Summary/Response – Ethos Example

In King’s letter to these people, including educated white individuals and Christian moderates, he expresses why he is the right type of leader for this movement by underlining his past experience guiding civil disobedience and his strong personal and influential connection to the church (King 356­71).

Before King arrived to Birmingham, people criticized the general way the Black community was going about protests, viewing them as unprofessional, unprepared, and poorly structured. What the majority of Americans failed to recognize was that these protests were the opposite. Under King’s guidance, the Civil Rights’ peaceful protests were sternly practiced and impressively understood by those demonstrating. In the opening of King’s letter, he specifically underlines his astounding knowledge of practicing civil disobedience in a non­violent manner to give not only verbal critics but also ignorant bystanders a better insight into what the protests embody and why King is a credibly significant leader. In the second paragraph, he underlines how “[he has] the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference” and immediately sets off a professional tone through doing so (357). Highlighting his own status in the Black­movement community, as well as listing his “opportunity to talk with [white] leaders of Birmingham’s economic community” he exhibits how he had personally cooperated with both racial groups to counter opponents’ views that King himself is a radical segregationist against white individuals (358). He emphasizes that this movement is not solely for African Americans— it is to bring about a better relationship between ethnicities in the United States. King highlights these examples of collaboration to illustrate his professionalism as well as ability and desire to negotiate with people of all racial and cultural backgrounds. While white conservatives are discouraging others against the Black movement and aiming for more segregation, King skillfully shows how he works with both groups peacefully, raising his perceived­perception as a skilled leader in hopes of getting others to see his actions as reasonably extreme. As the insightful individual he is, “[King and others] began a series of workshops on nonviolence” to teach the young protestors how to resist retaliation against white perpetrators (358). This is not King’s first act of peaceful defiance in public and he ensures to his critics that he is aware of the psychological thoughts protestors will want to express in response to physical harm from intense retaliators. By underlining this process, King elevates his status to one of immense understanding of what it means to lead a march as well as thousands of urban youth. He argues that these young men and women had been trained to do what they are doing, and by exemplifying this hopefully educated white individuals will see the value of the protests. King’s ability to articulate both his resume of experiences and his academic lense is one way in which King is socially and scholarly understanding and serves as an unquestionable representative of this movement.