Gender differences in the Civil Rights Movement: Women within the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the period 1960- 1964.

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Introduction

On February 4, 1960, there was a protest, called a sit-in, in F.W. Woolworths Company store in Greensboro, North Carolina. On this day, three hundred students participated in the protest, sitting in areas designated for white people only. Three days before, four young black students had started this initiative, and each day it attracted more students. The youngsters who had gathered were refused service and the press had crowded outside to share this news. The first four students who started the protest were male, but by day three one-third of the students were female. What made the protest significant was that on Thursday, Genie Seaman, Marilyn Lott, and Ann Dearsley, three white students, also attended the sit-in.[1] Many other female students attended Bennet College, a school known for attracting many black women. Dearsley explains that during the protest she proceeded to draw people, and these included "three black men, one with a look of determination frozen on his face" as well as "a black woman, who sat quietly at the lunch counter".[2] This demonstrates that in these protests, men and women stood side by side to fight racial inequality. During the Civil Rights Movement, women were active in various organisations and worked alongside men on the front line. An organisation in which many women were warmly received was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), also known as 'SNIK'. This thesis will focus on the position of women in SNCC compared to the position of men in the same organisation.

SNCC was founded as a coordinating committee for Southern student activists in 1960 in Raleigh, North Carolina, but soon became part of the more challenging arm of the Civil Rights Movement.[3] Its formation took place after sit-in campaigns in which black students

[1] Teresa Annas, "Woman honored as unsung hero during sit-ins" *Greensboro News & Record*. Accessed February 15, 2022. https://greensboro.com/woman-honored-as-unsung-hero-during-sit-ins-ann-dearsley-vernon-is-the-first-white/article_8e61ede1-a07f-58fd-90db-c63f728f904c.html
[2] Annas, "Woman honored as unsung hero during sit-ins".
[3] Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies, *From Sit-Ins to SNCC The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 2-6.

purchased supplies from shops and seated themselves in the areas reserved for whites. The sit-in protests, which were a form of non-violent protest, brought SNCC to national attention. The use of no violence was a central part of the demonstrations.[4] Using no violence was seen in SNCC as an "act of courage" and not as an act of fear.[5] However, many students did not receive a peaceful response and were often harassed. Nevertheless, the students were very determined to stick to the no-violence ideal. Similarly, Martin Luther King noted that "The key significance of the student movement lies in the fact that from its inception, everywhere, it has combined direct action with non-violence".[6]

SNCC's emergence came to a large extent from students' involvement in the Freedom Rides of 1961. These rides were bus trips to southern cities by students to ensure that segregation in public transport would disappear.[7] An increasing number of students joined the rides, making their campaigns very successful. Another event where SNCC was involved was during the March on Washington in 1963 where students fought for freedom for black people. Former SNCC president John Lewis was one of the speakers at the March and warned the crowd, "We are tired. We are tired of being beaten by policemen. We are tired of seeing our people locked up in jail over and over again. And then you holler, "Be patient." How long can we be patient? We want our freedom, and we want it now".[8]

SNCC was known above all for its youthful dynamism and its non-hierarchical structure. For the first time, it was mainly young adults who made their voices heard within

[4] Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 12-14.
[5] Hogan, *Many Minds*, 12.
[6] Martin Luther King Jr. "The Burning Truth in the South" Published article, Madison, Wisconsin, May 1, 1960 to May 31, 1960. Stanford University, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. Accessed February 15, 2022. https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/burning-truth-south
[7] Hogan, *Many Minds*, 46-50.
[8] John Lewis, "Speech at the March of Washington". 28 August 1963. Voices of Democracy, The U.S Oratory Project. Accessed February 15, 2022. https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/lewis-speech-at-the-march-on-washington-speech-text/

the Civil Rights Movement.[9] SNCC concentrated on bottom-up organising because it strengthened older attempts at change and facilitated the emergence of powerful new voices at the base. SNCC members focused on working on the ground with local people in the community. Young people tended to become members because they believed in the ideological accuracy of SNCC.[10] The fact that SNCC was focused on community work made it in comparison to other Civil Rights organisations a grassroots movement. The members of SNCC were the ones that went from door to door to get through to the public.[11] In proportion, SNCC had many black and white female members who also held important positions within the organisation. Having many women active in SNCC is a very appealing feature because in this period women's rights were generally subordinated to men's, especially those of black women, who were perceived as inferior to the white American population.

Although women held important positions within SNCC, they were often not treated equally. During a retreat in Mississippi in November 1964, several SNCC members requested that the organisation's infrastructure should be improved. In a position paper called "Women in the Movement", female members of SNCC showed that women were treated differently from men within the organisation.[12] The position paper showed that there was oppression within SNCC, and that sexual discrimination could not be denied. Because of this statement, it is important to acknowledge that women were not treated equally within SNCC, and it raised many questions about gender-based differences in positions within SNCC. For this reason, this research will find an answer to the question: *What was the position of women in the*

[9] Emily Stoper, "The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: Rise and Fall of a Redemptive Organization." *Journal of Black Studies 8, no. 1* (1977): 15.
[10] Stoper, "The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," 15.
[11] Morgan, *From Sit-Ins to SNCC The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s,* 2-5.
[12] "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Position Paper: Women in the Movement", November 1964, the Sixties Project , Accessed April 18, 2022. http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SNCC_women.html

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960-1964 and how did this differ from the position of men in the same organisation?

The rise of SNCC in the United States (US) was preceded by many historical events that led to the start of this movement. Black citizens in the country had been discriminated against for years on the grounds of their racial background and this originated from the times of enslavement. After the abolition of slavery, Jim Crow laws were introduced in America that segregated black and white citizens in public places and institutions. Because of the Jim Crow laws, many citizens in the South were unable to register to vote.[13] In the 1940s, more jobs were available with the arrival of the war, but the majority of black Americans were not getting better pay. In addition, black and white soldiers in the army were not treated equally, which caused much frustration among the black population. Black citizens also had to deal with lynching which made them feel unsafe because black citizens were assassinated in the street by a mob.[14] The segregation laws caused resentment, which sparked a reaction in the 1950s when many black citizens protested for their rights for the first time.

From the mid-1950s onward, more events occurred that caused the Civil Rights Movement to gain momentum. In 1954, the Civil Rights Movement accelerated when the American Supreme Court made segregation in public schools unequal in the famous Brown v. Board of Education case.[15] This case sparked many other protest protests other places were targeted instead. This was for example the bus boycott, wherein a black woman did not give her seat to a white person on the bus.[16] This turned out to be a great success, which resulted in the abolition of segregation on the bus. Due to the huge publicity surrounding the case, black

[13] "Black veterans return from World War II". Digital SNCC Gateway. Accessed February 15, 2022. https://snccdigital.org/events/black-veterans-return-from-world-war-ii/
[14] Leigh Raiford, ""Come Let Us Build a New World Together": SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement." *American Quarterly 59*, no. 4 (2007): 1129-1132.
[15] Christopher W. Schmidt, *Civil Rights in America: a History* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2021), 78-85.
[16] Schmidt, *Civil Rights in America*, 78-85.

citizens in all parts of the country started protesting for their freedom. Sit-ins were organised, like the one that SNCC performed, in which black citizens entered spots that were reserved for whites only and thereby disregarded the Jim Crow laws.

Historiography

Many studies have been done on SNCC, in particular on their activities and members. The grassroots nature of SNCC has been researched by many academics. In addition, the many different women who were members of SNCC have been researched or interviewed, as it is notable that women played an important role. Well-known female members of SNCC published their book in 2010 in which they narrate their experiences within the movement.[17] The analyses reveal that SNCC is a unique organisation because it did not intend to involve itself in the political establishment and had many female members who were of great value within the organisation. Clayborne Carson with the help of the American Council of Learned Societies, published a book in 1995 called *In Struggle SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* in which the entire account of SNCC is presented as a case study in the history of the Civil Rights Movement in general.[18] This study is important because it is one of the first significant studies on SNCC. The experiences of individuals within an organisation based on gender have been the focus of various studies. Earlier works on the Civil Rights Movement, for example, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980s* focused mainly on the part played by the men and paid almost no attention to the women's role.[19]

[17] Dorothy M. Zellner, Faith S. Holsaert, Judy Richardson, Jean Smith Young, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Betty Garman Robinson, *Hands on the Freedom Plow*: *Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (University of Illinois Press, 2010).
[18] Clayborne Carson and American Council of Learned Societies, *In Struggle SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960's* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995).
[19] Henry Hampton, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980s* (Bantam; Reissue edition, 1991).

In contrast, later studies, such as the one from Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods, called *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & Torchbearers 1941-1965*, have highlighted the work of black women in the movement.[20] This study is relevant because it focuses for the first time on women within SNCC. Charles Payne, in his study in which he focused on the Greenwood movement in the Mississippi Delta, identified an over-participation of black women. He argued that, in general, females tended to be more politically active than males in Civil Rights organisations.[21] This research is valuable because it shows that women played an influential part. Historian Doug McAdam studied in his article in *The American Journal of Sociology*, the different experiences of individuals who were members of a movement that fought for the rights of blacks. His research revealed that female volunteers who participated in Freedom Summer in 1964 were exposed to forms of discrimination based on sexism.[22]

Dennis Urban published in 2002 that women within SNCC were seen as inferior to men.[23] His article indicated that women within SNCC indeed experienced difficulties based on their gender. That women within SNCC experienced problems is evident from other studies, and this is of value to this thesis. Bernice McNair Barnett also researched the female leaders of the Civil Rights Movement and how they were invisible.[24] Much research has been done on SNCC, but this was mainly focused on the dynamics within the organisation. In addition, several members have been analysed in-depth, and many academic articles can be

[20] Vicki L Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods (ed.), *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & Torchbearers 1941-1965* (Indiana University Press, 1990).
[21] Charles Payne, "Men Led, but Women Organized: Movement Participation of Women in the Mississippi Delta," in Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods (ed.), *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & Torchbearers 1941-1965* (Indiana University Press, 1990), 8.
[22] Doug McAdam. "Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience: The Case of Freedom Summer." *The American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 5 (1992): 1225.
[23] Dennis J. Urban, "The women of SNCC: Struggle, Sexism, and the Emergence of Feminist Consciousness, 1960-66." *International Social Science Review 77*, no. 3/4 (2002): 185–90.
[24] Bernice McNair Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class." *Gender and Society 7.2* (1993).

found about them. The role of SNCC in the Civil Right movement has been researched many times before and its activities are a recurring theme.

Sara Evans has researched in her book *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left*, the first feminist movement that emerged in the 1960s. Her study addresses the women of SNCC and their experiences.[25] Several women talk about how they experienced gender-based discrimination within the organisation. This book is of value to this research because it draws on the personal experiences of these women. Mary Aickin Rothschild researched the white women who volunteered for SNCC.[26] This research is also of interest because it shows that the different women have been studied separately. These women are significant also because it allows the women within SNCC to be examined in general.

All of these scholars have researched SNCC and the role of women within it, but a comparison between the different positions of men and women in SNCC seems to be missing or neglected. Women were crucial to the Civil Rights Movement, in particular black women, which makes the activism of women a central part of the scholarship of the social movement. It is important to study the Civil Rights Movement at a time when women were treated as inferior to understand the activism of black citizens. It is fundamental to study the differences between men and women within this Civil Rights organisation to progress the case for gender equality. This research can expand on previous studies because it effectively compares the different positions and responsibilities of SNCC members to determine whether individuals within the organisation were treated differently based on their gender.

[25] Sara Evans, *Personal Politics : the Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Knopf : distributed by Random House, 1979).
[26] Mary Aickin Rothschild, "White Women Volunteers in the Freedom Summers: Their Life and Work in a Movement for Social Change." *Feminist Studies 5*, no. 3 (1979).

Methodology

The purpose of this historical research is to investigate what the position of women in SNCC was compared to the position of men in the same organisation. This requires an examination of the tasks and positions of SNCC members in general to draw a comparison between men and women. Therefore, the personal experiences of the women in SNCC must be examined. To investigate the positions of SNCC members, primary sources from SNCC archives are used that have documented all details. In addition, the issues that women faced within SNCC and how they were perceived in the mainstream media are examined. Interviews are used in which the female members tell their experiences and the mainstream media is analysed in the 1960s to identify the contribution of women. This is relevant to understanding the position of women within the organisation. By doing this research, it will be possible to examine the extent to which women were given equal status within a Civil Rights Movement organisation in which many women were active.

To investigate the difference in how men and women were treated within SNCC, it is important to study this from a gender analysis perspective. This involves examining, for example, the differences between men and women in role patterns, decision-making powers, general acknowledgement, and public perceptions. The positions of women and men are both studied to see what the differences are. Gender analysis is also used to see what kind of problems women faced and how they tried to solve them. This study looks at SNCC in the years 1960 to 1964. These years are chosen because from 1965 onwards, SNCC went through a change that caused the organisation to become closer to the Black Power movement. The radicalisation of SNCC made the organisation more aligned with the Black power movement. This study will only focus on the nonviolent years of SNCC because in these years SNCC was more coherent as an organisation.

It must also be recognised that experiences within SNCC are not the same for all women, as their experiences may also be determined by different factors. This is referred to as intersectionality and implies that a person's identity is defined by various factors such as race, class, or gender. Intersectionality is the phenomenon that social inequality occurs along different lines, which intersect.[27] It is the notion that individuals in a society experience discrimination and oppression based on a multiplicity of factors. For example, a black woman in SNCC may have had a different experience than a white woman. In addition, two black women may have different experiences because one comes from a different class. With intersectionality, the different forms of oppression and discrimination are not studied separately but follow one approach. In this approach, different forms of discrimination and oppression are studied together and, in their interrelationship, as otherwise not all of their causes and consequences can be explained. Professor Kimberle Crenshaw argues that discrimination against black women can be understood as a crossroads, where two streets (a metaphor for two forms of discrimination) intersect. Intersectionality shows how different individual characteristics overlap.[28]

Chapter outline

In this thesis, three sub-questions are addressed to conclude that women within SNCC were treated inferior to men and that they faced different problems. This is done through three chapters, each dealing with a different topic to understand the positions of women within SNCC. These three sub-chapters are important to conduct a comprehensive analysis of how women were treated and regarded within SNCC in comparison to men in the organisation. The first chapter looks at the different positions within SNCC of women and men. The aims

[27] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics [1989]." *In Feminist Legal Theory*, 1st ed (1991): 57–80.
[28] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 57-80.

and activities of SNCC are discussed, and the positions of the various members who primarily fulfilled these positions are examined. Within SNCC, some members were active in the office or the field and the various tasks of these members are addressed. The positions of women are clearly explained, by naming several examples of women who were active within SNCC.

The second chapter looks at the problems women faced within SNCC based on their gender. These problems are examined and discussed in detail to understand what these women were experiencing. In the process, the problems that differed per position for a woman are analysed. In addition, the women's responses to these problems and how they tried to overcome them are examined. The position paper and the women's own experiences of SNCC are used. McAdam's article in which he discusses the experiences of female volunteers at SNCC is very helpful. Urban's article is also of great value because it brings different problems of women to the foreground.

The third chapter looks at how the women of SNCC were acknowledged in the mainstream media, and how they appeared in the eyes of the public. Belinda Robnett, in her book *How Long? How Long? African American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (1999) noted that the experiences of African American women within SNCC were under-reported in favour of men, such as Martin Luther King.[29] The mainstream media is analysed in the 1960s to identify the contribution of women. By looking at the way men and women within SNCC were presented in the mainstream media, it can be concluded whether there is a difference in this portrayal. This involves looking at the differences between women, for example, whether a white woman appeared more in the media than a black woman from within SNCC.

By focusing on the women within SNCC and their experiences compared to men, it can be shown that even though the movement was very progressive, there were still major

[29] Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

underlying problems within the organisation. These capable, responsible, and experienced women played an important role within SNCC and occupied large positions but often experienced difficulties. Although women stood side by side in the sit-ins, as in Greensboro, they were not being addressed on equal grounds within SNCC. It is important to recognise that this study cannot cover all the experiences of women in SNCC as many women have worked or volunteered for the organisation. This is a limitation that allows the experiences of selected women in different positions to be discussed, but these experiences were common to most women. However, it is necessary to recognise that these experiences do not apply to all women that worked for SNCC.

Chapter 1: Gender Roles

McCree L. Harris was a teacher at Monroe High School in Albany Georgia who opposed segregation in the US from an early age. She tried to teach young students about SNCC to support the movement. She was in the right position to do this because she was already in direct contact with students through her job. She could tell them where the freedom marches started in the city and kept personal contact with them. Harris saw her involvement with the students on the ground as something that gave her the strength "to play my role in the movement".[30] Her work for SNCC was essential in spreading awareness of the movement among students. Harris serves as a good example of a woman who had an important role in this movement and was fully committed to it. Within SNCC many different tasks were carried out by men and women.

SNCC's activities began at its headquarters in Atlanta. It focused on organising sit-ins and other non-violent action protests against segregation in the country.[31] The Atlanta office was used for organising events. The office workers also sought to assist the field workers in this way. However, there was a big difference between the office workers and the field workers. This was because the members who attended the protests were often in dangerous circumstances, while the office workers were safely based in the Atlanta office. Women were represented nearly everywhere, some helped more with direct efforts, and others were engaged in voter administration.[32] Some women took their place on the front lines, but others performed their tasks in the background. By 1963, SNCC had several members in Georgia, Atlanta, and Mississippi. There were twelve workers in the Atlanta headquarters, sixty field

[30] McCree L. Harris, "Everybody Called Me "Teach", *Hands on the Freedom Plough: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 142.
[31] "SNCC National Office", Digital SNCC Gateway. Accessed March 12, 2022. https://snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/sncc-national-office/
[32] Zellner et all, *Hands on the Freedom Plow*: *Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, 3-5.

secretaries, and 121 full-time volunteers.[33] In addition, SNCC had many different staff members over the years as well as many local volunteers who participated in the struggle for equality.[34] Most of the members were active in the field, and the office staff was kept to a minimum.

In this thesis, the positions of women within SNCC in comparison to men are examined, and to answer this question, this chapter will look at the different tasks and activities of SNCC. Firstly, the different tasks that were performed at the SNCC headquarters in Atlanta are described. The analysis focuses on how the positions and tasks in the office were divided between men and women. Several important women who worked in the office are researched to identify their responsibilities. Subsequently, the tasks that the field workers had to perform are examined. An analysis is carried out of the different positions and tasks that were divided between men and women. The experiences of different women who were working on the ground are analysed to identify their responsibilities. The office workers and field workers are discussed in two different sections, as the positions of women in the office and the field were not the same. In addition, primary sources are analysed that specify which persons held which position. These records are studied in detail to provide a proper analysis of the different positions of women within SNCC. The personal experiences of several women who worked for SNCC are used to indicate the dynamics between men and women. By looking at the tasks of women in the office and on the ground, it shows that women did not have leading positions within SNCC and worked in general in the background.

[33] "SNCC: What we did", Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Legacy Project. Accessed March 12, 2022. https://www.snccclegacyproject.org/we-were-sncc/what-we-did
[34] Morgan, *From Sit-Ins to SNCC, the Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, 81.

Gender roles in the Atlanta office

Several SNCC members did hold leadership positions, in which they took on considerable responsibility. They worked mostly at the general office that was located in Atlanta. The executive secretary in that period of the Atlanta office was a man named James Forman. The mission of the office was to help the members on the ground by communicating their efforts as widely as possible and providing them with the funds to get their job done.[35] In the office, there were many different departments where various people worked. There was for example the Accounting department, Communications department, Photography department and the Research department.[36] The office personnel primarily assisted with records to assist the staff on the ground. Tasks included keeping track of the budget, transcribing reports from the ground, and writing news reports of SNCC activities.[37] In addition, the office staff had to carry out many administrative duties such as making phone calls and composing letters. Meetings were organised to get a clear overview of all activities that were planned in different states.

In the early 1960s, the core of SNCC in the office were mainly men who held positions of power. These included men such as James Forman, Charles Jones and Worth Long. Between 1960-1965, several persons had been chair or executive secretaries, but they had always been men. This is reflected in the staff meetings that have all been registered. In November 1960, Mr Tin Jenkins was chairman of the staff meetings.[38] From the transcript of the 1961 meetings, it is evident that Charles Jones was the chair of SNCC.[39] At an executive committee meeting in 1963, John Lewis was the chairman and the project directors were Bill

[35] "SNCC National Office".
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] "SNCC Meeting Minutes", November 1960, Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive. Accessed March 12, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6011_sncc_min.pdf
[39] "SNCC Staff Meeting Minutes", October 8-10 1961, Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive. Accessed March 12, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6110_sncc_staff_min.pdf

Hans and Don Harris and Bob Moses.[40] The recordings show that until 1964, all project directors were men. Consequently, men tended to dominate official positions of power, however, there was no apparent line of authority in SNCC.

Although women did not occupy the major positions of authority in these years, they were often included in the executive committee. The transcripts of the office staff meetings reveal that several women were part of the meetings. Forman's secretary in 1964 was a black woman named Judith Richardson. She was a member of SNCC already and prepared projects in the city of Cambridge in Maryland.[41] She grew up in New York and got a scholarship to attend Swarthmore College, where she came into contact with SNCC. Richardson met Forman at the office, and he learned of her, as she told in a 2007 interview: "I can type 90 words a minute and, yes, I can take shorthand. He said, "Oh no, you're not going back to Cambridge. You're going to be my secretary".[42] She held an upstanding position in the office and had to write plenty of letters. However, she was not permitted to speak in the staff meetings, which meant that only Forman had speaking privileges.[43] Nonetheless, Richardson felt appreciated for her skills and described "I mean, it was a sense that women in the organization were respected for their capabilities — even within the context of sexism, that (and yeah, you know, there was little stuff that would happen every once in a while). But most of the time, I never felt limited. Never limited about what I could do".[44]

Even though there were a handful of women working in the Atlanta office, the staff in 1964 was predominantly male. This was the case in all departments, from photography to communications, as well as in the freedom singers and Research departments. A 1964 SNCC

[40] "SNCC: Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting (summary)", September 6-9 1963, Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive. Accessed March 13, 2022.https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6309_sncc_excom_summary.pdf
[41] Judy Richardson, "My Enduring "Circle of Trust", *Hands on the Freedom Plough: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 352.
[42] Interview with Judy Richardson by Jean Wiley, February 2007, Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive. Accessed March 13, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/nars/judyrich.htm
[43] Interview with Judy Richardson by Jean Wiley, February 2007.
[44] Ibid.

document called "Brief Job Descriptions of Personnel in Atlanta Office" gives a brief description of the positions in the office and who held them.[45] Carol Merritt was the only woman in the Administrative department, where she led the organisation's education programme.[46] The director, assistant, chairmen and coordinators within this department were all men. In the document, only Betty Garman is listed as a female office staff member who had an influential position within the department for coordinating the Northern campuses.[47] Garman, however, was a white woman and had been considered a longstanding friend of SNCC before she became a member of the office staff.

The Personnel in Atlanta Office document from 1964 shows who worked in the office, but it also describes the posts. First, leadership positions such as the executive secretary, staff coordinator and the head of the production department were all male. However, the job description of the occupations in the office also indicates a gender-based division of labour. For example, the words ‘direct’ and ‘represents’ are used in Forman's job description, which suggests an authoritarian position within SNCC.[48] The duties of James E. Bolton are expressed in specific words such as 'acts' and 'mans'. Other words that are used for men include 'runs', 'takes care' and 'oversees'.[49] For women's positions, gentler words are more common, which tend to describe a secretary position. For example, in the case of Betty Garman the word 'handles' is used and for Judy Richardson, the term 'answers' is applied. The female jobs are described rather as a task of correspondence, while the description of the men appears to indicate an authoritarian executive position.

[45] “SNCC: Brief Job Descriptions of Personnel in Atlanta Office”, Spring 1964, Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive. Accessed March 11, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6405_sncc_jobdescriptions.pdf
[46] Belinda Robnett, “African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization.” *American Journal of Sociology* 101.6 (1996): 1674.
[47] “SNCC: Brief Job Descriptions of Personnel in Atlanta Office”.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

Within the Communication department, the majority of staff were also men. The director of this department was a man named Julian Bond. In the Communications department, Dorothy Miller Zellner, also known as Dottie, had to keep Bond up to date with press releases.[50] Zellner was born in New York City and was taught about black history by her parents as a child. In 1960, she felt inspired by the sit-in protests and left for the South. She went to work in the SNCC office, transcribing reports from field secretaries who tried to assist black people in the countryside of Georgia and Mississippi. It is important to note that Zellner was a white woman within a black organisation, but she always said that she felt comfortable "being in a tiny minority of white people in a black-led organization in a black world".[51]

Another female activist named Mary E. King was drafted into SNCC by doing voluntary work. She came into contact with Forman, who believed her academic background would be of value to SNCC.[52] For this reason, in 1963, she began working in the communications department with Bond and Zellner, delivering news to the public about arrests, bombings and other terrorist attacks.[53] King and Zellner had a good position in the communications department, but that was also because of their experience and academic background, which was in the eyes of Forman good fit with the office. In addition, Bond was the director and he ultimately decided what was going to happen and how they were going to approach their projects.

The only exceptions in which women had a more dominant position in the office were Ruby Smith Robinson and the women of the finance department. Robinson was a student at Spelman College and participated in sit-ins in Atlanta. As a result, she had been familiar with

[50] Dottie Zellner, "My Real Vocation", *Hands on the Freedom Plough: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 311-326.
[51] Zellner, "My Real Vocation", 317.
[52] Mary E. King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement (*New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1987).
[53] Mary E. King, "Getting Out the News", *Hands on the Freedom Plough: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 341.

SNCC since its establishment in 1960. Robinson held the position of administrative secretary of SNCC from 1963 and her duties included "Maintains a file on all Personnel, handles incoming requests from job applicants and scholarships, reads and responds to all field reports from staff" as described in the 1964 job description.[54] This position gave her considerable control within SNCC, as she was responsible for hiring volunteers and signing the cheques that went to the different projects.[55] As SNCC's administrative secretary, Robinson ensured that the field secretaries obtained everything they needed to carry out their work, allowing her to take a leadership position in the office. In the Accounting department, which monitored the budget of the organisation, many women were employed. Accountant Betty Miles was one of the most prominent members as she made sure that the bills were paid. The 1964 job description shows that Miles "Accounts for all expenditures (balance books) Reconciles project accounts 9 general checking account, etc. Also makes entries in books for receipts and expenditures".[56]

Examining the title positions within the SNCC office shows that women, especially black women, were almost non-existent, with a few exceptions. For women, the title positions were seen as a function that only existed in the office, and if you occupied a position within the office, you had less power according to their perception. This was partly because women were considered unsuitable for certain positions by men, which limited their power and prevented them from being independent.[57] Women were often not allowed to be part of the decision-making process and could not work upwards in their positions within SNCC. Their work usually consisted of administrative tasks such as writing letters or answering the phone. Also, as Richardson described, these women did not speak at meetings and always had to take

[54] "SNCC: Brief Job Descriptions of Personnel in Atlanta Office".
[55] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," 1674.
[56] "SNCC: Brief Job Descriptions of Personnel in Atlanta Office".
[57] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," 1675.

transcriptions of the conversation.[58] This was done in a document called "minutes" to have a clear overview of the meeting. Therefore, women often chose to carry out work for SNCC in a different context, so that they would be less restricted in their tasks. For men, it was just the opposite, as Bond's position as director in the Communications department gave him additional authority.

Gender roles in the field

On the ground, SNCC workers organised various activities and protests to promote the rights of black people. Many of these participants did this voluntarily, and most members were students who took time off to protest. These people on the ground were called field secretaries and helped with campaigns such as sit-ins and freedom rides. They also began organising campaigns to get more blacks to vote.[59] It was usually the women at the local level who made it possible for the students to carry out their activities. In the field, they attempted to guide students but also participated in demonstrations. One of the most important tasks on the ground was to register voters, and many SNCC members did this by "going door to door to contact people and to discuss the registration blanks with them", as SNCC members Curtis Hayes and Hollis Watkins explained in a report from 1962.[60] In addition, there were Freedom Singers, who organised workshops for students who might be interested in joining the organisation. At the beginning of the workshop, they often sang lyrics such as: "We are fighting for our freedom, we shall not be moved, Just like a tree, planted by the water, we shall not be moved".[61] The Freedom Singers sang songs to audiences across the country. "We

[58] Interview with Judy Richardson by Jean Wiley, February 2007.
[59] "Survey of Current Field Work, Spring 1963", Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive, Accessed April 4, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6305_sncc_cong_fieldwork.pdf
[60] "Report by Hollis Watkins and Curtis Hayes detailing their work in Southwest Mississippi", Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive, Accessed April 4, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/lets/6201_watkins_report.pdf
[61] "Songs of the Southern Freedom Movement", 1963, Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive. Accessed on 12 March, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/63_songs.pdf

travelled all over the country in a compact Buick," recalls Rutha Mae Harris, a female member of the SNCC Freedom Singers.[62]

Most members of SNCC worked in the field and attempted to personally reach out to people. Many women played an important part and were eager to commit themselves to SNCC. Because many field projects were scattered in different cities in the south, SNCC members founded field offices. From there, activities could be organised at a local level, and field secretaries were able to stay in contact with the headquarters in Atlanta. In these various projects, women were given many tasks. These included teaching in freedom schools or helping in the library. In addition, women also assisted in canvassing black voters.[63] In the isolated and geographically violent counties where SNCC operated, local offices were essential to keep staff connected to the central organisation where press releases were issued. According to a 1962 SNCC transcript, for example, there were field offices in Mississippi, Southwest Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Virginia and Maryland.[64]

What is notable from this file is that the field secretaries who are listed were almost all men. In Mississippi, for example, the field secretaries were Bob Moses, Charles Cobb, John O'Neal en Tim Jenkins.[65] In Georgia this was Charles Sherrod, in Alabama Bernard Lafayetts and in Virginia Avond Rollins was listed as secretary. Gloria Richardson, a black woman, was one of the few women mentioned. She was the field secretary in Maryland and was a key component of SNCC activities held in Cambridge. She became a member of the SNCC Board of Directors.[66] Although Richardson filled an influential position for SNCC, as a female she was in the minority among the field secretaries from the various states. That is because the

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[62] Rutha Mae Harris, "I Love to Sing," *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 144-146.
[63] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 69-71.
[64] "Address List: SNCC Field Offices & Friends of SNCC Groups 1962", Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive, Accessed April 5, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/62_sncc_offices.pdf
[65] "Address List: SNCC Field Offices & Friends of SNCC Groups 1962".
[66] "Gloria Richardson", Digital SNCC Gateway. Accessed April 5, 2022. https://snccdigital.org/people/gloria-richardson/

1962 address list reveals that the majority of SNCC field workers in leadership positions were men.

Another document from 1963 entitled 'SNCC field offices as of October 24, 1963' reveals that in general, most of the members in the field were men.[67] This document listed the lead members for each field office making it clear to the head office who worked where. However, these were not all members on the ground because SNCC had many volunteers who are not all recorded. At the smaller field offices, there were almost all males listed as employees, such as Reginald Robinson in North Carolina.[68] In places where larger groups of field workers gathered, such as Mississippi, women were listed as staff members, but they were outnumbered by men. In Mississippi, twenty students were full-time employees. These workers often met in Greenwood to maintain a concentrated programme in the city. Out of these twenty workers, two were female employees. They were Emma Bell and Diane Nash.[69] Bell was originally from Mississippi and helped many other workers by providing refuge. Nash was a white woman and did extensive work for the voting rights of black people. She had also been imprisoned several times while working for SNCC and dedicated herself fully to the organisation.[70] Next to that, Nash conducted several workshops for young black students to prepare them to participate in Freedom Rides. These women carried out important tasks but were in the minority.

The same pattern emerges for the composition of the field staff in Southwest Georgia and Mississippi. In Georgia in 1963, there were twelve full-time SNCC field employees. Three of these were female, namely Prathia Hall, Joyce Barrett and Faith Holseart.[71] The

[67] "SNCC: Survey of Current Field Work", May 1963, Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive, Accessed April 5, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6305_sncc_cong-fieldwork.pdf
[68] "SNCC: Survey of Current Field Work".
[69] Ibid.
[70] Diane Nash, "They Are the Ones Who Got Scared," *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 76-84.
[71] "SNCC: Survey of Current Field Work".

other members were all male. Hall has participated in various projects in different states, but her main task was voter education and registration in addition to literacy training for the effort toward political empowerment.[72] However, men were often the project leaders, as in Georgia, where they worked under Charles Sherrod and Charles Jones. Sherrod set the rules for the projects in Georgia and the members had to follow that structure.[73] Thus, a man was in control of the activities and other duties carried out in the field.

Possibly the most important women to help SNCC in the field were those who fed the members and sheltered them. These women were also the backbone of the leadership in the local movements. Other members in the field of SNCC would sometimes call these black women 'mothers' and would see in them vital examples of courage and leadership.[74] Yet these women performed domestic duties, and this was a common pattern for women to follow. These women discovered that they were still assigned the role of housewife, as was the case with their mothers in the past.[75] Several women became discontent with the domestic duties in the freedom houses because they felt it was unfair that men did not assist them.

In addition, historian Sara Evans argued that women in the field were unevenly distributed among freedom schools, community librarians and project workers.[76] Men tried to protect women, as Evans argued, by not giving them the most dangerous tasks. For example, men often participated in freedom rides so that women were not consistently put in physical danger. Evans claims that this reflected chivalry in men that served to reinforce their sense of their worthiness in an environment from which they could eliminate the danger.[77] Women were often described as passivist and black women, in particular, were defined as having

[72] Prathia Hall, "Freedom-Faith", *Hands on the Freedom Plough: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 174-177.
[73] Faith S Holseart, "Resistance U", *Hands on the Freedom Plough: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 181-195.
[74] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 74-77.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, 70-80.
[77] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 76-79.

"female-headedness, illegitimacy, teen pregnancy, and poverty".[78] But just because men were trying to be a protector of women, it did not mean that women always accepted it. Women consequently preferred to work in the field as this allowed them to be more independent.[79] Female leaders in the period and within SNCC were influential leaders in a different way to men because they had to deal with limitations, but this did not mean that their work had no significance. Black women generally worked more behind the scenes, for example by helping SNCC members at the local level.[80]

During Freedom Summer in 1964, many students volunteered to work for SNCC. For the first time, many white female students volunteered to protest for SNCC to try to end the massive resistance the workers continued to face.[81] Many of the female volunteers felt appreciated and had positive memories of this summer. However, during this summer the SNCC ideals of equality and personal dignity were not always upheld. Female volunteers experienced discrimination, and this was primarily in how work was distributed within projects, where men and women were given different roles.[82] Women's duties included teaching, administrative tasks and helping in the community centre. Voter registration was in general primarily the responsibility of men. The fact that women were given fewer of these tasks shows the more limited involvement of women compared to male volunteers.

Women, especially black women, had been involved more often in high-risk activism in the Civil Rights Movement, except for the white women who volunteered during the 1964 Freedom Summer. One SNCC member, called Peggy Trotter Dammond Preacely, described that wherever you were as a Civil Rights worker, it was never safe. In 1962, she had been

[78] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement,", 164.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Urban, "The Women of SNCC", 187.
[81] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 69.
[82] McAdam, "Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience", 1225.

arrested several times for protesting on the steps of Albany City Hall.[83] Many of these women who protested in places were arrested and faced harsh conditions. Hall spent several days in jail and even had "a two-week stay in jail during the freedom struggle".[84] The reason why these were mainly black women is that black women had more to "gain" from their participation and white women were less willing to risk their lives because they did not have to face racial discrimination and oppression like black women did.[85] Historian Jenny Irons also emphasises that white women were recruited differently from black women who were previously recruited through grassroots and personal networks.

Holseart lived in the Georgia freedom house, the houses in which many SNCC members lived together, and her main task was checking on demonstrators and canvassing voter registrants.[86] However, because she was a white woman, she often had to stay inside, as it was so dangerous for the black male staff to walk outside with a white woman. A black man could be lynched for this and to prevent this, Holseart had to follow strict rules. Nevertheless, it did not mean that women were not appreciated for their tasks. Project director Sherrod, for example, believed that women should be fully engaged in this struggle for human rights. He believed as Holseart expressed it, that "women were his equals".[87] He chose Hall to deliver a speech at the first anniversary of the Georgia SNCC movement where Martin Luther King also spoke. This was unheard of for many women, as they were not usually allowed to speak at such large events.

[83] Peggy Trotter Dammond Preacely, "It Was Simply in My Blood", *Hands on the Freedom Plough: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 163-171.
[84] Hall, "Freedom-Faith", 172-180.
[85] Jenny Irons, "The Shaping of Activist Recruitment and Participation: A Study of Women in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement." *Gender & Society 12, no. 6* (1998): 698
[86] Holseart, "Resistance U", 181-195.
[87] Ibid, 187.

The tasks given to women in the office and on the ground were different, as women in the field were given more space to carry out their tasks. The women in the office, on the other hand, were given more administrative tasks and had to listen to their male leaders. Women in the office felt special to work in such a place because there were few women present in proportion to the men. Women in the office and the field were given fewer leadership roles. Even though women were assigned a subordinate role in SNCC, it is important to note that most did not necessarily feel limited in their work. Many women experienced freedom within the organisation because they had never been appreciated for their work. Bernice Reagon, for example, who was a fieldworker in Georgia, felt very much at home within the organisation because: "my whole world was expanded in terms of what I could do as a person".[88] It was similar for Richardson who felt very valued as a woman within the organisation and said "But, as a woman, I just felt absolutely powerful, just powerful".[89]

In addition, Richardson emphasised that she always felt respected "for whatever skills I brought to the organization".[90] Office worker Betty Garman underlined that she enjoyed the fact that she was recognised as an equal "for who I was and what I gave".[91] Fieldworker Holseart remembered that she was bowled when Hall was allowed to give a speech on the first anniversary of the movement in Georgia because she "had not imagined a young woman my age could possess such oratorical power".[92] Nevertheless, this does not mean that women did not encounter other problems, as the next chapter will show.

[88] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," 1676
[89] Interview with Judy Richardson by Jean Wiley, February 2007.
[90] Richardson, "My Enduring "Circle of Trust", 352.
[91] Betty Garman Robinson, "Working in the Eye of the Social Movement Storm", *Hands on the Freedom Plough: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 379.
[92] Holseart, "Resistance U", 187.

Chapter 2: Women's Resistance

In 1964, a Position paper was published stating that the women of SNCC were not happy and content with their status in the organisation. The document contained a list of eleven points that women disagreed with, such as "Capable, responsible, and experienced women who are in leadership positions can expect to have to defer to a man on their project for final decision making".[93] Women within the organisation slowly began to realise that they were treated as inferior to men. With this Position paper, they tried to highlight this issue and make it clear that women faced several problems. SNCC has always stood for equality and appreciation, but these women wanted to show that there was a clear inequality when it came to their gender. In this chapter, the issues that women faced in the office and on the ground are examined. Firstly, this chapter looks at the problems that women faced within SNCC. This is divided into broader experiences and sexual experiences. Next, the Waveland conference will be discussed, and it will be explained why it was only at this point that women dared to speak out. The concluding section looks at the other methods women used to solve these problems, as well as the developments after the submission of the Position paper. The Position paper is analysed in detail to understand the difficulties that the women encountered. These difficulties are analysed by looking at the experiences of women in the office and on the ground. Their experiences reinforce the problems in the Position paper and provide additional context to the concerns that women sought to address.

[93] "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Position Paper: Women in the Movement", November 1964, the Sixties Project , Accessed April 18, 2022. http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SNCC_women.html

The experiences of women

Women in the office and on the ground faced different problems. This was due to the fact where women worked, just as the job descriptions differed between the women in the office and the field.[94] To clarify these problems, both workplaces are looked at carefully. The problems that the female members encountered in the office were mainly the tasks that they were given. They had little freedom and no leadership positions, as has been discussed in chapter one. Most women had administrative tasks to perform, such as answering the telephone and writing letters. Women were allowed to say little or nothing in the staff meetings, which was seen by many as a problem. Some men preferred not to collaborate with women, even though many women did not necessarily realise this.[95] This is evident from the stories of King and Zellner who worked with Bond in the communications department of SNCC. They believed that Bond saw them as an equal and felt honoured to work in that department. King emphasises that Bond saw her as an equal because "Julian Bond always treated me as a person of aptitude".[96]

A staff meeting at the 1964 office reveals the opposite. The summary of that meeting states that "Julian doesn't like working with women.... he would like to have Mike Sayer as requested earlier."[97] The meeting also revealed that the people who were present at the meeting did not say anything about it. Therefore, women ran into the problem of being side-lined because men preferred to work with other men rather than with a woman. This was not fair to women because they had just as much experience as the men in the office. Women were given administrative tasks, as the Position paper shows.[98] Also, several female members who were active in the office, such as Richardson stated in chapter one, confirm that they

[94] "SNCC: Brief Job Descriptions of Personnel in Atlanta Office".
[95] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," 1675.
[96] King, "Getting Out the News", 341.
[97] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," 1675.
[98] "SNCC Position Paper: Women in the Movement".

were given certain tasks that men never had to perform. Women always had to make a summary of the staff meetings and Richardson described it as a frustrating task because "I get tired of the fact — as do other women in the office —that only the women are doing the minutes, even in the office. So that's when the staff meeting happens. It's not just that I and Mary King are doing the minutes, it's that the guys aren't doing them — Julian [Bond] certainly isn't doing' no minutes. You know, none of the men were doing the minutes".[99]

Women were seen as inferior in the office because when a list of new lawyers for a special project had been put in SNCC's central office in Atlanta, the word 'girl' was written next to one of the names of the female staff members.[100] According to the 1964 position paper, this was reflected in the fact that men were seen as superior to women. Men were seen as human beings and women as girls who had to do what men said.[101] Many women were seen as girls by men and were not seen as equal SNCC members.[102] The men saw themselves as the leaders in the office and agreed that the women should listen to them.

In the field, women had important tasks because they took care of many of the members. Even though men were in charge, as the documents in which the staff members were registered show, women tried to carry out their tasks as much as possible. Many women worked in the freedom houses and took care of the household chores. In doing so, they ran into the problem of the domestic role that women were prescribed.[103] In 1963, a white female volunteer named Joni Rabiniwitz submitted a report to the office in which she addressed the position of women, stating that "the attitude around here toward keeping the house neat (as well as the general attitude toward the inferiority and "proper place" of women) is disgusting and also terribly depressing. I never saw a cooperative enterprize that was less

[99] Interview with Judy Richardson by Jean Wiley, February 2007.
[100] Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 114-115.
[101] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 86.
[102] Albert, *The Sixties Papers*, 114-116.
[103] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 164.

cooperative".[104] With this report, she wanted to prove to the leaders of SNCC that women were only given traditional female responsibilities. Similarly, another unknown female SNCC volunteer reported that "We didn't come down here to work as maid this summer, we came down to work in the field of civil rights".[105] Many women ran into these problems and tried to get the attention of the office with papers. By going to the leading members, they hoped that these issues would be addressed but often this was not the case.[106]

Another problem that white women in particular faced in the field was that they were often not allowed to leave the freedom houses. This was because it was dangerous for black men to walk on the streets with white women.[107] To protect these men, the white women had to stay inside and could not fully participate. SNCC member Holseart was one of the women who faced this problem. She also tried to perform as many of her duties as possible from the freedom houses but was obliged to stay inside as much as possible.[108] However, these white women accepted these limitations and did not try to go against these demands. Women were often given fewer tasks than men in the field and were unevenly distributed. The fact that women were given fewer of these tasks shows the more limited involvement of women compared to males. This is partly because white women also participated, and this was threatening to the white community, as historian McAdam emphasises, which in turn also threatened black men.[109] For this reason, it was decided within SNCC that it would be safer for the projects to place all women in less visible positions.[110] The men left every day and

[104] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 77.
[105] Ibid, 78.
[106] Urban, "The Women of SNCC", 187.
[107] Holseart, "Resistance U", 181-195.
[108] Ibid.
[109] R. M Fernandez and Doug McAdam, "Social Networks and Social Movements: Multiorganizational Fields and Recruitment to Mississippi Freedom Summer." *Sociological Forum (Randolph, N.J.) 3, no. 3* (1988): 357-382.
[110] Fernandez, "Social Networks and Social Movements," 357-382.

went to work, while the women stayed home around the freedom houses and looked after the other members.[111]

Sexual experiences

During the Freedom Summer, many female volunteers signed up to help. This included many white women.[112] The memories of these projects were positive, as McAdam describes in his research, but other stories show that there was much inequality between male and female members. The two main forms of discrimination faced by female volunteers were in the area of job assignment and sexual policies. On the sexual front, women were exposed to harassment and a clear double standard regarding sexual behaviour. A summer volunteer described her experience as: "It really was your classic 'damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't situation. If you didn't [have sex], you could count on being harassed. If you did, you ran the risk of being written off as a 'bad girl' and tossed off the project. This didn't happen to the guys".[113]

Some women were even asked to leave the project because they displayed behaviour that was not acceptable according to SNCC guidelines. One of the female volunteers named Ronald de Sousa wrote in her diary "some people found it very hard to conform to the necessary discipline… in particular, one girl was sent home last weekend after various incidents involving breaches of discipline in the field of social and public etiquette".[114] McAdam argues in his research that it is difficult to understand how a woman could break social rules without the help of a man. Therefore, there is no clear explanation as to why they were asked to leave the project. In addition, McAdam also found no evidence stating that a

[111] McAdam, "Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience", 1226.
[112] Rothschild, "White Women Volunteers in the Freedom Summers," 483-486.
[113] McAdam, "Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience", 1225.
[114] Ibid.

man was ever removed from the projects.[115] This again shows that women, if they misrepresented themselves in the eyes of men, were simply sent away, unlike men who could do anything they wanted and would never be removed from SNCC activities.

Miriam Cohen Glickman, one of the first white women to do fieldwork for SNCC in the South, also saw that there was a double standard among SNCC members. Glickman was very active in SNCC and also helped during Freedom Summer by setting up literacy projects.[116] An interview with Glickman from 1985 shows that there was tension among the members during the summer. In her words "A lot of it was on who dated who. I remember all these black guys were dating the white volunteers, and then one of the black girls had one date one night with a white guy. And I heard that the next morning four black male SNCC staff were over at her house chewing her out".[117] Women who did not want sexual contact had to deal with Black men who were aggressively "seeking their masculinity".[118] These men were very unkind to women when they were rejected and often called white women racist. Accusations and verbal abuse were not the only problems volunteers faced. Rape of white volunteers occurred sometimes.[119] This is evident from several stories of female volunteers, whom Mary Rothschild has interviewed.[120]

Female volunteers were sometimes the scapegoats for the black-and-white hostility in SNCC projects.[121] A woman, named Donna Goodman, who worked primarily on the Congressional Challenge for SNCC in 1965 recalled: "I always dreaded Saturday nights, because we'd all meet in our apartment and drink wine and then when the black guys got a

[115] McAdam, "Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience", 1226.
[116] "Oral history interview with Miriam Cohen Glickman, 2002", Columbia Center for Oral History. Accessed April 22, 2022. https://oralhistoryportal.library.columbia.edu/document.php?id=ldpd_11603570
[117] McAdam, "Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience", 1226.
[118] Alvin Poussaint, "The Stresses of the White Female Workers in the Civil Rights Movement in the South," *American Journal of Psychiatry 123*, no. 4 (October 1966): 401-407.
[119] Rothschild, "White Women Volunteers in the Freedom Summer", 483.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Poussaint, "The Stresses of the White Female Workers in the Civil Rights Movement in the South," 402.

little drunk, they'd pour out all their hatred-racial hatred-at us".[122] She stressed that the black men of SNCC called the white women "white bitches" and regarded them with disapproval. The summer of freedom raised many issues regarding sex roles but also caused racial tension within the organisation. For a while, black and white women had shared a feminist response to the position of women in SNCC, but objectively, black and white women lacked the trust and solidarity to call each other 'sister'.[123]

For example, black women within SNCC accused black men of only wanting to be responsible for white women. Many black men wanted to form relationships with white female volunteers.[124] This caused outrage among some black women and made them begin to search for definitions of femininity that included blackness.[125] The big problem of the time, however, was that women often did not realise that they were being treated badly. This is evident from the experiences of several female volunteers during the Freedom Summer. Women lacked a contemporary feminist perspective and were therefore unable to recognise the discrimination they experienced. For example, a volunteer reported that "I didn't see it as sexism, at the time.... I don't know what I thought of it exactly at the time, but you know sexism was not something that had been made conscious to me at that time".[126]

Women had to obey the regulations and fall within the norms and values of the men, because, as McAdam points out in his research, one could be sent away. Therefore, women tried to be as polite as possible, proving that they were decent individuals. All women did this, but black women, in particular, were often seen as inferior and wild in the eyes of a white audience. White Americans had an image of the black community that was mainly

[122] Rothschild, "White Women Volunteers in the Freedom Summer", 486.
[123] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 88.
[124] Rothschild. "White Women Volunteers in the Freedom Summers," 466–95.
[125] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 88-89.
[126] McAdam, "Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience", 1228.

characterised as immoral, childish and unworthy.[127] For this reason, black women tried to present themselves to the public in the best possible way. This is called respectability politics and is a form of social control, whereby certain groups represent themselves in a certain way.[128] Respectability politics mainly aims at public behaviour and public images of marginalised groups.[129] Black people needed to adjust considerably in American society because white people's behaviour was seen as normal. Identifying a limited number of behaviours as desirable, forces black women to behave in a certain way and exclude other possible actions that might compromise the group's image.[130] Because of this, the women in SNCC tried to present themselves in the right way. If they acted differently, they were quickly seen as inferior, because they were not proper women in the eyes of men.[131]

The Waveland retreat

During the summer of 1964, many SNCC members dedicated themselves to the Mississippi Freedom Project to register black Americans as voters. This summer was a great effort for the organisation because members worked hard to achieve the goal of helping as many people as possible.[132] As Freedom Summer drew to a close, many new activists joined SNCC, and although the organisation remained predominantly black, internal issues about racial roles emerged. When the summer ended, many new members had been added to the SNCC staff. Most of the staff remained black, but several white members also joined which created internal debates in the organisation. In addition, several issues arose concerning gender roles within the organisation.[133] Everyone had a different opinion on how SNCC should be

[127] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Harvard University Press, 1994), 185-188.
[128] Margot Dazey, "Rethinking Respectability Politics." *The British Journal of Sociology 72*, no. 3 (2021): 582.
[129] Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka, *Ethnicity and Group Rights* (New York: NYU Press, 1997), 574-578.
[130] Dazey, "Rethinking Respectability Politics," 582-583.
[131] McAdam, "Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience", 1223-1226.
[132] Michael Edmonds, *Risking Everything: A Freedom Summer Reader* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2014), 48-50.
[133] Urban, "The Women of SNCC", 186-187.

organised. There were many questions about what it meant to be an SNCC activist, organiser or freedom fighter.

After the summer of 1964, the problems within SNCC could not be solved, and it was decided to call all SNCC members to a retreat. This was in Waveland where conferences were held to try and discuss the various issues. Office assistant Mary King was one of the attendees at Waveland and remembers that everyone was invited to make a position paper.[134] Forman wanted the members to be challenged to raise everything to the point of being able to solve the problems. King described it as "In SNCC's radical egalitarian tradition, we could say anything we wanted to say, write about any topic, challenge the staff to anything we wanted to challenge them to. And these position papers were gathered and mimeographed in Atlanta and sent out. There were, as I recall, 37 position papers as we convened for the staff retreat. These papers were not to be the central defining question on the agenda, but they were to inform the overall environment of the meeting".[135]

For some, the Waveland Conference meant that the democratic interracial culture that SNCC had cultivated since its inception was slowly beginning to fall apart. The circle of trust, a defining feature of SNCC, had been broken according to several members.[136] Other members were more optimistic about the future and felt that many ideas had been discussed. The biggest topic during the retreat was racial differences in the organisation. One of the papers was 'What is the importance of racial considerations among the staff'. In this paper, it was suggested, for example, that white and black members should be used according to their

[134] "King--SNCC Position Papers, Waveland, Mississippi, meeting, November 1964" Freedom Summer Digital Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Accessed April 2, 2022. https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/p15932coll2/id/24554
[135] "Civil Rights Movement Documents SNCC Conference, Waveland MS, November 1964", Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive, Accessed April 18, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/waveland.htm
[136] "SNCC's Waveland conference", Digital SNCC Gateway. Accessed April 20, 2022. https://snccdigital.org/events/snccs-waveland-conference/

roles.[137] This was because white people were more popular in the public eye, which meant that they could get more support from the people.

Women in the Movement paper

One of the papers that was especially important to the women in the organisation was submitted anonymously and was called 'Women in the Movement'. During the workshops, an anonymous statement was made that had a profound impact on SNCC and the feminist consciousness within the organisation. This paper outlined the sexist discrimination that women in SNCC faced daily during their workdays. The authors of the paper complained, for example, that despite their experience, women were often assigned clerical work and trivial tasks.[138] This was because, as historian Urban argued in his work, women were seen as inferior to men within SNCC. The men in SNCC believed that female members were less able to do their jobs, hence the need for distinction.[139] The leaders of SNCC did not realise that by discriminating against women in the group, they were no different from the whites who oppressed them.

The Position paper contained several points that the female members felt had to be changed. It stated that there was a staff committee in October in which all the members were exclusively male.[140] This was also the case during the Mississippi project, where the entire leadership group consisted of men. In addition, some women in the field were given leadership roles for the day, but this was never said to them, which meant that the women did not realise it.[141] With this paper, the women intended to express that they wanted to be told so that they could fulfil their leading roles and act as leaders. Another major point to emerge

[137] "King--SNCC Position Papers, Waveland, Mississippi, meeting, November 1964".
[138] Urban, "The women of SNCC," 187.
[139] Ibid, 186-189.
[140] "SNCC Position Paper: Women in the Movement".
[141] Ibid.

from the paper was that male organisers often gave clerical tasks to the women: "Without asking any questions, the male organizer immediately assigned the clerical work to the female organizer although both had had equal experience in organizing campaigns".[142] Finally, the woman mentioned that "A fall 1964 personnel and resources report on Mississippi projects lists the number of people on each project. The section on Laurel, however, lists not the number of persons, but three girls".[143] The authors of the paper stressed in it that the list would seem strange to some, as this issue has never been addressed before.[144] This was partly because women did not talk about these incidents, as the subject was not open for discussion.

With this paper, the women in the office and the field wanted to show that they were not satisfied with their status. The paper clearly stated that "much talent and experience are being wasted by this movement when women are not given jobs commensurate with their abilities".[145] In the eyes of the SNCC women, they were a crucial factor in the movement. They were the members in the field who looked after everyone and kept everything running all day. However, women encountered various problems, which they were no longer willing to accept. The authors of this paper wanted to use the submission to reach a discussion among the members.[146] They hoped that some women would recognise the daily discrimination within the organisation. In this way, a slow process of change could begin that would make everyone realise that women should have the same rights as men, just as black people deserve the same rights as white people.

The male leaders paid little attention to the indignation of the authors of this Position paper.[147] Although the paper was initially submitted anonymously, it later came forward that Mary King and Casey Hayden had submitted the paper. King worked in the Atlanta office and

[142] "SNCC Position Paper: Women in the Movement".
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Urban, "The women of SNCC," 187.
[147] Ibid.

Hayden started a literacy project in Mississippi at Tougaloo College to help black students. Hayden decided not to work in the field because it could be dangerous for a white woman: "Being a white woman meant that wherever I was, the Movement was visible, and where there was visibility there was a danger".[148] In 1964, she helped SNCC's staff planners plan for Freedom Summer activities. King and Hayden believed that an anonymous submission would have left open the possibility that men had participated in the drafting of the document. King explained, "If we put our names to the paper, it would have been greeted with nothing but a wall of laughter".[149] The men soon realised who had drafted the paper and it was spread among the members. The response to their proposals and ideas was not positive, and most decided to ignore it as if the problem did not exist. Most male members of the organisation did not believe that there was sexual discrimination in the workplace.[150] This reaction is also evident in the remarks of male member Stokely Carmichael. He was asked about the position of women in the movement, and his only response was "prone", showing his lack of seriousness about the issue.[151]

Overcoming the difficulties

Women tried to raise these issues to solve the problems. Black women were the first to fight for equality within SNCC. Gradually, they began to refuse this relegation to traditional sex roles. Ruby Smith Robinson was on her way to becoming one of the strongest figures in SNCC, gaining more power.[152] She made herself heard increasingly. Donna Richards, a female SNCC member, claimed back her birth name after marrying Bob Moses.[153] He was

[148] Casey Hayden, "On to Open Ground," *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 49-52.
[149] Urban, "The women of SNCC", 188.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 80-85.
[153] Ibid, 83.

one of the most respected and influential men in the organisation, and thus her taking this step made a big impression on other women.[154]

By making a clear list of issues that annoyed women and made them feel inferior, they showed their pride. Another paper called 'A Kind of Memo' was written a year later by King and Hayden that followed the discussions that were created by the Women in the Movement paper. This paper addressed issues about gender within social movements in America. It raised questions about gender inequality, and sought to establish "genuine attempts at dialogue within the movement".[155] Both papers were bottom-up organised. This meant that there had been many conversations with women from these social movements, sharing views with each other.

In the memo, they mentioned, in particular, that women "seem to be caught up in a common-law caste system that operates, sometimes subtly, forcing them to work around or outside hierarchical structures of power which may exclude them. Women seem to be placed in the same position of assumed subordination in personal situations too. It is a caste system which, at its worst, uses and exploits women".[156] King and Hayden wanted to show how women's positions in society defined their involvement in the movement. In addition, they referred in the memo to the pain of women who had to live with "deeply ingrained fears".[157] Issues that women faced had been discussed among women, but they had never been brought to the attention of men. Whether these actions of the women had helped is questionable, because from 1965 the structure of SNCC changed and a new leader took over.[158] The new leadership focused mainly on the Afro-American identity, which caused an increased divide between the different races within the group.

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[154] "A Kind of Memo from Casey Hayden, Mary King, 1965", Duke University Libraries Digital Collections, Judy Richardson Papers, Accessed April 21, 2022. https://repository.duke.edu/dc/richardsonjudy/jrpst002017
[155] "A Kind of Memo from Casey Hayden, Mary King, 1965".
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Hogan, *Many Minds*, 226-230.

In conclusion, women in SNCC faced several problems. In most cases, they were not welcome at meetings and were seen as subordinate by the men. The women in the office were called girls by men and were considered to be inferior. Women often had to do unpleasant jobs and were not allowed to lead a project. In the field, women mainly had to perform household chores and, in some cases, had to stay inside. In addition, women suffered from sexual experiences that were very unpleasant for them. Women were often harassed and treated badly by men if they did not want to cooperate. During the Waveland retreat, women tried to address these issues. The Women in the Movement paper is therefore very progressive because, for the first time, women made their voices heard clearly. The only problem with this was that men did not take it seriously and did not recognise these narratives. The fact that SNCC did not act on it demonstrates that they were not as equality-minded as they presented themselves to the public. What is unique about these stories is that in the summer of 1964 many white women volunteered. The fact that so many white women volunteered for a black organisation is very unusual and makes SNCC distinctive from other Civil Rights organisations. However, the personal stories of the women reveal that they encountered many problems but often did not complain about them because they did not consider this to be discrimination. The women of SNCC were not very visible in the public eye in the 1960s, as the next chapter will indicate, by analysing how the women of SNCC were portrayed in the mainstream media.

Chapter 3: Women portrayed in the media

In December 1963, female SNCC member Ella Baker spoke before an SNCC Conference and said "But we do this because we believe that it is necessary to change the political and social system of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and yes to change the political and social system in respect to the entire country. So that when we say we have a democratic country and when we claim that we're a nation for the people and by the people, it will truly be a people's nation and a people's government".[159] She was one of the few women who was allowed to speak in front of a large audience and made an impression on people. The fact that she was allowed to speak caused a great deal of respect among women, and Baker emphasised "I had not anticipated having anything to say, and I think it's very gracious of Jim [Forman] to not only call on me but to indicate that what SNCC is, is the result of what the people are who are in SNCC".[160] That women could be seen in the public eye was rare. The fact that there were a few women who did take on this particular responsibility was unusual, because women, especially black women, were invisible in the media at that time.

This chapter will first look at how the mainstream media portrayed black people, especially black women in the 1960s. This is important to understand because the mainstream media played a major role in making black women invisible to audiences. At this time, black people were given little to no mention in news reports. Next, the chapter will look at SNCC's view of the media. This involves analysing how they used the mainstream media in their campaign and how they wanted to present themselves to the public. Finally, two women within SNCC, named Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer, are explored. The focus is mainly on these two field workers because not many women from SNCC spoke in front of a large

[159] "Address at SNCC Conference", Ella Baker, December 1963. State University of Women's Political Communication. Accessed May 25, 2022. https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2019/12/19/address-at-sncc-conference-dec-1963/
[160] "Address at SNCC Conference,".

audience. Finally, a study that questioned people about whom they considered significant in the Civil Rights Movement is analysed to see to what extent certain individuals could reach the public. From this information, the chapter will conclude that there were almost no women present in the mainstream media.

Media in the 1960s

Even though women outnumbered men in SNCC, they were allowed few, if any, leadership positions and faced sexist problems. These problems have been discussed in chapter two and prevented many women from holding executive positions or speaking publicly in front of large audiences. In 1963 the March on Washington took place, and this was a demonstration to stand up for the rights of African-American citizens. The programme of speakers at the March shows that no woman got to speak in front of a large audience.[161] The only women listed are Eva Jessye and Mahalia Jackson.[162] Jessye joined because she was the leader of the choir, and Jackson was only on the list because she was a well-known singer who could attract publicity with her participation in the March.

Black women were almost invisible in the mainstream media during the Civil Rights Movement and the media played a large role in this process. It is worth noting that this was mainly in the mainstream media. The mainstream press devoted little or no coverage to the problems of African-Americans until the 1950s.[163] Coverage of black citizens in the 1960s focused on conflict and made extensive use of racial stereotypes. In contrast, black people were often seen in media intended for black audiences.[164] Black news media is operated by

[161] "Official Program for the March on Washington", August 28 1963, National Archives Catalog, Accessed May 24, 2022. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5753043
[162] "Official Program for the March on Washington".
[163] C. Martindale, *The White press and Black America* (New York: Greenwood, 1986).
[164] Timothy Vercellotti and Paul R. Brewer. ""To Plead Our Own Cause": Public Opinion Toward Black and Mainstream News Media Among African Americans." *Journal of Black Studies 37*, no. 2 (2006): 236-240.

African-Americans. The audiences of these media are predominantly black individuals, and the role of the black media is to advocate for the black community.[165]

Historian S Isaacs researched the portrayal of African Americans in TV shows and found that "49% of the characters had not graduated from school" and "47% were perceived as poor".[166] This was a stereotype of black people that continued to be used many years later. According to Isaacs, in the 60s black people were still portrayed in a bad way to amuse white viewers.[167] Black people were barely present in the media, and it is therefore arguable that black women were almost completely absent. Martha Lott has also studied this invisibility of black women in the mainstream media and argues these women, who were active in the Civil Rights Movement, were often not asked questions by white politicians.[168] The leaders of civil rights movements were mainly black men and often received media attention. This created a lack of acknowledgement for Afro-American women.[169]

African-American women were mostly ignored in the mainstream media because the news tended to follow male leaders. This is also what Lott emphasises in her work. She uses the example of the photograph of the arrest of Ethel Witherspoon, a female civil rights activist, in Birmingham. According to Lott, this is a poorly documented Civil Rights action by African-American women.[170] Women were only published in the media in the 1960s if it suited the obedience that was present in society.[171] This black woman did not fit in and therefore could not be found in any white newspaper on the front page. On the other hand, this

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[165] Vercellotti, ""To Plead Our Own Cause," 232-324.
[166] S. T. Isaacs, *Portrayal of African Americans in the media: An examination of law and order* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2010).
[167] Isaacs, *Portrayal of African Americans in the media.*
[168] Martha Lott, "The Relationship Between the 'Invisibility' of African American Women in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and Their Portrayal in Modern Film." *Journal of Black Studies 48*, no. 4 (2017): 341.
[169] K. Springer, *Still lifting, still climbing: Contemporary African American women's activism* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1999), 243.
[170] Lott, "The Relationship Between the 'Invisibility' of African American Women in the American Civil Rights Movement," 341.
[171] M. A Berger, *Seeing through race: A reinterpretation of civil rights photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 119.

photo was used by some black newspapers, because they wanted to show that women were also fighting for the rights of blacks in the country. It is therefore important to recognise that black people had little to contribute to the mainstream media and that black women had almost no role to play. They were mostly invisible.

SNCC and the media

The mainstream media often misrepresented black people and several Civil Rights organisations did not know how to deal with this. SNCC members were often critical of the media but were aware of the positive influence it could have. For this reason, SNCC began to appreciate the mainstream media more, as it was able to contribute greatly to favourable publicity.[172] It was also very important for SNCC to use the media because it allowed them to become popular.[173] This is also why they used the aspect of no violence which was very important for SNCC. If the members showed no violence, SNCC would be portrayed more positively in the mainstream media, which would give the organisation more publicity. SNCC's first public relations effort was coordinated by female member Jane Stembridge. She was a white woman who was committed to SNCC from the beginning. In 1960, she helped SNCC produce *The Student Voice* and organised SNCC conferences.[174] However, Stembridge did not appear in the media herself, because she worked behind the scenes. Her tasks included keeping the newsletter up to date, transcribing information from the media and "trying to get people in touch with each other".[175] During an interview in 1966, Stembridge confirmed that

[172] Mark Joseph Walmsley, "Tell It Like It Isn't: SNCC and the Media, 1960–1965." *Journal of American Studies 48*, no. 1 (2014): 293.
[173] Walmsley, "Tell It Like It Isn't: SNCC and the Media, 1960–1965." 293.
[174] "SNCC Staff: Jane Stembridge", Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Legacy Project. Accessed May 25, 2022. https://snccdigital.org/people/jane-stembridge/
[175] "Oral History/Interview Jane Stembridge", Interviewed by Emily Stoper 1966 or 1967. Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive. Accessed May 25, 2022. https://www.crmvet.org/nars/stembrid.htm

she had to keep track of many tasks but "I did not speak for SNCC like Forman as Executive Secretary did".[176]

SNCC set up a special department to focus on communicating with the public. This department was headed by Bond and included a photography department, SNCC Photo.[177] From the beginning, the Communications department of SNCC tried hard to counter racism in the media. The mainstream media mainly focused on white, northern audiences, and SNCC wanted to conform to this. According to Mary King, this was a fundamental obstacle because the activities of the black community were not considered newsworthy.[178] She argues in later interviews that the mainstream media was assumed to be firmly on the side of the Movement. They viewed SNCC as an authority and ensured that many reporters engaged with its members. However, this is a false assumption according to King, because in fact reports on the Southern Civil Rights Movement rarely reached the press.[179]

Several national wire services, such as *The Associated Press* (AP) and *United Press International* (UPI), had no reporters in most areas where the Civil Rights Movement had its strongest presence.[180] Most news agencies were dependent on the reports of local newspapers, which more often tended to cover the events. The national news agencies could then copy these reports. In addition, white southern reporters were often hostile to SNCC members, as King acknowledges because they would often not publish the attacks that SNCC members faced as newsworthy or forward them to other newspapers.[181] Because the mainstream media was so focused on a white world, it was very difficult for SNCC to get through.

[176] "Oral History/Interview Jane Stembridge".
[177] Leigh Raiford, "'Come Let Us Build a New World Together': SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Quarterly, 59* (2007), 1129–1157.
[178] King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement*.
[179] King, "Getting Out the News," 335.
[180] Ibid, 334-337.
[181] Ibid.

This problem was not unique to SNCC. The mainstream media reframed many times the messages of social organisations, as Mark Joseph Walmsley mentions, and this happened to all organisations trying to reach society at large.[182] However, SNCC would not have been popular without the involvement of the media. SNCC needed the news to spread its information in the community and attract more people to the organisation. John Lewis has also said that "without the media, the Civil Rights Movement would have been like a bird without wings".[183] SNCC tried to use the mainstream media as much as possible by positively representing themselves.

The local press often refused to print stories from SNCC and usually assigned only one regular reporter to the southern states in the 1960s.[184] Bond, therefore, ensured that the SNCC Communications department would be a source of information for journalists. SNCC members were willing to do this for the mainstream media because it would make them more popular. For example, during the summer of 1964, the communications department instructed the volunteers to send journalistic requests forward to the project leaders to make it clear within the organisation what would or would not reach the press.[185] The mainstream media concentrated on occurrences in the South involving white volunteers and often mentioned white participants. Walmsley gives an example in his article that dominant racial attitudes also were involved in mainstream media reporting. For example, in a *New York Times* article, three white participants were mentioned by name who were actively fighting for civil rights, while the other black participants were referred to as 'niggers'.[186] Deaths or attacks on black people were hardly mentioned in the news because the lives of black people were inferior to those of white citizens.

[182] Walmsley, "Tell It Like It Isn't: SNCC and the Media, 1960–1965." 293.
[183] Charlotte Grimes, "Civil Rights and the Press," *Journalism Studies*, 6 (2005), 118.
[184] Walmsley, "Tell It Like It Isn't: SNCC and the Media, 1960–1965." 299.
[185] Ibid, 300.
[186] Ibid.

A difficult issue that SNCC had to face was that they had to use their white volunteers in their media campaigns. White audiences were more likely to be attracted to these messages. McAdam argues, that SNCC was in a difficult position because they had to use the racism they opposed to gain popularity in the mainstream media.[187] By using white volunteers, SNCC was able to maintain its publicity because it could reach a larger audience. In addition, the two women who worked in the Communications department, Zellner and King, were white. Zellner ensured, in particular, that SNCC was in touch with various mainstream media channels and that she was able to tell the stories at the same time.[188] The communications section of the SNCC repeatedly asked employees to submit profiles and sent reports when a volunteer was engaged in any newsworthy activities.[189]

SNCC women in front of the masses

The first chapter revealed that there were women who liked to work behind the scenes because it gave them considerable independence. In addition, they preferred to work on the ground, as this was where they were able to do their business. The SNCC women worked among the crowd and were not known to the mainstream media. Men mainly held leadership positions and took on the role of spokespersons. For example, John Lewis gave a speech at the 1963 March on Washington in which he spoke to President Kennedy: “Listen, Mr Kennedy, the black masses are on the march for jobs and for freedom, and we must say to the politicians that there won't be a 'cooling-off period”.[190] No other SNCC member spoke at this event and certainly not any women. Well-known names who appeared in the media or in front of the press were mainly men because they felt more at home here. For many women, it was

[187] Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 103
[188] Zellner, "My Real Vocation", 311-326.
[189] Walmsley, “Tell It Like It Isn't: SNCC and the Media, 1960–1965.” 303.
[190] “Speech at the March on Washington”, John Lewis, 28 August 1963. Voices of Democracy, The U.S Oratory Project. Accessed May 28, 2022. https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/lewis-speech-at-the-march-on-washington-speech-text/

also difficult to appear in front of the press because it made them an easy target and they did not want to endanger SNCC.[191]

Some well-known SNCC women are Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer and Diane Nash. It is crucial to examine these women because it indicates that SNCC women were indeed known among the crowd. Ella Baker dedicated her life to the fight for racial equality and had been active in SNCC since its inception.[192] She knew how people should listen to her and was therefore appreciated by men. Baker made several speeches, including one at the Hattiesburg Freedom Rally in January 1964, in which she proclaimed, "We aren't free until within us we have that deep sense of freedom from a lot of things that we don't even mention in these meetings".[193] Baker then gave several speeches and enjoyed addressing the SNCC audience. However, this did not mean that she had much of a media presence. Among the black members of SNCC, she was very well known, but the white audience in the north did not know her. This was because the mainstream media did not give the floor to black women, but also because Baker was more concerned with her role within SNCC and not how she was perceived by a wider audience.[194]

Fannie Lou Hamer is a female activist for SNCC who has been regarded by many as a perfect speaker. She was very involved with the Freedom Summer of 1964 but helped with many other activities that SNCC organised.[195] Hamer became an important force within SNCC and also became known among the members. Like Baker, she gave several speeches to the members but was not present in the mainstream media. Hamer believed that the fight for

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[191] Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement From 1830 to 1970* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 161.
[192] Charles Payne, "Ella Baker and Models of Social Change." *Signs 14.4* (1989): 885-899. 885
[193] "Address at the Hattiesburg Freedom Day Rally", Ella Baker, 21 Januari 1964. Voices of Democracy, The U.S Oratory Project. Accessed May 28, 2022. https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/ella-baker-freedom-day-rally-speech-text/
[194] Ellen Cantarow and Susan O'Malley, *Moving the mountain: Women working for social change* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Pres, 1980), 69-72.
[195] Monica M. White, "A Pig and a Garden": Fannie Lou Hamer and the Freedom Farms Cooperative." *Food and Foodways 25.1* (2017): 21-22.

racial equality was more important than gender equality, as she said that "the goal was to work together with black men".[196] Her speeches had different lessons and they made a great impression on different people. For example, Eleanor Homes Norton described that Hamer said everything with extraordinary brilliance".[197] Hamer was not afraid to step into the spotlight and was eager to express her opinion.

One of Hamer's key moments was during the 1964 Democratic National Convention, where she gave a testimony about being sexually harassed.[198] She did this in front of a large audience and this convention was also broadcast live on TV. However, her statement was not broadcast live on TV. Her statement was so impressive that President Johnson made an impromptu press conference on tv, panicking to get the attention of the American citizens from Hamer's testimony to him. This was a damaging choice for the President, as the testimony still made the news.[199] In the days that followed, Hamer's story was repeated several times and thousands of people knew who she was. She was constantly present on TV in the days that followed as a black woman, which was very unique at this time.

However, other women of SNCC were almost unknown in the mainstream media and were not known to the public. This was because men in the organisation did not think women were suitable for this and the mainstream media rarely gave the floor to women, especially not to black women. Diane Nash is a female member of SNCC who was very active and was seen as a role model by several members. Nash arranged the Freedom Rides and put in all the hard work, but Martin Luther King was given the credit in the mainstream media for these activities.[200] Nash was not named and therefore did not appear much to the press. It is

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[196] Janice D Hamlet, "Fannie Lou Hamer: The Unquenchable Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement." *Journal of Black Studies 26.5* (1996): 569-571.
[197] Hamlet, "Fannie Lou Hamer". 566-567
[198] "Testimony Before the Credentials Committee, Democratic National Convention" Fannie Lou Hamer, Atlantic City, New Jersey - August 22, 1964. American Public Media. Accessed June 2, 2022. https://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/sayitplain/flhamer.html
[199] "Fannie Lou Hamer's Powerful Testimony", Freedom Summer, American Experience PBS, 24 June 24, 2014. YouTube. Accessed June 2, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07PwNVCZCcY
[200] Olson, *Freedom's Daughters*, 188-190.

therefore difficult to conclude how women were portrayed in the mainstream media, as they were almost non-existent. There are almost no news reports from this time that show black women being given the floor in the mainstream media.

Nash is seen as one of the leaders of SNCC because she organised many activities on the ground. Even though she felt at home among SNCC members, she was uncomfortable with public recognition. Men were seen as more capable of taking on leadership positions as has been stated in chapters one and two, but Nash wanted to give black men the stage in the mainstream media. She was content to let men who wanted to deal with the press handle the task more effectively.[201] In addition, Nash was described by various media sources as a beautiful woman because she had "delicate beauty".[202] That an activist's beauty was mentioned only distracts attention from her other strengths. Mentioning her beauty only indicates that she is a beautiful woman but not what her input to the organisation was. By focusing on gender constructs such as beauty, the press subordinated Nash to the men around her.[203] Nash is an example of how the mainstream media portrayed some women, and that is only by looking at their qualities based on gender and not on what they were committed to.

In her 1993 article, Bernice McNair Barnett interviewed thirty-six activists from the Civil Rights Movement to ask questions about who they thought were important activists. She asked, "Whom do you consider to be the ten most important individual leaders of the civil rights movement from 1955 to 1968?".[204] She made a separate schedule for the most well-known female activists. Most known meant which women activists were heard from most often, through news reports or other media channels. People all over the country could only have heard of these women through the mainstream media. This list shows that Rosa Parks is

[201] Olson, *Freedom's Daughters*, 161.
[202] Ibid, 148.
[203] Lindal Buchanan, *Rhetorics of Motherhood* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 72-76.
[204] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement" 171-173.

the best-known woman because her activism made the news.[205] However, she is only in the seventh place on the total list, which indicates that women were rarely or not mentioned at all in the mainstream media.

At number nine is Ella Baker, she was named by four respondents.[206] At number eleven is Diane Nash with two mentions, and at number twelve is Fannie Lou Hamer with only one acknowledgement from a respondent. These are the only women who were part of SNCC and were named on this list. In addition, they were only mentioned by less than four of the thirty-six respondents, indicating that these women were not known to the public because their value was not seen as the most significant.[207] This is unfair to Nash, for example, as she did much for the Freedom Rides along with Martin Luther King. However, he is known for his activities, and she is not mentioned anywhere. It is therefore clear that Martin Luther King is at the top of the list, indicating that male leaders were seen as most important in the eyes of the public.

SNCC initially did not know how to deal with the mainstream media and how it should be approached. Women were hardly mentioned at all during this time, and it was especially rare for black women to be addressed. Attacks on black people were rarely mentioned in the news. With its Communications department, SNCC tried to show its good image to the general public, but this was difficult because the mainstream media did not pick up on many of its members. Because black citizens were not newsworthy, the male black leaders within SNCC were the spokespersons, because black women were not highlighted in the news. Therefore, when someone spoke for SNCC, it was usually a man. The only women who did speak to a larger audience were Baker and Hamer.

[205] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement" 171.
[206] Ibid, 171-173.
[207] Ibid.

They were seen as examples by many SNCC members and made an impression on other audiences. Hamer has been on live TV and has inspired many people. The way these women spoke to the audience made a big impression. These women were perceived with great recognition and were respected within SNCC. However, almost no other women made it into the media, as Nash pointed out because they did not feel at home in front of cameras. This was a task they preferred to leave to the men because they considered themselves unsuitable for it. Thus, the SNCC members who were observed by a larger audience were mainly men, with a few exceptions. Men were seen as more valuable by the mainstream media, which meant that the women within SNCC were not very well known in the public eye.

Conclusion

SNCC was an important organisation that was active during the Civil Rights Movement. Today, the organisation is known throughout America and its legacy is visible. SNCC had many female members, which made the organisation more accessible to everyone since women were usually subordinate to men during this period. For women, this was a great opportunity and in general, they felt valued. This research investigated the positions of women within SNCC and how this differed from the positions of men in the organisation. For this reason, the study first explored in depth the different positions of women within SNCC and the tasks they had to fulfil in comparison to men. Secondly, the problems that women encountered and how this affected their work as opposed to men were examined. In addition, it was studied how the women of SNCC were presented in the mainstream media in contrast to the men of this organisation. This research suggests that the women within SNCC became subordinate to men because they were given different positions. Women were seen as inferior to men and faced several problems. Several women were discriminated against and not displayed in the public eye because men were the face of SNCC.

The first chapter showed that women did hold diverse positions in the office and on the ground. The document "Brief Job Descriptions of Personnel in Atlanta Office" showed that men held the leading positions in the organisation, both in the office and in the field. The leading faces in the period 1960-1965 were mainly men and the executive director had always been a man. The few women who worked in the office occupied administrative positions and were seen rather as secretaries. Most women generally could not rise within the ranks of SNCC and were excluded from several meetings. Most women preferred to work in the field because here they could be independent and provide help to the people who needed it. But they did not fulfil leading tasks, unlike the male members who were often the familiar faces of the organisation. The tasks of the women in the office and the field were very different as the

women in the office were more concerned with administrative tasks and the women in the field came in personal contact with the people.

Chapter two showed that the women in SNCC encountered various problems. These were general problems such as being given unpleasant tasks, but they also had to deal with sexual problems. Some men of SNCC especially abused the female volunteers during the 1964 Freedom Summer and perceived this as normal. White women faced the problem of not being alone on the streets with a black man, as this would be detrimental to the black men of SNCC. Black women, on the other hand, faced the problem that they were female as well as black. As a result, they were seen as inferior by the white society, because the black race was seen as inferior, and women were also beneath men. It is important to note that the women of SNCC tried to overcome their problems by submitting a position paper to the SNCC chairman. In this research, they mentioned their problems and showed the leadership that women were discriminated against within SNCC based on their gender. The men in the organisation did not consider the document significant and paid little attention to it. Therefore, the women did not benefit from it, but they did try to stand up for themselves and that was progressive for this era. The fact that SNCC did not act on it demonstrates that they were not as equality-minded as they presented themselves to the public.

In the mainstream media, the women of SNCC were almost unknown. As chapter three revealed, most women did not mind this either, because they considered media attention as a task for men. In addition, the mainstream media during this period did not focus on black people, especially not black women. Women, in general, were not featured prominently in the media in the 1960s. SNCC did need the media to promote its lining of the white society. Therefore, in the summer of 1964, they tried to highlight white volunteers as they were more attractive to a white audience. The SNCC members who were observed by a larger audience were mainly men, with a few exceptions. Women were less often put in the spotlight because

men were seen as more valuable by the media, which meant that the women within SNCC were not very well known in the public eye.

It is not surprising, to my understanding, that women felt very valued within SNCC and did not realise much of the gender discrimination they faced. In their eyes, SNCC was a unique opportunity, and for this reason, black women, in particular, were involved in the field to reach a large audience. Black women had nothing to lose because they were already seen as inferior by society, and they wanted to fight for their rights. The fact that so many women, including white women, were active at SNCC headquarters proves that the organisation was progressive, as these were not generally tasks for women. The number of white women who were active in SNCC as well as their appreciation by the other members reveals the uniqueness of the organisation during this period. It is very unusual for a black organisation to have white members because black people were discriminated against by white people. SNCC wanted to show that they were equal to white people and therefore allowed white women to work for them. I consider the possibility of black and white women working side by side to be very progressive in this period. Unfortunately, all the records of this research indicate that women were indeed in the majority of cases subordinated to the men within SNCC based on their gender. SNCC was not as progressive as it was made out to be, but the number of women in the organisation proves that the organisation was out to change society.

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