COINTELPRO and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Classification of Threats

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Abstract

COINTELPRO was a formidable and extremely controversial counterintelligence program conducted by the FBI from 1956 to 1971. Its exposure showcased the covert methods in which the FBI targeted US citizens it identified as threats to the internal and domestic security of the United States. Since the program's end, the FBI continues to explore and identify the current and potential threats to the United States. However, what exactly does this program say about the FBI at the time of its inception and what does it say about how it had classified threats? And what could it tell us about how it classifies threats today?

This study examines how the FBI treated two identified targets of COINTELPRO, "black extremists" and "white hate groups", and whether the differences found between the treatment of the two targets as threats was a result of internal or external institutional factors. In conducting such study, I seek to determine if the factors that influence the Bureau's threat classification may have either been internal, a result of the Directors' influence or the influence of the organization's structure, culture, and/or function, or external, a result of the President's or Congress' influence. I hypothesize that the differing treatment of these targets, where "black extremists" were identified and prioritized as more of a threat than "white hate groups", was a result of internal institutional factors within the Bureau. Within this study, I examine reports and memos from the FBI database, the Vault, from 1968, to best determine which hypothesis is more accurate.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

COINTELPRO was a domestic counterintelligence conducted by the FBI from 1956 to 1971 that targeted American citizens deemed to be a threat to the internal security of the U.S. that were engaging in, in what the Bureau identified as, subversive activity. This program was controversial as it targeted American citizens using covert methods without the knowledge of the President, Congress, and the American public. Since the program's end, the FBI continues to identify and address domestic threats facing the United States today. However, what can this program tell us about how the FBI identified and classified threats during this time? And what can this tell us about how it addresses threats today?

This study seeks to understand how the FBI treated two groups within COINTELPRO, "black extremists" and "white hate groups" and what factors may have influenced the treatment of these targets. In conducting such study, I seek to determine if the factors that influence the Bureau's threat classification may have either been internal, a result of the Directors' influence or the influence of the organization's structure, culture, and/or function, or external, a result of the President's or Congress' influence. I propose these two hypotheses and suggest that it is more likely that internal factors shaped the Bureau's threat classification and differing treatment of these groups. Within this study, I examine reports and memos from the FBI database, the Vault, from 1968 to determine which hypothesis is more accurate.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Founded as the Bureau of Investigations (BOI) in 1908, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) was initially created to address the lack of a systematic mechanism of law enforcement across the country and the national rise in violent crime and corruption in major cities (U.S. Dept. of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2008). Since its founding, the FBI has evolved to encompass both law enforcement and intelligence capabilities as it seeks to fulfill its mission statement, to "protect the American people and uphold the Constitution of the United States" (FBI, *Mission & Priorities*). This mission statement is the backbone of the Bureau's actions as both a law enforcement and intelligence agency as it seeks to maintain and ensure domestic security within the country. However, as the Cold War continued to engulf the world in a constant state of geopolitical tension, the United States began to face its own problems at home:

> As the country throbbed with social upheavals and crises, with an attempt to readjust racial and economic relationships, with bitter protest against an unpopular Asian war, and with a new protest movement against pollution of the environment, the [FBI] were dispatched to maintain the status quo (Ungar, 1976, p. 135).

These social upheavals and crises had not sprung up overnight but had been simmering for quite some time. The Civil Rights Movement took hold of the nation between the late 1940s and early 1950s with African Americans demanding for their rights to be seen and treated as equals by both the state and society. Meanwhile, the United States had begun its involvement in the Vietnam war in 1954. The 1960s would provide the backdrop for American's discontent with both the status quo and the changing environment they faced.

As the Civil Rights Movement rose to prominence, so did those that sought to destroy it and the progress it sought. In 1963, members of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, killing 4 young black girls. In the summer of 1964, a voting campaign known as "Freedom Summer" organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to register black voters, was marred by the murders of Andrew Goodman, James Earl Chaney, and Michael Henry Schwerner at the hands of Mississippi Klansmen. Even so, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 would codify these protections against discrimination and voting rights guarantees into law. But this social unrest would not end. In 1966, following a split within the Civil Rights Movement between its non-violent and more militant factions, the Black Panther Party was founded and saw emergence of the Black Power Movement. Similarly, the United States saw the rise of numerous counterculture movements across the country including the Hippie and anti-war movement following further escalation of the war in Vietnam. The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr., which triggered riots across the country, and of Democratic presidential candidate, Robert F. Kennedy, in 1968 contributed to widespread uneasiness, anger, and fear. Meanwhile, the contentious 1968 presidential election included the clash between Chicago police and anti-war protesters at the DNC and candidate George Wallace, a well-known and outspoken segregationist, on the campaign trail.

The U.S. seemed to be a nation on the brink and to some in need of stability and continuity. As the agency responsible for ensuring and upholding the domestic security of the country, the FBI had to figure out a way to ensure that threats abroad did not make it to the homeland and those that came from within were closely monitored to ensure it didn't spread beliefs and ideologies that seemed in opposition to the U.S. Their solution was to develop a

program, known as the Counterintelligence Program or COINTELPRO, that sought to address this rapidly changing social and political environment and the threats that such changes posed to the domestic security and stability of the U.S.

COINTELPRO was a covert domestic counterintelligence program conducted by the FBI from 1956 to 1971 that sought to target "subversive" groups thought to be a threat to the internal security of the United States. The overall purpose of COINTELPRO was to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities" of groups and individuals that were deemed to be engaging in actions that threatened the security of the U.S. government (Cunningham, 2003). Initially, COINTELPRO was created out of Director J. Edgar Hoover's concern of the average American's growing apathy towards a communist threat within the country but would later evolve to encompass other "subversive" groups such as the Black Panther Party (BPP), the Civil Rights Movement, and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) (Cunningham, 2005; Gage, 2022).

Two "subversive groups" that were targets of COINTELPRO were "white hate groups" and "black extremists". These two groups, while broad in name and description, targeted a number of groups and organizations. "White hate groups" included such groups as the Klu Klux Klan (KKK), the United Klans of America (UKA), the Knights of the Klu Klux Klan (KKKK), the National States' Rights Party (NSRP), and the National Socialists White People's Party (NSWPP). "Black extremists" included groups such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the Black Panther Party (BPP), the Nation of Islam (NOI), as well as members of the Civil Rights Movement including Martin Luther King Jr. While both broad groupings were targets of the same program, the purposes behind their addition to

COINTELPRO vary slightly. In targeting "white hate groups", the program sought "to expose, disrupt, and otherwise neutralize the activities of various Klans and hate organizations, their leadership and adherents" (FBI Memo, From Director to all Field offices, 2 Sept. 1964). While for "black extremists", the purpose of the program was "to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, and otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groups, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder" (FBI Memo, From Director to all field offices, 25 Aug. 1967). Unlike "black extremists", the purpose of identifying "white hate groups" as subversive or targets of the program is not tied to a "propensity for violence and civil disorder". Which is unusual considering that Cunningham (2003) and Drabble (2004) note that those falling into the category of "white hate groups" engaged in violent, vigilante activity against black citizens and civil rights workers, often resulting in death. So why no mention of violence when accounting for "white hate groups"? Why is the focus solely applied to "black extremists"?

This study focuses on the FBI and its program COINTELPRO. It examines the way in which the FBI treated two targets of COINTELPRO, "white hate groups" and "black extremists", to determine to what extent the differences in treatment likely signify a priority or emphasis by the Bureau of one threat over another, whether real or otherwise, and how much of said priority is influenced by factors either within or outside of the Bureau. The data I will be examining will include all of the memos from the FBI's public database, the Vault, pertaining to "black extremists" and "white hate groups" in the year 1968. I have chosen to examine such memos from a single year, 1968, to narrow my scope of analysis and allow for a more thorough, detailed examination of these documents as they pertain to my thesis. While also ensuring that the programs targeting these two groups, "white hate groups" and "black extremists" had enough

time to develop and cultivate counterintelligence action. In terms of how I am examining how the FBI "treated" "white hate groups" and "black extremists", I will be examining the language it used to refer to or speak about either group with the memos to better understand the Bureau's priorities. In that I will be looking for language that indicates a sense of urgency or calls for immediate action to be taken against a group. But I will also be looking for the lack thereof, in which language determines there is no threat or that no action need be taken against a group. To best determine which factors are primarily influencing the FBI in its threat classification, I propose two hypotheses for my study:

1. The FBI's system of threat classification is influenced by internal factors. Such factors would include the Director of the FBI and the FBI's organizational culture and structure.
2. The FBI's system of threat classification is influenced by external factors. Such factors would include the President of the United States and/or Congress.

These hypotheses are derived from the work of scholars of organizations about how organizational behavior and leadership, external social pressures, and changes in law are among the factors that influence organizational activities (Barnett & Carroll, 1995; Kondra & Hurst, 2008; Schraeder et al, 2004; Van Fleet & Griffin, 2006; Zegart, 2008). In proposing these hypotheses, I seek to inform the manner in which an organization such as the FBI can be or is influenced.

It must also be noted that the terms "black extremists" and "white hate groups" are terms used by the FBI and are found within the documents that are to be analyzed. As I proceed throughout my thesis, I intend to use these terms as they have been presented as they are not only the "correct" terms used by the FBI at the time, but their use can aid in my analysis and understanding of how the FBI treated these two groups as threats.

Purpose Of Research

The purpose of conducting such research, especially on such a deeply researched topic as COINTELPRO, is to provide further perspective on how this program showcased the Bureau's priorities, what groups the Bureau saw as threats to the United States, and what it can tell us about the Bureau and, potentially, its process of threat classification today towards similar groups. In conducting such a study, I am seeking to better understand as to what factors can effectively influence an executive agency, its processes, and priorities.

Thesis Format

This thesis is organized into 5 chapters. Following the introduction, Chapter 2 will review the relevant literature, including how threats are constructed within the United States, how the FBI identified and defined threats in COINTELPRO, how it responded to such threats, and the structure and culture of the FBI as an organization during this time and the environment in which the FBI had developed as an agency. Chapter 3 will cover the methodology of my case study, how I processed the memos and the methods of analysis I used. It will also cover the definitions of those words and concepts that appear throughout my case study. Chapter 4 will review the results of my findings. This chapter will include a general interpretation of results, implications of such results, the limitations within my research that impacted or could have impacted my results, and recommendations regarding future research and what I would have done differently. And finally, Chapter 5 will provide the overall conclusion and incorporate my overall takeaways from the study and determine if they could apply to current targets of counterintelligence activities that the FBI has been working against.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will review the relevant literature to my case study. As I am examining the manner in which the FBI's threat classification was influenced by either internal or external factors, it was apparent that I examine how the United States has framed and constructed, how that potentially influenced how the Bureau identified threats, how it responded to said threats, and how the organization functioned and was structured during this time in its history. As to better understand the general background of the Bureau while COINTELPRO was being conducted. The key themes found in this literature review are threat construction in the United States, identifying and defining 'subversive' activity, responses to 'subversive' activity, FBI's organizational structure at the time of COINTELPRO, and organizational theory and institutionalized resistance in the FBI.

Threat Construction in the United States

To understand the manner in which the FBI was able to determine and identify threats, we must understand how threats were often constructed in the United States. According Sjöstedt (2013), threat construction is a process in which threats are identified, either by a state or non-state actors, often resulting in the securitization and countering of a particular threat. How a state or non-state actor approaches this process varies. However, Newell (2020), Sjöstedt (2013), and Yuan & Fu (2020) identified the United States to have the tendency to utilize narratives in their threat construction, both domestic and international. But what does that mean? The use of a narrative in threat construction, according to Yuan & Fu (2020), means the development of a particular perspective, from either state or non-state actors, regarding a threat to that actor. This

narrative entails in what they described as “storytelling logic” to justify and legitimize their actions against a threat as being morally and ‘logically’ correct. The “storytelling logic” Yuan & Fu (2020) refer to often engages in and identifies a self-other dynamic when identifying, particularly, national threats (p. 425). In their article, they examine how the United States often engaged in this narrative framing as threats have evolved. In which the self, in this case the United States, constructs a narrative against a threat, in this case the other, more specifically the Soviet Union, Japan, and China. Similarly, Sjöstedt (2013) examined how ideas and identities affected decision makers’ ability to initiate securitization of a threat. Within her article, Sjöstedt (2013) identified decision makers as having immense influence on the spread of ‘ideas’ and others’ relation to their ‘identity’ which aids in how threat narratives are shaped. In particular, Sjöstedt (2013) examined how the United States’ initial choice to not identify the AIDS epidemic as a threat to public health was due to perceptions of decision makers of the belief that AIDS affected the immoral, more specifically the gay community. And how that changed in later administrations as their beliefs and ideas of the community shifted. Yuan & Fu (2020) identify a similar occurrence known as the ‘narrative identity’:

> we make sense of the world through narratives and in that process acquire our identity; that identity, in turn, serves as the premise for what to do, which further leads to new narratives and actions. Narrative, identity, and actions are hence in a constant, mutually constitutive process, and identity formation turns out to be a narrative construction process. (p. 425)

In understanding that narratives aid in our understanding of the world around us and aid in our understanding of ourselves, it makes sense that they influence our perceptions of what is or is not a threat. For example, Newell (2020) compared how the United States government

treated the domestic threats such as the KKK, Fenians, and anarchists between 1860-1920. In which he found that while the KKK had produced greater violence during this time period, American government officials deemed it less of a threat compared to the "perceived foreignness, otherness, and ideological aberrance of the anarchists", (p. 288). Newell (2020) also identified 'Americanism', how American one is perceived to be, as being a key factor in how domestic threats were identified during this time. In that the more 'American' you perceived, or if you held or upheld American values, the less of a threat you were. And while Yuan & Fu (2020) do not examine the United States' domestic threat construction, like Newell (2020) and Sjöstedt (2013), their emphasis on foreign states, aids in Newell (2020) and Sjöstedt (2013) arguments of the United States' tendency to "other" perceived threats, even those domestically. Let us examine the extent to which the FBI utilizes threat construction in COINTELPRO.

Identifying and Defining 'Subversive' Activity

I briefly mentioned in the introduction that the purpose of COINTELPRO was to target "subversive groups" that were seen as threats to the internal security of the United States. But what exactly makes a group 'subversive' and how does one go about identifying them? Before we can go into how the FBI identified and defined subversive behavior and activities, we must first identify what a threat is. According to Witte (1992), "a threat is an external stimulus that exists whether a person knows it or not" (p. 331). Meaning that a threat exists outside the individual as a form of harm or danger and is either real or it is not. Witte (1992) goes on to say that if a person perceives a threat to exist, that even if it does not exist in reality, its perception is real to the viewer. Allowing the person perceiving the threat to act upon it as if it were real.

However, what is threatening for one person, may not be for another. If we were to return it to the notion of subversive activity, Ungar (1976) notes that:

> What is subversive to one man may, of course, be the height of patriotism for another. And an act of speech intended as the very personification of democratic ideals, may be interpreted by others who consider themselves vigilant as a dangerous threat to the internal security of the nation. (p.123)

Similarly, Stinson (1979) found that "those in charge of the F.B.I. often were unable to distinguish subversive groups from non-subversive groups, which resulted in the latter groups also being subjected to investigations" (p. 217). A threat, or "subversive activity" in this case, is something that is widely up for interpretation. But that interpretation is often motivated by the fear of that which is threatening something or someone, or the perception of that that threat will or is already occurring. Roger (1975) describes a threat as influencing 'fear appeal', a form of persuasive messaging that seeks to scare an audience into following what the message wants them to by describing the terrible things that will happen if they don't. While Roger (1975) primary focus was examining the extent to which 'fear appeal' had upon the change of attitudes and behavior, he later identified threat as being an important variable to fear. So, if a form of "subversive activity" can be identified as a threat, whether real or otherwise, the notion of that person's perception of the threat is real, or at least real to them, due to the fear that such threat induces or will induces if it occurs.

Both Witte (1992) and Roger (1975) state that for a person to act upon a threat, that threat must be examined through its severity and for the person's susceptibility of said threat. The severity and one's susceptibility to a threat is heavily dependent upon the reality and perception of the threats' impact. This also impacts the success of the processes that attempt to mitigate a

threat, otherwise known as efficacy. Witte (1994) identified two kinds of efficacy, response efficacy and self-efficacy. Response efficacy is the degree to which an individual believes a response to a threat has been effective at alleviating said threat, while self-efficacy is the degree to which an individual believes they are capable of implementing the response (Witte, 1994). Both are needed and must be applied effectively to resolve a threat.

While Witte (1992) and Roger (1975) speak on threats on the individual level, Johnston & Warkentin (2010) apply their concept of threat to an organization and its ability and willingness to identify and address threats in, particularly, computer security. As they are primarily focused on an organization, they incorporate the social influence of behavioral intent, the manner in which those within an organizational setting are influenced by those around them, into how severely threats are taken. As such, they note the importance of how one's social and work environment influences their perception and identification of a threat and how they go about addressing and resolving said threat.

Returning to how the FBI identified and defined "subversive activity". Within COINTELPRO, the "subversive activity" that the FBI was targeting and seeking to effectively neutralize was perceived to be and associated with the notion of violence or the potential use of violence (Cunningham, 2005, Ungar, 1976). According to Cunningham (2005): "Violent acts qualified both the left and right for selection as COINTELPRO" (p. 123). While the terminology was not often used at the time, what was deemed to be 'subversive activity' under COINTELPRO would best fall under the modern classification of domestic terrorism. Domestic terrorism being a subcategory of terrorism, which is generally described as acts of terror that involve the ideology of a group of people that seek to use violence or the threat of violence for political gain or to achieve a particular political goal (Jones et al, 2020). The overarching

definition of domestic terrorism is that it is acts of terror that are committed within the confines of a particular country by its own citizenry (Bjelopera, 2017; Berris, 2021). For the FBI, it defines domestic terrorism as "Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature." (FBI, "Terrorism").

As we can see in the definition, the threats posed by "subversive groups", in our case "white hate groups" and "black extremists", falls into this definition, but only to an extent. Not all of those identified as participating in "subversive groups" committed violent or criminal acts. Many "subversive groups" were targeted for their "subversive" or radical ideas, even the mere exposure to such ideas were seen by the Bureau as belief in them and were subject to investigation (Ungar, 1976). Ungar (1976) broadens this threat perception as follows:

> The FBI's shocked reaction to the counterculture of the 1960s was hardly surprising. But Bureau men were not just scandalized Middle Americans feeling their values were being insulted and threatened by such aspects of "movement" life-style as drugs, communal living, and abundant hair. They were the nation's elite law enforcement force; their work, in a real sense, the maintenance of national law and order. For the typical FBI man, a personal sense of disgust fed professional concern; the result was too often the overstatement of dangers posed by new organizations and individual activists. And polarization. And, with the growth of the groups and escalation of their protests, some of them openly violent, a Bureau that became ever more frightened and confused until it saw itself as a bulwark against the lawlessness and disintegration of the American way of life. The FBI felt it had to set things right again, and if that meant its own escalation of tactics and some desperate measures in the name of the law, then so be it. (p. 462)

As mentioned with Rogers (1975), Witte (1992), and Johnston & Warkentin (2010), the presence of fear in the identification of a threat or perceived threat can shape the behavior and response of those believed to be at the receiving end of said threat. The FBI was severely concerned with the potential threat posed from those within seeking to upset the norms and status quo of the nation or, more drastically, seeking to the overthrow of the U.S. government. As far as the Bureau was concerned, acts of subversion or perceived subversion constituted its identification as a threat and a response.

Responses to 'Subversive' Activity

The ways in which the FBI responded to 'subversive' activity in COINTELPRO varies from who it targeted at the time and how much of a threat they were perceived to be. Even when COINTELPRO shifted to a larger program focused on threats other than communism, including "white hate groups" and "black extremists", the Bureau remained "constantly on the lookout for any indication that the American anti-war and other protest movements were controlled by the Communist party or linked to foreign powers" (Ungar, 1976). Indicating a continued concern for such influence in the sphere of domestic, social, and political matters, and likely priority if such "subversive activity" would indicate or imply such influence.

But what kinds of methods did the FBI take to address and neutralize "subversive activity"? Cunningham (2003) identified all the forms and functions in which the FBI were able to address two of its targets, "white hate groups" and the "New Left", to neutralize their engagement in subversive activity. Cunningham (2003) is examining the extent to which "White Hate Groups" and the "New-Left" are targeted by COINTELPRO and the differences that came

about the treatment between the two groups. Figure 1a. identifies all the forms and functions of the actions against "white hate groups" were taken. Notably, Cunningham (2003) identifies the methods that were used solely for "white hate groups" and not used against the New Left. Including, destroying target resources, starting chain letters, anonymously sending evidence of protest activity, utilizing fake target credentials, placing fake order for periodical, and making

Table 3 Typology of COINTELPRO actions against white hate groups

Function	
1	Create a negative public image
2	Break down internal organization
3	Create dissension among groups
4	Restrict access to group-level resources
5	Restrict ability to protest
6	Hinder the ability of individual targets to participate in group activities
7	Displace conflict
8	Gather information (intelligence)
9*	Control target group actions
Form	
A	Send anonymous letter
B	Send fake (signed) letter
C	Send articles or "public source documents"
D	Supply information to officials
E	Plant evidence
F	Utilize informants
G	Utilize media source
H	Disseminate Bureau-generated information about targets
I	Interview targets
J	Supply misinformation
K	Make fake phone call
L	Actively harass targets
N*	Destroy target's resources
P	Send ridicule-type information
Q*	Start chain letter
S*	Anonymously send evidence of protest activity
T*	Utilize fake target credentials
U*	Place fake order for periodical
V*	Make anonymous phone call

Note: Asterisks denote forms/functions not used against the New Left.

Figure 1a: *COINTELPRO actions against White Hate Groups*

Note. Reprinted from *Understanding State Responses to Left-versus Right-Wing Threats: The FBI's Repression of the New Left and the Ku Klux Klan* by D. Cunningham, 2003, *Social Science History*, Vol. 27, pp. 327-370. Copyright 2003 by Cambridge University Press.

anonymous phone calls. He also notes that the only function differing from "white hate groups" and the New-Left was the intent to control the groups actions. This comes with the implication that there was no intention by the Bureau to completely eliminate these groups when compared

to the New Left, even though they are identified as engaging in subversive activity deemed threatening to the internal security of the United States. That is, threatening enough to warrant

Table 1 Typology of COINTELPRO actions against the New Left

Function	
1	Create a negative public image
2	Break down internal organization
3	Create dissension among groups
4	Restrict access to group-level resources
5	Restrict ability to protest
6	Hinder the ability of individual targets to participate in group activities
7	Displace conflict
8	Gather information (intelligence)
Form	
A	Send anonymous letter
B	Send fake (signed) letter
C	Send articles or "public source documents"
D	Supply information to officials
E	Plant evidence
F	Utilize informants
G	Utilize media source
H	Disseminate Bureau-generated information about targets
I	Interview targets
J	Supply misinformation
K	Make fake phone call
L	Actively harass targets
M*	Supply resources to anti-New Left groups
P	Send ridicule-type information

Note: Asterisks denote forms/functions not used against white hate groups.

Figure 1b*: COINTELPRO actions against New Left Groups*

Note. Reprinted from *Understanding State Responses to Left-versus Right-Wing Threats: The FBI's Repression of the New Left and the Ku Klux Klan* by D. Cunningham, 2003, *Social Science History*, Vol. 27, pp. 327-370. Copyright 2003 by Cambridge University Press.

their addition to COINTELPRO. The desire to control these groups rather than eliminate them also implies that there is some kind of level of acceptability to their existence by the Bureau. Cunningham (2003) furthers that this resulted in the Bureau conducting a campaign to steer members of "white hate groups" towards less violent alternatives, resulting in the Bureau to strengthen these alternatives as organizations.

In comparison, Figure 1b. shows that the FBI's actions towards the New Left have quite a bit of overlap with White Hate groups in both form and function, except for one form. The only difference being that the FBI supplied resources to Anti-New Left groups in order to combat the New Left. While Cunningham (2003), does not explore this form in any further detail, it does pose numerous questions about the FBI's counterintelligence practices. Like what were the effects and consequences of supplying these groups resources? What kind of resources were being given? Who were these Anti-New Left groups? Is it possible that any of these Anti-New Left groups could overlap with White Hate Groups? While my study doesn't examine or utilize the Bureau's counterintelligence action against the New Left, Cunningham (2003) work does provide a background in understanding how the Bureau treated "white hate groups" compared to other subversive groups with leftist ideology.

So far, we have identified the kinds of actions and responses the Bureau has taken to address these subversive groups. However, it must be acknowledged that the actions committed against targets of COINTELPRO were not done without calls of concern from Bureau agents. There were those within the Bureau that voiced their opposition against COINTELPRO and the Bureau's responses to "subversive activity". The San Francisco Field Office had initially resisted the idea of selecting the Black Panther Party as a target for COINTELPRO because the Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Charles W. Bates believed the action would not be effective to curb activity (Davis, 1992). Similarly, Special Agent Robert Wall of the Washington Field Office (WFO) was appalled by the Bureau's program to target "black extremists" stating that "it was absurd to investigate hundreds of people whose only connection with the Black Panther Party was that the Party was trying to influence them" (Davis, 1992). Even so "the feelings of Special

Agent Wall and perhaps others like him, had no direct bearings on the investigations or the basic thrust of this COINTELPRO" (Davis, 1992).

FBI Organizational Structure During COINTELPRO

The FBI as an organization is incredibly tight lipped when it comes to disclosing information regarding its organization, structure, and culture. Numerous authors, including Cunningham (2005), Ungar (1976), Vizzard (2008), and Zegart (2007) have noted of the Bureau's consistent unwillingness throughout the decades to disclose its day-to-day operations and work culture to those deemed to be unfriendly to or outsiders of the Bureau. While this unwillingness has impacted the fullest extent to which we know and understand how the Bureau operates, we do know about how the Bureau's organizational structure influenced how COINTELPRO operated and was implemented. As well as the two major parts of the organization that were involved: the Office of the Director and the field offices across the country.

The Office of the Director is overseen by the Director as the head of the organization with his Assistant and Associate Directors below him handing out his decisions to the field offices (Cunningham, 2005) By virtue of his position, Director Hoover had the final say in the decision-making process, especially as it pertained to COINTELPRO. The Assistant and Associate Directors could make suggestions to the Director, but they, in theory, could make the final decision. However, according to former Assistant Attorney General Henry Peterson (1972-1974) all decisions made for COINTELPRO were made at the Assistant Director level and, occasionally, at the level of the Director of the FBI (Cunningham, 2005). Cunningham (2005)

furthers that Assistant Directors would often send memos in the Director's name, without his personal approval, making decisions that were not consistent with those that the Director had made in relation to COINTELPRO. However, the decisions made by the Assistant Directors could later be rescinded by the Director himself if he disagrees with the decision made.

Of the 59 field offices that worked across the country when COINTELPRO was active, all field offices participated in some part of or form of the program, including the national headquarters in Washington, D.C (Cunningham, 2003; Cunningham 2005). "Each field office dealt with a full range of federally prosecutable criminal acts; even at the height of COINTELPRO, intelligence and counter-intelligence activities against subversive targets made up only a small fraction of agents' activities" (Cunningham 2003). Field offices would determine the current threats in their given locality, report them and propose potential actions to the Director for his approval. These field offices worked closely with local and state law enforcement as well as local courts when conducting counterintelligence activity in their locality (Cunningham, 2005; Stinson, 1979). Each field office would have a Special Agent in Charge (SAC) that operated as a link between the Director and their field office, with the exception of New York City and Los Angeles which had Assistant Directors due to sheer size. These SACs would ensure that the current priorities from headquarters would match up with the priorities and concerns of those at the local level.

Organizational Theory & Institutionalized Resistance in the FBI

While the Director's Office and Field Offices directed the manner in which COINTELPRO was conducted, there is another aspect of the Bureau that influenced how the

structure and organization functions: its demographics. The demographics of the Bureau at the time of COINTELPRO were, and continue to be, predominantly white (Cunningham 2005; FBI, *Diversity*; Stinson, 1979; Ungar 1976;). Cunningham (2005) notes of an account between a number of concerned parties and Director Hoover about the hiring practices within the Bureau, in which the Director disputes these concerns by stating that the Bureau had five black special agents. Which, as Cunningham (2005) would go onto explain, was a misleading assertion. The five black special agents Director Hoover was speaking of weren't legitimate special agents that conducted investigation nor took part in COINTELPRO. Rather those "special agents" were menial workers and personal attendants to Hoover. Robert Kennedy would later ask Hoover to diversify his hiring practices in which Hoover responded, "As long as I am Director, there will never be a Negro special agent of the F.B.I." (Cunningham, 2005; Stinson, 1979). Similarly, Ungar (1976) wrote of an account while present at a ceremony to induct new officers into the FBI, that a member of the audience made a comment that "If Mr. Hoover could see this, he would be rolling in his grave", referring to the fact that the group had two women and a handful of African Americans and Hispanics (Ungar, 1976, p. 20). But how did the FBI get to be this way?

In order to better understand how the FBI came to be an organization, and the resulting prejudices that seemed to have permeated through the Bureau, we must go back to the late 19th century during the Reconstruction era to better understand the political, social, and cultural environment at the time and how it affected how the FBI was structured and organized when it was established in the early 20th century. The Civil War had just ended, and many previously enslaved African Americans had finally been given their right to attain U.S. citizenship. However, many of them would soon become subject to new laws and court rulings that would

reduce the federal government's capacity to intervene in state affairs and would only allow the newly passed 14th Amendment to protect those against state violence, not individual violence (Equal Justice Initiative, p. 18). "Meanwhile, Southern white politicians relied on 'lynching and vigilantism as instruments of political terrorism' to recreate state governments based in white supremacy and worked hard to defeat proposed federal laws that would have protected Black citizens' voting rights" (Equal Justice Initiative, p. 50). In essence, African Americans would receive no protection from the federal government against white mobs and varying forms of white terror in the South. Even so, the newly established Department of Justice (DOJ) would use local informants in the Union-occupied South to curb and prosecute these acts of terror against African Americans, until later federal law put an end to it and the Union Army retreated from the South (Equal Justice Initiative, 2017). Which coincided with former Confederate generals and/or high-ranking officers within the Confederacy, who spouted white supremacist rhetoric, attaining political offices in local, state, and federal elections, with little to no federal pushback, even though there was legislation in place to prevent it. However, such legislation would be overturned by the Amnesty Act of 1872 which lifted the ban on those formerly in the Confederate Army to attain political office and forced the federal government to recall any intervention in the South (Equal Justice Initiative, 2017).

From the beginning, any meaningful changes made by the federal government during and after Reconstruction to address the injustices that African Americans faced at the hands of white people, both on an individual and social level, was nullified by following administrations, Congress, the courts, and state and local governments. In 1905, the DOJ brought two cases, Hodges v. United States and Riggins v. United States, to the Supreme Court to address the wide-spread practice of lynching in the South targeting African Americans (Waldrep, 2008). The DOJ

argued in Hodges v. United States that an expansive reading of 13th amendment prevents formerly enslaved individuals from experiencing actions or incidents that might result or replicate the conditions of ones' former enslavement, while in Riggins v. United States, they argued that because the 14th amendment requires state governments to provide their citizens with due process and equal treatment, such protections would extend to shielding citizens from mob-violence or "acts of individual invasion". In both cases, the Supreme Court determined that the 13th amendment and the 14th amendment could not be applied to the cases of lynching and barred the federal prosecution of lynching based on Constitutional grounds (Waldrep, 2008).

The FBI would not be established until 1908, during the height of Jim Crow as the Bureau of Investigation (BOI). By the time that the FBI could potentially do something, it was already bound by the then Congressional legislation and Supreme Court interpretation and set precedent. But it was also bound by the social norms present at the time of its establishment. As much as we would like our executive agencies and bureaucracies to be unbiased, the FBI was not and would not be immune to trends, bias, and prejudice, especially those existing within and outside of the agency in the dominant sphere of American culture and focus (Cunningham, 2005; Jeffery-Jones, 2007; Ray, 2019). Victor Ray (2019), a scholar of organizational theory, opposes the notion that organizations can be "race-neutral". Rather, he seeks to establish a more realistic perspective and approach to organization by asserting that "in isolation, individual prejudice and racial animus may matter little; but when these are put into practice in connection to organizational processes such as racialized tracking, job-typing, or exclusion, they help shape the larger racial order", especially as the influence of race in organizational theory is largely an under-theorized and realized sector. Particularly in the study of meso-levels of analysis where it acts as the transition between the interactions of and between the individual and the institution.

Similarly, Light et al (2011) argues that racism and other similar concepts operate as processes that can be applied on the most minute and exorbitant level of human interactions and conduct in organizational theory. But it warrants emphasis that both Ray (2019) and Light et al (2011) establish that their area of research is highly underutilized and prioritizes the examination of the individual (micro) and institutions (macro) rather the intermediary aspects of the process that can connect both to one another, thereby connecting the individual to the institution they interact with and potentially embody. So, if racism can persist within an organization on numerous levels, what is keeping that organization or those within it from changing, especially if there is a desire for the organization to change?

Agócs (1997), Barnett & Carroll (1995), and Zegart (2007) state that the longer an institution or organization exists, the more resistant it becomes to change. This resistance to change they are describing is known as institutionalized resistance. Agócs (1997) defines institutionalized resistance as "the pattern of organizational behaviour that decision makers in organizations employ to actively deny, reject, refuse to implement, repress or even dismantle change proposals and initiatives" (p. 918). Hoover's refusal of hiring black people into positions of special agents is one such example of institutionalized resistance. However, Hoover's refusal to change is more of an example of, what Agócs (1997) describes as, the powerholder's influence on an institution, its resources and authority. A more detailed example to explain this concept would be Cunningham (2005) and his case regarding COINTELPRO and the New Left. In which, Director Hoover, by virtue of his position and is lengthy tenure as Director, was able to shape and shift the general narratives and focus of and within the FBI:

> It is here that Hoover's preferences —his prejudices and worldview—would enter the picture; the Bureau's disproportionate focus on civil rights group was a direct

> consequence of Hoover's racism; the huge counterintelligence program against the Communist Party—USA, a result of Hoover's often McCarthyite views of the dangers posed by the Red Menace (Cunningham, 2005, p. 80).

Essentially, Hoover allowed his own beliefs of what American morality and justice is or was to be and applied to towards how he structured the organization and function of the FBI. He made it so the FBI and those within it found the organization to be on the frontline of protecting and promoting American values. However, this is only one kind of actor that participates in institutionalized resistance, the other comes from the population of employees within the organization. Similarly, Zegart (2007) states that "employees inside organizations become wedded to habits, thinking, routines, values, norms, ideas, and identities, and these attachments make change difficult" (p. 45). While this can be greatly influenced and spurred by the powerholder over the organization, as showcased by Hoover, such influence can be used as a sort of self-policing amongst employees to ensure that their colleagues are upholding the status quo within the organization or, at the very least, do not resist it. Ungar (1976) describes that:

> For the average FBI agent, the Bureau became his extended family, source of many political and social values, his most enduring fraternal connection. Agents depended upon each other almost indiscriminately and took heart from the singleness of purpose, character, and even personality that they seemed bound to discover in their colleagues. If an agent symbolically left the fold by publicly criticizing or embarrassing the Bureau, his colleagues generally turned against him with a vengeance" (Ungar, 1976, p. 59).

Here Ungar (1976) provides an example of a phenomenon of what Zegart (2007) describes as "natural social pressures". In which the longer people work together, the more similar they become in terms of their attitudes within the organization and become more hostile to views and

behaviors they believe deviate from the norms set within their environment. “Overtime, people inside an organization also develop a vested interest and fight to maintain them. Organizational norms, relationships, and behaviors take hold. Employees become increasingly comfortable doing things the way they have been done before and expect newcomers to do the same.” (Zegart, 2007)

This is not to say that changes in organizations do not occur, rather change is simply more difficult to achieve the longer an organization has been around and its structure, work culture, and employees have remained the same. Zegart (2008) notes that “As sociologists have long pointed out, organizations are constantly changing. The key issue is whether those changes matter, or more precisely, whether the rate of change within an organization keeps pace (or lags behind) the rate of change in the external environment”. (p. 20). Zegart (2008) points out that this is the general consensus within the field and analysis of organizational theory of how organizations operate. However, Zegart (2008) also notes that there is little to no sense within organizational theory that organizations, particularly government agencies, may be *unable* to change.

Examining relevant scholarship provides better understanding of how the FBI as an organization functioned as it identified and addressed threats. It also adds insight into conversations between authors on the ways in which threats are and have been defined, the patterns in how the United States has treated threats as a whole, and how organizations and institutions change if they are able and willing. Doing so expands upon the hypotheses posed earlier, further exploring the internal and external factors that could influence the FBI.

This review of the literature, however, does not go into depth about possible external factors that can influence organizations, including how and what organizational levels they are

likely to be found. Yet the review, does briefly discuss how social values and norms found outside an organization culture can change, leaving the organization trailing such shifts.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will cover the research design and methods that I will be using when conducting my case study and the manner in which my analysis will be conducted. As I am posing two hypotheses to my case study, I note what I anticipate to find as a result of my case study. I also provide definitions of the concepts found within my case study in both the groups I am analyzing as well as those concepts pertinent to the documents I am examining.

The significance of conducting such a case study is to further understand the manner in which the FBI has treated threats in the past and determine if there could be any potential for the FBI to develop or continue a pattern of behavior when identifying similar targets. In determining where such an influence comes from and how it affects or has affected the FBI as an agency and how it addresses and identifies threats, we can better understand the extent to which this has shaped the FBI as an agency, if it has at all.

This study is designed to explore which form of influence, internal or external, has shaped the manner in which the FBI classified and addressed threats within its COINTELPRO program. Essentially, I seek to determine what form of organizational change, internal or external, was more impactful on the Bureau at the time and determine the environment to which fostered its ability to change or not. I will be examining COINTELPRO's activities in 1968 towards "white hate groups" and "black extremists" as it was a tumultuous and well documented period of time in the United States filled with social and political tension while this program was

being conducted. Including the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the 1968 Democratic National Convention, the Black Power movement, Civil Rights Movement, and so on. I also chose to examine documents specifically from 1968, because both programs targeting "white hate groups" and "black extremists" would have had enough time to develop their programs, methods of counterintelligence against these targets, and general intelligence regarding these targets. I will primarily depend upon the Bureau reports during this time, provided by the Vault, an FBI database of declassified documents. While I am examining the FBI's documentation of both "white hate groups" and "black extremists" from 1968, it is important to note that the time the Bureau was conducting such a large swath of reporting that some of these documents that were made did include samples of proposed actions such as flyers, comics, and anonymous letters. I will not be including these documents in my examination as I am focusing on the reports themselves and the language used within them. A similar examination of reports was conducted by Cunningham (2003) & (2005), who examined COINTELPRO and its counterintelligence actions against the White Hate Groups and the New Left. As such, when citing these documents, I will be utilizing the format that Cunningham used, (FBI memo, who it is sent from and to, date), when referencing and citing specific FBI documents.

These reports will be examined and documented for their relevance towards my two hypotheses and organized by date as to create a timeline of events the FBI had taken and to track any changes, if any, towards "white hate groups" and "black extremists". Such changes will make note of any influence or suggested influence by Congress, the President, or those within the Bureau. For example, when accounting for Hypothesis # 1, I will be looking for mentions or signs of, or the lack thereof, the widespread priority of a particular threat across Bureau field offices and how much oversight, direction, and freedom by the Director gave towards said field

offices when addressing these threats. For Hypothesis #2, I will be looking for mentions or concerns, or the lack thereof, within the reports made by the Director, Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of a Bureau office, or other high-ranking members within the Bureau, about the President or Congress in relation to COINTELPRO and whether they need to shift or affirm priorities to accommodate the President or Congresses needs or concerns. This would include identifying specific names of members of Congress, members of the President's cabinet or staff, etc., their position and relation to Bureau regarding threat setting. Relevance of the documents analyzed will be determined by the language used within the reports, how it pertains to actions the Bureau seeks take or not against these groups, "white hate groups" and "black extremists", and whether these groups are viewed as or explicitly identified as threats. Documents of particular relevance will identify the explicit methods of counterintelligence the Bureau has or planned to take against "white hate groups" and "black extremists". Within this hypothesis, I am anticipating that such changes would come directly from the Director to the field offices but am also looking to see if field offices look for clarification of the change of action or priority. I should note that as these are declassified documents that I am using for my case study, many sections have been blacked out by the Bureau. So, the extent to which I will have access to *all* that I need to conduct my case study, is based on the information which the Bureau has not redacted or censored.

So, why then look at FBI internal documents, especially when parts are omitted? In examining these internal documents, the structure in which the FBI processes and approves of activity against threats is present. It showcases the way in which field offices suggest action towards threats, identifies threats in the local area, then seeks approval for said action before moving forward. It also shows the responses from the Director on which actions are approved or not and brings continuity towards the actions that are to be taken and provides context and

reasoning as to why. Regarding the omission of information, it is important to note that in the process of declassifying documents, information that may be detrimental to the security of the state, or the Bureau, and are not meant to be released to the public are what is omitted. As previously stated, I am looking for information or *the lack thereof*, to aid in my examination. That which is omitted can also signify the level of importance depending upon the context it was found in. Whether that be names or entire actions omitted.

While single case studies are not the most widely used in political science, as they are considered to not bring much to scientific development in comparison to multi case study, which conventional wisdom deems to bring about more exploratory and thorough examination, (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Longhofer et al, 2017; Morgan, 2012) that does not necessarily mean they do not bring anything to the table. Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts that single case studies can provide a stepping off point for testing theories, allowing further research to be conducted to uphold a theories' argument, disaffirm it, or pose something new entirely. He also notes that single case studies are capable of deriving generalizations from research as such a study is capable of carrying out testable theories or hypotheses. Conducting a single case study rather than a multi case study will also allow me to put my full focus in examining the ins and outs of the processes and casual effects that I am seeking to better understand.

In conducting my case study, I will be utilizing textual analysis to aid in the examination of the Bureau's documents, memos, and reports. In proposing a hypothesis or hypotheses, it provides an added layer of security for textual analysis by setting up parameters in which to engage in its analysis of a particular study by proposing a theory, or set of theories, that can be tested. While Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts that one does not need to have a hypothesis for a case study for it to produce any viable or testable knowledge, he does note that "the case study is

useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses but is not limited to these research activities alone" (p. 229). My intention of adding such hypotheses to my study is to, at least, narrow down the scope in which to examine the factors that influence the FBI's threat classification to a more manageable degree.

As I am examining these FBI memos, understanding the how and why behind the language used and actions taken under COINTELPRO is paramount. Textual analysis will allow me to better understand and interpret the language used within the reports I am examining. Language provides intent and meaning, conscious or not. While much can be interpreted on a surface level, this case study is merely a drop in the bucket of further investigation and research that should and, quite frankly, must be conducted. In determining the meaning behind certain actions, we can also determine the manner in which the FBI has acted and has continued to act in the future. Furthering our understanding of the organization and how it has evolved as threats and the environment in which the organization was initially conceived have changed and altered it dramatically.

In examining these memos, rather than replaying on a set rubric, I have a set of questions I asked when examining these memos. Some of the questions I asked included:

- How was the FBI referring to these groups within these memos? In what manner did it refer to or note a group as a threat? If so, how much of a threat was it and why? Was there any reasoning provided for a group being documented as a threat?
- What kinds of counterintelligence activity did the FBI conduct or propose to conduct to address these groups? How did the counterintelligence activity that was taken compare to the other groups?

In utilizing these questions, my aim is to get a better understanding of and provide context to the actions the FBI took during COINTELPRO to address these groups. I also looked for particular words used in association with these groups such as “threat”, “violent”, “violence” or any similar words that could indicate that the FBI was particularly concerned about how much of a threat a group posed. Of particular importance given the time period, would be the pairing of such threats with such terms as “racial”, “social” or “ideological”.

Anticipated Results

I anticipate that the differing treatment and classification of “White Hate Groups” and “Black Extremists” within the FBI program, COINTELPRO, as threats is primarily influenced by internal factors within the agency. Such factors I anticipate encountering are Director J. Edgar Hoover’s personal judgements and his influence on the direction of the Bureau, as well as the organizational culture of the Bureau itself. While I classify these two as separate factors, I am aware that Director Hoover’s prominence and authority within the FBI during this time period may result in these factors overlapping with one another.

The goal of this case study is not to have a formal answer to the question that has been posed. But to have an idea of what is likely to have occurred and to identify other variables that can and should be taken into consideration when conducting further research in a similar study. I do not anticipate my study to be the end all be all, rather to be the start of further research. Understanding the FBI as an organization will be an always changing process. As the organization, the people within and outside, and the institutions influencing it change, so will our ability and methods to analyze it. My case study will only be examining one aspect of the

Bureau's practices as an organization, not necessarily the fullest extent to which it operates as an institution.

Operational Definitions

In identifying and defining the concepts and terms most pertinent to my thesis, my goal is to establish the groundwork for which my case study and the words often found within it are based upon. Many of these concepts are ones found within and used by the Bureau within the memos I am examining.

White Supremacy

According to Bergen et al (2019) and Bjelopera (2017), 'white supremacy' refers to the belief or a system of beliefs that promote the idea that white people are superior to any and all other races, which can be applied to individuals and institutions. Depending on the particular form of white supremacy that a person subscribes to, they may believe that this results in either the complete eradication of other races to ensure the purity of the white race or the complete and total subjugation of other races (Bergen et al, 2019; Bjelopera, 2017, Bjørgo & Ravndal, 2019). But that is simply when referring to white supremacy as a belief system, rather than also being systemic institution that has deep social, political, and economic ramifications. Newirk (2017) notes that when explaining what white supremacy is:

> By 'white supremacy' I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in

> which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

In essence, white supremacy can exist both as a belief system and an institution and utilizes both forms to reinforce each other.

Extremism

When defining ‘extremism’, we first must understand there is a general overlap between the term ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism’ due in part the similarities they share in their identification. However, because of that, it also makes defining ‘extremism’ incredibly difficult, especially as the U.S. and other countries such as the UK find it quite difficult to concretely define it as well, even though attempts had been made (Richards, 2015). Bötticher (2017) proposed an overarching definition of extremism that would potentially fill this gap that I find to be quite useful for my thesis:

> Extremism characterizes an ideological position embraced by those anti-establishment movements, which understand politics as struggle for supremacy rather than as peaceful competition between parties with different interests seeking popular support for advancing the common good. Extremism exists at the periphery of societies and seeks to conquer its center by creating fear of enemies within and outside society. (p.74)

Extremism, according to Bötticher (2017), also encompasses not only violent but non-violent actions and tendencies. However, “violent extremists” are more heavily reported and targeted by

governments due to the clear danger they present to the general public as a legitimate, tangible threat (Richards, 2015).

So, what exactly separates ‘terrorism’ from ‘extremism’? ‘Extremism’ is a category in which ‘terrorism’ is categorized under *only* when acts of violence or threats of violence are found (Bergen et al, 2019; Bjelopera, 2017; Richards, 2015). However, extremism does not necessarily *require* ideological motivations or acts of violence to be considered extremist, though it does make identification easier (Bjelopera, 2017). In essence, all terrorists can be classified as extremists, but not all extremists can be classified as terrorists.

Terrorism

As it has been defined in the post-9/11 context, terrorism is defined and applied to groups of people with a particular ideology that commit actions, either violent or not, for political gain or to achieve political goal that upholds the groups’ ideology (Jones et al, 2020).

Domestic Terrorism

The U.S. Penal Code defines domestic terrorism as:

> “activities that— (A)involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State; (B)appear to be intended— (i)to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii)to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii)to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and (C) occur

primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States" (18 U.S.C. Chapter 113b – Terrorism § 2231)

According to the FBI, domestic terrorism is defined as "Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature" (FBI, "*Terrorism*").

Chapter 4: Results

In the previous chapter, I anticipated that my results would showcase a difference of treatment between "white hate groups" and "black extremists" as threats within COINTELPRO and that this difference in treatment would primarily be influenced by internal factors within the Bureau. Before I present of the results on support for the proposed hypotheses, I describe how I examined the memos and the extent to which the Bureau treated "White Hate Groups" and "Black Extremists" differently as threats and which threat it saw as more concerning than the other in 1968.

Table 2 provides an example of how I documented the memos, I noted which group the memo referred to, the part or volume it was from, the date of the memo, who it was from and to, and the contents of the memo by either summarizing or quoting it. The use of both summaries and quotes provides both a general understanding and knowledge of the contents within the memos and the exact language Bureau officials used. The highlighted summaries and quotes respond to the questions I had posed in Chapter 3, which are of some importance to the manner in which the FBI treated both "black extremists" and "white hate groups". I organized the

VOLUME/GROUP	DATE	TO/FROM	SUMMARY/QUOTES
BLACK EXTREMISTS Part 1 of 23	03/14/68	TO: SACs, ATLANTA, BALTIMORE FROM: DIRECTOR, FBI	Update on MLK's proposed "Washington Spring Project" (Poor People's Campaign?). Baltimore office of FBI suggests displaying photos of Muhammed Ali and NOI literature in the SCLC office to suggest the two groups have a close relationship. Suggestion from director to "leak" this unusual alliance to the press to embarrass King, as he had past conflict with the NOI. Should only be done in a black newspaper. Requests made to Atlanta and Chicago office to determine what King's and the NOI's reaction would be if this were to occur.
WHITE HATE GROUPS Part 2 of 9	04/12/68	TO: SAC, ATLANTA FROM: DIRECTOR, FBI	"The suggestion as proposed in referenced letter by Atlanta is well thought out and appreciated. It is felt that the racial situation in Atlanta and other parts of the country is such that news articles of this type could inflame racial feelings. The Bureau is, therefore, not granting authority to Atlanta to undertake this proposal. Atlanta should reconsider this situation and resubmit at a later date. For the information of Birmingham and Atlanta the Bureau is of the opinion that newspaper articles tending to make fun of and pointing out the ludicrous nature of these groups would have a better effect at this time than evidence of arming and physical training. ---- In your continuing counterintelligence, this suggestion should be considered "
WHITE HATE GROUPS	07/02/68	TO: DIRECTOR, FBI	"There has been no change in the situation at Baltimore with regard to hate groups since the submission of

Part 3 of 9		FROM: SAC, BALTIMORE	referenced letter. The United Klans of America, Inc., Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (UKA) has had no public activity but plans rallies for the coming summer months. Sources in the National States Rights Party (NSRP) report a few demonstrations by some NSRP members in their efforts to support the segregation policies of a private swimming club in Baltimore County." "There is no pending counterintelligence action due to the inactivity of the hate groups."

Table 2: *Example of Documentation of COINTELPRO Memos, 1968*

memos chronologically, to ensure that any follow-ups from previous memos/documents, from either the Director or particular field offices, were documented and to document any changes from the Director or field offices if counterintelligence action had been taken.

Next, I turn to the differences I found in how the FBI treated "black extremists" and "white hate groups" as threats. The first notable is the terminology used to describe them. Both "white hate groups" and "black extremists" are classified as forms of hate groups by the Bureau (FBI Memo, From Director to Atlanta, 2 September 1964; FBI Memo, From Director to Albany, 25 August 1967). But it is "black extremists" that are given the label of "extremists", or other times "nationalists" or "militants", even though both actions they commit are technically considered forms of extremism and they are both identified as "subversive" groups. Words and their usage are important, especially when examining *how* such words are used and what they are meant to convey to those who would read them. In the case of the FBI and its threat classification, words are vital in their effort to convey the importance of the threats it seeks to

resolve and protect the American people from. The manner in which the FBI uses such language can either enhance or dampen that threat the groups are associated with. For example, a memo from G.C. Moore to W.C. Sullivan recommended the approval of a treatise in a narrative form to be prepared and sent to friendly news media sources entitled, “the Black Klan”, which compared the threat of the Black Panther Party to that of the Klan. The contents in the “the Black Klan” article was described as promoting “the theme that acts of violence were rewarded with prosecution by Federal and local officials and caused the present decline of the white Klan” while also comparing “the militancy of both groups and their penchant for weapons…pointed out that both the Black Panthers and the white Klan use uniformed guards to harass and frighten…and that the one big difference between the two is the fact that the Black Panthers look to the communists for at least moral support while the white Klan looks to local citizenry” (FBI Memo, G.C. Moore to W.C. Sullivan, 17 December 1968). Following the comparison, it is noted that the article ends “with the thought that America does not need these types of groups and like the white Klan, the black Klan will disappear if the public is told the story of the violence and the extremism formulated by the black Klan” (FBI Memo, G.C. Moore to W.C. Sullivan, 17 December 1968). The ending states:

> “So, once again we listen to the haunting refrain of the Klan thrusting its repugnant image in our faces. But this time it is a "black Klan" that is emerging. Instead of "White Power" cries, we hear "Black Power, Kill Whitey" and "get rid of the pig." The untold millions of patient long-suffering Americans, both black and white, are once again the victims of this idiocy. The black Klan will be rejected by black America just as the white Klan was rejected by white America. To hasten this rejection, effective prosecution of violators of the law must be maintained, so that the people are afforded a true picture of these groups.

> America does not need groups that engage in gun battles with police, burn crosses, or destroy buildings with bombs. America does not need groups that swear allegiance to guns or advocate guerrilla warfare. America does not need extremism in any shape or form. America is for the two hundred million decent citizens who obey the law, not for the few thousand who seek to emasculate our laws and destroy America. Our country will not be run by white or black extremists and in the foreseeable future, the black Klan will also disappear from our midst, leaving the same bad taste that the white Klan left" (FBI Memo, G.C. Moore to W.C. Sullivan, 17 December 1968)

In comparing the Black Panther Party to the Klan, the Bureau acknowledges the threat posed by both groups to domestic security. However, its focus in this article is not to diminish both groups, but only the Black Panther Party. In utilizing and acknowledging the "murder, assault, cross burning, and other acts of intimidation" the Klan had committed and implicitly comparing such acts to those of the Black Panther Party, the Bureau makes it seem to the audience that the actions the Klan committed against black people, are similarly to those of the Black Panther Party against white people (FBI Memo, G.C. Moore to W.C. Sullivan, 17 December 1968). In stating that the Klan was already in decline and that it seeks to ensure that the Black Panther Party faces similar results, the Bureau, again, focuses on the Black Panther Party as the current pressing threat to security of the United States, while making it seem like the Klan is a threat of the past. In reality, the KKK had approximately 14,000 registered members across the country the same year that the Black Klan memo was produced (Klobuchar, 2009). This further delegitimizes the Black Panther Party's goals of black empowerment, class solidarity, and community building by presenting them as extremists, rather than a group seeking to better those within and throughout their community to the larger more liberal audience.

Throughout the FBI memos I examined, emphasis was placed on "black extremists" as being violent and responsible for civil disorder (FBI Memo, Boston to Director, 27 February 1968; FBI Memo, Jacksonville to Director, 29 February 1968; FBI Memo, Albany to Director, 4 March 1968; FBI Memo, Memphis/Nashville to Director, 14 March 1968; FBI Memo, Jacksonville to Director, 2 April 1968; FBI Memo, Miami to Director, 2 April 1968; FBI Memo, Newark to Director, 2 April 1968; FBI Memo, WFO to Director, 4 April, 1968; FBI Memo, New York City to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, Columbia to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, Cincinnati to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, St. Louis to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, Los Angeles to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, Charlotte to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, San Diego to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, Los Angeles to Director, 30 August 1968; FBI Memo, San Francisco to Director, 30 September 1968; FBI Memo, Seattle to Director, 4 November 1948; FBI Memo, Albany to Director, 6 December 1968). While in comparison, the FBI made no mention of "white hate groups" engaging in violent behavior or disrupting the social order, with the exception of "the Black Klan" (FBI Memo, From Director to Atlanta, 2 September, 1964; FBI Memo, Birmingham to Director, 27 March 1968; FBI Memo, Atlanta to Director, 29 March 1968; FBI Memo, Birmingham to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, Director to Atlanta, 12 April 1968; FBI Memo, Charlotte to Director, 5 August 1968). Rather, white hate groups and their actions were described as "devious" by the Director and fellow higher ups (FBI Memo, F.J. Baumgardner to W.C. Sullivan, 27 August 1964; FBI Memo, From Director to Atlanta, 2 September 1964).

I also found that the FBI had developed what it referred to as an "Agitator Index", also sometimes referred to as the "Rabble Rouser Index", a list of names of those involved or believed to be involved in "black extremist" or "black nationalist" activity (FBI Memo, Memphis

to Director, 14 March 1968; FBI Memo, Houston to Director, 14 March 1968; FBI Memo, Pittsburgh to Director, 28 March 1968; FBI Memo, Richmond to Director, 1 April 1968; FBI Memo, Jacksonville to Director, 2 April 1968; FBI Memo, Newark to Director, 2 April 1968; FBI Memo, Los Angeles to Director, 2 April 1968; FBI Memo, Buffalo to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, Cleveland to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, Baltimore to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, Minneapolis to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, Phoenix to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, WFO to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, Indianapolis to Director, 5 April 1968; FBI Memo, New Haven to Director, 14 May 1968; FBI Memo, Seattle to Director, 31 May 1968; FBI Memo, Pittsburgh to Director, 28 August, 1968). Many of the names of those on the "Agitator Indexes" were blacked out, but it was indicated that the purpose of developing an "Agitator Index" was to develop and commit to counterintelligence actions against the individuals named (FBI Memo, Newark to Director, 2 April 1968; FBI Memo, San Diego to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, San Francisco to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, Pittsburgh to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, New York City to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, Jackson to Director, 4 April 1968; FBI Memo, Columbia to Director, 5 April 1968; FBI Memo, St. Louis to Director, 5 April 1968; FBI Memo, Portland to Director, 30 August, 1968). With one notable example being that of author-playwright LeRoi Jones, who within an FBI memo is labeled under "AGITATOR INDEX SUBJECTS WHO ARE BLACK NATIONALISTS" and "ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS CONSIDERED OF SUCH POTENTIAL DANGER AS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR CURRENT COUNTERINTELLIGENCE ACTION" (FBI Memo, Newark to Director, 2 April 1968). Where within he is described as a person of interest as he constantly calls for conflict with "the white race", though is noted as not a member of any particular organization, but his activity indicates

that he is willing to assist black nationalist groups. No such indexes were found for “white hate groups”.

The lack of such provocative terminology referring to “white hate groups” seems to indicate that that group does not prove to be as significant of a threat when compared to “black extremists”. Rather the term itself, “black extremist”, denotes a kind of urgency of threat that “black extremists” pose, rather than “white hate groups” at this point in time. The emphasis that they are “extremists”, “nationalists”, “militants”, and/or “agitators” puts to the forefront their capability for violence and their othering from American society.

The second notable difference between how these groups are treated differently is the volume of reporting. In total, “white hate groups” had 9 volumes, or ‘parts’, as was the term used on the FBI’s database, The Vault, of which reports ranged in length between 32-237 pages. “Black extremists” had 23 volumes or ‘parts’, in which reports ranged in length between 11 to 250 pages. “White hate groups” reports ranged from 1964-1971, while “black extremists” reports ranged from 1967-1971. For 1968, both “black extremists” and “white hate groups” had 9 volumes or parts. Which may seem odd for “white hate groups” as that is the total volumes reported. But between the two volumes, “white hate groups” was the most disorganized with reports ranging from the start of its program to its end found throughout the volumes or parts. I had to examine the entire volume of memos to ensure that I documented all the memos pertaining to 1968. In terms of pages within their total volumes, “white hate groups” had 1,189 pages of documents, while for “black extremists” had 3,814 pages of documents. While my examination is focused on examining reports from 1968, I believe acknowledging the amount of knowledge produced by the Bureau on these groups can provide further insight into how it viewed either group as threats. In comparing the number of memos from 1968 to their total

volumes, I found that “white hate groups” had 187 out of the 1,189, or about 15.73% of the total, while “black extremists” had 1,580 out of 3,814, or 41.43% of the total.

This seems odd considering that COINTELPRO’s program for “white hate groups” was being conducted 3 years prior to the program on “black extremists”. In theory, this would mean the Bureau would have spent more time recording and documenting their actions and efforts against “white hate groups”. However, as many of these documents from 1968 stated, these hate groups were in decline and had been in decline for quite some time (FBI Memo, From Chicago to Director, 2 January 1968; FBI Memo, From Charlotte to Director, 1 April, 1968; FBI Memo, From Birmingham to Director, 3 April, 1968; FBI Memo, From Charlotte to Director, 26 June 1968; FBI Memo, From Baltimore to Director, 2 July 1968). Particularly the Klan and its sister affiliations, which the Birmingham field office stated on numerous occasions, that due to the lack of activity, was believed to be less of a concern and that their current efforts and focus should be placed on more pressing threats (FBI Memo, From Birmingham to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, From Birmingham to Director, 1 October 1968). While these documents do not go into particular detail as to *why* “white hate groups” were in decline, many of these documents believed it was because of the success of the counterintelligence activities the FBI had taken and would often include it under ‘tangible results’ in quarterly progress reports (FBI Memo, From Birmingham to Director, 3 April 1968; FBI Memo, From Birmingham to Director, 1 October 1968). According to Drabble (2003), “By the mid-1960s, the notion that Klan groups and Klansmen were un-American was becoming conventional in the South. Conspiratorial, racist rhetoric was being purged from Southern political discourse. It was becoming extreme” (p. 303).

While Drabble (2003) does not indicate whether or not it was due to successful implementation of counterintelligence activities, rather he states that Southern journalists and

those that can shape public opinion aided in the publics' shift in view of the Klan, that does not necessarily mean that these counterintelligence activities did not have some kind of impact. Recall that the purpose of the program targeting "white hate groups" was to "expose, disrupt, and otherwise neutralize [their] activities". A significantly smaller volume of reporting compared to "black extremists" and a general decline in activity by white hate groups, from a successful implementation of counterintelligence and tangible results following, could be indicative that the Bureau did not view them as much of a concern as "black extremists", which was a newly emerging threat, as shown with "the Black Klan" example. And the suggestion by field offices that the Bureau should place priorities of threats elsewhere could further such an indication. But that is only if the Bureau had more of a handle of "white hate groups" than of "black extremists" during this period of time.

The final area of differences found between these groups is how extensive the Bureau's program was across the country. Of the documents from 1968, I identified 11 out of 59 field offices who were actively investigating "white hate groups", which included: Alexandria, Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, Cincinnati, Chicago, Charlotte, Cleveland, Phoenix, Richmond, and San Francisco. These field offices are predominantly found in the South, where segregationists and their ideas were prevalent. In comparison to "black extremists", in which I identified around 32 out of the 59 field offices. While this number is greater than that of "white hate groups", this was not the fullest extent to which the Bureau was involved in counterintelligence against "black extremists". A Memo from W.C. Sullivan, the Assistant Director who directed the Bureau's domestic intelligence operations from 1961 to 1971, to G.C. Moore stated that the Bureau was planning to expand the scope of their counterintelligence program against "black extremists" from 23 offices to 41 (FBI Memo from W.C. Sullivan to

G.C. Moore; 29 February, 1968). Cunningham (2003) found similar results in his study, stating that, “the scope of COINTELPRO-New Left was much broader. Fifty-nine field offices eventually participated in the program, while COINTELPRO-White Hate Groups generally involved only the Bureau's southern offices” (p. 342).

In determining whether the FBI’s threat classification of “white hate groups” and “black extremists” were treated differently, in that the Bureau treated “black extremists” as more of a threat and priority than “white hate groups”, I have found the Bureau’s threat classification at the time of COINTELPRO was influenced internally by the Director and the general structure and culture of the organization. These influences were primarily a result of the Director’s position as both the head of the Bureau and the creator of COINTELPRO as well as the Bureau’s insular nature as an organization. But first, let’s reexamine the role that Director Hoover had on the Bureau and COINTELPRO.

Hoover was the Director of the FBI from 1935 until his death in 1972, making him the longest serving Director the FBI has seen. He transformed the FBI into the Bureau he envisioned it could and would become. In the midst of his career, he instituted COINTELPRO to target threats the Bureau identified to domestic security. While Hoover was not directly overseeing all of the actions taken in the name of the program, and often his subordinates would approve of actions either for or against his wishes, he was a great influence on how the program functioned and the direction in which it headed. Hoover was directly responsible for the establishment and expansion of the programs targeting “white hate groups” and “black extremists”. On July 30, 1964, “Hoover asked for a study to determine if a sustained counterintelligence program directed at white hate groups, located primarily in the South, should be initiated. Less than a month later on August 27, the Intelligence Division recommended the immediate initiation of a “hard hitting

closely supervised coordinated counterintelligence program to expose, disrupt, and otherwise neutralize the Ku Klux Klan and specified other hate groups" (Davis, 1992, p. 76). In September that same year, COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE would be established (FBI Memo, Director to Atlanta, 2 September 1964). On August 1967, a memo creating the COINTELPRO program targeting "black extremists" came directly from Hoover (Davis, 1992; FBI Memo, Director to Albany, 25 August 1967). Another memo would come in March of 1968 seeking to expand said program in preparation for another riot filled summer (Davis, 1992; FBI Memo, Director to Albany, 4 March 1968).

As Cunningham (2005) describes: "Hoover' ironhanded and total control of Bureau policy had understandably fostered an impression that FBI actions were a direct expression of the Director's interests. Extending this perspective, we could then argue that actions initiated under COINTELPRO were designed to further the FBI's interests as defined by Hoover" (p. 80). Or as Special Agent Wall put it "Hoover's word is law" (Davis, 1992). And this was coming from the perspective of an agent during COINTELPRO's operation.

When it came to the reports I examined, emphasis was placed on following procedures and ensuring that no action or method of counterintelligence be implemented without "expressed Bureau approval". From the reports, "expressed Bureau approval" seemed to mean approval from the Director, as Director Hoover was the one who would approve actions or provided corrections to submitted actions which could be approved of at a later date, so long as they maintain the corrections the Director had added. In one example, I found that because of his position, Director Hoover was able to bend the rules and procedures he set, on the condition that such action be taken in response to an immediate threat, in this case for "black extremists":

> In regard to overall counterintelligence action, the only suggestion offered would be the Bureau give consideration to the fact that in many instances an opportunity presents itself and must be acted on immediately, precluding the possibility of clearance with the Bureau approval; it is suggested, therefore, common sense and good judgement with SAC approval be sufficient authority to take such action when opportunities demanding of immediate action present themselves (FBI Memo from Director to Minneapolis, 3 April, 1968).

In further examinations of reports, I was not able to find any similar bending of the rules from the Director for "black extremists" or "white hate groups" for the 1968 calendar year. Though I suspect that if this happened once, there is a chance that it happened to other field offices at different points in time. In bending such rules, it shows the immense power and authority that Hoover had over the Bureau and the direction of COINTELPRO. However, I should note, there is a caveat to these approvals. Earlier on in my thesis I mentioned that Cunningham (2005) noted that Assistant Directors would often approve of actions without the consent of the Director which could have influenced the Bureau's process of threat classification. Even so, Hoover had the final say on counterintelligence actions. Having the final say, even when those around him would go against his wishes, gave him immense authority to determine the direction of the program and what is classified as a threat. And even when the Assistant Directors approved of actions, it was in the role of Director they were doing so. Because the position of Director, and the man occupying that office, had that much authority, legitimacy, and sway in the Bureau.

But as previously stated, it wasn't just Hoover that aided in this influence over the Bureau's threat classification process, but the Bureau's structure as an organization. While I

concede that Hoover had a large part to play in shaping the FBI into the agency, we know of in the 20th century, such organizations require the willingness and drive of its employees, in this case agents, to fulfill the goals of and subsequent actions taken by the organization. Within COINTELPRO, agents were encouraged to be creative and enthusiastic in their means of developing counterintelligence strategies. For "black extremists" they were told, "You are urged to take an enthusiastic and imaginative approach to this new counterintelligence endeavor and the Bureau will be pleased to entertain any suggestions or techniques you may recommend" (FBI Memo, From Director to Albany, 25 August 1967). Very similarly, they were told in targeting "white hate groups", "If an enthusiastic approach is made to this new endeavor, there is no reason why the results achieved under this program will not equal or surpass our achievements in similar-type programs directed against subversives (FBI Memo, From Director to Atlanta, 2 September 1964). Such suggestions that were posed by field offices included, but are not limited to, revealing targets infidelity to their spouses, investigating their financial records, using media, in the form of television, radio, and newspaper, to broadcast the public danger these targets pose, to placing informants amongst their ranks. Though that is not to say that these programs were met with such enthusiasm by all field offices. This was particularly apparent with field offices targeting "white hate groups" in which they would often suggest ending their offices engagement in the program due to lack of activity by targets (From Birmingham to Director, 3 April 1968; From Birmingham to Director, 1 October 1968). Nonetheless, these programs would continue within these field offices.

Numerous authors I have encountered including Cunningham (2005), Davis (1992) Ungar (1976) have expressed deep concern from agents at the time of retribution or retaliation from fellow agents or the Director if they did not follow orders or if they acted in a manner

deemed to be unbecoming of a bureau agent. While I found no particular descriptions of actions that were deemed unbecoming to the Bureau or any punishments from the Director or other high-ranking members of the Bureau, I was able to find on numerous occasions, that Director Hoover emphasized that if certain counterintelligence measure were to be taken that they cannot result in the embarrassment of or be traced back to the Bureau (FBI Memo, From Birmingham to Director, 13 March, 1968; FBI Memo, From Mobile to Director, 25 March, 1968; , From Director to Mobile, 2 April 1968; From WFO to Director; 2 April 1968).

Keller (1989), at this point of time within the program, noted that the Bureau had become an incredibly insulated organization that was able to conduct investigations without the knowledge or consideration of external parties like Congress and the President:

> FBI operations became progressively more insulated from other units of government, from the press, and from the public after the middle 1950s. Following the Smith Act trials of Communist leaders in 1949, everyone knew that the FBI worked against communism. But by the middle 1960s, the bureau had achieved sufficient insularity of operations to enable it to investigate any individual or group at will and without the knowledge or interference of interested parties, the Congress, or the courts. (p. 191-192)

While Director Hoover continued to inform the President and Congress on the progress made by the Bureau with targets that both the President and Congress identified as threats to security, they were not informed that the Bureau had developed a formal program in which all such counterintelligence activities were occurring under. In my examination of these memos and reports, I found no evidence or mention of the Bureau's interactions with or acknowledgement of Congress or the President, as it applied to exercising counterintelligence measures. Rather

concern was more so placed in ensuring that agents followed Bureau procedure and regulations to a ‘t’ as to ensure the secrecy of the program was maintained.

Interpretation of Results

While the results of the case study evidently support Hypothesis #1, that is not to say that the President or Congress did not have influence over how the FBI operated and how it conducted COINTELPRO. Rather that influence was not necessarily a result of these institutions’ desire to influence how the FBI prioritizes threats but reflected the general nature of how COINTELPRO operated. The key aspect of COINTELPRO was that it was a covert, domestic counterintelligence operation being conducted outside of the bounds and direct influence and awareness of the President and members of Congress. In order to ensure that the program was being conducted as it was and that it could continue to operate freely without external intervention, the FBI had to be aware of the influence of these institutions. Otherwise, the program might be discovered, and the Bureau humiliated, as it later was following the revelation of COINTELPRO in 1971. This would mean ensuring that the program met the needs and requests of Washington, which included the crackdown on Klan members and the development of COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE (Cunningham, 2003), appealing to more liberal congressmembers through counterintelligence means (Cunningham, 2003; Keller, 1989), and regularly meeting with the President and Congress to update them on progress made on counterintelligence activities against threatening groups (Cunningham, 2005; Gates, 2022; Keller, 1989).

Yet this would also mean ignoring or not following up with discoveries found within the program that could potentially alert politicians of the Bureau's activities when potential counterintelligence activity crossed over with politics. When the Birmingham and Atlanta field offices found out that the UKA and the NSRP had provided or were planning to provide financial support for George Wallace's President run, Hoover made clear that no action should or was to be taken as doing so would have "political implications" (FBI Memo, From Birmingham to Director, 27 March 1968; FBI Memo, From Atlanta to Director, 29 March 1968; FBI Memo, From Director to Birmingham 4 April 1968). Throughout my study, for both "white hate groups" and "black extremists", the Bureau was seemingly aware of the embarrassment and jeopardy it would bring to the organization if COINTELPRO was uncovered. For example, the Albany field office suggested a counterintelligence proposal that would utilize the local police department to issue traffic tickets to target "black extremists" within the program. The intention being that the police department would intentionally lose and destroy a targets' copy, resulting in a backlog of unpaid tickets that would allow for the department to issue an arrest warrant for those individuals. In response to this proposal Director Hoover stated:

> The Bureau cannot authorize you to recommend this action to local police. An operation such as this would involve the entire traffic division of the police department, at least, with a resulting possibility of embarrassment to the Bureau if it became known the Bureau initiated this action. Also, such an operation could have an adverse reaction, actually causing violence, if an arrest for unpaid traffic tickets was not handled and timed correctly during a period of racial tension. (FBI Memo, Director to Albany, 12 June 1968)

A similar example came from the Director to the Cincinnati field office regarding the approval of counterintelligence:

> …set forth instructions to Cincinnati that prior to authorizing a 'news leak," the Bureau must be furnished the name and identifying data of the person to whom the information will be furnished, together with a precise description of the information to be furnished and assurance that full security can be maintained with no resultant embarrassment to the Bureau" (FBI Memo, Director to Cincinnati, 26 September 1968).

While these examples do not necessarily outright state that the concern of the program's revelation, it is mentioned in a memo response from the Director to the Philadelphia office regarding counterintelligence action against the Black Coalition:

> Philadelphia is authorized to foster the rumor that leaders of the Black Coalition have "sold out to whites" and are using money which should go to Negro poor people for their personal benefit. This should be done discreetly through routine contacts in racial matters. Ensure this is handled in such a way that the existence of an organized counterintelligence operation is not revealed. (FBI Memo, Director to Philadelphia, 26 August 1968)

This concern of the program's revelation was so great, that when approving for or seeking approval for counterintelligence, Even specifying that when conducting counterintelligence activities involving flyers, letters, etc. the need to purchase commercial brand paper, office supplies, specific kinds of typewriters, that could not be traced back to the Bureau (FBI Memo, From Birmingham to Director, 13 March, 1968; FBI Memo, From Director to Mobile, 2 April 1968).

Limitations of Research

There were a number of limitations that occurred while conducting this study. The first limitation of this study was due to the lack of readily available and easily accessible information about the FBI, its organization and culture. Ideally, in examining the FBI as an organization, I would explore its nature as an intelligence agency as well as how intelligence agencies organize and operate. In doing so, I would have identified the commonalities that all of these intelligence agencies have and the differences between them. However, during the process of my research, I had attempted to retrieve many documents that would pertain in how United States' and foreign intelligence agencies operate but they required approval from vendors outside of the university library. All of the documents I had requested were denied. Similarly, as noted earlier, the FBI as an organization is incredibly resistant to revealing information about itself, especially when it pertains to the culture within the organization and how it impacts the work it does. Ungar (1976), whose work revolved around the examination of a post-Hoover FBI in which he interviewed former and, at the time, current agents and heads of the Bureau, was the first of the authors I found to note of the issues that came with interacting with and attempting to understand and observe the function of and within the Bureau as it conducted its day-to-day operations. He specifically documented that Director Clarence Kelley (1973-1978), had initially broken from the tradition of only speaking with certified "friends" of the Bureau when he sought out his research and interviews with agents within the FBI. But later noticed that such cooperation became more and more begrudging. Ungar (1976) noted that:

> Indeed, as time passed and [Director Kelley] became less independent of the Bureau hierarchy, Kelley did seem to waver and to appear less enthusiastic about the project; I

> became convinced that had my initial approach to [Director Kelley] came later in his tenure, he might have followed the insider's advice and declined to help. (preface, xi)

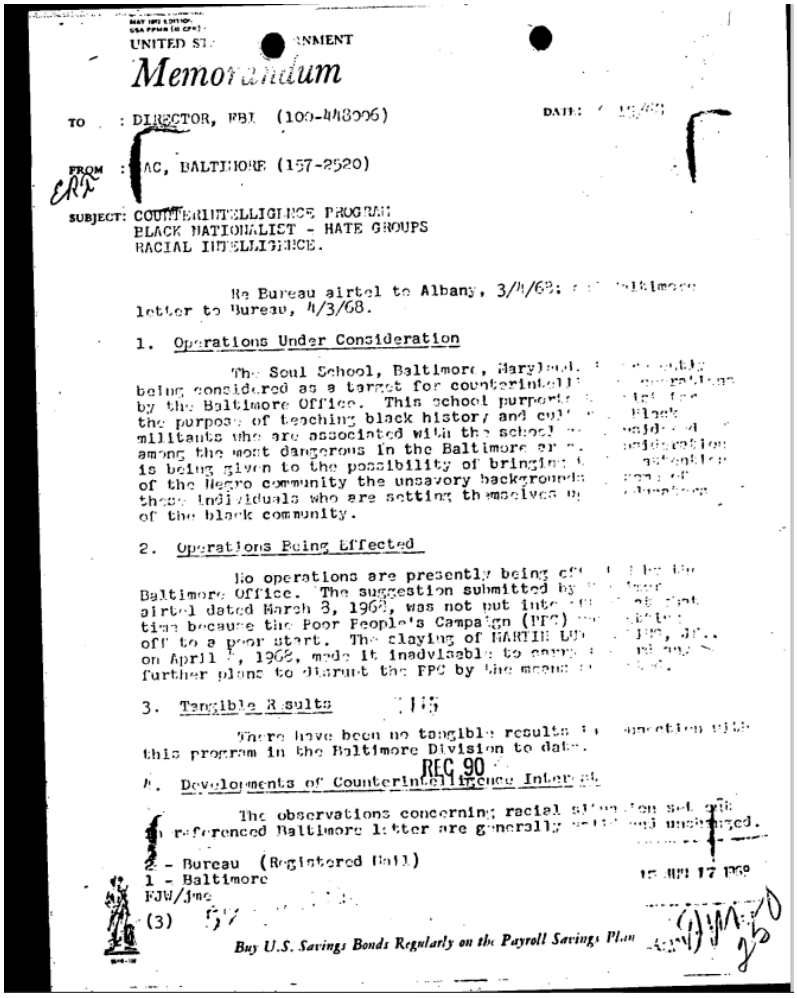
Vizzard (2008) notes of other authors attempts to attain insider access the Bureau like Ungar (1976) in a similar fashion but ultimately failed to do so. This was especially prevalent in former Directors' and managers' memoirs in which they would speak of their tenure but never really expand upon or question the current swath of knowledge and/or insight on the agency (Vizzard, 2008). When I began my study, I knew to some extent that an agency like the FBI that deals in protecting the security and interests of the country would be apprehensive to exposing their structure and function to those outside of itself. However, I was not prepared to experience such stonewalling myself. Which brings me to the second limitation to my study.

The second limitation to my study was a result of the specific content I sought to examine and immediately became apparent when I began examining and determining which documents to use for my case study. This issue particularly stems from how the FBI digitized its documents in the Vault. Rather than having all of the relevant documents I needed, "white hate groups" and "black extremists" in an easily downloadable package, all of the documents had to be individually downloaded as pdfs. As pdfs, "white hate groups" were edited to allow for easy searching for and highlighting of text, while "black extremists" were not edited for that capability. Which resulted in me having to go through every pdf for 1968 and manually document which reports would indicate any priority of threat by the FBI, identify language that would indicate from the Director, SAC of Field Offices, and/or other agents what, if anything, influenced their priority of threat, and so on. This aspect of my research was the most time-consuming. The manner in which documents for both groups were digitized, with particular emphasis on "white hate groups" were done in such a way that did not signify a particular order

in which they were scanned into its system. As a result, the timeline that I had made was not only to better help my ability to identify if there had been any changes the Bureau's threat priorities and actions in 1968 with both "white hate groups" and "black extremists" but to organize the documents in chronological order as they had not been prior to the start of my study.

I should also note that I had considered using a programming software to analyze and record the contents of the reports. But due to the condition of the reports themselves and the manner in which they were scanned and digitized, there was no guarantee that the program would have been able to accurately read and document what was on the report. Meaning I would have had to go back and manually adjust for any mistakes made by the program including misspellings, etc. anyways. So, it made more sense for me to document the reports manually than utilizing a software program. Which then poses the question of whether or not the FBI purposefully digitized their documents in such a manner that would make it incredibly difficult for anyone wanting to access that information to use a programming software to analyze them. And even if someone did choose to go through every single document by hand, made the process so tedious it may potentially dissuade them from doing so.

The third limitation of my research came as a result of the general age and state of the documents. In every volume, or "part", the Bureau had made for these groups, it had placed a disclaimer before all of the memos reading, "The best copy obtainable is included in the reproduction of these documents. Pages that are blurred, light, or otherwise difficult to read are the result of the condition of the original document. No better copy can be reproduced". As many of these documents were well over 50 years old, though their exact ages are not clear since there is no indication of when the FBI digitized the documents, many were in such poor condition that I was unable to read them and had to automatically exclude them from analysis.



UNITED ST[illegible]NMENT

Memorandum

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (100-448006)

DATE: [illegible]

FROM : SAC, BALTIMORE (157-2520)

SUBJECT: COUNTERINTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
BLACK NATIONALIST - HATE GROUPS
RACIAL INTELLIGENCE.

Re Bureau airtel to Albany, 3/[illegible]/68; [illegible] Baltimore letter to Bureau, 4/3/68.

1. Operations Under Consideration

The Soul School, Baltimore, Maryland, [illegible] being considered as a target for counterintelli[illegible] by the Baltimore Office. This school purports [illegible] the purpose of teaching black history and cul[illegible] militants who are associated with the school [illegible] among the most dangerous in the Baltimore ar[illegible] is being given to the possibility of bringing [illegible] of the Negro community the unsavory backgrounds [illegible] those individuals who are setting themselves u[illegible] of the black community.

2. Operations Being Effected

No operations are presently being c[illegible] by the Baltimore Office. The suggestion submitted by [illegible] airtel dated March 3, 1968, was not put into [illegible] time because the Poor People's Campaign (PPC) [illegible] off to a poor start. The slaying of MARTIN LU[illegible], Jr., on April [illegible], 1968, made it inadvisable to carry [illegible] further plans to disrupt the PPC by the means [illegible].

3. Tangible Results

There have been no tangible results [illegible] this program in the Baltimore Division to date.

REC 90

4. Developments of Counterintelligence Inter[illegible]

The observations concerning racial situation set forth in referenced Baltimore letter are generally [illegible] and unchanged.

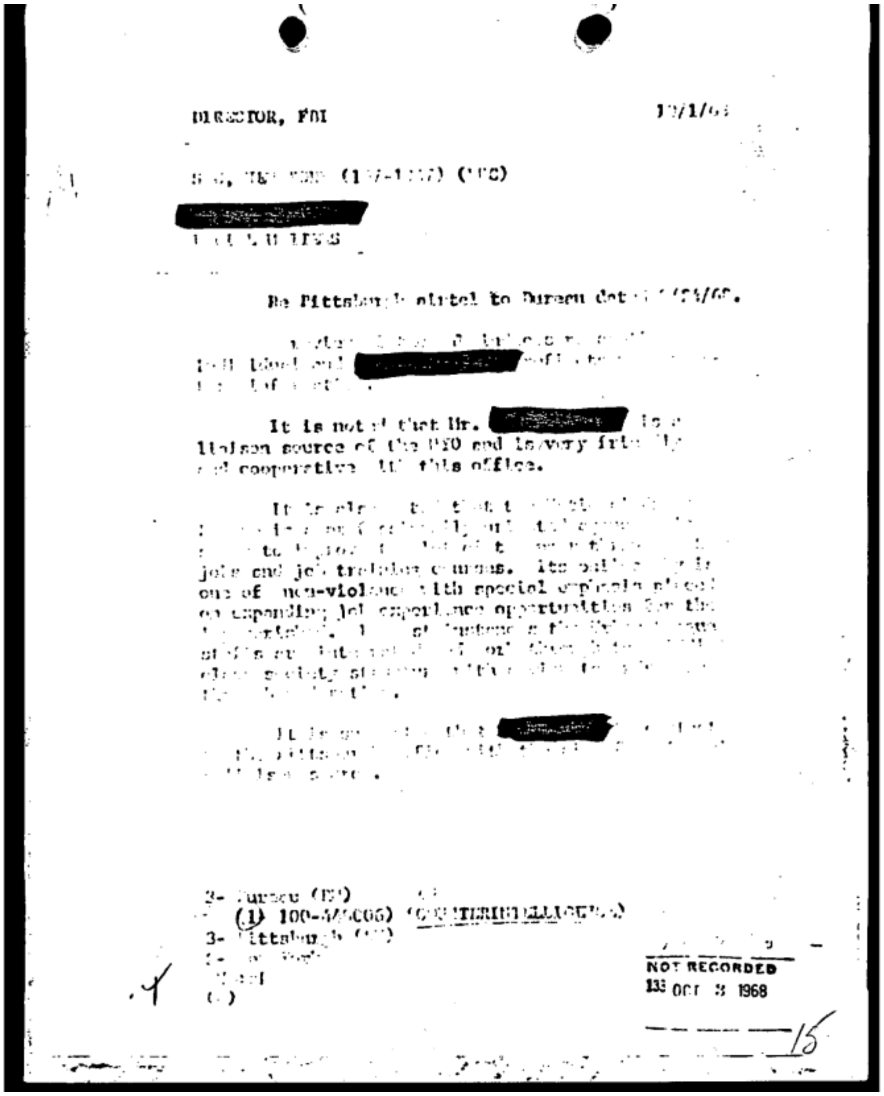
2 - Bureau (Registered Mail)
1 - Baltimore
FJW/jmc
(3)

15 APR 17 1968

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

Figure 1: Example of Disqualified Memo 1

Figure 1 shows an example of a page of a memo that I had to disqualify. Although, parts of the memo are legible, the right half of the memo is not. Figure 2 is a more extreme example of the memos I had to disqualify as there is no discernible way to obtain any information from this particular memo due the document. Of the documents I have examined, I had to disqualify 118 out of 1,737 memos, or about 6.79% of the total. Those documents could have had information in them that could have potentially aided me in my research but because of their condition, they could not.



DIRECTOR, FBI

[redacted]

Re Pittsburgh airtel to Bureau dated

[redacted]

It is noted that Mr. [redacted] is a liaison source of the

[redacted]

3- Bureau

3- Pittsburgh

NOT RECORDED

133 OCT 3 1968

Figure 2: Example of Disqualified Memo 2

The final limitation of my research was the memos themselves. I examined the extent to which the FBI's threat classification of "black extremists" and "white hate groups" were influenced by internal or external factors. In examining these memos, I focused on examining the internal dynamics of the FBI in 1968, rather than observing any external influence.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research is needed to determine if this result can be replicated in a similar case study investigating the FBI and its threat classification. While I have lauded the importance that single-case studies bring to research, I would like to see what results can be found from multiple case studies, incorporating this case within it, and then comparing its results to that of it the results found from the single-case study. Not only would this provide a necessary expansion on my research, but it could provide further perspective on how the FBI's threat classification has evolved and the impacts of influences resulting from it. I would also like to see if the FBI's shift in threat priorities coincided with the reorganization of the Bureau. For example, following the end of COINTELPRO and the death of J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI underwent reorganization in an attempt to win back the trust of the America people. Further reorganizations have taken place after intelligence failures and loss of trust from the public, with the most notable, and most recent example, being the failure of the FBI to adequately act upon and warn of the threat posed by terrorism prior to the attacks on September 11th.

If I were able to conduct this research again, I would alter my research to incorporate the use of a language database to further understand the extent to which the Bureau's prioritization of "black extremists" versus "white hate groups" went. In incorporating a language database, not only would this mean having to convert these pdfs into documents capable of being analyzed by a program, but it might also ensure that further research and examination of the Bureau's declassified documents within COINTELPRO will go without the roadblocks that I had encountered in my research.

I would also spend more time examining the external factors, Congress and the President, had on the FBI and its threat classification. Barnett & Carroll (1995) had identified in

their paper *Modeling Internal Organizational Change,* the need and benefits that would come from further research examining how external factors that influence organizational change. In particular they explain that further factors, besides market volatility and the institutional environment, need to be explored. In solely examining declassified FBI documents, I set myself up to be more exposed to process and identify the internal factors than the external.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In understanding that the Bureau's process of threat classification, as it applies to COINTELPRO, and the differing treatment of "white hate groups" and "black extremists" as threats, was primarily influenced by internal factors, we must understand the importance of examining such a topic, especially as it pertains to the Bureau and its threat classification today. In identifying that the internal factors that influenced the Bureau's threat classification were Director Hoover's impact on the Bureau and COINTELPRO as well as the insular nature of organizational structure and culture of the Bureau at large, we must understand what kind of lasting impact that it will have on the current state of affairs if these factors continue to persist. I have already established that organizations, especially those as large as the FBI, that have been around for quite some time, have a harder time at implementing change, often due to internal resistance. While the FBI has changed much as an agency since COINTELPRO, it has continued to face issues regarding its ability to target and address threats. After the events of 9/11, the failure of the FBI to warn of the attacks was evaluated. It was later determined to be an organizational failure due to the Bureau's slow adaptation to the shifting threat environment from Cold War priorities to terrorism, resistance of adopting new forms of processing and advancing the Bureau's technological capabilities, and of field offices not properly

communicating with one another regarding intelligence it had on the current terror threat (Zegart, 2008) The newest area of scrutiny the FBI has faced comes from targeted groups, seemingly similar to the "black extremists" and "white hate groups" it had targeted during COINTELPRO. Those groups being, Black Lives Matter and the Insurrectionists on January 6th.

In May of 2021, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) produced the Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Data on Domestic Terrorism. This joint strategic intelligence assessment reviewed data regarding acts of domestic terrorism that had occurred between 2017 to 2019, how they occurred and were investigated, what intelligence was derived from it, and provided potential recommendations to address domestic terror threats in the future. From this assessment, it was noted from previous intelligence assessments from 2017 to 2019 that the most prominent and lethal form of violent domestic extremists are Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVEs) that advocate the superiority of the white race (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2021).

RMVEs were acknowledged in the 2017 and 2018 assessments as the "primary sources of lethal and significant violence, with lone offenders conducting lethal attacks against targets of opportunity, using non-complex tactics and accessible weapons" (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2021). But it was in 2019, a year that became the most lethal year for domestic violent extremist attacks since the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995, which led to the deaths of 32 people, of which 24 of those deaths were caused by RMVEs that advocate the superiority of the white race (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2021), that resulted in the FBI and the DHS to further stress the threat that RMVEs with white supremacist ideologies posed for the U.S. This would include the FBI and DHS maintaining in their previous assessments that RMVEs that advocate the superiority of the white race were more lethal than other forms of violent domestic

extremism, while orientating their 2019 assessment to focus more heavily on RMVEs, rather than generalizing all the threats that previous assessments acknowledge for that year's assessments. The FBI and DHS also made mention in the 2019 assessment that "our agencies had high confidence in this assessment based on the demonstrated capability of RMVEs in 2019 to select weapons and targets to conduct attacks, and the effectiveness of online RMVE messaging calling for increased violence", acknowledging how much of an increasing threat and evolving capability these domestic terrorists were to national security (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2021).

This report was published after the events of January 6th, 2021, which saw Trump supporters storm the Capitol building while Congress was in a joint session to count the electoral vote from the 2020 presidential election. Since then, we have seen nearly a thousand arrests of those who participated in the attack on January 6th by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Justice (DOJ), many of whom were aligned with militant, white hate, and/or extremist groups, and an investigation into January 6th. However, while some progress has been made to address the causes and effects of January 6th, there remains a deep level of scrutiny towards the FBI for what they had known prior to the attack on the Capitol and what prevented them from acting in the first place.

Following the attack on the Capitol, Director Christopher Wray released a statement condemning the actions that had taken place at the Capitol on January 6th and that those responsible would be swiftly and aggressively pursued by local, state, and federal authorities and held accountable for the actions they committed that day (FBI, 2021). The following day, January 8th, the Director of the Washington Field Office, Steve D'Antuono, stated that "that the FBI had no intelligence suggesting that violence was brewing before Jan. 6th." (Rangappa, 2022).

This statement was later found to have contradicting information to the intelligence the FBI had prior to January 6th. In late December 2020, the New York Police Department (NYPD) sent a packet of intelligence to the FBI indicating a potential outbreak of violence on January 6th when lawmakers would certify the election results (Silber, 2021). On January 5th, the FBI's Norfolk office similarly indicated there were specific threats to the lives of congress members, on January 6th (Silber, 2021). While during the insurrection, the FBI had informants amongst some members of the Proud Boys that stormed the Capitol. One Proud Boy, by the name "Aaron" notified his handler that he was coming into D.C. that day for the protest and was told "to try to see if [he] could locate someone in D.C. that had nothing to do with the Proud Boys," (Weiner et al, 2023). D'Antuono would later come to backpedal that statement in later press releases stating that the FBI had some intelligence of individuals coming to D.C. to cause violence but had persuaded them not to come.

Regardless of the contradictory statements made by the FBI, it still begs the question of why it did not act. According to FBI Director Wray and Deputy Director for Counterterrorism, Jill Sanborn, the FBI could not monitor social media posts of people advocating or planning to commit violence due to its internal rules and regulations regarding concerns about the First Amendment (Kroll, 2022; Rangappa, 2022). However, the FBI has monitored social media posts in the past and is, and has been, encouraged by the Attorney General to do so prior to a major national event (Kroll, 2022; Rangappa, 2022). For example, following the death of George Floyd and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, the FBI identified and arrested Lore-Elisabeth Blumenthal for setting a police SUV on fire during a protest in Philadelphia. The FBI were able to identify her through a photograph and managed to link the shirt she wore to an Etsy store and then to her Linkedin (Roebuck, 2021). This refusal to apply such measure to the rioters

on January 6th, is seemingly akin to the refusal made by many FBI agents during COINTELPRO to protect civil rights workers "claiming limited jurisdiction, warning about the constitutional dangers of a national police force, and posing as a disinterested, apolitical, fact-gathering investigative agency" (Cunningham, 2004). But that still does not explain why the Bureau did not take the warnings for January 6th seriously while it swiftly arrested Elisabeth Blumenthal.

While we may not get a direct answer from the Bureau anytime soon, there may be an inkling as to why. "After the death of George Floyd in May of 2020, the Justice Department had singled out far-left antifascists as responsible for violence and destruction at racial justice protests across the country, although there was little evidence of any organized left-wing effort to disrupt those rallies" (Weiner et al, 2023). It was also mentioned by Michael German, a former undercover agent that "posture would naturally put pressure on FBI agents working in the domestic terrorism field to find this antifascist terrorist menace," (Weiner et al, 2023). In a similar vein, an email was revealed as a part of the Jan 6th investigation, having been sent a week after the insurrection at the Capitol, that there were many agents across the agency that were sympathetic to the rioters, stating that:

> There's no good way to say it, so I'll just be direct: from my first-hand and second-hand information from conversations since January 6th there is, at best, a sizable percentage of the employee population that felt sympathetic to the group that stormed the Capitol, several also lamented that the only reason this violent activity is getting more attention is because of 'political correctness' (Reilly & Dilanian, 2022).

While the FBI has yet to comment on the claims made by the email, this email may provide some insight into current innerworkings and beliefs of some within the organization. However, similar revelations or claims have yet to be made known.

It should also be noted that prior to January 6th and even well before the death of George Floyd, in 2017, the FBI had identified a new domestic threat facing the United States known as "Black Identity Extremists". While no official definition exists, the FBI described Black Identity Extremists as engaging in ideologically motivated, often violent, acts that seek to address the disenfranchisement and systemic oppression facing African Americans (FBI, 2017). While never explicitly named in the document, Black Lives Matter theoretically applies under this definition. Which may explain why Blumenthal was targeted by the FBI on her social media. However, according to Director Wray, the term is no longer in use as of 2019 and has since been replaced by the term Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVEs). Which, as stated earlier, is the dominant threat to the domestic security of the United States, in the form of those who advocate for white supremacy. While the term, "Black Identity Extremists" only existed briefly, the FBI identifying it as a threat provides an insight into its priorities at the time.

What do we take away from this study in 2023? While threats and priorities within and outside the Bureau have shifted to accommodate the changing social and political environment, that does not necessarily mean that prior convictions and beliefs about particular or similar groups the Bureau had targeted in the past have completely vanished. Rather there remains the possibility that such beliefs, and overall culture within the Bureau linger, as the imprints of prior leadership and agents continue, with or without the organization's explicit knowledge or awareness. So then how does an organization like the FBI go about addressing these issues? This is especially pressing since we have already established that the longer an organization maintains a particular culture and set of beliefs, the harder it becomes for it to change. Although it is harder for such an organization to change, it is not impossible. As previously stated, the FBI has been behind the arrests of the insurrectionists at the Capitol on January 6th and, in conjunction with the

DHS, it has spotlighted RMVEs with white supremacist beliefs as the greatest threat to the domestic security of the United States, even though it seemingly has continued to target groups similar to “black extremists”, such as Black Lives Matter. However, unlike the FBI of the 1960s with “white hate groups”, the current FBI evidently neither took this threat lightly nor has it downplayed these groups’ ability for violence. Nonetheless, the FBI still has a way to go. Regardless of the progress made by the Bureau, more attention should be paid to it and its actions to ensure that it does not repeat the actions of its past.

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