lost the battle to maintain segregation, but as a structure that governed social action, the racial boundary was not fully discarded.

Elaboration of Method

General methodology was reviewed in Chapter Three, but the specific approach taken for this chapter’s analysis warrants further elaboration. This chapter is concerned with these empirical questions: 1) What motivated surveillance of the racial boundary? 2) Did the private transcript mirror or diverge from the public transcript? 3) How and when did the Sovereignty Commission intervene at the county-level to suggest ways of either reinforcing or altering the racial boundary?

As noted in Chapter Three, county-level documents are the focus of analysis. I also use evidence from annual reports and meeting minutes to determine what political elites were saying and doing behind the public eye. The county-level reports are the unit of analysis. They provide a way to operationalize the level of interest in a particular county, and they also reveal the degree of attention to particular types of problems. The sample of sixteen counties, discussed in chapter three, contained a total of 685 investigative documents that were coded for analysis.

Beyond acknowledging whether Commission activity increased or decreased in particular areas and during certain time periods, I wanted to know which kinds of problems were most likely to stimulate intrusion and surveillance. Thus, for each
investigative document, I coded each problem identified, or each boundary violation, which I define as any "disorganization of the dominant ideology" (Omi and Winant 1994, 89). This included the range of things that threatened the power of white political elites to define who got what resources, as well as the cultural schema that made sense of racist resource distribution.

The analysis asks how Commission employees, acting on behalf of the State of Mississippi, monitored threats to the boundary that divided black and white access to resources. This boundary framed and shaped the political, economic, and social worlds of blacks and whites, functioning as what Morris (1984) called the "tripartite system of domination." This boundary was maintained through both shared meaning and the distribution of resources. Within each investigative document, I coded every boundary violation identified by the investigator. For example, the first boundary violation in a report was often the reason an investigator was sent to a particular county. Typically, this initial concern was the monitoring of general racial activity. If an investigator went to a county and then discovered other problems, like a voter registration drive or a mixed-race child, these were coded as additional boundary violations. In short, every concern identified in a document was coded.

In the documents that were coded, 1,213 boundary violations were identified. These boundary violations were coded according to their specific description, like voter registration or public integration. To simplify the analysis, identify trends, and compare findings about Commission activity with other research on the Civil Rights Movement,
all boundary violations were grouped into five categories that represent the types of resources that were threatened.

The central three categories are based on Morris' tripartite system of domination: political, economic, and social. Appendix B, number 14, on the coding form shows how individual violations were grouped into these categories. Basically, violations were classified according to the general realm where they posed a challenge. General concern with racial activity (like membership in the NAACP or attendance at a meeting), voting and election matters, and collective action were coded as challenges white control of political resources. Integration attempts that threatened white control of social resources—whether in education, public space, relationships, or social events—were coded as social boundary violations. Finally, challenges that threatened white economic control, or the relegation of blacks to a world of inferior financial resources, were coded as economic violations.

In addition, I wanted to determine whether the Commission was concerned with violence, or threats to the state's mandate to preserve law and order. Presumably, a state must maintain a monopoly on violence to maintain legitimacy (Weber 1978). Luders (2001) says that when state organizations like the Sovereignty Commission ignored white supremacist groups, they in effect facilitated violent repression. Thus, I coded "violence boundary violations" for documents where the investigator identified recent acts of violence against black or white citizens as concerns. The coding scheme differentiated between acts specifically noted as instigated by whites (or "supposedly" instigated by whites) and acts whose perpetrators were not identified. The "white violence" category
included concern with white supremacist groups. Because the public relations message increasingly targeted white resistance groups as “hot-headed” and “emotional,” I wanted to see if the backstage Commission strategies were as concerned with monitoring the activities of such groups. Finally, I included an “other” category to catch violations that could not be classified into the four previous categories. Because this category was so small, it is not discussed in the results.

For the county-level analysis, documents were coded for the presence or absence of the identification of violation types. In other words, if a document reported on voter registration activity in a particular county, it was coded “1” for the presence of a political boundary violation. If there were multiple types of political boundary violations in a given document, all violations were coded in the database, but the document was still coded “1” for all violations of the same type. Some violations were coded with multiple codes to account for the fact that some events challenged boundaries in multiple realms. For example, a movement-initiated sit-in was a political act of protest that challenged boundaries in public space, such as a park or restaurant. In such a case, the action would be coded as both a political and a social boundary violation, or as a demonstration and an attempt at public integration. Thus, the document would be coded as identifying problems in both the political and social realms.

*Monitoring the Movement, Monitoring Race*

In 1957, the Sovereignty Commission presented a report to the state legislature that highlighted the major functions of the organization. The report praised the “exceedingly good” race relations in Mississippi and noted, “It can be safely asserted that
there has been less trouble and less friction between the races in Mississippi than possibly any other state where similar conditions prevail." Citing reciprocal "good will" that existed between blacks and whites, the report told legislators that the Commission had been working to encourage this "fine attitude on the part of both races." The report also noted that investigations had been carried out, but would remain secret as disclosure would "serve no good purpose, and in many instances would be harmful." In comparison to later years, investigative activity was relatively minimal during the Commission's first year of existence; however, agency documents clearly established the secretive, hidden nature of investigative activity. Though white hegemony was being contested, the Commission was still required to maintain legitimacy as a state organization, a "political identity" (Tilly 1999) that had to uphold the public face of domination (Scott 1990). Thus, as a governmental agency, the Commission was constrained in its ability to release information or acknowledge its activities. Investigations were effectively the domain of the hidden transcript.

While the results of investigations were not public domain, the existence of the Sovereignty Commission was. Press reports cited in Chapter Three show that the local press alerted everyone to the status of the Commission as the state's "segregation watchdog." The public knew from the press that the Commission employed investigators, and in the early years, an investigator traveled to white civic clubs to explain the surveillance practices of the organization but not the details. The only audiences for the results of investigations, beyond Commission employees, were the

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119 "State Sovereignty Commission: Report to the Members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi," SCR # 7-0-1-29-1-1-1 to 9-1-1, p.6
Commission board and the state legislature. The Commission board typically met monthly to discuss strategies, although as noted in previous chapters, one Governor failed to appoint a board at all for two years of his administration, during which time the Commission director controlled the organization's work. In addition to the board, the state legislature was informed of Commission investigations. Typically, both houses of the legislature were given reports about Commission activities that covered varying spans of time, from one to three years. These reports highlighted Commission strategies regarded, or at least presented, as successful. However, reports sometimes noted that full details were not provided for reasons that disclosure would be problematic. Legislators were told they could stop by the Commission office to view the files, and this practice was encouraged when the organization was criticized for not fully utilizing its capabilities. Before delving into the analysis of the files themselves, I briefly review the investigations and results highlighted in these legislative reports. This shows how a sort of middle transcript filtered information to other state officials, yet was intended to be kept from public knowledge. It also suggests what Commission officials regarded as successful and shows how they shared their "dirty linen" with other political elites.

Between 1956 and 1959, investigative activity was focused on the NAACP. Meeting minutes and reports presented to the legislature emphasize the Commission's growing catalogue of suspected troublemakers. Such documents also reveal that the Commission's pursuits were not limited to the monitoring of early movement activity. For example, in 1956, Commission board members and the director corresponded with an in-state biologist about the threat of sickle-cell anemia and blood exchange between
blacks and whites. Seeking a way to preserve segregation in the public school system, the Commission reviewed the argument that the presence of sickle cell anemia in mostly black persons would threaten white schoolchildren. They consulted with officials at the University of Mississippi medical center regarding this argument and never seriously devoted effort to publicizing the information, but the time spent considering the issue points to the Commission’s primary concern with seeking all potential defenses for the preservation of the racial boundary in the education system.120

At the end of 1959, and before a new gubernatorial administration assumed control, the Commission issued a report that drew attention to the organization’s proudest moments. According to this report, the Commission prevented several “racial incidents,” including the attempted registration of a black male at a local state college and the plans of a white preacher from Indiana to build a “Negro school with integrated faculty.” The organization was also involved in plans to prevent integration of its Gulf Coast beaches, and it had begun to establish “eyes and ears” in many counties for the purpose of obtaining information. Thus, initial engagement in boundary-work focused on people and organizations threatening to the state’s control of resources that helped maintain the racial boundary. While much of the covert monitoring did not have direct consequences, but rather served as a means of record-keeping, the Commission boasted to members of the legislature that its work often did maintain control over threatened resources. Thus,

120 SCR # 7-0-1-27-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.3. In 1958, a bill that would require the labeling of blood by race to prevent the integration of blood transfusions passed the House of Representatives. A news article noted that the Sovereignty Commission had studied sickle cell anemia in the past (“Bill Prevents Any Mixing of Races From Blood Bank”, Commercial Dispatch, March 25, 1958).
backstage work involved both toned down coercion as well as reassurance to other political elites that hegemony was protected.

The inauguration of Governor Ross Barnett in 1960 initiated a period of unrelenting defiance of integration and a tightened link between the Commission and local Citizens Councils. Under Barnett, the Commission boasted that it had worked to preserve control of educational resources by preventing the registration of a black man at an all-white state college (with disastrous personal consequences for the man). However, the Commission, nor the Governor, were able to prevent the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi in 1962. In the wake of this incident, several University faculty members spoke out against racist conditions in the school and state, much to the disliking of state officials. The Sovereignty Commission director's report to legislators at the end of 1963 notes that he had written the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Institutions of Higher Learning and proposed reasons why Dr. James Silver, the author of *The Closed Society*, should be fired from his job. When the Chairman responded that the Board did not want to make a martyr of Silver, the Commission concurred it was best to prevent negative publicity. In brief, the Commission reassured its allies—white segregationists—that the organization was doing all it could to maintain the racial boundary and undermine those who challenged it. However, Commission action was tempered by the need to maintain legitimacy with the non-southern public and the federal government, who were both beginning to look more critically at the ways in which resources and schemas were utilized to defend segregation.
Consequently, the backstage arena was the place where boundary-work was fueled by a cultural schema of race that said resources should be unequally distributed between blacks and whites. It was also a place where Commission strategies were constrained by the desire to prevent negative publicity that might undermine the public presentation of dominance. For example, the Commission became involved in an issue for several years regarding school integration and racial classification. A summary report to Commission members in November 1963 noted that it was looking “into a situation in Jasper County concerning the attempt of a woman, unmarried, listed on birth certificate as a Negro, who is attempting to get her two sons, whose birth certificates show they are white, into a white school.” Apparently the case had been brought to the attention of the Commission two years prior, and the family had agreed not to send the boys to a white school. In 1963, at ages 9 and 7, the boys had never been to school. The Commission began to work with the family, local schools, and the Department of Education, to “prevent the integration of a Jasper County School”; ultimately, the Commission’s goal was to keep the situation out of the press and avoid negative publicity.\textsuperscript{121} By 1963, investigations had determined that the boys were “no more than 1/16 Negro, and it is more likely that they are about 1/32. Under state law this means they are white.” However, their county school would not admit the boys, and agreed to pay for their transportation to another school.\textsuperscript{122} By 1965, the Commission had arranged to get the boys into an all-white school after failing at the first attempt to get them into a school.

\textsuperscript{121} “Report to Sovereignty Commission,” November 21, 1963, SCR # 7-5-0-9-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.1

\textsuperscript{122} “Director’s Report to Sovereignty Commission Members,” December 1963, SCR # 99-68-0-1-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.1
outside of Jasper County. One report noted the Commission’s pleasure that the situation never made the news.

By 1964, and with the election of a more moderate governor, the Commission was operating in full force. Although Governor Paul Johnson did not officially call a Commission meeting until 1966, Director Erie Johnston continued to keep the organization operating smoothly, passing all information to the Governor’s assistant. The Commission continued to monitor civil rights organizations and “racial agitators,” although Director Johnston had written a new policy directive. In August 1964, Johnston noted that they had “attempted to operate the office as a preventative program to avoid incidents and situations where they could be averted by advance information in the hands of proper authorities. We have assumed the role...of trouble shooter for communities, boards, or commissions requesting official guidance in working out solutions to racial problems.”123 Noting that this role assumed a range of activities, the report then listed major investigations that had been carried out in the previous month.

In the political realm, the Commission dealt with the advancement of Freedom Summer and multiple civil rights activities. In 1964, the organization suggested that the Public Service Commission use its power to keep a black man (designated “c/m” in the report), a trucker who answered to this organization, in Philadelphia, Mississippi, from renting his motel to civil rights organizations for Freedom Summer. The report notes that this motel was not leased. Such actions served to carry out the stated program of preventive medicine, but not necessarily in a way motivated to prevent violence and

123 “Report of Principal Activities and Policies from January 1, 1964 through August 31, 1964,” SCR # 97-3-0-26-1-1-1 to 11-1-1, p.1
protect activists. Ultimately, the Commission was concerned with maintaining the color line, and if white and black volunteers lived together in this motel and carried their agitative message to local people, then a problematic situation might arise. The Commission also monitored the MFDP, providing a report to the Mississippi Democratic Delegation on the political party. In keeping with its constant concern regarding voting issues, investigators solicited information from circuit clerks across the state in August to determine the effect of voter registration drives. The Civil Rights Movement typically initiated its contestation of racial boundaries in the political sphere, and the Commission followed it there, sometimes preceding it in an effort to ward off disruption to white southern rule.  

As in the first period, the Commission was also involved in various issues related to integration of the public sphere. It had suggested that Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, cancel extension courses that would be integrated under federal order to prevent an “influx of Negro ex-servicemen on our university campuses.” It also tried to get a local television station to cancel “Bonanza” after three of its stars refused to appear before a segregated audience in Jackson, Mississippi.  

By 1965, the Commission was more concerned about activities in the economic realm. In reports to the legislature, the Commission lauded its role in preventing or curbing the effect of boycotts at the county level. As civil rights activists became

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124 The Commission also spent some time investigating a segregationist organization called Americans for the Preservation of the White Race. The APWR was targeted by the Commission because it had instituted boycotts in some towns against white merchants who appeared sympathetic to segregation. Ultimately, the Commission was concerned with the boycotts and their effects, not necessarily the organization’s goals.

125 Ibid.
involved in poverty programs, like the Child Development Group of Mississippi and Headstart schools, the Commission started to collect information regarding them. For example, investigators spend a great deal of time monitoring Mount Beulah, the place where many Headstart programs were organized. With information gleaned from reports, the Commission arranged for publication of “shocking and immoral behavior” there...so that “many colored citizens changed their attitudes about this center.”  

By 1966, the Commission was heavily involved in getting information to US Senators about local poverty programs to get money shifted to organizations controlled by the state, and away from those it saw as pushing the cause of civil rights. Finally, by the late 1960s, the Commission was less explicitly concerned about racial problems, more concerned about the general category of subversion, and as a whole, was less active. A director's report on the years 1968-1971 reported surveillance of the Republic of New Africa, the Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society, and the American Civil Liberties Union. In addition, the Commission monitored “drug abuse” and other campus problems.

In short, the typical function of this middle-range transcript was to reassure other white political elites that the Commission was successful in preventing both integration and bad publicity. The process through which the Commission functioned and filtered information is instructive for Scott's account of domination. It is somewhat problematic to assume a clear divide between the public and private transcript. In this case, the system of white domination was so encompassing that the state could acknowledge its

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126 "Report on Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission (1964-1967) SCR # 7-3-0-20-1-1-1 to 19-1-1, p.8
"dirty linen" as a symbolic way to express power, but it was also careful not to reveal its entire deck of cards. The Commission filtered its valuable cards to other state officials, and only carefully dealt choice ones to the public by having the segregationist press publish articles using Commission information without acknowledging the source. Ultimately, the goal was to undermine the "outsiders" who threatened the state's system of order. Because political elites were seemingly blind to the agency of local blacks, they did not see the strength of the opposition they faced internally.

County-level investigations

The discussion above reveals that the Sovereignty Commission was involved in a range of strategies intended to undermine social change and retain white political power and resource control. The predominant coercive strategy used in this process was surveillance. Information gained from surveillance was used in various ways to challenge the movement's claims and activities. The Commission distributed information to the local press to discredit activists and portray local blacks as resistant to their work. In addition, investigative results were provided to local, state, and federal officials in efforts to resist activists and their programs. The Commission also used surveillance information to target white moderates, sending the message that no one was exempt from the organization's watchdog tactics. Investigators communicated with local officials about ways to manage civil rights demonstrations, laws, and federal investigators. Informants, both black and white, were recruited to carry out covert investigations, and they provided the Commission with information about civil rights organizations' members, materials, and plans. Finally, the reports discussed above
portray the Commission as being actively involved at preventing problems at the local level. While the actual investigative documents show that this occurred less often than suggested by official reports to the legislature, the Commission director and investigators sometimes did make recommendations to local officials regarding how certain problems should be handled.

Taken together, how did these activities play out at the county-level? And how were they informed by a particular understanding of the black/white boundary? To answer these questions, this discussion focuses on surveillance strategies, although the other methods of response will also be included. Table 5.1 provides a general overview of a basic trend in Sovereignty Commission surveillance: the volume of investigations increased over time. The first three columns denote the time periods of primary movement significance and parallel the time periods of focus in the previous chapter. As the fourth column shows, there was comparatively little investigative activity after 1968. Thus, while the years 1968 through 1974 will be noted in the discussion, they will remain marginal to the analysis.

Table 5.1: Volume of Coded Investigative Documents Over Time

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It might be expected that the volume of investigative activities would decrease over time due to increasing pressure generated by federal mandates and the civil rights movement. It would seem that the Sovereignty Commission, as an agent of a state trying

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127 The volume increase is not due to an increase in staff; at any given time, there were never more than three full-time investigators.
to maintain the public appearance of domination, would retreat from actions that might weaken its legitimacy. In addition, the changing public relations message suggests that the state became more compliant with federal mandates beginning in late 1964. What explains the shifts in Commission strategies of surveillance? Was the organization just responding to movement activity in a tactical ebb and flow? Did external factors, like the federal government or economic factors, affect the process of response? Did internal conflict among elites shape the choices of strategy? Did the Sovereignty Commission simply fade into its own extraneous relationship to inevitable change? By turning to the text—and an illumination of the cultural schema that fueled this process—we can better understand why the state increasingly turned to strategies of surveillance, even as these strategies were presumably becoming more costly.

Macro-level explanations would suggest that county-level characteristics were related to Commission monitoring. Scholars have shown that county-level characteristics help explain movement success and local backlash against the movement (Andrews forthcoming). Conversely, it might be expected that county-level characteristics help explain the degree of state response. As discussed in Chapter Three, I examine this possibility by looking at variation in Commission monitoring at the county level. A sample of sixteen counties was drawn to capture variation in terms of movement strength, which was historically correlated with the presence of a White Citizens Council (McMillen 1989), and violence against civil rights activists.
Table 5.2: Mean Count of Reports by County Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Violence</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Episodic</th>
<th>Sustained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The total number of counties in each cell is indicated in parentheses.

Table 5.2 presents the mean count of reports by county type. The mean is used because in two categories, only one county of the population of 82 fit the type. Thus, I took the mean for other cells where two counties were included in the sample. The trend across county types shows that surveillance increased in counties with greater movement strength and increased violence against civil rights activists. This finding suggests that the Sovereignty Commission was more responsive in areas where the movement was stronger and the level of violence was higher—implying that the state organization was concerned with preventing challenges to racial boundaries and with preserving law and order. Such a conclusion would be in line with the public message that became more critical of extremist groups over time. In addition, this finding agrees with the theoretical expectation that the state needed to preserve hegemony as well as maintain control of violent tactics. White vigilantism increasingly endangered claims to state sovereignty.
However, a closer look at the text of the documents suggests a more refined understanding of state response is necessary.

To begin a closer examination of the text, I turn to the identification of boundary violations. Recall that the coding of boundary violations is intended to capture the identification of resources that were perceived to be threatened. Mississippi's dominant whites remained in power through a system of order that kept blacks in a subservient, powerless position. Structurally, blacks did not have equal access to material resources, like voting or political office or well-paying jobs or high-quality education or Gulf Coast beaches. Through routine patrols and requests, Commission investigators identified potential and actual violations of the boundaries that maintained this system of structural inequality. Essentially, investigators were working at the micro-level, drawing from macro-level cultural schema of race that were embodied in etiquette, rituals, ideas, and symbols. As state actors and white political elites, they were constrained by their commitment to a political culture premised on segregation. However, as challenges arose that threatened structural segregation and posed a new way of thinking about race (in the claims of the civil rights movement), state actors were forced to think about material change, but they were also presented with new cultural schema for thinking about and strategizing racial boundary management.

To begin to think about how this process unfolded, Table 5.3 presents data on the overall trend of boundary monitoring. Percentages do not total to 100 because reports could contain more than one type of boundary violation. The data on county-level characteristics suggested that the Commission paid more attention to counties with more
sustained movements and greater levels of violence against activists. Table 5.3 suggests that the overwhelming concern of the Commission was with challenges in the political realm, rather than with maintaining law and order and preventing those violations which threatened the safety of activists. Yet, how did this process change over time? Tables 5.4 and 5.5 help answer this question.

Table 5.3: Percentage of Reports Identifying Types of Racial Boundary Violations (1956-1974)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Violence</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68.03%</td>
<td>27.59%</td>
<td>15.62%</td>
<td>10.07%</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In tables 5.4 and 5.5, several trends are significant for the discussion. Table 5.4 provides a general count of how many reports, within each time period, identified boundary violations in the relevant areas. Table 5.5 shows what percentage of all investigative documents during a given time period identified racial boundary violations in the same areas. First, the monitoring of racial boundaries was largely driven by concern with threats in the political realm, which supports a central tenet of political opportunity structure theory that elites are motivated to defend political power when movements arise. In fact, studies of repression have often focused on how elites respond to political protest events. However, the range of response is much broader. According to the data, the process also closely attended to the contestation of social boundaries, which was more intense during the second time period than after 1963. In addition, the Commission paid little attention to challenges in the economic realm until post-1964. Finally, there is an important shift whereby the Commission increasingly paid more attention to violent events. Was it because the Commission altered its public message in
1964 to express a commitment to “preventative medicine,” or the prevention of problems before they started? This result suggests that the Commission was, in fact, increasingly concerned with urging restraint among white citizens and maintaining lawfulness and peace. The text of these documents illuminates the cultural schema that informed the monitoring of resources. An examination of investigative discourse and legitimacy struggles elaborates the process of how states and their political elites respond to challenges.
Table 5.4: Time Period Count of Reports Identifying Racial Boundary Violations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956-1959</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1963</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-1974</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Count is presence or absence of boundary violation in reports; reports can identify more than one type of boundary violation

Table 5.5: Percentage of Reports Identifying Racial Boundary Violations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956-1959</td>
<td>77.19%</td>
<td>14.04</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-1963</td>
<td>65.69</td>
<td>46.08</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Values in cells represent the number of documents identifying type of boundary violation within time period as percentage of total documents for time period.

The Political Realm

By the mid 1960s, the Commission's public message was one that urged compliance with federal legislation, which was never considered constitutional. And yet behind the scenes, the Commission was increasingly concerned with violations in the
political realm—implying that the organization's backstage actions were somewhat decoupled from its public ones.

Across all time periods, concern with political resources dominated Commission monitoring. And in counties with more sustained movement activity, attention to political resources that supported the racial boundary was strongest. This finding enforces a major argument of political process theory that political elites are largely concerned with the political threat posed by movements (McAdam 1982). The most general category of monitoring—activity—was placed here, and it is the modal type of political concern. “Activity” encompasses a range of things, including routine checks of the situation in various counties to concern regarding whether persons were active in civil rights work to background checks on persons involved in movement events to tracking of membership in the NAACP and other organizations. From 1956 to 1959, Commission discourse regarding civil rights activity largely centered on determining whether the NAACP was active in particular counties and the presence of “troublemakers.” Investigators sought information largely through local officials, including mayors and sheriffs, and local white citizens, who were often members of the local Citizens Council. For example, in 1958, the sheriff of Lafayette County told an investigator, “he believed that there was an active chapter of the NAACP around Oxford. He does not know where they meet but said there were several Negroes who were busy agitating all the time.”

Often, local officials would then identify the local blacks they suspected of being NAACP members, and the investigator would file the information away, troublemakers

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128 Zack van Landingham memo to Director, November 26, 1958, SCR # 2-19-0-1-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
targeted and county racial activity assessed. By the end of 1958, the Sovereignty
Commission had assembled a list of "individuals who have shown up constantly in our
investigations as being active in their support of the NAACP across the state" and
distributed the names to the relevant county officials.\textsuperscript{129}

As Erle Johnston recalled, if someone was just an NAACP member, that was not
a big deal (although the membership was noted)…

But if it were a person who was actually doing something that was instigative, or
trying to get bitterness between whites and blacks, we would try our best to get
something on that person and get that person out of the way. I don’t mean by
elimination, what I mean is, get them away from the community where he was.\textsuperscript{130}

Typically, they would try to do this by discrediting the activist in some way—and
because the Commission did not want to be directly connected to this process (because it
had to maintain governmental legitimacy), it would filter the information it gained to
local officials or journalists. What is important here—in terms of how the state saw
challenges in the early 1960s—is that for political elites, activists were trying to get
bitterness started between blacks and whites. For white elites, as they said in public
relations material, segregation was “mutual”—they could not \textit{see} their social organization
any other way as their vision was shaped by a hegemonic racial boundary. Here, the
Commission’s identification of agitators and potential agitators was a strategy to
reinforce the boundary between black and white.

\textsuperscript{129} SCR # 2-19-0-3-1-1-1; A copy of this document often marked the beginning of a
county’s folder.
\textsuperscript{130} Erle Johnston Oral History, Mississippi Oral History Project, Volume 276, 1980, p.81-
82. William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
Between 1960 and 1963, investigators were still concerned with membership in the NAACP and the organization’s activities, but they were also increasingly attentive to the participation of students and local blacks in protest activity. An investigator reported in 1960, “All law enforcement officials stated that to their knowledge there were no known Negro or white agitators in Montgomery County.”[^1] Such evidence suggests that the Sovereignty Commission was part of a larger apparatus of repression that prevented early, strong movement activity in Mississippi. Acknowledged by movement scholars and activists as possibly the most difficult segregated southern state to penetrate, Mississippi had the “benefit” of a state organization that began tracking challenges early and effectively.

By 1962, the Commission was acutely aware of the assistance of outsiders, as one investigator wrote that he had been sent to Sunflower County “to assist county and city officials in combating racial troubles which were brought about by Robert Moses, James Bevels, and a number of other racial agitators.”[^2] Thus, as more visible and vocal activists moved into the state, the Commission became more concerned with identifying those who would threaten a racial order. From 1964 until the Commission’s end, agents continued to monitor civil rights activity that challenged the color line. One agent wrote in 1966 that he had been sent to one county to check for “any subversive subjects which might be at work under the color of civil rights....”[^3] Briefly, these quotes suggest how

[^1]: Investigative Report, July 20, 1960, SCR # 2-65-0-13-1-1-1
[^2]: Investigative Report, September 14, 1962, SCR # 2-38-1-47-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.1
[^3]: Investigative Report, June 8, 1966, SCR # 2-19-0-50-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
agents for the Commission identified civil rights activity as threatening to racial boundaries, defining the work as racial agitation.

The Commission's concern with voter registration was the second highest modal category of political boundary violations and mirrors points made by public representatives to non-southern audiences. Speeches and written material of the public relations department often pointed to the significant population of blacks in Mississippi as an implicit political threat. As early as 1959, the Sovereignty Commission began systematically collecting information from local circuit clerks regarding black voter registration. Concern with voter registration dominated investigator attention between 1960 and 1963, when responses to Commission investigators were more explicitly framed in terms of black population size and voter registration. In 1960, one circuit clerk reported to an investigator that, "about 1000 Negroes are registered to vote in Jackson County. The Negroes constitute about 18% of the population of the county." The number of black registered voters and voter registration drives were clearly defined as racial trouble in investigation documents, since white officials at both the state and local level perceived growing black political power as a threat to white political domination (Blaylock 1967).

From concern about voter registration grew concern about actual voting practices, and eventually about the election of black officials. Consider the following sketch of investigations. In 1960, an investigator reported that Sunflower County, a county in the cotton-rich, heavily black-populated, Mississippi Delta, had "fifteen registered Negro

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Investigative Report, July 5, 1960, SCR # 2-50-08-1-1-1
voters ... [and] has had very little trouble with Negroes in attempting to register to vote.

Senator Bob Everett stated fortunately most Negroes in Sunflower County were not interested in voting... 135 By 1962, an investigator noted that concern regarding voter registration in Sunflower County, an area with sustained movement activity, had increased, as civil rights organizations "are united together in one big drive in organizing Negroes to resist the white people and to register to vote...[they are] training local Negroes for agitative purposes under the color of the Negroes getting their rights as provided for under the US Constitution." 136 In 1967, an investigator visited the same county amid a media flurry, created because of the possibility that black candidates might win all municipal offices. However, he was happy to report that

... in spite of the fact that qualified Negro voters outnumbered the whites by about 35 in Sunflower, a white slate of officials was elected...I determined through confidential sources long before the polls closed that the white ticket was going to win because of the fact that many good Negro citizens were voting a white ticket. 137

What does this extended example tell us about how actions were motivated by cultural schema regarding the racial boundary? Throughout the files, the Sovereignty Commission rarely, if ever, attributes agency to local blacks. In fact, the discourse of investigative documents tends to portray local blacks as loyal to whites, uninterested in obtaining political power. While the issue of race will be explored more fully in the following chapter, it is important to note that the powerholders' hidden transcript did not reveal a perception of the subordinate group that differed from the publicly produced

135 Investigative Report, August 24, 1960, SCR # 2-38-1-14-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.1
136 Investigative Report, September 26, 1962, SCR # 2-38-1-47-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.4
137 Memo to Erle Johnston from Tom Scarbrough, May 5, 1967, SCR # 2-38-2-1-1-1-1
version. If anything, the denigration of the subordinate group is more severe in the investigative documents. This cultural schema and concern with maintaining legitimacy informed strategies. While the Commission kept close watch over black access to the political realm, white powerholders’ inability to see blacks as full agents, desirous of political access, led to the organization’s relative lack of direction to local officials regarding how to prevent voter registration and voting. In addition, federal pressure on local clerks to conform to race-neutral registration policies constrained the Commission’s ability to interfere with resource distribution.

For example, investigations into voting patterns for black and white candidates in one county in 1967 show that the investigator justified his work by noting that he was not being “political” in his investigation, but that he was just reporting what he observed. In addition, a memo from the Commission director in 1965 instructed that all files should be reviewed for any evidence the organization was linked to preventing voter registration. Suspect files were pulled, although the Commission director later insisted that he never destroyed any documents. Changes mandated by the federal government certainly altered Sovereignty Commission strategies, as well as how they were discussed. Whereas before 1965, investigators had simply trumpeted voter registration numbers and patterns in their reports, they became more cautious, acknowledging the inappropriateness of seeming to interfere with the political process. The articulation of boundary violations and strategies of surveillance changed, impacted by new institutional rules that made coercion even more costly.
These new institutional rules also affected the cultural portrayal of black political power. Above, in the Sunflower examples, investigators briefly acknowledge that blacks in Mississippi did not have full constitutional rights. This admission, rare in the public transcript, is tempered by the phrase “under the color of the Negroes getting their rights,” implying that outside agitators were there to disrupt the color line and resist “white people”, not to advocate civil rights. While the schema of American values pervaded the Commission’s public message in a discourse of rights, it was a discourse of rights for states, and implicitly for the right of white powerholders to define order and manage race. Publicly, the Commission also came to espouse the right of individuals to act on their preferences. The white powerholders’ discourse of rights was incompatible with the movement’s discourse of rights, showing how cultural schema are transposable, their use adaptive to an actor or organization’s needs. This difference provided the Commission with the justification for questioning the movement’s stated goal. Because their interpretation of the cultural schema of American Values did not mesh, white investigators aligned with the state only saw movement actions as racially divisive. However, the Commission could not continue to dismiss black access to the vote or to office, and the cultural schema of race that said blacks lacked agency and should be subservient was effectively challenged.

Not all challenges from black candidates for office or black voters could be dismissed as easily as they were in the above examples. By the mid-1960s, black candidates began to run for office with local Agricultural Stabilization Committees,
which controlled the distribution of resources to local farmers (Andrews forthcoming). A report from late 1964 read:

I am of the opinion that the people of Madison County ... are aware of the fact that they must organize and control the SC elections or in the future, it will be dominated by COFO and local Negroes, and this same danger exists in other counties where Negroes out-number the whites and are presently qualified to vote.¹³⁸

Amid voter registration drives and the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Commission investigators, along with other white powerholders, had to take seriously the threat to material resources. A conflict developed between a cultural schema that told them blacks were uninterested in political resources and a reality that said otherwise. A conflict also developed between the need to appease local segregationist whites and the federal government. Thus, the racist cultural schema that supported action was being strongly challenged as the federal government began to overpower the alliance with local segregationists.

Sovereignty Commission investigators also paid a great deal of attention to protest events. A 1960 document expresses the first concern with political demonstrations found in this sample. One investigator reported on Clay County, the location of Mary Holmes Junior College, an all-black school. He noted, “some of the students...planned to demonstrate by parading in the streets of West Point, and possibly staging a sit-down demonstration in drug stores or cafes, but was diverted from doing so by older Negroes who advised against such demonstrations.”¹³⁹ This report reflects a discursive trend in the investigative discussion of demonstration surveillance. In their

¹³⁸ Investigative Report, December 9, 1964, SCR # 2-23-3-81-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.3
¹³⁹ Investigative Report, June 20, 1960, SCR # 2-88-0-23-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p. 2
descriptions of actual or rumored events, investigators often pointed to the organizational problems of civil rights groups, or to a lack of local support. An investigator wrote in 1964 that a rally in Madison County had been unsuccessful. His measure of this lack of success noted, “the Negroes that were in charge had ordered 1,000 chickens to feed an expected 2,000 people and only about 150 people attended the rally.”

By 1963, the Commission was aware of and concerned with the activities of SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Investigators kept close tabs on specific campaigns, like the Mock Election of 1963 and Freedom Summer. Of course, with Freedom Summer, boundary violations that challenged white control of resources were rampant. In particular, Freedom Summer participants were seen to particularly violate boundaries in the political and social realm. Reporting on rumors circulating in Canton in 1964, an investigator noted that a white meter reader had spotted a “white female civil rights worker ironing clothes. She was dressed only in a pair of thin panties and a bra, and a Negro man was lounging on a couch in the same room at the same time.” Rumors also circulated about a white female civil rights worker and a married black man. Finally, the investigator noted the rumor that, “one of the civil rights workers purchased a case of rubber prophylactics and carried them to the Freedom House in Canton where white and colored males and females are reported to be staying.” Investigators, local officials, and white citizens were outraged by the boundary violations that were apparently meant to “infuriate our citizens.”

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140 Investigative Report, May 26, 1964, SCR # 2-24-3-37-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.2
141 Investigative Report, July 24, 1964, SCR # 2-24-3-47-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
142 Investigative Report, July 29, 1964, SCR # 2-20-2-2-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.2
black men and women were combined with the rule that black and white should be kept 
separate to fuel the surveillance of sexual boundaries. Nagel (2000) notes that these 
boundaries are strongly policed by various societal forces, and this time period was no 
exception.

The Sovereignty Commission also targeted white moderates who publicly 
challenged the color line. In 1961, concern arose about a white teacher from Rust 
College, an historically all-black school in Holly Springs. A state senator requested that 
the Commission investigate “Mrs. Campbell openly advocating integration.”

According to reports on the teacher, she had asked to bring a “colored” friend to a church 
service (the church refused) and had asked a service station operator to remove signs 
designated black and white water fountains (again, she was refused). When the 
investigator sought her out for questioning, he found that she had returned to her home in 
California. Other investigations of white moderates had more serious consequences and 
actually threatened Commission legitimacy. During the early 1960s, the editor of the 
University of Mississippi newspaper spoke out against the Sovereignty Commission. In 
turn, the editor was targeted by the Sovereignty Commission as a communist and activist, 
losing his position. During the exchange between the organization and the young man, 
public criticism developed in newspapers, challenging the Commission’s legitimacy. 
However, the Commission prevailed and justified its actions. Thus, this indicates that

143 Investigative Report, May 29, 1961, SCR # 2-20-1-50-1-1-1 to 7-1-1, p.1
144 Investigative Report, May 3, 1961, SCR # 2-20-1-45-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.1
145 “Ole Miss Student Rips Pro-Segregation Units,” Clarion-Ledger, May 11, 1961; 
“Segregationists Smearing Him, Student Charges,” Commercial-Appeal, May 11, 1961, 
SCR # 7-0-2-87-1-1-1 to 5-1-1
to some degree, the Commission was able to engage in coercive strategies without repercussions, at least in the earlier stages of its work.

*The Social Realm*

Tables 5.4 and 5.5 show that the Sovereignty Commission was also very attentive to violations that targeted resources of a social nature. This is where the backstage actions most closely parallel the public message. The public message was strongly segregationist from 1960-1963, which was when the monitoring of boundary violations in the social realm peaked.

From 1960-1963, concern with social integration in investigative actions was also at its highest, decreasing by nearly half in the third period. Beginning in 1964, as the federal government passed and began to enforce desegregation legislation, the Commission was less able to publicly advocate segregation and maintain legitimacy to those outside the South. However, public discourse did contain support for continued social segregation even as public institutions were altered. Yet, behind the scenes, the Commission less actively patrolled this sphere, focusing more intently on political and economic changes.

Concerns with boundaries in the social world encompassed integration in several areas: public space (like parks and bus stations), housing, cultural events, personal relationships, and schools. While some of these areas were more tightly regulated than others by the federal government and challenged by the movement, they all represent examples of the social world.
From 1956-1959, there were very few boundary violations identified in the social realm. Most identified violations largely concerned potential integration in schools. Between 1960-1963, there was also attention to the education system. Investigators were instructed to contact county and city school superintendents to assess whether or not any districts were threatened by the presence of “subversive” teachers. This task involved obtaining a list of all teachers, both white and black, and documenting whether or not they had signed two state sanctioned forms, one of which required teachers to state their membership in organizations. Ostensibly, the purpose was to find out if any teachers were NAACP members; this implicit question was understood by superintendents, who reported things like, “there was not a Negro teacher in Holmes County who belonged to the NAACP or any other organization advocating integration of the races.”146 This strategy largely or completely ceased after 1963, because the institutional rules of governmental legitimacy constrained Commission action and new federal legislation led to a shift in strategy.

In 1965, the Sovereignty Commission initiated a project, in collusion with Percy Greene, the black newspaper publisher, to actually encourage black schoolteachers to vote with assurances there would be “no kind of retaliation.”147 Erle Johnston developed the plan as a proactive move to combat the summer’s anticipated “Black Belt Project,” which would initiate voter registration drives across the South, focusing on the

146 Investigative Report, August 2, 1960, SCR # 2-54-1-45-1-1-1
147 Letter from Percy Greene, Attached to memo from Erle Johnston to Governor Paul Johnson’s office, April 1, 1965, Paul B. Johnston Family Papers (M 191, Box 137), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
registration of teachers. The Sovereignty Commission reasoned that they could use Greene's conservative Mississippi Negro Citizens Association, "headed by Negroes who speak out for progress but with dignity and through the cooperation of the white leadership," to encourage black teachers to register, thus facilitating teacher loyalty as "Mississippians rather than outsiders." Thus, the Commission acknowledged that the boundary dividing access to political resources was eroding, but its actions were motivated by a desire to retain the control of how resources were distributed.

After 1960, most examples of social boundary violations fall under the classification of "public integration." In 1961, one investigator responded to a letter written by a teenage boy regarding the integration of the public library in Jackson County. After observing the reported violation, the investigator spoke with the librarian and reported:

...the colored have not come in groups but have been into the library in two's and three's, principally men. She says she has had no trouble with them and that she feels since 'they also are taxpayers' that she should continue to serve them. She also stated that the Library has a bookmobile which makes the rounds for white and colored and that the stops are so scheduled that no place are white and colored served at the same time.\(^\text{149}\)

After the librarian expressed displeasure at the visit—the only recorded negative reaction to the Commission—the investigator moved on, and there is no record that the organization became involved in trying to prevent integration. In the same county, investigators responded to a call from a Citizens Council member that the restroom

\(^{148}\) Memo from Erle Johnston to Governor Paul B. Johnson, February 23, 1965, Paul B. Johnston Family Papers (M 191, Box), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.

\(^{149}\) Investigative Report, August 13, 1962, SCR # 2-50-0-61-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.2
facilities at a local construction site were integrated, creating a “delicate situation.” Such instances show that the Commission was eager to monitor situations reported by local whites as threatening to the boundaries that separated blacks and whites in public spaces. Categorical identification and discursive articulation show that the blurring of boundaries was not acceptable. When agents, traveling with Council members, found that at least one restroom at the construction site still had a sign marked, “White,” they felt satisfied. In particular, after learning from the company that permanent facilities would be segregated, the local Citizens Council and the Commission felt the situation was resolved.\textsuperscript{150}

To the Commission, the entrance of black people into public space culturally reserved for whites was a visible confrontation to hegemonic ideals. Public integration forced whites to articulate the boundaries that had long been accepted as the common-sense rule. In 1962, after a woman reported to the Sovereignty Commission that her sister-in-law had a child with a black man and was still dating a black man, an investigator paid the reputed interracial dater a visit. His report read:

> Among this group of children was a little girl which looked to be one-half Negro...She has all the characteristics of any half bred Negro that I have ever seen...I told [the mother] that it had been reported that she was the mother of a half Negro child, which I presumed to be the one she was holding in her arms...She denied the child being half Negro or ever having gone with a Negro. I asked her how she could account for the child’s color and kinky hair.

The woman answered that the doctor who delivered the baby had given it shots to alter its skin color and hair, but the investigator was not convinced. His report concluded, “I do

\textsuperscript{150} Investigative Report, March 7, 1962, SCR # 2-50-32-1-1-1 to 2-1-1; Investigative Report, March 23, 1962, SCR # 2-50-0-42-1-1-1 to 2-1-1
believe she will discontinue going with Negro men as she appeared to be rather scared about her conduct being known...”\textsuperscript{151}

In this example, an investigator recorded an infringement on the racial boundary as protected by separation in the public sphere. While white political elites were defending the power to control social resources, they were also reinforcing the dominant white cultural schema that meant whites were superior to blacks. And yet by the end of 1964, such discursive constructions of the racial boundary were increasingly absent from both the public message and private actions.

Although the Civil Rights Movement and federal laws led to an increase of “mixing” in the social sphere, the Commission paid less and less attention to this. Why? The contestation of white hegemony was more and more complete in this realm—and although stalwart segregationists remained in the state and on the Commission board, the organization was less able to publicly or privately justify the articulation and monitoring of racial boundaries in the social realm.

\textit{The Economic Realm}

Economic boundary violations did not serve as a strong mechanism driving racial monitoring until after 1963. Presumably, this might be because economic advancement took a backseat to the movement’s driving goal of political equality. As movement activists began to work on economic issues with the development of Headstart and the Child Development Group of Mississippi, programs that attended to racial and economic inequality in early childhood education, state officials became more concerned that

\textsuperscript{151} Investigative Report, June, 26, 1962, SCR # 2-92-0-23-1-1-1 to 4-1-1
boundaries were being violated in the economic realm. The Commission also seemed to be concerned with the interference of outside groups in providing for local impoverished blacks. In 1964, an investigator traveled to Sunflower County "...concerning a large truck van load of old clothes and groceries which had been sent to Ruleville from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and which was being distributed to Negroes in the Ruleville area supposedly because they were destitute for clothing and food." This report suggests that in defense of white identity, the Commission was concerned with activities that threatened white paternalism, or the white planters' ability to provide for black workers. It also illustrates the Commission's suspicion of groups bearing sustenance for local blacks for two reasons. First, the Commission was highly concerned with preventing and refuting negative publicity; the acknowledgement of "destitute" blacks would mean admitting racial separation was equated with inequality. Second, investigators expressed constant suspicion that the provision of food and clothing from outside the state was only a bribe to induce local blacks to register. Thus, the fear of economic support for blacks was related to the protection of white political power. In addition, the Commission's motivation to monitor this boundary violation was largely driven by its desire to prevent the use of federal resources by local activists for furthering the cause of civil rights.

Another factor that explains increased attention to economic boundaries is the effective use of movement-led boycotts against white businesses in several counties. Just as boycotts initiated against the state of Mississippi from external sources were related to

\footnote{Investigative Report, February 21, 1964, SCR # 2-38-1-64-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.1}
a shift in the public transcript, so did economic pressures from within the state lead to increased identification of boundary problems and a shift in recommendation strategies, discussed below. Thus, the challenge to economic boundaries—blacks threatened white resources—led to greater identification of this area as a problem. The Commission was motivated to monitor threats to white control of economic resources, but its strategies of surveillance were constrained by the need to maintain legitimacy. In other words, unlike the Citizens Council, the Commission could not sanction local blacks and force them to shop in white stores. Because such a tactic would be too costly for a legitimate governmental organization, the Commission made unexpected recommendations, discussed below.

Violence

What about the finding that attention to violence boundary violations increased over time, and that the public message became one that urged constraint among its local white citizens? Significantly, attention to violent events increased after 1963. As federal attention shifted to Mississippi following the Freedom Rides, the admission of the first black man to the University of Mississippi, and Freedom Summer, the Commission became publicly committed to “preventative medicine.” With the goal of preventing violence before it happened, the Commission linked the defense of a racial boundary with the schema that justified state control of order. However, while the Commission expressed concern in the reports about a few instances of violence, most reports of violence against civil rights activists were regarded with high suspicion. Often, local officials and the investigator suspected activists, like “race agitator” Robert Moses, had
started the events themselves to create negative publicity. Thus, while there was more attention to violence behind the scenes, the apparent concern was with the creation of negative publicity that would mar a state struggling to convince the rest of the world that segregation was a peaceful way of life.

Overall, the discursive evidence does not suggest that the Commission agents were motivated to protect local blacks or movement activists. Nearly all investigations of reported violence were summarized based on evidence provided by local officials, who were sometimes the alleged instigators of the violent act. Primarily, white segregationist groups were responsible for initiating violence against blacks. Yet because white local officials and Commission agents saw the events through a lens of a racist cultural schema, their definitions of the situation failed to hold the true initiators responsible.

Thus, contrary to the public message—and even actions in the hidden transcript that targeted segregationist groups—the discourse identifying violence as a problem reinforced white privilege.

Attention to violence was particularly high in Neshoba County. Just before the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign began in the state, three civil rights workers were reported missing in Neshoba County, including one local black man and two white men from the North. Pressured by national media attention, the FBI took over the local investigation. In addition, a Commission agent spent significant time there, following both the investigation and the FBI’s encroachment. After the discovery of the workers’ burned vehicle, the investigator observed:

The people in Philadelphia are extremely upset over this matter. Most of the businessmen and good citizens still believe that this is a hoax perpetrated by the
missing parties. Other citizens believed that it was a hoax to start with but are beginning to fear that these subjects have met with foul play.  

This theme was found in many Commission documents that described reported violence in counties—the theme of doubt, suspicion, and support of local authorities. Although the local sheriff and deputy sheriff were named primary suspects in the murder of the three men, the Commission maintained contact with them and criticized the FBI for their encroachment on local sovereignty.

In another report of police brutality that Fannie Lou Hamer made nationally public in 1965 when she spoke as a member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party trying to unseat the all-white Mississippi delegation to the national convention, the investigator focused on the transgression of public racial boundaries rather than on an act of violence which left some members of an all-black group severely beaten (Dittmer 1994). The Montgomery County sheriff told the investigator that when members of the group entered the white café at the local bus station and demanded service, he was called in to calm the “disturbance” and arrested all seven people. Tom Scarbrough, the investigator, wrote:

Lawrence Guyot claimed four white men used brutality on him while he was under arrest. The Sheriff stated no brutality was used on Guyot in his presence and it was his thinking Guyot was lying which is the customary thing for all of the white outside agitators to do when arrested. 

Thus, while the Commission paid slightly more attention to local violence over time, investigators often questioned the validity of victims’ statements. Furthermore, violent acts were rarely framed in racial terms, as were all other boundary violations. While

\[153\] Investigative Report, June 29, 1964, SCR # 2-112-1-41-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.3

\[154\] Investigative Report, June 18, 1963, SCR # 2-65-0-99-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
violent acts might be seen as instigated by the boundary violation of local blacks or activists, the response of whites was not defined as a boundary violation, but rather implicitly portrayed as a defensive reaction to protect a way of life, explained as a defense of the schema of American Values.

Recommendations and Boundary-work

In short, the Commission engaged in boundary-work to defend a deeply cultural way of life. Long taken-for-granted by whites as common sense, segregation marked all spheres of structural life in the South and typically went unquestioned by white political elites. Even the way that investigations were carried out reinforced the power of whites and the silence of blacks. In all investigations, the voice of blacks—whether bystanders, businessmen, or challengers—was largely silent. In the 685 coded documents, investigators spoke to black subjects only fourteen times. However, investigators spoke with local officials (all white) regarding their concerns in 505 reports. In addition, I was able to determine that in at least 32 reports, a member of a local Citizens Council was contacted.\textsuperscript{155} Thus, the process of boundary-work was the domain of white political elites, a covert operation that was able to retain white dominance by ignoring voices of dissension. Commission actors were so invested in their own hegemonic place in the world that they did not typically go to the source of the challenges, but rather worked in concert with other whites, and sympathetic blacks, to try and maintain the racial boundary. The voices and agency of blacks were silenced in multiple ways during the

\textsuperscript{155} I suspect that this actual number is quite higher; however, members of the Citizens Council were not always clearly identified. Local officials were not identified as members, although it is almost certain that many were members of this organization.
process of response, showing that white political elites refused to acknowledge contestation from below.

In just over 10% of the coded documents, it was clear that the Commission had taken direct action with local problems, either through recommending a course of action or being involved in a local discussion (sometimes the two overlapped). There is a noticeable shift in these actions. Before and during 1964, recommendations were driven by a desire to maintain segregation and reaffirm the white identity. During 1964, however, some recommendations began to suggest accommodation, paralleling the public message. They also more directly targeted covert white groups as problematic. The path to legitimacy was no longer through complete resistance.

Before late 1964, in response to demonstrations and other protest events, Sovereignty Commission investigators offered direction and direct involvement. In 1963, Investigator Scarbrough went to Holly Springs in Marshall County “to help create an auxiliary police force, composed of hand-picked, level-headed citizens [to ward off] well-known Negro agitators.” The Sovereignty Commission was always very careful to advertise that its assistance was provided only upon request. The organization was aware of legitimacy problems with its actions, and it wanted its work to be regarded as advisory.

Information was also distributed to local officials to aid the management of boundary violations and control resources. In reaction to particular federal mandates or actions, the Commission might visit local officials and suggest ways of dealing with a particular situation. For example, agents visited local circuit clerks after the federal

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156 Investigative Report, May 14, 1963, SCR # 2-20-1-71-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.1
government threatened to send in federal examiners of the voting process to suggest ways of confronting this threat to local sovereignty. Just before the “invasion” of Freedom Summer, the chief investigator visited multiple areas around the state to speak with law enforcement officials regarding how they should deal with “racial agitators who have promised to invade Mississippi this summer.” Scarbrough, a former law enforcement officer, listed things the local officers could do to prevent negative publicity and serious problems. He told them that demonstrations would occur in counties with significant black populations and that integration of public places would likely occur. He warned them to use restraint in dealing with these agitators, as “it is a well recognized fact the national agitators are trying their best to make a whipping boy out of Mississippi and use us for their dumping ground and to their advantage in passing civil rights legislation which can be destructive for our state.” Finally, he also told them six things they could do to manage voter registration drives. In his conclusion to the officers, Scarbrough said:

I also mentioned the fact that the Negro has never progressed very far on his own, that his progress has come with the assistance of the white man or by the white man's mistakes, and of course, the reason Mississippi officers have done so well is that they have been organized and have avoided making any mistakes that cities in the north more liberal than ours have made.\footnote{\footnotemark{157}}

The message sent by this Commission representative to local officials was that restraint was the way to preserve segregation. If the officers engaged in violent repression of the activists, the movement would win support and civil rights legislation. The Commission's effort to preserve segregation preached restraint—preventative medicine—to maintain the racial boundary. In other words, the preservation of the racial

\footnotetext{157}{Investigative Report, May 5, 1964, SCR # 2-19-0-39-1-1-1 to 4-1-1}
boundary was linked to the schema of Law & Order. For white political elites, this goal lay in the hands of the far superior white man, as they could not acknowledge that local blacks had the ability to bring about change themselves.

In 1964, the Lafayette County sheriff requested that Investigator Scarbrough suggest a way to deal with the possible attendance of black students at the University of Mississippi/Memphis State University football game. Scarbrough noted that he told the sheriff:

...so long as they sat on the Memphis State side and behaved themselves I didn't know of any legal action he could take to prevent them from doing so... However, I further stated I believed the sheriff would be justified in taking in charge any Negro who attempted to sit on the Ole Miss side, as in all probability such person would only invite serious trouble and possible get himself killed...

In a summary report of this time period, the Commission’s experience dealing with this situation was called an “exacting assignment”. Reflecting a theme of both public and private documents, the investigator suggested that the integration attempts of blacks would stimulate a justifiable violent reaction of whites. One the one hand, this suggestion was in keeping with the Sovereignty Commission director’s policy statement that the organization was engaged in “preventative medicine,” to prevent problematic situations from developing in the name of maintaining peace and order. However, this strategy also served to reaffirm the white identity. Unaware of any legal action that might prevent integrating this public space, the investigator recommended arresting blacks for their own protection if they violated social boundaries. The primary concern

158 Investigative Report, September 17, 1964, SCR # 2-19-0-45-1-1-1
was keeping blacks out of white public space. Later documents show that no black students attended this game.

Yet, a shift occurred in 1964 at the same time such suggestions were being made, illustrated by the following contrast. In the early 1960s, investigators visited counties where compliance had begun with the federal ruling forbidding segregation on public interstate transportation, including waiting rooms. In 1961, an investigator went to Grenada County to “formulate plans to stop any compliance with the ICC ruling by the cities of Grenada and Winona.” After extending warnings to local officials that state officials were unhappy with the rumors and planned to enforce segregation, bus station managers complied with the investigator’s request. Yet by 1964, the Commission suggested that to combat a very strong black boycott of white stores in Madison County, merchants should removed the Citizens Council stickers placed in their windows. According to one source, merchants felt pressured by the Council to use the stickers and feared removing them. However, the Commission urged them to do so to bring an end to the boycott. Johnston encouraged the Council members to remove the stickers, which “would be out-maneuvering the agitators because they have a tremendous selling point by perpetuating the boycott as long as they can emphasize the meaning of the stickers.”

The Commission went from protesting the removal of signs marking black and white waiting rooms to advocating the removal of signs symbolizing a white supremacist organization.

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159 Investigative Report, November 6, 1961, SCR # 2-21-1-37-1-1-1 to 4-1-1
160 Letter from Erle Johnston to local Citizens Council president, April 20, 1964, SCR # 2-24-3-17-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.1
Consider another example of how Commission strategies transformed. Erle Johnston, the Commission director who had been criticized by board members for his increasingly accommodationist public stance on race relations, came under fire for making recommendations that crossed too far over the color line. In 1967, a board member expressed his concern that Johnston had suggested that the Natchez, Mississippi, school board appoint a black member to appease the black community. Although the Director defended this action, arguing that the recommendation was made (and accepted) to prevent tension, the board voted that all recommendations should be subject to their approval.¹⁶¹

Why the transition? A change of heart? This concern was driven more by a shifting relevant audience and legitimacy struggle. A conflict arose between those who refused to accept integration and those who feared the economic consequences of not granting concessions. In 1964, the Commission acknowledged that a boycott had been instituted against Mississippi products in St. Louis, Missouri. Other boycotts were instituted in Flint, Michigan and Houston, Texas. Each time, the Sovereignty Commission utilized its public relations committee to curb these threats.¹⁶² However, the boycotts signaled that the state, and the Commission, were facing growing financial pressure to integrate. Moderate white businessmen began to urge accommodation and

¹⁶¹ Meeting minutes, June 13, 1967, Paul B. Johnston Family Papers (M 191, Box 140), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
¹⁶² Report of Principal Activities and Policies, September 1, 1964 through May 31, 1965, Paul B. Johnston Family Papers (M 191, Box 137), Archives and Manuscript Department, William D. McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.
the federal government threatened to withhold federal funds if integration was not implemented. With these constraints, the Commission gradually became more reserved in its public stance and investigative activity trickled out. Even local public criticism arose when a summary report of Commission activities from 1964 to 1967 revealed some of the more sinister, backstage work in which the agents had been involved. The Commission's funding was vetoed in 1973, and although a few resolute members wrangled to justify its existence, the monitoring was over. Although some have debated whether the Commission had any effect on civil rights activities, others have said the organization had a "chilling effect".163

Conclusion

The Sovereignty Commission's monitoring strategies were coercive. This monitoring was coercive in the sense that it did lead to active attempts to undermine the movement and direct ways of dealing with problems at the local county level, but it was a tempered approach to domination. As Chapter Four showed, the Commission encountered criticism and occasionally termination for not being a strong enough force in the fight against segregation. The tempered nature of the Commission's backstage work helps to explain why the organization, as a coercive arm of the state, never became too costly. Its covert actions never truly alarmed the federal government or became as costly as violence, but the Commission was also largely supported by and allied with white segregationists in Mississippi, a powerful local audience who worked in concert with the Commission to maintain the hegemonic racial boundary. Thus, one way white political

elites maintained legitimate power was by walking a tightrope between two highly divergent audiences: one that demanded conformity with integration mandates, the other that encouraged a fight to resist them. Yet, the state and the Commission ultimately had to be pulled in one direction in order to sustain the power structure, which required that the boundary-work undertaken in the process of response to disruption change. This finding also reaffirms the need to examine and explain state action to defend hegemony and domination as occurring in a context of multiple audiences where power does not equal sovereignty.

While the data suggest that coercive intrusion into people's lives increased over time, a closer analysis of the text shows that as federally-imposed rules regarding resource distribution were implemented, the Commission’s attempt to reconstitute hegemony changed as well. In other words, white political elites were forced to figure out a new relationship to the racial boundary as the federal government altered the pattern of resource distribution and the non-southern public and local white moderates encouraged compliance.

The most important third party in this strategic and discursive shift was the federal government, which had to institute more forceful means of intervention that ultimately struck Mississippi hardest by threatening to withhold funds without compliance. The Commission’s recommendations show that local segregationists became a less relevant audience, and local moderates became a more important one. Textual evidence suggests that the movement itself generated most concern by targeting white economic power through boycotts. Interestingly, white political elites remained so
enmeshed in a hegemonic understanding of race that they were distanced from the reality that local blacks were participating in and leading movement efforts. Because of this, an agency created to defend segregation from encroachment from *outsiders* rarely attributed agency to local blacks or sought them out in an effort to exercise coercion and attempt to silence dissension. Even as the state’s authority to allot resources along racial lines was changed and it altered public and private resistance to integration, the Commission worked to retain power by controlling whose voices were relevant in the process of hegemonic reconstitution.

The Commission’s boundary-work was ultimately altered by the legitimacy imperative. Not the legitimacy imperative of maintaining a racial boundary, which was informed by a locally dominant cultural schema, but the legitimacy imperative of meeting demands of institutional rules associated with a particular system of governance. This suggests that the problem with Gramscian studies of the state, domination, and hegemony, is the focus on authoritarian contexts which assume dominance and sovereignty are mutually constitutive. The difference is that in democratic states, surveillance may always take place in a most hidden way, but the existence of surveillance becomes more visible when disruption calls for the articulation of taken-for-granted cultural schema that justify covert action.

Even the dominant voices of the local white public, once critical of the Commission’s seeming lack of response, began to doubt the Commission’s legitimacy. The organization came under fire from the public when a document was accidentally leaked in 1967 that detailed covert Commission actions. In addition, controversy had
developed among Commission board members and employees about how to reconcile racial problems at the local level. Essentially, the cultural schema and resources that constituted the racial boundary were ultimately constrained by the pressure to maintain legitimacy as a democratic government in both a subordinate and superordinate position.

In its work, the Commission exemplifies state response to disruption to a system of classification that manages bodies and lives. But like most authority structures, the Commission was caught between audiences: on the one hand, it had to maintain legitimacy with a powerful local constituency that demanded segregation, and on the other hand, it also had to maintain legitimacy with a greater federal government that required compliance. The need to maintain legitimacy (rather than re-fight the civil war) overrode the need to maintain the racial boundary that undergirded white political power. During this process, the state’s definition of order became less explicitly racial and, presumably, discriminating in its application.

In short, the narrative of state response is much more complicated than “movements act, states repress.” While the Sovereignty Commission did engage in actions typically defined as coercive and repressive, its work was impacted by third parties who demanded change from above, or at least from places external to the state. Additionally, the Commission was strategically allied with different local audiences over time to first defend the racial boundary (through resistance) and then to reconstitute it in more amenable ways (through reconciliation). Largely silencing the voice of local blacks, either as subjects of change or objects of investigation, also contributed to the sustenance of white power. Yet, these tempered strategies of coercion were legitimated,
and then transformed, by the alteration of cultural schemas through ideological strategies. In the final empirical chapter, I return to an analysis of how the Commission engaged in cultural repair-work to reconstitute power in a way that helped white political elites survive.
CHAPTER 6: DEFINING AND DEFENDING BOUNDARIES

This chapter examines how white powerholders used ideological strategies of condemnation and commendation to defend and then transform the racial boundary. It also asks whether and why cracks came to exist in these strategies and what this tells us about the mechanisms through which racial boundaries and identities are activated, challenged, and altered. The analysis combines elements of Chapters Four and Five by asking how the Commission tried to maintain a hegemonic racial boundary, and identity, in its hidden transcript.

This chapter speaks primarily to two main strands of literature. First, the analysis bridges a micro and macro level understanding of racial boundary work. Scholars have attended to the way in which boundaries are maintained and contested in individual level interactions (i.e., see Lamont 1992, 2000; Lamont and Fournier 1992). They have also studied how similar processes happen at the macro level. In particular, research has analyzed how states impose racial boundaries through categorization and policy-making as well as how those boundaries, marking identity, are contested by social groups (i.e., see Jung 2000; Lieberman 2001; Nagel 1986, 1994; Quadagno 1998; Wright 1994). This analysis asks how micro-level evaluations regarding the players involved in the contestation over racial boundaries reflected and contributed to a larger state project of racial boundary management. Second, while researchers have begun to critically examine the production of whiteness as an identity (see Chapter Two for citations), they have less often attended to the question of how this process unfolds at the state level.
This chapter examines how whiteness was defended as a privileged identity in micro-level interactions and at the state level by an organizational entity.

Below, I examine three important results from analysis of the discursive evaluative strategies used by Sovereignty Commission agents, local officials, and others to describe players involved in the contestation of racial boundaries. The analysis is important because it provides insight into how actors made "conceptual distinctions" between groups to reinforce, or challenge, the racial boundary. We again see how the cultural schema of legitimacy partially trumped the cultural schema of race, shaping the activation, maintenance, and dispute of the racial boundary and identity.\(^{164}\) Below, I briefly discuss the specific data used for this chapter's analysis. I then review the findings regarding evaluations of white covert groups, evaluations of local blacks and outsiders, and the marking of race in evaluative statements.

Elaboration of Method

The previous chapter focused largely on how the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission monitored resources that partly constituted the racial boundary. This chapter more closely attends to how cultural schemata were articulated and transformed in the process of making sense of actors who instigated or resisted change.

When investigators traveled to counties to carry out routine checks of racial activity or inquire about particular situations, they often engaged in exchanges with local officials, white citizens, and others. As noted in the previous chapter, in all

\(^{164}\) The terms activation, maintenance, and dispute are included in Lamont and Molnár's (2002) call for a better understanding of the mechanisms involved in these aspects of boundary work.
investigations, the voice of blacks—whether bystanders, businessmen, or challengers—was largely silent. In the 685 coded documents, investigators spoke to black subjects only fourteen times. However, investigators spoke with local officials (all white) regarding their concerns in 505 reports. In addition, I was able to determine that in at least 32 reports, a member of a local Citizens Council was contacted. Thus, the process of boundary-work was largely controlled by the voices of white political elites.

In this process, white political elites negotiated definitions of the players involved in the contestation of racial boundaries. The ideological strategies used by these actors to evaluate the players illustrate how cultural schemata shaped action. They also show how boundary-work was altered by changes in the rules of governmental legitimacy. Analyses of political discourse (Edelman 1964; 1977) and framing (Babb 1996) have examined how political actors use discursive strategies to categorize themselves and their challengers. Most studies tend to focus on public discourse. For example, Edelman (1977) discusses how political elites use categorization to identify threats and try to retain their definition of disruptive situations. This chapter, however, utilizes data collected from the investigative documents of the Sovereignty Commission to compare backstage categorization of the players with public presentation (see Chapter Four). In addition, the data begin to answer questions about how the political identity of elites was transformed as the hegemonic racial structure was cracked.

For each investigative document (see previous chapter for discussion of sample selection), I coded player evaluations, or the statements made by investigators and the people with which they interacted, that offered judgments, opinions, or conceptual
distinctions about individuals either challenging or defending segregation. These evaluations represent the cultural tools used to either reinforce or challenge segregation. They are the symbolic vehicles (Berezin 1997) used by political elites to make sense of challenges to their taken-for-granted way of life. Disruptions led to articulation of the racial boundary, and during the process of response, this boundary was maintained and transformed in interactions between investigators and local officials.

While evaluations were coded for thirteen different groups, this analysis will focus on evaluations of three groups: local blacks, outsiders, and white covert groups. The categories are based on the viewpoint of the Sovereignty Commission investigators. In other words, while movement literature might identify many local blacks as "activists," the Sovereignty Commission typically did not confer such a title. They were defined as local blacks who instigated trouble. It was the "outsiders," or those from outside the state of Mississippi, who were occasionally given the title of "professional agitator." Thus, to parallel the distinction often made by the Commission, I decided that the significant distinction for investigators and local officials was local blacks versus outsiders. When possible, I did differentiate between black outsiders and white outsiders. However, for purposes of this analysis, these differences are grouped into a larger category of "outsider." Finally, I coded evaluations of local white groups who resisted integration. This category included both the Citizens Council as well as other groups, like the Association for the Preservation of the White Race (APWR).
For each evaluative statement, I coded the target of the statement, the actor who made the statement, the category of evaluation, and the text. Fifteen types of evaluative categories were possible:

Positive
Negative
Neutral
Morally Inferior
Sexual deviant
Ignorant
Communist
Anti-civil rights
Pro-civil rights
Coerced
Uppity
Self-interested
Happy/content
Instigator
Others

If a particular sentence or discussion included multiple categories, each category was coded. For example, an outsider might be labeled both a sexual deviant and an agitator; in this case, the presence of both “sexual deviant” and “instigator” would be coded.

Below, I discuss how the discursive strategies were used in the process of boundary-work, as well as how this process was crucial to the defense of “whiteness” as a privileged identity at both a micro and a macro level.

*Evaluating and Boundary-Work*

This analysis is concerned with answering two related but slightly different questions. Both questions are related in that they ask how the cultural schemata that composed the racial boundary used to make sense of challenges or were actually challenged. First, how was the boundary between blacks and whites activated,
maintained, and altered? Second, how did this process contribute to and affect the defense of whiteness at an institutional level? These questions will be answered by examining two oppositional ideological strategies: commendation and condemnation.

Through strategies of commendation or condemnation, lines were drawn to symbolically designate those who conformed to the dominant cultural racial schema and those who challenged it. These strategies changed across time and by target. Their usage also varied depending on the race of the target. Finally, they also suggest some similarities and differences between public and private discourse.

The classification of these two types of discursive strategies parallels similar concepts used by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) to explain mechanisms that contribute to the development of “actor constitution” of an insurgent group during contentious politics. They argue that actor constitution develops in part through the certification and/or de-certification of insurgent groups by external agents, like political elites. In other words, social movement actors come to develop a cohesive group and collective identity through internal and external processes that set them apart from others. Studies of social movements have paid more attention recently to this process through which social movements form collective identities (Taylor and Whittier 1992, for example). However, the process unfolding on the other side of the contest is often left unexplored. Namely, what happens to the identity of the powerholding group being challenged? Where McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly named external factors that shaped social movement identity, my analysis of the strategies of commendation and condemnation asks how political elites mark boundaries and defend their own identity.
In addition, I elaborate different components of this discursive process to understand how change happens.

Local Blacks Versus Outsiders

Strategies of both condemnation and commendation were used to evaluate local blacks, whereas only strategies of condemnation were used to evaluate outsiders. In addition, there were some differences in how condemnation strategies were used to describe local blacks versus outsiders.

Most evaluative statements regarding both local blacks and outsiders classified them as “instigators.” Those who challenged segregation were seen as agitators, as threats to order, and as disruptive to the racial boundary itself. While making early rounds to identify racial agitators in 1959, an investigator was told by a Yazoo local official of “troublemakers who had been responsible for the school petition to integrate”. The local official told of an incident from 1955, and noted that most of these troublemakers had left town due to economic pressure imposed by white citizens. In this typical interaction, the local official and Commission investigator shared a conception of what a troublemaker was—it was a black person who did not silently remain in his or her place in the education system. Such exchanges reinforced a boundary that divided blacks and whites in terms of what resources it was suitable for them to use, but also symbolically identified “troublemakers” as blacks who crossed the color line.

165 Memo from Zack van Landingham to Director, January 13, 1959, SCR # 2-13-0-10-1-1-1-1
The discursive strategy of condemnation was used to mark local blacks who engaged in activities, or were thought to engage in activities, that challenged the differential allocation of resources to blacks and whites. The discursive classification of these local blacks symbolically marked them as people who broke the cultural schema of race and thus should be monitored. In 1961, a college student was investigated for participating in a sit-in, and the investigator concluded that “Lorjust Bayne’s name should be added to the file as a future agitator”\textsuperscript{166}. In 1963, a “young Negro” in Holmes County was described as “the anointed racial agitator in that community”.\textsuperscript{167} Beyond being evaluated as threatening to the maintenance of the racial boundary, local blacks were defined as threatening to the position of other blacks who remained “in their place.” For example, a 1966 report in Madison County noted, “George Raymond and C.O. Chinn are trouble-makers and their activities are doing nothing whatsoever to further the cause of the Negro race”.\textsuperscript{168} It is important to note that the public message rarely, if ever, acknowledged local black involvement in the movement. Rather, local blacks were portrayed as content with segregation and highly critical of outsiders, who were depicted as interlopers threatening “mutually beneficial” segregation. The cultural schemata of race and legitimacy meant that the Sovereignty Commission could not acknowledge black resistance in the public sphere, and only begrudgingly in the private sphere. In other words, it did not benefit the hegemony of whites to acknowledge insurgency from below.

\textsuperscript{166} Investigative report, May 3, 1961, SCR # 2-20-1-45-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
\textsuperscript{167} Investigative report, December 27, 1963, SCR # 2-54-2-8-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.1
\textsuperscript{168} Investigative report, September 27, 1966, SCR # 2-24-40-1-1-1 to 3-1-1
The condemnation of outsiders as instigators worked in similar ways, although outsiders were more often portrayed as initiating the trouble. In general, outsiders were seen as coming into Mississippi to "create division, hate and chaos among the races." The public message to non-southern and local audiences expressed outrage at the fact that others would come into Mississippi and ignore problems in their own states, and the private message echoed this belief. The cultural schema of race meant that the boundary between blacks and whites was naturalized. In fact, it was so unalterable that local whites saw the challenge as largely coming from outside. One investigator wrote in 1961, "The clerk as well as all officials in the county were of the opinion Sunflower County would have no Negro registration trouble if all outside agitators would stay out of the county." Robert Moses, an African-American civil rights worker from the North, was identified by investigators as "the ringleader of all Negro agitation". Thus, these evaluative statements, developed at the micro-level, reinforced the Commission's boundary defense and justified actions. Because a cultural schema of racial difference marked a clear division between blacks and whites in the social, political, and economic realm, political elites justified actions that violated challengers' civil rights, in hopes of maintaining the color line.

Strategies of condemnation were also used to degrade the character of both local blacks and outsiders, although in different ways. Local blacks who did not conform to white expectations for their behavior were often evaluated as "uppity." For example, West Point, a city in Clay County, was identified early as a source of potential trouble.

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169 Investigative report, July 21, 1966, SCR # 2-21-1-89-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.1
170 Investigative report, March 27, 1961, SCR # 2-38-1-16-1-1-1
due to the presence of a black college. A local official in 1960 reported to an investigator that, "...the City is subjected to having quite a few whom he considered smart aleck Negroes roaming around on the streets, both day and night".\(^{171}\)

Most often, local blacks were the target of condemnation strategies to represent the belief that blacks were inherently unintelligent and unworthy of white resources. In particular, local blacks were targeted in this manner for demanding equal access to resources in the realms of education and politics. When blacks applied to all-white state universities, Sovereignty Commission employees, in their conference with school officials regarding the challenges, often discussed the low abilities of the applicants in strategizing how to prevent integration. Largely, condemnation strategies evaluated local blacks as ignorant when they applied to vote. For example, an investigator in Holmes County in 1963 commented,

All of the Negroes who made application to register to vote in Holmes County were of a caliber who were far from being qualified to pass any kind of voter registration test...certainly not even Robert Kennedy himself could be justified in saying any one of the 23 came close to passing the test.\(^{172}\)

In 1964, an investigator observing the racial situation in Madison County reported, "From the caliber of Negroes I saw that came to the courthouse, I would say very few of them qualified to vote".\(^{173}\) The racial boundary was reinforced by the cultural schema dominant whites often shared: blacks were inferior in many ways, particularly in terms of intellect, and were thus not worthy of the same rights and resources.

\(^{171}\) Investigative report, May 24, 1960, SCR # 2-88-0-20-1-1-1
\(^{172}\) Investigative report, April 19, 1963, SCR # 2-54-1-79-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
\(^{173}\) Investigative report, March 3, 1964, SCR # 2-24-2-48-1-1-1 to 5-1-1
This taken-for-granted belief in black ignorance supported the public and private assertion of whites that most blacks were uninterested in or incapable of protest.

Consider the following evaluation, written by an investigator who stopped a group of civil rights workers transporting a U-Haul trailer full of books to a Freedom School in 1964:

I do not know what part the three Negro boys played in the plans of the three white agitators in having them along, as in my opinion, they are too ignorant to teach anybody anything on any subject. They probably brought them along to load and unload the books.\textsuperscript{174}

The belief in black inferiority was so ingrained in the way whites made sense of the boundary between the two groups that they could not perceive local blacks as having the intelligence to lead protest, much less contribute to it. However, these discursive choices contradict the examples above, which illustrate that the investigators and their cohorts did acknowledge some local blacks as agitators. Yet, local blacks condemned as agitators were the exception that did not make cultural sense, and they were often compared to “most” blacks who were “in-step” with segregation.

Both local blacks and outsiders were condemned as having low morals or being sexually deviant. Outsiders were more often condemned for low morals, typically because they identified as atheists, violating the religious rules of the Bible Belt South. Investigators and local officials also occasionally targeted local blacks and outsiders involved in civil rights activities as being sexually deviant. One investigative report in particular is known for its rabid attacks on sexual deviants at Rust College: “Informant No. 3 stated that Smith is a known liar and ladies’ man and it has been rumored that

\textsuperscript{174} Investigative report, May 19, 1964, SCR # 2-19-0-44-1-1-1 to 7-1-1.
Smith might have other queer sexual impulses. While investigators condemned interracial sex in their identification of boundary violations, they tended to more harshly condemn activists as “sex perverts” and homosexual. Such evaluations reinforced the boundary that separated political elites from their challengers, both by drawing lines between the two groups and privileging the sexual and moral choices of those who conformed to segregation.

Outsiders were rarely, if ever, identified as ignorant or uppity. They were targeted more often for their appearance and presumed association with communism. Investigators could not make sense of the general appearance, for example, of the white college students who came to Mississippi during Freedom Summer. They also could not make sense of the actions of the white college students. Thus, by condemning the appearance of these outsiders, white political elites again reinforced the boundary between black and white by charging that whites who fought segregation did not make sense. In Sunflower County, 1964, one investigator commented on one of these students, “Scattergood had on an old turned up, frazzled straw hat, was wearing filthy clothing and a pair of tennis shoes with the heels out of the back of them.” Another report described a march in Rankin County, 1965: “...the most colorful and repulsive appearing group that I have ever observed participating in a demonstration of any kind. The Negroes and whites, without exception, were dressed in dirty clothes, many of them with beards and needed hair cuts very badly, and some of them with a ring in one ear.” While this

175 Investigative report, June 30, 1964, SCR # 2-20-1-78-1-1-1 to 5-1-1, p.4
176 Investigative report, October 20, 1964, SCR # 2-38-1-89-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.4
177 Investigative report, May 31, 1965, SCR # 2-37-2-16-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.1
evaluation does include condemnation of blacks, it echoes the general strategy used by investigators and local officials to target those who disrupted not just material resources, but also cultural schemata.

Finally, outsiders were the target of condemnation strategies that drew on the American values cultural schema and labeled them as Communist and un-American. This strategy was a part of the public and private response, because Commission officials thought that by labeling activists communists, they would alienate the outsiders from the religious black community. However, an activist from outside the state noted that while he initially feared this red-baiting, he realized that because local blacks had been so removed from political involvement, they were not really aware of the Communist backlash. Regardless, this strategy of condemnation also worked to undermine the goals of white activists from outside the state by targeting them as un-American. If the outsiders were un-American, they could not possibly be contributing goodwill to Mississippi, and thus were not qualified to challenge the racial boundary. And if local blacks were being led astray by evil Communists, then they were not a sincere threat to white dominance. Again, the Commission and its allies engaged in ideological strategies that reassured them of their own hegemony and tried to enforce it in institutions and interactions not directly incorporated into the state structure.

In short, condemnation strategies that targeted the character of local blacks and outsiders marked them as polluting forces (Douglas 1966) that threatened the

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segregationist "way of life." Both local blacks and outsiders were recognized as disruptive to the system of order and segregation, although outsiders were more likely to be seen as instigating or leading the charge. The character of each group was targeted, but in slightly different ways. Condemnation strategies more often targeted the intelligence level of local blacks, whereas outsiders were evaluated for their appearance and association with Communism. Thus, condemnation strategies were used to defend and maintain the racial boundary, typically attributing more agency to outsiders than to local blacks. However, by condemning local blacks who were too visibly active in the movement to be ignored, Commission investigators and local officials discursively began to alter the boundary that matched the dichotomy of black/white with the cultural schema that denied blacks agency but granted it to whites.

Commendation strategies, on the other hand, were never used to describe outsiders, who were largely seen as "communists, sex perverts, odd balls and do-gooders." They were, however, used to reaffirm white privilege and the boundary between black and white in two primary ways. First, commendation was used to offer positive evaluations of local blacks as conforming to the ideal of a "white man's Negro." Second, a form of commendation—reassurance—was used to represent the perception that local blacks were resistant to outsiders and integration.

Evaluations of local blacks as good or reliable were often made by other whites. This strategy was used to define the boundary between whites and blacks, but also between acceptable blacks and those who challenged the boundary. According to

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180 Investigative report, May 6, 1964, SCR # 2-19-0-39-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.2
investigators and local officials, good blacks were the ones who conformed to ritualistic norms of behavior and did not support integration:

Bankhead appears to be about 7/8 white and talks very intelligently... He stated further that in his thinking the NAACP has done tremendous harm to the colored man in the South and that as a result of their irritable agitations, a wedge had been driven between the fine relationship which once existed between the two races...\(^{181}\)

Another example:

[A subject’s] father... is considered to be a good Negro by all of the white people who know him... His mother is also considered to be a good Negro woman. ... All of the white people whom I talked to... gave the family a good name and said they were the type of people who did not bother into white people’s business\(^ {182}\)

Such evaluations defined the meaning of “a good reliable white man’s Negro”.\(^ {183}\) In the middle and later half of the 1960s, good local blacks were the ones who resisted voter registration campaigns led by organizations like COFO (Council of Confederated Organizations). They were identified in state actions that targeted “reliable Negroes” and encouraged them to vote and apply for tuition grants. Like the Commission initiated its own teacher voter registration campaign (see Chapter Five), it also encouraged certain blacks to apply for tuition grants to maintain their continued loyalty to a government dominated by whites, both numerically and normatively.

Reassurance strategies, as a form of commendation, worked through three primary designations: blacks as anti-civil rights (or anti-outsider), blacks as happy or content, and blacks as coerced. These strategies reinforced the hegemonic understanding of blacks as deferential to whites and respectful of the boundary that marked the two

\(^{181}\) Investigative report, Lafayette County, June 8 and 9, 1960, SCR # 2-19-0-6-1-1-1

\(^{182}\) Investigative report, Clay County, 1961, SCR #2-88-0-25-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.3

\(^{183}\) Investigative report, Grenada County, August 1967, SCR # 6-28-0-6-1-1-1 to 4-1-1
groups' interactions and access to resources. In late 1958, the Sovereignty Commission distributed a memo to local officials and attached the names of black citizens in their counties suspected of membership in the NAACP. This memo also noted, "...some very few of those already included become disillusioned with the NAACP and drop their memberships and get in-step with the majority of Negroes in the state...". Early in its response, the Commission defined local blacks as largely uninterested in the civil rights struggle. In 1964, as boycott and voter registration campaigns targeted white economic and political power, investigators and local officials exchanged evaluations of local blacks as uninterested: "Negroes have made the statement that they are disgusted with the outsiders, both white and Negro that have come into Madison County for the purpose of causing trouble between the races". Even as Freedom Summer waged on and grassroots organizing spread across Mississippi, white political elites interpreted the challenge through a cultural schema of race that interpreted blacks as nearly reverent of segregation and of whites. Though the public display of resistance was manifest, whites continued to reinforce racial boundaries, even in the private transcript. Again, local cultural schemata meant that white political elites were unable to see the very real nature of a challenge initiated by local blacks.

Similar strategies of reassurance supported this view. Blacks were described by local officials as "well-satisfied with their new schools...[and] the present program of

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184 SCR # 2-38-1-2-1-1-1
185 Madison County, Investigative report, October 26, 1964, SCR # 2-24-3-72-1-1-1 to 2-1-1.
segregation as it involved the two races. White political elites, backstage, described local blacks as happily complicit in segregation and content with their material resources. By 1964, a new strategy of reassurance had appeared. Local blacks were portrayed as coerced. An investigator noted during a major boycott campaign in 1965 in Madison County, “It seems that most of these people have been asked, told, begged, and possibly threatened to register and become qualified to vote.” Based on discussions with local blacks, officials reported that local blacks were coerced, or tricked, into registering to vote or boycotting stores. Local blacks were reportedly wooed to register with false promises of food and clothing relief, and they were forced to boycott white stores with the threat of violence. To make sense of local black participation in protest, whites reassured themselves of the maintenance of the hegemonic boundary by depicting local blacks as coerced.

In short, commendation strategies were used to maintain racial boundaries and reassure whites of the legitimacy of segregation and white rule. However, the rules of legitimacy, which mandated conformity to federal policies as an official state government and also required that Mississippi maintain law and order, began to chip away at deeply ingrained cultural schemata that supported the racial boundary. The shift in discursive depictions of white segregationist groups, discussed below, shows how.

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186 Rankin County, Investigative report, March 1959, SCR #2-37-1-4-1-1-1.  
188 It could also be the case that local blacks were reporting coercion to white officials, who still dominated local politics, and in some case, local white reprisals for protest.
Local White Groups

The data reflect a significant shift in the evaluation of white pro-segregationists. First, it should be noted that Sovereignty Commission agents rarely reported on the activities of white covert groups, like the Citizens Council or the Ku Klux Klan. They were more concerned about the implications of the KKK, but the group was typically only mentioned in passing form—for example, to determine whether or not a KKK group existed in a county. What is important to note is the clear shift from positive evaluations of white segregationists before 1964 to negative evaluations afterwards. This change from commendation to condemnation provides insight into how the institutional rules of legitimacy and audience relevance impacted the discursive marking of white identity.

Strategies of commendation were used before 1964 to praise the work of Citizens Councils in maintaining racial boundaries. For example, an investigator reporting on the situation in Holmes County in 1961 noted:

Holmes County has a very strong and active Citizens Council and in my opinion is composed of the best citizens in the county. To my thinking, Holmes County is in good shape today because of the efforts put forth by these good citizens to see that the County was not taken over by do-gooders and integrationists.\(^\text{189}\)

Recall that this was the time period—between 1960 and 1963—when Governor Ross Barnett approved and encouraged a close relationship between the Sovereignty Commission and the Citizens Councils. In fact, the Sovereignty Commission was providing monthly donations to the Councils during this time. Local officials recognized the value of this relationship. A Grenada County official reported to an investigator in 1961 that, “with the assistance of the two organizations, along with what he and his

\(^{189}\) Investigative report, February 4, 1961, SCR # 2-54-1-48-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
deputies had done to promote racial harmony, and in eliminating racial agitators, the NAACP had been practically neutralized in Grenada County. The Sovereignty Commission looked favorably on groups that maintained both material and symbolic boundaries between blacks and whites, and yet this support deteriorated behind the scenes by 1964, just as it did in the public message.

By 1964, the context of Sovereignty Commission discourse had changed. Relations between the Citizens Council and Commission had become strained, due to conflicts between Erle Johnston and William Simmons, the Council leader. In addition, the Sovereignty Commission was increasingly concerned about its image within the state and outside—especially as organizations in other states began to boycott Mississippi products. Condemnation strategies were largely used to target the APWR (Americans for the Preservation of the White Race) during and after 1964 for their initiation of campaigns against white merchants and employers perceived as supportive of integration.

When the APWR threatened an employer in Rankin County who hired blacks, the Commission assured him that “such action by the APWR was very regrettable and did not represent official policy of the state and the Sovereignty Commission would cooperate with him and his company against further visits and subtle threats.” A few reports later, an investigator evaluated the APWR as follows:

The APWR in Mississippi was organized and chartered for the purpose of maintaining segregation and preserving our way of life, but as in so many cases, this organization was infiltrated by rabble-rousing, trouble-making, undesirable individuals and as a result, practically killed the organization.

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190 Investigative report, April 12, 1961, SCR # 2-21-1-21-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p. 1
191 Investigative report, June 8, 1964, SCR # 2-37-1-99-1-1-1 to 3-1-1, p.2
192 Investigative report, December 18, 1964, SCR # 2-37-2-2-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
Thus, as the Commission was condemning the strategy of "hothead" groups in the public message, it was now condemning them in the private realm. But again, the condemnation stemmed from concerns with the economy and legitimacy, not necessarily disagreement over goals. Like the KKK, the APWR did not engage in legitimate action and threatened the economic development of communities.

This shift in strategy is significant because it marks a discursive crack, signifying a crucial step toward transformation of the boundary between black and white. Though the APWR and the Sovereignty Commission were defending the same boundary, the Commission could no longer ally itself with an organization that practiced economically threatening tactics. Before 1964, silence toward or even appreciation of segregationist groups like the APWR sanctioned reprisals against challengers. Yet as Mississippi encountered growing pressure to maintain legitimacy with the federal government, moderate whites within the state, and external economic forces, the Sovereignty Commission shifted both its public and private evaluation of segregationist groups. Consequently, the shift marks a symbolic blurring of the boundary that had protected segregationist ideology and actions.

*Marking or Masking White Identity?*

In his work on hidden ethnicity (discussed in Chapter Two), Doane (1998) suggests that white identity is only asserted in reaction to challengers, while it is masked during times of relative stasis. In other words, the lack of reference to one ethnicity, and an emphasis on other ones, reconfirms the dominant position of the ethnicity that remains unnamed. Doane also says that the visibility of whiteness—in terms of accentuation or
masking—varies depending on the "perceived costs and benefits in intergroup interactions" (1998: 79). This research brings interesting addendums to Doane’s work.

Interestingly, white identity was primarily masked in the private sphere, presumable because Commission investigators and local whites did not have to defend whiteness to each other. White identity was sometimes accentuated as a reaction to challenge. It was most typically marked when whites violated the boundary that should have upheld their own privilege.

In the public message, white identity was accentuated to justify continued white political dominance. During the volunteer speakers bureau of the early 1960s aimed at a non-southern audience, volunteers were told to answer questions about segregation with evidence of white superiority, including historical dominance and cleanliness. By the mid-1960s, Erle Johnston was encouraging whites to register to vote as a duty—and as way to counter black registration. Thus, in the public transcript, whiteness was asserted in resistance and under the cultural schema that encouraged patriotism. In the private transcript, the accentuation of whiteness was also related to political authority. An investigator in Sunflower County in noted,

In actuality, all of these Negroes who are being trained for these agitative purposes have their constitutional rights, they are not particularly interested in obtaining any further constitutional rights of their own. What the Negroes really want is what is left of the white man’s rights.  

For other studies on whiteness, see, for example Hale (1998); Hartigan (1998); Frankenburg (1993); Jacobson (1998).

Investigative report, September 26, 1962, SCR # 2-38-1-47-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.4
A similar assertion occurred in Yazoo County, where a local official attributed the “lack of trouble” to “Negro...confidence in the white leaders”. Thus, as political resources were threatened, whiteness was articulated as the dominant, privileged identity. To some degree, whiteness was accentuated as an identity in reaction to challenges issued by activists to the “white man’s rights,” although these rights are left unarticulated. Presumably, these rights are the vote and political office, as trouble is seen as absent due to black respect for white control. Again, the racial boundary was reinforced in such evaluations, but white identity was also defended.

White identity was also marked when other whites crossed the boundaries that were presumed to divide black and white. Hartigan (1999) presents a compelling story of how poor whites differentiate themselves from the privilege typically associated with whiteness. In a reverse story here, white political elites asserted their white identity in more masked ways through strategies of condemnation that rejected whites who did not match the dominant southern perception of the symbolic meaning of whiteness. Accordingly, while the race of black challengers was always marked (see examples above), the race of most whites, unless they were also challengers, was rarely, if ever, marked. In addition, these white challengers were condemned by the strategies noted above.

Consider the story of Hazel Brannon Smith. Smith owned and edited a newspaper in Holmes County. Though a local, Smith was highly critical of segregation and the Sovereignty Commission. In 1960, Smith was described by an investigator as follows,

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195 Investigative report, December 18, 1964, SCR # 2-13-0-51-1-1-1 to 2-1-1, p.2
"Everyone whom I talked to considered Hazel Smith, a white female, a trouble-maker and an integrationist". Note that her race is identified, which did not happen as investigators spoke with local officials or even white bystanders. Because Smith violated the boundary between black and white, she was marked and targeted. This suggests that white identity is also accentuated when the schematic meaning associated with a category is not confirmed. Such evaluations had consequences for local whites. At a time when most white moderates were silenced, Smith spoke out. She was the target of surveillance by the Sovereignty Commission, and the organization used information collected on her in attempts to discredit her newspaper.

It should be noted that whiteness was not always marked when challengers were discussed. Often, the race of college students with Freedom Summer went unnoticed. Yet, it is important to notice that often when whiteness was marked, it was often to identify divergence and condemn behavior.

Whiteness was also marked when other characteristics of a white person did not fit the schematic expectations of the category. In 1964, an investigator traveled to Sunflower County to check out a white man working as a chiropractor. When the chiropractor explained he had moved to Mississippi because he heard business was good, the investigator concluded that he was probably right, "...because there is nothing more satisfying to a Negro than being sick and having some white man to rub him". To make sense of white man working for black patients, the investigator concluded that the chiropractor’s financial explanation was justifiable because blacks wanted whites to cross

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196 Investigative report, March 29, 1960, SCR # 2-54-1-50-1-1-1
197 Investigative report, October 20, 1964, SCR # 2-38-1-89-1-1-1 to 4-1-1, p.4
the boundary and submit to them. In 1962, an investigator traveled to Tallahatchie County to investigate a woman’s report that her sister-in-law had a mixed-race child and was dating a black man. After interviewing the woman and concluded that she was visibly intimidated by his visit and probably would not date interracially again, the investigator wrote, “The Jackson family is living in a dilapidated house...My observation of the home in which they lived was that it was more filthy than the average Negro home. The Jackson are what most people would call poor white trash”.

Here, whiteness is identified first because the woman stooped to provide access to her white sexual resources and produced a mixed-race child. Second, whiteness is marked to make sense of a white woman who did not confirm white privilege.

The boundary-work that occurred during investigations not only maintained, and slightly altered, racial boundaries, but also reinforced whiteness as a privileged identity. When whites did not match the schematic meaning of their race, whiteness was articulated. By masking whiteness in their reports, Commission investigators reaffirmed white privilege, and by accentuating it, they acknowledged the blurring of the racial boundary and whiteness as the dominant identity.

Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter shows how micro-level evaluations were informed by macro-level cultural schemata that composed the racial boundary. These micro-level evaluations largely reinforced the boundary in ways that were not legitimate in the public sphere, and yet they also display evidence of cracks in the discursive articulation of white

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198 Investigative report, June 26, 1962, SCR # 2-92-0-23-1-1-1 to 4-1-1
identity and black agency, suggesting important backstage transformation in the boundary between black and white.

Through condemnation strategies, activists from outside the state were given more agency than local blacks, reinforcing the conceptual distinction that blacks were not intelligent or resistant. However, by negatively evaluating local blacks who did instigate disruption, Commission investigators and local white officials acknowledged the capacity of local blacks to break this conceptual distinction. Even if these local instigators were regarded as aberrations, they still challenged the fact that the locally dominant racist cultural schema typically blinded white political elites to the reality that the Mississippi movement was largely successful due to grassroots organizing (i.e. Payne 1995).

Strategies of commendation and reassurance praised local blacks who at least appeared committed to the racial status quo and excused active local blacks as coerced. Such strategies reinforced the cultural schema that held whites were inherently superior to blacks. In particular, evaluating blacks as coerced appeared as a new strategy between 1964 and 1965, as federal laws were enabling blacks in Mississippi to integrate the social and political spheres. To make sense of this, political elites saw blacks who seized these opportunities as forced or bribed into challenging white control of resource distribution. According to the dominant white interpretation, blacks still confirmed that the hegemonic racial boundary remained.

The strongest evidence of a crack in this boundary is found in a change in the discursive evaluations of local segregationist groups from commendation to condemnation. Though the Commission agreed with the message of such groups, the
new rules of legitimate action meant it could no longer support them. By condemning the actions of segregationist groups, the Commission signaled a crack in the representation of whiteness.

Further, the process through which white identity was either accentuated or masked also suggests an early complication for the boundary that divided blacks and whites. To some degree, whiteness was accentuated when threatened, but it was also accentuated when someone did not match the sense-making process that defined whites as privileged and supportive of segregation. As the real alliance between the Commission and segregationist groups began to crack, so did the articulation of white identity. This suggests that an early step in generating boundary alteration is the effective fragmentation of white identity on both a micro and a macro level.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

Although it would not meet the demands of its mandate in a wider political context becoming rapidly adverse to explicit racism, the response of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission to the effective contestation of hegemony illuminates how political elites retain power by reconstituting structures that inform, govern, and support the social practices of a state. In this case, the racial boundary at the heart of the Commission’s justification and defense was rearticulated through coercive and ideological strategies that ultimately embedded white control of resources and retention of the boundary in other more legitimate cultural schemata. Most importantly, this research shows that the analysis of hegemony and coercion becomes more complex when we reject the assumption that elites are necessarily coherent and sovereign. In this case, multiple audiences inspired and threatened Commission action in different ways, making coercion costly and the generation of consent complicated.

Because domination was a costly way for Mississippi to officially respond to disruption, largely due to its lack of full sovereignty, the Commission engaged in strategies to try to maintain “hegemony protected by the armour of coercion” (see Chapter Two) with cultural repair-work and tempered coercion. This work was carried out in the public realm, where elites were more directly accountable for what they said, and in the private realm, where actions were somewhat decoupled from public ones and elites more entrenched in sustaining at least symbolic distance between “us” and “them.” Table 7.1 returns to the organizing table from Chapter 2 to summarize how strategies of coercion and ideology were used to maintain domination and hegemony.
Table 7.1: Boundary-Work and the Process of State Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path of Action</th>
<th>Type of State Action</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideological</td>
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<tr>
<td>Through State Structure</td>
<td>Transformed boundary through linkage with legitimate schema in public message</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Largely retained boundary through strategies of commendation and condemnation/non-recognition of local black agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>In relation with non-state actors</td>
<td>Boundary first maintained through commendation, then transformation supported through condemnation of white segregationist groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boundary maintained in alliance with segregationist groups and refusal to prevent white violence, then transformed as alliance becomes costly</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1 summarizes an answer to the question of: How did the Sovereignty Commission embody the white political elite response to integration challenges, accommodating change to stay in power? Briefly, I will discuss the table and relate changes to the pressures generated by multiple audiences on a non-sovereign political body.

To directly maintain hegemony through the Commission as part of the state structure, public relations activity was initially carried out in explicit defense of the racial
boundary. When asked about what the Commission expected to gain from its public relations campaign, particularly the Speakers Bureau directed at non-southern audiences, Erle Johnston reflected that he was not trying to convert people, just convince them that the negative stories told about Mississippi were not true. Johnston and other white elites knew that boundary-work had to be articulated in a schema that legitimated state power, like the schema of Legality that appealed to the Constitutional guarantee of state sovereignty. Johnston noted:

We made it clear to them that five times the Supreme Court of the United States had upheld the separate-but-equal doctrine as to education. Now, the Constitution had not been changed—and the only way you can change it is by amendment—and Congress had passed no law requiring integration of the schools. So how in the world do you think that a few judges up there could take it upon themselves to not only overthrow five previous decisions of their own court, but take away a lawmaking function which belongs to Congress?...What we were trying to show is [that] we weren’t trying to make the integration and segregation so much an issue as it was that the Supreme Court had no right to bring it about: it had no authority. The states under the Constitution retained all the authority not specifically granted to the federal government...

According to Johnston, the public appeal to the non-southern audience was not premised on a defense of a racial boundary but on a defense of state sovereignty. Strangely, the Commission recognized that a defense of racial boundaries was not legitimate, and yet until 1964, the public message placed more emphasis on discursive elements supporting this boundary than on those appealing to a sense of legality and the constitutional rights of states. Thus, the early public message shows that the locally dominant cultural schema of race trumped the need to maintain legitimacy with a non-southern audience. Yet by 1964, appeals to maintain the racial boundary were increasingly linked to more legitimate

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and broadly resonant cultural schema. This transformation accommodated change, visibly represented in the public message, in order for whites to retain power.

This transformation in this public ideological strategy was supported by more coercive measures undertaken in the private transcript, often in conjunction with non-state parties. Too much coercion was costly for Mississippi, as a local state subordinate to a federal one, but a tempered version of coercion was acceptable—even downplayed by white elites involved in defending power. For example, when Erle Johnston was pressed by an interviewer about whether the Sovereignty Commission violated 14th Amendment rights, he dodged the question, insisting:

The Sovereignty Commission was an information agency. When you ever heard about people interfering with blacks trying to register or breaking up a march of some kind it was not the Sovereignty Commission. Some of it we got blamed for it but it was local people. Local people either KKK people or APWR people, citizen’s council people, anybody at the local—the Sovereignty Commission never did organize, never did sponsor, never did interfere with any black trying to register to vote. Now we got statistics. In fact the governor would say, “how many blacks are voting up there in Leflore County now?” Well if we could find out we’d say, “Well we’ve got seven hundred and something up in there.” But that was part of the information. As far as being bodily opposing we didn’t do it...200

Johnston defined “interference” as bodily opposition, not information-gathering or information-distribution. According to Johnston, the Commission’s surveillance strategy was not costly, because it was not violent and because it publicly insisted that the organization only made recommendations when requested to do so by local officials.

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Yet, it can be argued that first, the data do suggest there was interference by the Commission to undermine challenges, and second, even information-gathering was a strategy that provided elites with a sense of hegemonic efficacy and control over the means of domination.

The more coercive strategies carried out in the private transcript did not immediately match the transformation of the public message, but there was some alteration in boundary-work, a change largely driven by coercive measures instituted from above by the federal government. Explaining his unsuccessful attempt to change the nature of the Commission, Johnston reflected:

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of ’64, the Voting Rights Act of ’65, there was really no function I could even think of that the Sovereignty Commission would have. But we were still having problems with confrontations from blacks who were demanding a white power structure certain things whether it be a board of education or city council or board of supervisors... I never put it in the files if a Sovereignty Commission member knew I was communicating with civil rights people ... they’d have probably fired me on the spot.201

The Sovereignty Commission was not intended to work for racial reconciliation or interracial communication. And yet by the mid-1960s, it was doing just that. Of course, the Commission was still monitoring boundary violations, even though Johnston notes it had to create its own work when “things got quieter.” But the transition to a public message of accommodation and the change in recommendations made to local officials are key to understanding the process through which the structure of race, as principle that governed social life in this particular system, was transformed (Sewell 1992: 6).

What of the role of ideological strategies undertaken in relation to non-state entities? Throughout the process of surveillance, micro-level interactions between Commission investigators and non-state-level actors sustained the racial boundary through strategies of condemnation or commendation. In a sense, it was in the evaluations made within the Commission and between the organization and others that political elites were safest from the influence of interventionist politics. Largely, strategies of evaluation were used to maintain the racial boundary and a dominant white identity. However, evidence exists of cracks and transformation. The dominant white identity was contested by challengers and others who did not conform to the schema that informed black/white interactions and resource distribution. More importantly, the Commission shifted from commendation of its original allies, white segregationists, to condemnation of their hot-headed tactics. Because these non-state groups threatened continued white hegemony, they were ideologically rejected.

In short, federal legislation, the result of hard-fought movement struggles, generated a legitimacy crisis for Mississippi. Especially as external forces began to impose boycotts of Mississippi products, local segregationist whites were no longer relevant as an audience with which the Commission had to maintain legitimacy. Rather, the organization began to work with moderate businessmen who were wary of the Commission’s image. The public transcript had cracked not necessarily because the Commission exposed the dirty private world of whites who held political power, but because legitimacy struggles were generated by multiple audiences with divergent demands and power.
In the end, Mississippi’s official system of order, premised on racial boundaries, was altered. Mike Smith, a formal journalist, recalled: “I mean it’s right out of Max Weber. It’s a bureaucracy trying to perpetuate itself. I think white Mississippi correctly viewed the civil rights movement as a great threat to established order.” In 1956, when the Sovereignty Commission was created, order equaled a racial boundary. By 1964, the equation was effectively threatened, and by 1974, the Commission’s days were numbered. To return to a quote from Chapter One, it became “unfashionable” to explicitly defend the boundary between blacks and whites.

Thus, the racial boundary, as a structure governing social action and supporting the white state structure, was transformed. Sewell (1996: 842) writes, “We can speak of structures when sets of cultural schemas, the distribution of resources, and modes of power combine in an interlocking and mutually sustaining fashion to reproduce consistent streams of social practice.” The important thing about structures is that they are relatively durable, although their form may change. The federal government, the non-southern public, divided local whites, and even the movement, much-ignored by the Commission’s cultural repair-work, all contributed to the process through which political elites reconstituted the racial boundary to maintain power. In other words, segregation, a particular version of the boundary as constituted in locally legitimate racism, the unequal distribution of resources, and the state sanctioning of the previous two items, was transformed; it did not fully disappear. The racial boundary continued to inform social practice, but its constitutive parts had to be transformed. While blacks registered to vote,

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won political office, integrated the public schools, and rode on bus seats of their choosing, whites largely retained control of the actual distribution of resources. To this day, Mississippi boasts of its high number of black elected officials, but no black man or woman has ever been elected to a statewide office. Even though the Commission, as the state’s agent of boundary-work, encouraged moderation and complied with federal intervention, the racial boundary was rearticulated “by means of transpositions of schemas and remobilizations of resources” (Sewell 1992: 27). In other words, whites adapted to change by linking the unequal distribution of resources to other more legitimate schema in a way that officially ended segregation but ultimately did not dismantle the racial boundary, inequality, or their own power.

Thus, this story is one of white political elites losing, the outcome of their fight overdetermined by a wider political context. However, the most interesting aspect of the Commission’s response is how it worked to reconstitute hegemony and a racial boundary. Even Erle Johnston, the man who fueled so much of the Commission’s work in the 1960’s, said that he always knew the battle would be lost. On a speaking engagement to the North during the early 1960s, Johnston was asked by a volunteer speaker, “We’re fighting a losing battle, aren’t we?” Johnston replied, “Yes, we are. It’s just how long we can postpone it is all we can do.” The white political elite presumably leading the state’s battle to maintain segregation acknowledged that the Sovereignty Commission, and Mississippi, could not withstand federal intervention and the process of change. Yet, he argued, in his “practical” approach to segregation, “We can adopt a policy of consideration and cooperation, which is a lot better than coercion, and probably have
many of them on our side in appreciation of what is being done for them." Johnston advanced the main argument of this dissertation: coercion is costly when a state lacks full sovereignty, and so other strategies must be engaged to retain power. Consequently, the goal of Johnston, and of other "practical" political elites, was to transform the racial boundary, such that paternalism still defined the relationship between whites and blacks and whites controlled "what is being done" for the weaker race. Relations and resources were rearticulated in the process of response, transformed to agree with less racist cultural schemata and ensure that white political elites retained legitimacy.

Do the findings suggest that movements matter in altering boundaries that classify groups of people and their access to material resources? To some degree. The analysis shows that the process of sense-making by elites is not a process of complete imposition from above, contrary to much of Edelman's work that assumes elite dominance. Rather than assume elites have monolithic control, scholars should attend to the ways in which the dominant group may not be fully sovereign. While elites may not acknowledge their position as tenuous, their response to disruption, especially in a democratic environment or a multi-level system, is often complex. Governments often must answer to wider audiences, including other political actors, economic forces, and the broader public. For example, in the wake of the Cold War, the United States was beholden to explain domestic racial inequality to its global audience, which forced the federal government's hand in creating civil rights policies (Dudziak 2000; Skrentny 1996). In the same way, Mississippi found itself shifting from a deep alliance with segregationist principles to

commitments to economic progress, order, and accommodation. During this process, legitimacy struggles forced the Sovereignty Commission's hand, producing a hesitant public commitment to racial moderation.

This finding suggests that social movements gain significant advantages, and boundaries that nourish inequality are challenged, by compelling targeted political bodies to address multiple audiences. By forcing the federal government to intervene and generating sympathy from the non-southern public and southern white moderates, the Civil Rights Movement indirectly altered the routinely segregationist politics of Mississippi. Although the Commission did not acknowledge the movement as a force of change, its strategies were altered by factors that mediated movement pressure. Because the Commission had to maintain governmental legitimacy, it responded to an increasingly unsympathetic non-southern public, economic pressure, and federal desegregation mandates, rather than conform to the demands of the local segregationist audience. Ultimately, it was Mississippi's subordination to the federal government and fear of negative economic consequences that elicited significant changes in the Commission's discursive repertoire. This finding could be extended to the situation of political elites that are beholden to higher powers, which is true of most elite bodies, except for the elites of the major world hegemons. Even those elites, however, are increasingly accountable to other forces in the context of globalization.

In summary, this research asks us to think critically about how political elites adapt to change, retaining power through transformations that alter the nature of their rule without fully dismantling actual patterns of inequalities. These findings suggest a
theoretical way to interpret how states perpetuate the maintenance of boundaries and classification systems, even as oppositional groups successfully challenge the cultural schema and resources that compose them.
APPENDIX A: DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS BY CULTURAL SCHEMA

Legality/Constitutionality
States Rights
Court decisions and legislation are unconstitutional
Our governmental balance of power is at risk/threatened
The rights of the majority have been trampled upon

The federal government is engaging in illegitimate actions (sending in troops)
We cannot afford to lose federal aid
We cannot withdraw from the nation/draw border
The implementation of federal anti-discrimination laws is overstepping bounds of law
Justice Department has a responsibility to make findings about allegations in MS public
The federal government is discriminatory/SC decisions are unjustly applied to South
The Sovereignty Commission is part of MS executive branch (establishing legitimacy)

Law and Order
Assertion of state commitment to order, law, peace
Outsiders provoke violence and tension
Promotion of local restraint and responsibility
Our laws have been violated by agitators
Denial of police brutality
White undercover groups cause problems

Values, Justice
Appeal for fair hearing/refute falsehoods
MS has been vilified/is a victim
Admission of fault as typical human/state error

America is based on free enterprise; success must be earned
Citizenship rights must be earned; not a given
American is based on freedom and individual choice
Mississippians are patriotic Americans

Civil rights activists have un-American values (religion, communism, etc)

Race
Segregation is mutual system of respect & a necessity
Size of Negro population is the problem (political threat)
Segregation benefits Negroes (jobs, education, etc)
Negroes are the original segregationists/desire segregation
Many local Negroes do not support agitation
Integration would prevent Negro progress
The judicial system in MS works for blacks and whites

To demand integration (in classroom, church) is to admit inferiority
The races are different; separate cultural institutions
Racial problems exist everywhere

Integration organizations are problematic (mislead, outsiders, thrive on strained
relations, don’t communicate, etc)
Cites legal definition of Negro (1/8 blood)
white violence against blacks is rare incident
White paternalism is necessary
White paternalism is being reduced

The southern white man is not without sin in treatment of the Negro
Mississippians are proud of Anglo-Saxon heritage
don't let movement be divisive to white community
White superiority (cleanliness, history, etc)
We enjoy and insist on segregated schools
We have desegregated schools
Whites own businesses, industry, etc.
Negroes can vote if they qualify

**Transition/Accomodation**
Anyone with a solution will be rewarded
Governor's pledge: hate and prejudice will not reign
We have to be patient with this time period
MS state leaders and industry are committed to progress

Transition period has made us a target for "hate-mongering"
Transition has broken down customs/we will survive

**Mixed Schema**

*legality+values:* citizens have a right to protect their sovereign rights

*legality+values:* federal offices have confused morality and constitutionality

*legality+race:* withholding federal aid creates hardship for both races

*legality+order:* laws can be changed through courts and popular sentiment

*legality+order:* we cannot let nation degenerate into legislation by demonstration
rather than legislation by deliberation
legality+order: violence in the South has bred laws

race+order: SSC maintains segregation/order/prevents racial unrest

race+order: "hot heads" from both races cause problems
race+order: agitators stymie negro progress

race+order: outside agitators provoke violence with interracial exhibitionism
race+values: Communists have infiltrated civil rights groups; they are alienating races
race+values: To succeed, Negros have to abide by values of competition, morality, conduct
race+values: Encourage white vote

race+legality: our enemies advocate integration and trample state's rights

race+legality+values: colored applicants have to pass tests for government jobs
race+legality+values: a way of life cannot be legislated
race+legality+values: our laws and customs preserve purity and dignity of both races (anti-miscegenation)

race+transition: there will be no national segregation movement
race+transition: the federal government will soon support colored people; we have to provide or share

race+transition: we need cooperation among whites and Negroes

race+transition: many colored people have improved themselves

race+transition: local industries have been adversely affected by racial problems

race+order+transition: racial problems can be dealt with on a practical level

transition+order: new laws and court orders will not lead to chaos

transition+order: we cannot make true progress with creation of tension by outsiders (outsiders prevent progress)

transition+legality+order: laws and court orders are obnoxious, but we have been forced to adjust as law-abiding citizenry

transition+values: principles can be preserved in transition

transition+legality: MS changed voting laws to conform
APPENDIX B: DATA SOURCES FOR COUNTY-LEVEL CASE SELECTION

**Variable:** Movement Strength

*Source:* Andrews, forthcoming

**Variable:** Movement Index

*Brief Description:* Summary measure constructed from seven dichotomous indicators indicating the presence or absence of the following at the county level:

1. SNCC or CORE project
2. NAACP chapter in 1963
3. MFDP chapter in 1965
4. NAACP chapter in 1966
5. Participation in Freedom Summer
6. Participation in 1963 Freedom Vote
7. Participation in 1964 Freedom Vote

**Variable:** Violence

*Source:* Colby (1987)

*Variable:* White violence

*Brief Description:* Data collected on 82 counties in Mississippi from 1960-1969 to determine level of violence that “physically injures persons or damages property” (32). Total count is 1,085 acts of violence, with average of 8 acts per county.
APPENDIX C: COUNTY-LEVEL DOCUMENT CODEBOOK

IDENTIFYING VARIABLES
These variables record identifying information for each document coded.

1. UNIQUEID (autonumber)
   Unique identification number assigned by Access

2. DOCUMENT NUMBER (text field)
   Unique identification number assigned by Sovereignty Commission

3. COUNT (text field)
   Record number. Keeps total count of documents coded; found in lefthand corner of bottom of screen (i.e. Record ___ of ___)

4. DATE (number field: enter as YYMODA)
   Report date of document (note: initially meant to be date coded, but realized mistake in coding and left as report date of document being coded).

DOCUMENT DETAIL VARIABLES
These variables record details about each document coded.

5. TYPE (look-up)
   Type of document being coded.
   Look-up menu for type of document
   Investigative report
   Memo to director
   Memo from director
   File memo
   Correspondence from Commission
   Correspondence to Commission
   Newspaper article
   Other

6. RECIPIENT (look-up)

---

204 This format is based on Brian Steensland’s codebook.
Recipient of document

Look-up menu for recipient
Commission employee
Commission board member
State official
Local official
Federal official
White citizen
Black citizen
Informant
OTHER

7. DATE CODED (number field: enter as YYMODA)

Date document was coded (note: initially, this was supposed to be 4 above)

8. BEGIN DATE (number field: enter as YYMODA)

Beginning date of document/investigation, as recorded by document author.

9. END DATE (number field: enter as YYMODA)

Ending date of investigation, as recorded by document author (may be same as begin date; if so, leave blank)

10. NUMBER OF PAGES (number field)

Number of total pages in document

11. AUTHOR POSITION (look-up menu)

Author position

Look-up menu
Commission director
Commission investigator
Informant
Local official
State official
Federal official
Citizen
Activist
Other
12. AUTHOR (text field)

Author (enter last name only)

13. SUBJECT HEADING (text field)

Text of full subject heading

14. INITIAL AREA (look-up menu)

Area of concern/trouble initially identified by author in subject line of investigative report. Coded to capture what initially motivated report/investigation. In other words, what did the Commission initially go out to investigate or monitor? What area of life did it identify as a place where boundaries had been violated, or violation was feared? Types of concerns are grouped into five major areas: political, social, economic, violence, and other.

**Look-up menu**

**Political**

a. Activity: General category for “racial activity,” including checks on people suspected of being active, going to meetings, belong to organization, etc. Also includes routine checks of activity, i.e. questioning whether any “racial activity” was going on in a county.
b. Meeting: problem is civil rights meeting (including events there, like speeches)
c. Demonstration: Civil rights demonstration (march, picketing)
d. Boycott: Civil rights related economic boycott
e. Organization: Civil rights organization (office, formation, etc)
f. Political party: Political party organizing
g. Office: Blacks running for office
h. Voter reg: Voter registration/challenge to disfranchisement
i. Voting: Actual voting by blacks
j. Lawsuit: Lawsuit filed (includes injunctions, etc)
k. Public: Public promotion of integration (someone publicly advocates integration)
l. Other: activity related to political realm not identified above

**Social/cultural**
a. Integration pub: Integration at public place (church, park, courthouse, bar, restaurant, library, etc)
b. Integration trans: Integration in transportation (bus, etc)
c. Integration work: Integration in a workplace
d. Integration mtg: Integration at meeting (not civil rights related)
e. Integration house: Integration in housing (neighborhoods, hotels, having blacks into white homes)
f. Integration sex: Interracial relationship (dating, child, marriage)
g. Integration event: Integrated cultural event/television program
h. Other social: problem related to social realm, not including education, not identified above
i. Potential sub: check on whether or not any subversive teachers are present in school (i.e. check to see if teachers have signed state forms)
j. Actual sub: teachers identified as subversive/pro-integration
k. Integration edu: Integration happens or is threatened at a school
l. School tension: Tension or fighting is reported at a school
m. Check edu: Check of school conditions, i.e. whether blacks are satisfied with schools
n. Material edu: check of material being used in school
o. Other edu: problem related to education not identified above

Economic
a. Notary: Notary public application investigation
b. Black-owned: Black-owned business
c. Welfare: Welfare/poverty programs
d. Other: problem related to economic realm not identified above

Violence
b. Violence: report of violence not identified as racially motivated
c. White violence: report of violence specifically identified (or accused of being identified) as being initiated by white covert groups/also includes reports on white covert groups, like KKK or APWR

Other
a. General other: other problems identified not related to anything on this list
b. Suspicious activity: Suspicious activity (i.e. report that a "large number of Negroes has assembled" or drove down the road, etc)
c. Subversive: Subversives (with no explicit connection to race)
d. Creation of neg pub: Creation of negative publicity

15. FOLLOW-UP (toggle on/off)

Toggle on if document contains a follow-up to a previous investigation.

16. FOLLOW-UP NUMBER (text)

Document number of original report this one is follow-up to, if identifiable.

17. COUNTY (text field)

County in which investigation took place.

18. CITY (text field)

City in which investigation took place.

19. WAS THIS A ROUTINE INVESTIGATION? (toggle on/off)

Toggle on if investigation is marked as routine check of county by investigator in report.

20. WAS INFORMATION DISTRIBUTED? (toggle on/off)

Toggle on if Sovereignty Commission distributed information to county officials or anyone else (i.e. information about federal examiners, etc.)

21. DISTEXT (memo field)

Enter text of actual information distributed. If text is not entered as exact quotation, put in parentheses.

22. COLLECTION OF GOOD PUBLICITY (toggle on/off)

Toggle on if purpose of investigation is to collect and then distribute good publicity about the state of Mississippi.
23. WAS INVESTIGATION REQUESTED? (toggle on/off)

Toggle on if document author specifically notes that investigation was requested by someone.

24. REQUESTED BY (look-up menu)

Select position of person requesting investigation.

Look-up menu:
- Commission director
- Commission employee
- Commission board member
- White state official
- White local official
- White federal official
- White citizen
- Black citizen
- Informant
- Other

25. REQUEST BY COUNCIL MEMBER (toggle on/off)

Toggle on if request was identifiably made by a Citizens Council member.
(Unfortunately, these members are not often marked by investigator, but do note if it is clear person requesting was member of Council)

INFORMATION GATHERING VARIABLES

These variables record what kinds of contacts Sovereignty Commission employees made and what kinds of information they collected.

25. WAS INFORMANT USED? (look-up menu)

Identify whether or not investigator used an informant.

Look-up menu
- Yes
- No
- Unknown

The following variables are to be toggled on if the document author made contact with any of the following types of people to construct document:
26. CONTACT WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS

A local official is any person serving in an elected (or appointed) capacity for the county-level government.

27. CONTACT WITH WHITE BYSTANDER

A white bystander is any white person contact who is not directly involved in the investigation as a subject, etc. This can be a witness.

28. CONTACT WITH BLACK BYSTANDER

Same as 27, but a black bystander. Race is typically identified in these reports only for people of color (black) or for white persons who are involved with the movement.

29. CONTACT WITH COUNCIL MEMBER

Citizens Council Member. As noted previously, locals who are citizen council members are not always identified as being a member.

30. CONTACT WITH WHITE BUSINESSOWNER

White person is interviewed in their capacity as a businessowner.

31. CONTACT WITH BLACK BUSINESSOWNER

Black person is interviewed in their capacity as a businessowner.

32. CONTACT WITH WHITE SUBJECT

A white subject of investigation is interviewed.

33. CONTACT WITH BLACK SUBJECT

A black subject of investigation is interviewed.

34. OBTAINED LICENSE INFORMATION

Document author obtained license plate information for subjects.

35. OBTAINED RESIDENCE INFORMATION
Document author obtained resident information for subjects.

36. OBTAINED EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

Document author obtained information regarding subject’s employment.

37. OBTAINED EDUCATION INFORMATION

Document author obtained information regarding subject’s current educational status or background (i.e. where person goes to school)

38. OBTAINED CRIMINAL RECORD INFORMATION

Document author obtained information regarding subject’s criminal record.

*Toggle the following variables on if they are mentioned in the report.*

39. NAACP

40. CORE

41. SNCC

42. SCLC

43. COFO

44. OTHER ORG

45. ORGANIZATION NAME (text field)

Enter name of organization.

**SUBFORM 1: VIOLATION SUBFORM**

This first subform is embedded within main form to capture multiple instances of boundary violation identification/articulation. This list is the same as the one above for initial area of concern, but it is intended to capture all of the problems investigated, monitored, or confirmed in the documents.

46. VIOLATION ID (autonumber)

Unique identification number assigned for each record in subform by database.

47. DOCUMENT NUMBER (linked variable)
Same as document number in mainform and serves to link this subform to main table. Matches each boundary violation with document record from which it comes.

48. VIOLATION RECORD # (number field)

Enter record number from subform. This keeps track of how many violations are identified within each report.

49. VIOLATION TYPE (look-up menu)

Same as codes for INITIAL AREA variable above.

50. DESCRIPTION OF VIOLATION (memo field)

Record of textual description of violation. If direct quotes are not used, put in parentheses.

51. LOCATION (text field)

Location where problem took place

52. ADDITIONAL POINTS (memo field)

Record of any problems or interesting points about violation description.

END OF SUBFORM

SUBFORM 2: RACE RELATIONS ASSESSMENT SUBFORM

53. RELATION ID (autonumber)

Unique identification number supplied by Access for each record for this subform.

54. DOCUMENT NUMBER (linked variable)

Same as document number in mainform and serves to link this subform to main table. Matches each record here with document record from which it comes.

55. RELATIONS RECORD NUMBER (number field)
Enter record number from subform. This keeps track of how many assessments are identified within each report.

56. POSITION ON RACE RELATIONS (look-up menu)

Utilize this form when investigator notes that someone in report (typically subject) articulates clear position on race relations; if no articulation of position, then leave subform blank

look-up menu
Pro-segregation
Pro-integration
Reluctant accommodation

57. SPEAKER 1 (look-up)

Select speaker of statement regarding race relations.

Look-up menu
Investigator
Subject
White citizen
Black citizen
Local official
State official
Other

58. POSITION STATEMENT (memo field)

Statement of position (verbatim)

59. INEQUALITY NOTED? (toggle on/off)

Is there an acknowledgement of inequality in report? (yes/no)

60. SPEAKER 2 (look-up menu)

Speaker of statement on inequality.

Look-up menu
Investigator
Subject
White citizen
Black citizen
Local official
61. STATEMENT OF INEQUALITY (memo field)

Verbatim text used by speaker describing inequality

END OF SUBFORM 2

SUBFORM 3: Evaluation of players subform

62. PLAYERS ID (autonumber)

Unique identification number supplied by Access for each record for this subform.

63. DOCUMENT NUMBER (linking variable)

Same as document number in mainform and serves to link this subform to main table. Matches each record here with document record from which it comes.

64. PLAYERS RECORD NUMBER (number field)

Enter record number from subform. This keeps track of how many player evaluations are identified within each report.

65. PLAYER BEING EVALUATED (look-up menu)

If statements of evaluation (define better-judgments/opinions) of particular players in contestation are offered by anyone in report, note here which player is targeted.

Look-up menu
Activist
Local white
Local black
Council
Other covert
Federal
Local
State
MSSC
Informant
Outsider-white
Outsider-black
Outsider
Other

66. SPEAKER OF EVALUATION (look-up menu)

Look-up menu
Investigator
Subject
Local white
Local black
Federal official
Local official
State official
Council member
Commission director
Informant
Other

67. CATEGORY OF EVALUATION (look-up menu)

Code the category of the evaluation.

Look-up menu
Positive
Negative
Neutral
Morally inferior
Sexual deviant
Ignorant
Communist
Anti-civil rights
Pro-civil rights
Coerced
Uppity
Self-interested
Happy/content
Instigators
Other

68. TEXT DESCRIBING EVALUATION OF PLAYER (memo field)
SUBFORM 4: BOUNDARY ASSESSMENT

69. BOUNDARY ID (autonumber)

Unique identification number supplied by Access for each record for this subform.

70. DOCUMENT NUMBER (linking variable)

Same as document number in mainform and serves to link this subform to main table. Matches each record here with document record from which it comes.

71. ASSESSMENT RECORD NUMBER (number field)

Enter record number from subform. This keeps track of how many evaluations of racial situation are identified within each report.

72. SPEAKER’S ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION (look-up menu)

Look-up table
Quiet: Racial situation is quiet
Explosive: Racial situation is tense/explosive/critical
Improved: Racial situation is “better”/improved
Fear: Expression of fear about future
No change
Other

73. AFFILIATION OF SPEAKER (look-up menu)

Look-up
Investigator
Subject
White citizen
Black citizen
Local official
State official
Federal official
Council
Other
VIOLENCE/ORDER VARIABLES

75. VIOLENCE NOTED (toggle on/off)
   Toggle on if violence is noted in report.

76. REPORTED (toggle on/off)
   Toggle on if violence was reported by someone else to author.

77. OBSERVED (toggle on/off)
   Toggle on if violence was observed by author.

78. NUMBER OF VIOLENCE EVENTS (number field)
   Record number of instances/events (number)

79. VIOLENCE DONE TO ACTIVISTS (toggle on/off)

80. VIOLENCE DONE TO BLACKS (toggle on/off)

81. VIOLENCE DONE TO WHITES (toggle on/off)

82. VIOLENCE DONE TO OFFICIALS (toggle on/off)

83. VIOLENCE DONE TO OTHERS (toggle on/off)

84. VIOLENCE DESCRIPTION (memo)
   Enter text describing violence

85. INJURIES REPORTED (toggle on/off)

86. INJURIES TO ACTIVISTS? (toggle on/off)

87. INJURIES TO BLACKS? (toggle on/off)

88. INJURIES TO WHITES? (toggle on/off)
89. INJURY TEXT (memo)
   Record text describing injuries.

90. ARRESTS REPORTED? (toggle on/off)

91. ARRESTS OF ACTIVISTS? (toggle on/off)

92. ARRESTS OF BLACKS? (toggle on/off)

93. ARRESTS OF WHITES? (toggle on/off)

94. ARRESTS OF OFFICIALS? (toggle on/off)

95. ARREST TEXT (memo)
   Record text describing arrests.

96. IS TRIAL OBSERVED? (toggle on/off)

97. TRIAL REPORTED ON BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN AUTHOR (toggle on/off)

GENERAL CODA/EVALUATION OF INVESTIGATION—by investigator

98. CONFIRM INITIAL CONCERN (toggle on/off)
   Does investigator confirm initial concern? Yes/no

99. REFUTE INITIAL CONCERN (toggle on/off)
   Does investigator refute initial concern? Yes/no

100. CALL FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION (toggle on/off)
    Does investigator call for future investigation? Yes/no

101. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKERS (toggle on/off)
    Does investigator identify potential troublemakers? Yes/no

102. IDENTIFY ACTIVE TROUBLEMAKERS (toggle on/off)
    Does investigator identify active troublemakers? Yes/no
103. SAYS MOVEMENT IS LOSING POWER (toggle on/off)
   Does investigator assess that movement is losing momentum? Yes/no

104. SAYS MOVEMENT IS GAINING POWER (toggle on/off)
   Does investigator assess that movement is gaining power? Yes/no

105. TEXT OF GENERAL EVALUATION, IF PRESENT (Memo field)
   Text of general evaluation, if present

ACTION VARIABLES

106. ACTION TAKEN (toggle on/off)
   Is there evidence that action was taken in response to any situation mentioned? (YES/NO)

107. PROVIDE INFORMATION TO MEDIA (toggle on/off)
   Did SC note they would provide information to media? (YES/No)

108. PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO LOCA OFFICIALS (toggle on/off)
   Did SC officials provide local officials with recommendations? (YES/NO)

109. INVESTIGATOR SAYS: REJECT INTEGRATION (toggle on/off)
   Did SC encourage local officials to reject integration? (yes/no)

110. INVESTIGATOR SAYS GRANT CONCESSIONS (toggle on/off)
   Did SC encourage local officials to grant concessions? (yes/no)

111. INVESTIGATOR SAYS COMMUNICATE WITH BLACKS (toggle on/off)
   Did SC encourage local officials to communicate with blacks? (yes/no)

112. INVESTIGATOR SAYS DO NOT COMMUNICATE WITH BLACKS (toggle on/off)
   Did SC encourage local officials NOT to communicate with blacks? (yes/no)
113. INVESTIGATOR INVOLVED IN LOCAL DISCUSSION OF PROBLEM (toggle on/off)

   Was SC representative involved in local official discussions of the problem? (yes/no)

114. TEXT OF RECOMMENDATION (memo field)

   Record verbatim text of recommendation.

115. INFORMATION GIVEN TO SC BY PERSON IN REPORT (memo field)

   Record text of information given to author by someone in report.

116. ANY NOTES/QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS DOCUMENT (memo field)

   Record any comments or questions regarding document as a whole.
REFERENCES


Steinhoff, Patricia G. Unknown publication date. “A New Approach to Qualitative Content Analysis.”


