**[music]**

**Intro:** Welcome to the Let’s Talk Government Podcast that is provided for you by the Department of Government at Minnesota State University, Mankato located in Minnesota in the United States. I am your host Dr. Pat Nelson the chairperson of the Government Department. I want to thank you for joining us as we explore different topics about government. Some may be surprising to you and some may not, so please enjoy.

**Dr. Nelson:** Welcome to episode two of Let’s Talk Government Podcast. Today we're going to talk about protests, riots, and outlast citizenship. I am joined by Dr. Amelia Pridemore, from the Minnesota State University Mankato political science program and her political science 271 state and local government class. We're doing this podcast in a little bit different format, and it will include participation from the class if they have questions or feel appropriate. I'm holding this conversation with Dr. Pridemore in my capacity as a professor in our law enforcement program. And, also, based on my experience as a police officer and Sergeant for 17 years in Minneapolis, MN. Dr. Amelia Pridemore is in her second year as an assistant professor of political science at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She has served as a journalist before pursuing her PhD, and she studies public administration and outlaw citizenship as part of her research. So, thank you for joining me today. So, Dr. Pridemore Amelia, what is outlast citizenship?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Outlaw citizenship is basically non-traditional citizen participation such as protests and online organizing, and versus more traditional citizen participation like voting or speaking at a government organized public hearing. Some of the key points about it is that it's often done by those who go unheard for real or perceived reasons in the social and political dialogue. And it's one of the key points I always tell people when it comes to outlaw citizenship is you should have seen it coming. What happens is outlaw citizenship is never spontaneous. It's rather, it's a building and building and building of a lot of longtime grievances, and basically what happens is, there's generally a major event such as a police shooting. That basically triggers a reaction such as a protest. Sometimes they're violent sometimes they're not, but nonetheless the big key point is you should have seen it coming. Don't be shocked when things build and build and build and you know it's building and then there's a reaction and a very strong one quite often.

**Dr. Nelson:** So, we see that there are protests, and we see that that obviously the part about citizenship. So how is those participating in outlaw systems citizenship different than what we know is an anarchist? You know.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** it's actually a lot of times with if you're talking about say an anarchist, a lot of what they're doing is outlaw citizenship too. Likewise, somebody having a calm, peaceful, legally recognized, maybe even permitted protest on a sidewalk where somebody is just holding a sign, that's outlaw citizenship too. It has so many different dimensions in terms of violence or lack thereof legality and the lack thereof. And one another key point is overall social acceptance or the lack thereof. And none of those fit into a perfect box. There's a lot that about law citizenship activities that are considered, that are definitely illegal but are nonviolent. There are some who engage in say property damage, and they are considered heroes even for something violent case in point the Stonewall riots which was considered the precursor to the LGBT rights movement. Sometimes, also, something legal and nonviolent is considered socially reprehensible. Big example of that is Westboro Baptist Church, and some of the protests they have done at for say soldiers killed in the Iraq war, or hate crime victims, or others who were in very tragic high profile deaths. Case in point, in my home state of West Virginia they came to protest a memorial for miners killed in the sago mine disaster holding up signs saying, “Miners in hell.” That was illegal protest. It was nonviolent as in physically nonviolent, but nonetheless it was considered highly reprehensible.

**Dr. Nelson:**  And actually, those two examples are really good because they kind of also flipped to the question of why we allow that type of protesting. The Westboro church is notorious for holding up really derogatory and vicious signs, hateful signs. Such as standing outside of veteran’s funerals saying, “he deserved to die”, or “she deserved to die for protecting your country” and law enforcement will get the question of why you let that happen. And this is where we get into our constitution, right. We have the right for freedom of speech. We have the right for a lawful public assembly. And the framers of our constitution were very deliberate to not identify what was freedom of speech, or what kind of speech was protected. So, pretty much everything is protected unless it's going to cause a panic or injury. That's why you can't yell the fire in the movie theater, but otherwise even our Supreme Court has been wide open on that. So, even though you look at those signs and you listen to the chance that like happened with Westboro and other ones, law enforcement can't stop it because then we would be violating their constitutional rights. Now I know the argument comes up or what about the constitutional rights of the victims’ families? Unfortunately, there's nothing in our constitution that protects you from hearing things you don't want to hear. So, that's very hard, right. So that's good point though about their sometimes people that are doing our outlaw citizenship could be anarchist, right. Does everybody that participates in outlaw citizenship have some sort of ideology or social idea that they're trying to promote?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Technically speaking as outlaw citizenship is defined, if somebody is actually engaging, let's just say there's a difference between visibly engaging a lot of times versus actually being an outlaw citizenship. If a person is coming to say a protest whether that whether they're engaging in holding a sign or setting things on fire, but they're doing so in the name of the cause that they're trying to promote, and one thing I also want to note about at last citizenship that I want to make sure to mention one key difference between outlaw citizenship in terms of citizen participation as a whole. One of the goals is to not work with government but rather to work against government to try to end policies that they believe is unjust. So, if you're actually participating in the name of doing that, right, then that's one thing. But if you're showing up there to either because you think that burning things are fun, you know, it's the perfect cover for first Amendment rights. Or, likewise, and this has happened particularly in Kenosha, Portland. Some have shown up to be an outlaw citizen against the outlaw’s citizenship with these counter protests. There's also been accusations that some who have participated in these protests and done violent acts have done so just to make the others look bad. So, in my view, the specially the ones who just show up because they think it's fun to vandalize, or they're doing this to undermine the image of the outlaws’ citizens. It is in my view, that no - they're not engaging in outlaw citizenship. There just got some trouble.

**Dr. Nelson:** The video on the media of the people that are breaking in the front door of the target and like leaving with shopping carts full of goods. They're really not participating in outlast citizenship there. They're looting, right?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Well, it actually looting has some political roots as well. So, there was an article I was reading about riots, and how even though riots which it can include activities such as looting do have a political purpose as well. What happens a lot of times with something that really goes out of control like riots. When it comes to something like riots, it may just look totally disorganized people just running around, breaking things. The thing is a lot of times what happens, remember it's a lot of historically disenfranchised groups who participate in such a lot of times their problems are so deep, and longstanding, and complex. So, a lot of times those who participate really don't even know where to start, and a lot of times two when it comes to looting yes somebody might be wanting a big screen TV. You know, kind of like the people who think it's fun to burn things, right. But a lot of times looting is seen as a political purpose because, “I don't have anything. I've been constantly deprived no matter how hard I work. You know what, I'm going to take from the rich.” Kind of like a Robin Hood point of view. Is it necessarily, right? No. But, there's a reason behind it. But again, it takes new ones. So many ways it takes new ones. We have a question here.

**Dr. Nelson:** So the question is when anarchism be considered a political ideology? That's a good question here. I just want to read the rest of the comments because we'll be able to. So, I would first say as Dr. Pridemore reading the rest of the comment there. It really depends on your definition of anarchists, and what you're looking at their involvement at the time. When we look at terrorism and political violence, there's usually some sort of social ideology, social change, or political change you want to have occur with your actions. And, if your anarchist, if they come in and they were going to be destroying property because that is how they want to get their point across an they have that ideology, you're right. I think they do fall into that political ideology, and I'm going to let Dr. Pridemore answer in a second. But, when you run into anarchists that are there just because they say that they can break property, and they don't share any ideology with anybody, that's where I think we get out of bounds on a little bit. So, what do you think Amelia?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Well, kind of like what Liza said here. You know, when it comes to his comment here, civil unrest is the only real powerful tool that a citizen has to pressure the state. A lot of times when it comes to people who engage in outlaw citizenship, the reason why they may break the windows out in target, and totally trashed the place, and loot. Maybe, that “I've tried getting their attention. I've tried getting the government's attention over and over and over again. I've held up a sign didn't work I broke out a window. That didn't work. OK, well, I'm really going to have to anti now.” And that's when you oftentimes run into, you know, burning down buildings, or ,you know, beating up somebody in the streets. Particularly when you do some serious property damage or something particularly destructive because a lot of times participants in outlaws citizenship believe that that's the only way, they're going to get attention. And maybe they're right in doing so. Maybe that is the only way they're going to get attention. So, well, “I'm going to be heard. This is what I got to do.”

**De. Nelson:** You know, from the law enforcement perspective, and I'm not talking about riots or protests that come out of an incident. I'm talking this frame way is like a planned event like the Republican National Convention, the Democratic National Convention, the WTO, the World Trade Organization meetings that they have. That law enforcement prepares for those because of the anarchists. You prepare for your protest, your peaceful demonstrations, you know that's going to happen and that's fine we do that to make sure people are safe. We give him a spot to do that where they can't be run over by cars, right. But we also prepare for the anarchists is just why you see the 50 officers sitting in the background, waiting for something to happen because if they come, we have to be able to respond to it. I was part of the Republican National Convention. St. Paul started having, they had a peaceful protest going and enlarge that was being escorted. They got to shut down the freeway, and then suddenly down in downtown Saint Paul we had a group of six anarchists dressed completely in black, start breaking out the big store windows and then they took off running. And, so, that's probably where it's harder for law enforcement to get your head around anarchy being part of the outlaw citizenship because you expect to have a message to go along with that damage to properly, right. We never figured out what their purpose was. Were they protesting the Republicans? Were they protesting the big business in downtown Saint Paul? And nobody really understood what that was from. So, from the logical point of view is just like, “well, why did they do it?” You know, where with the George Floyd protests, and riots, and burning down the 3rd you can see that direct connection. So, I think that sometimes where confusion comes in.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** And, also to with public opinion as well, and technically this it actually was quite the difference between property destruction. So, in Portland, we're not talking about the Portland protest. This was just a few years ago. Portland had a huge problem with potholes, and the citizens as a whole believed that their government was doing absolutely nothing about it. And so, a group of anarchists got together and did unauthorized DYI pothole patching throughout the city. You know, completing their anarchist gear the whole 9 yards. And, so, some people thought, people in the media thought this was rather strange. So, they interviewed the anarchists unlike some of the anarchist who just broke out the windows, but nobody knew why. Well, these anarchists explained why they were doing this. And what happened was in Portland as well as New Orleans which has notoriously bad street repair problems. So, people started joining they thought, “well great, you know, the government is not going to fix my potholes. I'm going to do it.” So, here we had a group of anarchists once they stated their cause, even though yes what they were doing was totally illegal, people joined them. Maybe they didn't join anarchism, but they saw a common thread with what the anarchists were doing, “well, I'm going to get rid of these potholes too.”

**Dr. Nelson:** So, would you say that kind of a distinction between those that are just participating in outlaw citizenship and those who are anarchists which is a form of outlaw citizenship. If you're truly an anarchist, you don't want government, right? The philosophy behind anarchism is that “we don't want the government. The government is the problem. We should be able to kind of regulate our own behaviors and the behaviors of our neighbors should all be just on the individual or family level.” Is that fair to say?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** I would say so. Yeah. And that's actually some of the reasoning behind what some of the Portland anarchy pothole repairs were we're saying, you know, “the state the state doesn't need to get involved. We as citizens should just take care of ourselves.” And in their case, they fix the potholes.

**Dr. Nelson:** So, it's interesting. It would always be interesting to me to find out if those that are deemed or labeled anarchists, are truly in following the anarchy ideology, or if they are really kind of writing that line between anarchy and outlaw citizenship where they still want the government, but they wanted to change. That type of thing is interesting.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Yeah. It’s like I said sometimes there's just so much nuance that you have to look at with outlaw citizenship, and no one and I'm not talking about just activity whether you're, you know, like I said standing with the sign or burning things. Even when you're comparing those two actions, still yet you got to factor in intent. Who's doing it? Why they're doing it? And kind of I guess, you could say crunch the numbers. You really make a determination if, you know, what's going on here and is this justifiable legally or socially. And there's a big difference between those two like we mentioned.

**Dr. Nelson:** Yeah, like legally if you look at it. You're legally allowed to do protests because of protest by definition is literally gathering a group of people in verbally, or with signs getting your point across where it turns into a riot just by a legal definition is when you have a gathering of three or more people committing crimes. So, that's where your property damage, your arson, your thefts come in that's when it turns into a riot. So, why don't we arrest everybody in a riot? Do you know how many officers it would take? That's why when you see that there only arresting strategic people in a riot. That's because they're trying to pick out the ones that are actually causing issues. So, outlaw citizenship. Which one of our probably most historical examples of outlaw citizenship that your students here would recognize when you talk about it? What do you think?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:**  Probably in when it comes to current events is definitely the George Floyd protests. I would say probably the black lives matter protests are even before George Floyd. Probably would rank towards the top. Also, some of the women's March. Now, yes, this most of those were legally permitted, but still yet the women's March in 2017 which was literally everywhere in the world. And, even there were quote unquote sister marches even in even in cities outside the United States those were definitely part of that, and I think even with especially with the black lives matter protests, again there's so many there were if you look at all the nuances there but one thing I thought of especially again with the black lives matter protests one criticism of law enforcement has been has been the excessive force that a lot of people feel has been used on the protesters, and one thing that a student mentioned to me yesterday in the same class the use of the military, the federal troops in the removal of protesters in DC which was rather unprecedented.

**Dr. Nelson:** Yeah. Actually, that was unprecedented and actually calling in the National Guard here in Minneapolis over the summer was fairly unprecedented as well they haven't done that in a long time. There is a fuzzy line that we try not to cross in involving military in our own domestic issues here in the United States because then we're going back to the 60s and 70s where you brought in National Guard or military like at Kent State and during the civil rights marches. It has been decision-making based on public administration, and you know societies standards to not use the military. We actually with the black lives matter and the law enforcement side you're getting two different narratives there is the excessive force, you know. When do you start using excessive force? What is excessive force? Using the rubber bullets, the crowd control techniques and then on the other side, you also hear complaints like when we were having the I-94 protests in the marching along I-94. Well, why did they let them do that for so long and shut down the freeway? There is no magic formula to find the perfect balance between crowd control, and letting people express their concerns, and when you start using must less lethal techniques. We in the United States have not seen much for like Molotov cocktails and fighters during protest. But, if you look at Europe and Canada and Asia, there is a lot of fire involved so I hope we stay that way. But that's why you'll start seeing them using water cannons and other things that are used. So, in the comments here do we have something else that we?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:**  Yes. This is from (student’s name) again. Well, you know, it may seem confusing, but it's and that's the thing that we often see when it comes to public policy and when it comes to social movements. Nothing fits in a perfect box. Nothing ever does. One thing that I teach a lot for example, is social construction theory which does factor into outlaw citizenship, and basically what that means is when it comes to its groups of people in terms of their level of power, and their level of how well their regarded, how well people like them. And there's basically 4 boxes according to this theory, one is powerful and well liked, and then powerful but not well liked, and then down here well liked but not powerful, and then no power and not well liked. For example, one that's in that low category is say sex offenders. Oftentimes, flag burners, communists are put in that category too. And, then in kind of the upper echelon you have say veterans, the elderly. And what happens under this theory is that public policy and you could probably count perceived, you know, police reactions as one of those public policy outcomes. As being the result of a group's social construction, in terms of power and likeability. But yet you remember as a box is right when we had this discussion last spring in one of my classes about social construction, some people said, “well there's this group that's well liked but what about the subgroup within it.” Like for example, one group that often gets slammed a lot as lawyers. Well, are you talking about you know the Atticus Finch, you know, fight for the underdog type of lawyer, or are you talking about, you know, people like Michael Cohen for example. Who's been slammed even by his ex-employer, now right. Who are we talking about? Even after we put them in one of those four little boxes. So, a lot of times without law citizenship, you know, determining whether or not they're good or bad is once again trying to put things in a box when you really can't.

**Dr. Nelson:** And I'll just add on that. Remember, who writes our narratives? It's usually the people that are in power, and you wouldn't have outlaw citizenship if everybody share power equally. So, the outlaw citizenship is automatically going to be a negative narrative because they want change from the established power. But if you think about how that changes over time somebody who was considered an outlast citizen today in 10 years may no longer be an outlaw citizen because the ideology, they wanted is now the idea ideology that's in power. Think back to the protests against the Vietnam War, right. So, the ones that were protesting against the Vietnam War were concerned the outlaw citizens cause that's why they wanted that change. They thought it was an unjust war. If we look now who is in power in the House and Senate in the United States level or even at the state level, I can guarantee you people that were protesting the Vietnam War are now in power. They are not considered outlast citizens anymore. They still got what they wanted by doing their protests. So, it does change I mean look at our original outlaw citizens. All of the people that lived here in the United States before it was the United States were sent here because they were outlaw citizens. The Boston tea party outlaw citizenship. So, I would not inherently say it is good or bad, but it's not going to be aligned with the current power structure because otherwise why would be why would they want something to change. And this is great to the lease right into Shannon’s question. Do you think so unrest really is the only powerful tool a citizen has to pressure the state? And I actually think Amelia and I are going to agree on this because I say yes because if… well let's go what do you think Amelia?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Really to be quite honest with you when it comes to certain, you know, again historically disenfranchised groups a lot of times yes because so many systems particularly mention what's interesting you mentioned Vietnam, right? Well, in so trust in government after Vietnam absolutely plummeted. The only time it ever recovered, and this was very brief was in the direct aftermath of 911. Trust in government never recovered after Vietnam. So, what happened was particularly in the public administration field the bureaucracy there was a push for greater citizen voice in public policy making that's why you see a lot of these public hearings, regulatory comment periods. But the problem is a lot of them still yet did two things. First of all, a lot of people solid as a figurative bread and circuses, we were just going to placate you a little bit and, you know, make you feel like you had a voice, but we're just we're just going to do what we want anyway. And a lot of times too even if say that that did move the needle. A lot of these methods of being able to participate were actually making things worse in terms of social inequality because like say public hearings for example, right. If one is at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, how many people especially those who work maybe second shift can make it to that, right. Well, think of who can. A lot of times that is a wealthier class. And what happens as a result now this is providing that the bureaucracy is actually listening to them. But what happens as a result a lot of times public policy's their adopted are the preferred policies of those who were able to make it, which is generally a more powerful, wealthier, wider group. So, when you have those outcomes happening over, and over, and over again, and you literally cannot access the means to where you can move the needle to. What can you do? What else can you do? And for a lot of people that answer is civil unrest.

**Dr. Nelson:** And I would totally agree with that especially look at the civil rights movement if they had not demonstrated and protested and marched. Do we think the change that took place in the 60s would have taken place? and if so, why hasn't that change carried on? Why do we still need to have the black lives matters protest? Why do we still need to be protesting systemic racism? Why do we still need to be protesting law enforcement and community relations? Because, if we don't have those keyboards stepping up protesting making sure their voices heard, there is not going to be a change. We know that the public administration that bureaucracy voting in the United States. if you want to run for office, you have to have the money to do it great, but we shouldn't have to have this money to make changes in the society as well. So, yes Shannon. I would say yes that is how they get their voice heard, and if they don't start with the protesting, their voice isn't going to be heard. I mean you can put a video up on YouTube. That's great and there's a lot of great ideology on YouTube, but unless somebody is following you nobody is going to see that. If you are in the middle of the street in Minneapolis protesting the death of a man well the police were there, you are going to get hurt and you're going to get that airtime. So, it's kind of like a catch 22, you know. You want your ideology to come out, and you may not necessarily want to be out protesting or have things needing to damage, but if that doesn't happen then your ideology is not going to be heard. It really is a weird catch 22. And, I will say that many law enforcement officers feel the same way. Feel that they agree with the things that are happening with black lives matter. They agree that there is systemic racism. They agree that people should have civil rights. But, when they're out in there on the line you have to be apolitical. You have to be neutral. So, even if you agree with him, you can tell him that. You know, when you see pictures of people walking up and talking to him and giving him Flowers, and you might be going well, why aren't they talking back. It's because in their position they have to remain neutral. Although neutral is an important agent of the state at that point which may not be neutral, but that's a conversation for a completely different day. So, great question.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Yeah, and the same goes for, you know, you mentioned neutrality. Now, not all follow this but when you are on the ground Reporter in the media. Same deal when it comes to neutrality. You're supposed to know it's not you're not legally bound as a police officer would be. But you're supposed to be just the facts, right. And, even if you totally agree or totally disagree with what is going on two. One example, of the latter I'll give you 2 of them actually and one involved law enforcement. Before my tenure at my last employer, the KKK did a rally in the middle of one of the towns in our coverage area. And, you know, this was a huge rally involving a hate group we, you know, there were counterprotests whatnot. My employer had to cover it. One extraordinary, I wish I had it with me, one extraordinarily powerful photo that one of my colleagues took at that time was the Klansman in the background with their white hoods on, and the police officer from the West Virginia State Police who was basically in charge at the security detail standing with his arms crossed, and you could just tell on his face that he was disgusted by it. He was black. The trooper that was in charge of making sure that the Ku Klux Klan was protected because inevitably a lot of people are going to get upset at what they do. And he was he was a black police officer, and he's having to like Doctor Nelson said, you know, objectively do his job and protect this group regardless of what he thinks. And he's a black man having to put tabs to protect the KKK. We and then myself as a Reporter, now this interview was not published. So, back to Westboro again, I interviewed Fred Phelps. The founder of Westboro Baptist Church during my time there and I can tell you I was having to just pull back the whole time personally because everything he said just was absolute bile. And I just kept my cool. But I made sure to also ask him follow up questions at the same time, you know. I challenged him in my own way because I would see discrepancies all the time in what he was saying. And, so you know, I came at him with follow up. I didn't just let him spout, but in terms of my saying “no you are” I couldn't do it by the by the standards of the job. I have now, you know, there's the editorial page where you know the editorial board can absolutely rip them to pieces. But, by the standards of my job, I still had to as some reporters have done when they've covered Westboro the KKK, some of the neo Nazi rallies, outright rallies that were that we've seen in recent years a lot of that there's a common thread with law enforcement in that too.

**Dr. Nelson:** Well, we are out of time here. So, thank you so much Dr. Pridemore and the great questions from the class. I'm sure we can pick this topic up again and spend lots more time on it. I want to thank you for your time today.

**[music]**

Thank you for listening to this episode of Let's Talk Government. If you have suggestions for future episode topics or other areas, you'd like us to cover, please visit our website at link.msu.edu\let'stalkgov to submit your ideas. Join us every Tuesday for a new episode and thank you for listening.