FLAWED CONSUMERS: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF INTERSECTIONAL POLITICAL CONSUMERISM DURING THE CHICAGO WELFARE RIGHTS ERA

BY

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DISSEPTION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores African American political consumerism during the Chicago Welfare Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Much of the research on consumption fails to adequately engage race. This dissertation incorporates not only an analysis of race, but the interplay between class and gender as well. This project explores how an extension of Zygmunt Bauman’s ‘flawed consumer’ theory to include race, class and gender can assist in providing a more nuanced understanding of the impact of political consumerist activities on the members of Chicago Welfare Rights Organizations. The use of intersectionality is most appropriate to engage questions around the impact of multiple social locations on Bauman’s ‘flawed consumer’ theory. The framework explores how this interaction between the ‘flawed consumer’ and race, class, gender intersectionality, a concept given to us by black feminist theory, create and affect the environment of political consumerism. Instead of being ‘flawed’ and lacking agency within an environment controlled by class divisions, intersectional analysis allows us to see how interconnected social locations work together, not only to construct oppressive barriers to consumerism, but also serve to politicize consumerist activities to impact a political outcome by utilizing these interconnected social locations. Incorporating black feminist theory to extend Bauman’s theory, this intersectional approach reveals a specific dimension of political consumerism which illuminates how power is shaped, enacted and resisted.

Specifically, the study outlines the consumption theory I developed and termed intersectional political consumerism. The study discusses how intersectional political consumerism allows for a more complete understanding of how poor and working-poor African American women and men engaged and made meaning of consumer activism. Using a combination of archival research and computational analysis (i.e. topic modeling), the dissertation uses four case studies to expose the presence of intersectional political consumerism. The study investigates several Chicago Welfare Rights Organization (CWRO) affiliated groups, including a comparison of Jobs Or Income Now (JOIN) and The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), and discusses how these groups’ ideologies influenced the types of political consumerism they chose to employ in their efforts to win rights for poor people. The project identifies
specific dimensions of political consumerism, community-centered and commercial-centered, which
serve to explain the differences in strategies employed by these organizations. The dissertation also
examines TWO’s ‘Square Deal Campaign’ and the specific political actors and realms of power involved
in the campaign and consider how these actors and entities influenced how intersectional political
consumerism was demonstrated within the context of urban renewal planning. Lastly, the project explores
class aspirations expressed through political consumerism, specifically how consumerism constructs
middle-class neoliberal identities and is used by the welfare apparatus to deconstruct the poor.

The dissertation contends that a reconceptualization of consumer activism, through the
incorporation of black feminist theory, will lead to a more robust interpretation of not only intersectional
political consumerism during specific historical flashpoints but also a more nuanced understanding of
current political consumerist strategies and how these actions might lead to systemic change within
disenfranchised communities. Though the major focus of this research rests in its theoretical and
empirical contributions, the project also has methodological implications that utilize ‘big data’ to change
the landscape of sociological research, expanding sociologists’ understanding of the power of
computational analysis as well as encouraging future researchers to engage large datasets using this
technology.
In loving memory of my grandmother, Conswilla Gouch, and my uncle, Curtis Parker

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Playwright and writer Lorraine Hansberry is best known for her widely successful play “A Raisin in the Sun”, the first play written by an African American to appear on Broadway. The setting of the play is the Southside Chicago neighborhood of Woodlawn during the 1950s. Post World War II there was increased focus on citizens as consumers rather than producers, which was complicated by issues of class, specifically issues of urban poverty. The play offers a commentary on materialism and the fulfilment of dreams through material wealth. Though not a main theme of the play, A Raisin in the Sun does expose the pursuit by African Americans of white middle-class aspirations sought through consumerism. It is fitting that Hansberry’s tale, inspired by her own upbringing in Chicago, would provide an inroad with which to discuss intersectionality, consumerism and the rights of the poor in Chicago during the period of the 1950s-1970s. Just like Mama (Lena) centered whiteness by conflating a ‘better’ neighborhood with one that was predominately white, the black women and men of the Chicago welfare rights movement at times attempted to access the benefits associated with whiteness using consumerist maneuvers. The Youngers’ painful choice to either stay in their impoverished black neighborhood or move to a white one, risking discrimination and racially-motivated dangers, in some ways mirrors issues faced by Chicago welfare rights leaders, brought on by politicized consumerism as freedom of choice. What we also find though, as in Hansberry’s play, is a resistance and subversion of consumer strategies in order to redefine spaces and places.

Why Study Chicago?

In the late 1700s Chicago was founded by Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable, a Haitian fur trader who was the first of Chicago’s non-indigenous permanent settlers (Dickerson 2005). Migration of blacks to Chicago from the South began in the early 1900s. Discriminatory Jim
Crow laws, racial segregation of public facilities and schools, lynchings, and the collapse of the cotton industry all contributed to blacks’ migration North (Spear 1967; Wilkenson 2011). From the time of the first great migration of blacks from the South to the second migration the African American population in Chicago had experienced a nearly twenty-five percentage point change in population and increased to well over 10% of Chicago’s overall population (U.S. Census 2012). The promises of prosperity of a black middle class spurred the exodus from South to North (Frazier 1957) and Chicago’s Southside had become known as a major hub for blacks, or the “Black Metropolis” (Drake and Cayton et al., 1993). With such a heavy concentration of blacks located in Chicago, there developed a definitive consumer market. Yet, for many African Americans, the North turned out not to be the land of milk and honey. Because of housing segregation, much of the African American population was concentrated in the city’s Southside “black belt”. Exploitation of black residents by white landlords was commonplace. With cramped living conditions and a decline in industrial jobs came the exacerbation of social problems such as poverty and crime (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987; Wilson 1997).

Post World War II Chicago is the site of this study, which explores intersectional issues of race, class, and gender. Little research has been done on the Chicago Welfare Rights Organization (CWRO) affiliated groups, many of which had histories and community relations which predated the formal creation of the CWRO. These neighborhood organizations addressed many of the social issues which plagued black communities in Chicago. The organizations were both religious and secular and many were either formally or informally led by African American women.
Why Consumerism?

Beyond Felicia Kornbluh’s work investigating the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) and its fight to obtain consumer credit from the Sears Corporation, the overlapping of welfare rights and consumer rights has not been extensively explored. The CWRO was a regional branch of the NWRO. This dissertation highlights the importance of situating the political consumerism of those CWRO affiliated groups within the larger consumer rights movement and addressing the erasure of the political work of African American poor women within the welfare rights movement.

The project uses the period between 1950s-1970s and explores Chicago welfare rights organizations who engaged political consumerism. Specifically, the project considers how governance, industry, economic policy and economic condition influence how power was maintained and resisted within an ever increasingly consumerist society. The project considers how the study of consumerism exposes how power was negotiated and navigated depending on community organizational ideology, intersectional social locations (such as race, class and gender) and class aspirations of group members.

The CWRO and its network of organizations, all of whom existed prior to the creation of the NWRO and CWRO and whose scope extended beyond welfare rights, were chosen for this study because, in addition to being understudied, particularly related to their activism around consumerism, these organizations, during various times periods, tangentially affiliated with CWRO while independently maintaining a persistent agenda to poor people (particularly poor black people) and consumer rights. The CWRO, as a network of previously existing Chicago-based organizations, was particularly fragmented in comparison to other welfare rights organizations within NWRO. These Chicago-based groups exemplify the web of messiness
around CWRO affiliation, leadership, and power dynamics. These groups also demonstrate how the activism of those marginalized (particularly women) can be erased within a linear formal hierarchal leadership structure, yet also recovered through the study of a phenomenon equally messy and insidious which connects to every aspect of daily social life, namely consumerism. The study of consumerism is often artificially compartmentalized, just as social identities are often compartmentalized with little interrogation of the role of intersectionality and the impact of interlocking identities and oppressions on the outcomes of people’s lives. In this study, consumerism is used as the tracer, a way of tracking how interconnected social characteristics move and operate. Like the radiographic dye used in fluoroscopy, the study of consumerism provides a contrast which makes visible previously invisible aspects of intersectional life, without isolating the systems of study to the point of completely removing them from their larger context. Though these organizations are highlighted individually, they must be considered within a larger messy network which (though not directly affecting their daily activities and decisions) serve to contextualize the conditions in which they operate. This larger messy network showcases how power operates, is shaped and resisted. And this messy network weaves into and morphs alongside the various organizations’ efforts to engage consumerism as a political project. Once the dye is cast, the study reveals that consumerism is not only a means, but an end. And that what it represents for those most marginalized is just as important as what it ultimately yields.

**Theoretical Framework**

This project explores how an extension of Bauman’s ‘flawed consumer’ theory to include race, class and gender can assist in providing a more nuanced understanding of the impact of political consumerist activities on the members of CWROs. I introduce my theory of
intersectional political consumerism, which seeks to more comprehensively explain and make meaning of these consumerist activities. Within social scientific analysis, the exploration of African American consumerism has been largely ignored. The study of African American consumerism would allow social scientists to gain a deeper understanding of how marginalized groups have engaged within a consumerist society. Theorists’ major failing has been to reduce issues of consumption to social class (Bourdieu 1984) or some other one category, thus ignoring intersectionalities of social locations such as race, gender and class and their relationships with oppression and resistance.

When constructing a theoretical framework, I utilize Bauman’s theory of the ‘flawed consumer’ which suggests that the poor are viewed as flawed because of financial restraints preventing them from doing their citizenry duty of engaging the marketplace as citizens (Bauman 1998). I extend Bauman’s theory, which engages class, by incorporating race and gender and applying this lens to the participants of the Welfare Rights Era. The use of intersectionality is most appropriate to engage questions around the impact of multiple social locations on Bauman’s ‘flawed consumer’ concept. The framework explores how this interaction between the ‘flawed consumer’ and race, class, gender intersectionality, a concept given to us by black feminist theory, create and affect the environment of political consumerism. Instead of being ‘flawed’ and lacking agency within an environment controlled by class divisions, intersectional analysis allows us to see how interconnected social locations work together, not only to construct oppressive barriers to consumerism, but also serve to politicize consumerist activities to impact a political outcome by utilizing these interconnected social locations. Intersectionality helps to combat ideological hegemony because it forces the consumption discourse to consider points of view previously misunderstood, understudied, or flat-out ignored.
Intersectionality directly addresses issues of inequity and oppression while acknowledging the agency of marginalized groups.

**Research Questions**

1. How did members of the CWRO affiliated organizations make political meaning of consumer activities?
2. What were the economic and social conditions that led to targeted consumer activism and the social and economic structures that promoted and inhibited the use of consumerism as a politicized project?
3. How were the forms of political consumerism identified during the Chicago Welfare Rights Era successful (or unsuccessful) as a democratizing tool for poor people?

**Methods**

I conducted extensive archival research over the course of four months, reviewing eighteen primary source collections (See Appendix A), close readings and analysis of thousands of collection documents, hundreds of newspaper articles and audio recordings from speeches, which were later transcribed. Upon returning from the archives, I reviewed 3,273 documents which were identified as particularly relevant to the study, and scanned them into readable pdf documents and securely stored them on my computer’s hard drive. A major frustration of the archival sources was an erasure of black women within the collections. Though my research was limited to the availability and accessibility of the historical record, I recognize that my use of the historical record, including how I interpret it, engages a politic of research. As Julia Jordan-Zachary (2013) notes “Research is a political act and intersectional research is no exception. Researchers make decisions, which have political consequences, when they decide who can speak, whom they speak to, what they can speak about, what questions are asked, how we
observe behaviors, and also how we measure such behaviors.” (2013:102) In some cases I found myself discussing activities of people who were not my original intended foci of research in order to understand the social context in which black women attempted to do their advocacy work. For example, when attempting to investigate the work of two African American women (Dovie Coleman and Dovie Thurman) involved in the Uptown organization of Jobs Or Income Now (JOIN), I frequently encountered articles, including several in Jet Magazine, highlighting the work of Peggy Terry, a white woman who was a leader of JOIN. Welfare rights organization documents highlighting the activities and plans of formal male leadership rarely spoke about or offered perspectives on the women within these organizations. In some cases, women were discussed using very disparaging and sexist terms (See Chapter 3, p.66). The historical record clearly shows the presence of women within these organizations, either in pictures or in membership roll lists, but too often the only perspectives that were preserved within the historical record of these Chicago organizations were those of men. This observation speaks not only to the limitations of the historical record but also to the importance of black women preserving our own stories. With these limitations in mind, both open and focused coding (Creswell 2003) was used to identify themes within the documents and audio recordings in the collections. Generally, the unit of content was a document (within a collection focused on a specific organization). The data analysis software used to perform content analysis of documents was ATLAS.ti. Photographs and photocopies of documents were digitized using optical character recognition (OCR) software, converted into searchable documents and imported into ATLAS.ti. Words, phrases and passages within the scanned archival documents were open coded and condensed with focused codes and matched with relevant research questions.
Computational analysis, specifically topic modeling, was also used within the study. Topic modeling uses statistical computational modeling to discover abstract themes within a collection of documents. Computational analysis allowed for the surveying of over 1.5 million research articles from the JSTOR digital library to provide background and context for the study and to uncover themes within the digitized record related to intersectionality, political consumerism, and welfare rights. (An explanation of the topic modeling process used in this study as well as a detailed definition of intersectional political consumerism are provided in Chapter 2.) With the availability of ‘big data’, sociologists have new and underutilized methods at our disposal to explore sociological questions and create new knowledge on a scale previously unimaginable. Within this study, computational analysis is used specifically to assist in the recovery of experiences of poor Black women from within the digitized record. Computational analysis is used to expose the erasure of Black women’s experiences within the digitized record by uncovering a specific context in which race, class and gender are discussed in relation to consumption. In addition, computational analysis helps to uncover gaps in themes discussed by scholars related to areas such as government, consumerism, neoliberalism and welfare, which provide context in which to assist the researcher in obtaining the richest embodiments of the lives of those within these Chicago welfare organizations. (A complete listing of search term queries used to identify themes may be found in Appendix B.) I will draw the reader’s attention to themes that were present within the archival documents and also found their way into the JSTOR⁴ academic discourse as distinct topics, in some cases to lend more credibility to my research decisions to drive the conversation in certain deliberate directions and in other cases to make distinctions between my treatment of the historical record versus the academic discourse.
Significance & Contributions

Ultimately I hope to make a major intervention within the current consumption discourse related to the ways in which scholars come to understand how consumerism empowered and disempowered various groups during key historical flashpoints, and specifically how African Americans who were considered poor and working poor during the 1960s and 1970s experienced resistance and power through consumerism. I am particularly interested in the incorporation of intersectionality into the consumption discourse. Specifically, gaining a better understanding of how African American women and men experienced consumerism as a political project during the Welfare Rights era and how interconnected identities impact how people experienced and made meaning of consumerism. Though the major focus of this research rests in its theoretical and empirical contributions, the project also has methodological implications that utilize ‘big data’ to change the landscape of sociological research, expanding sociologists’ understanding of the power of computational analysis as well as encouraging future researchers to engage large datasets using this technology.

Dissertation Chapters

The second chapter defines my theory of intersectional political consumerism and discusses how the theory informs the ways in which power is shaped and negotiated. The chapter makes the case of the importance of historicizing consumerism, particularly when attempting to understand the relationship between African Americans and consumerism. The chapter describes the role of the NWRO in pursuing consumer rights for the poor and discusses how the use of Zygmunt Bauman’s theory of the flawed consumer, when coupled with an intersectional analysis, serves well in understanding how the poor are constructed as consumers. The chapter identifies specific realms of power which describe how power is negotiated and influenced by
intersecting social locations and how these realms will provide context for the remaining chapters. Using computational analysis, the chapter discusses present and absent themes within the larger discourse on consumerism and the various realms of power and makes the case for why this research is critical to addressing the empirical and theoretical gaps within the field/literature.

Chapter 3 compares the histories and political consumerist strategies of two community organizations during the 1950s and 1960s, Jobs Or Income Now (JOIN) and The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), and discusses how their ideologies influenced the types of intersectional political consumerism they chose to employ in their efforts to win rights for poor people. The author found that while TWO, a predominately black and male-led organization serving Chicago’s Southside Woodlawn neighborhood, employed a commercial-based intersectional political consumerism to achieve its goals, JOIN, an interracial and women-led Northside Uptown neighborhood organization, utilized a community-based form of intersectional political consumerism. The chapter details the various ways whiteness gets centered as communities of color attempt to engage intersectional political consumerism, while also considering the types of social relationships that are forged across consumer spaces when community organizations are ideologically capitalist or socialist. The chapter concludes that TWO and JOIN’s political activism around access to consumerism for their neighborhoods was essentially a battle for their communities’ legitimacy as consumers.

Chapter 4 looks at TWO’s ‘Square Deal Campaign’ and the specific political actors and realms of power involved in the campaign. The author interrogates TWO’s alliance with the Woodlawn Business Men’s Association (WBMA) in order to show how the intersectional political consumerism employed by a marginalized group can be co-opted and re-centered to
meet the needs of those with more privileged social identities. The relationship between the WBMA and TWO serves as an example of how power is negotiated in consumer spaces. The chapter also considers how these actors and entities influenced how intersectional political consumerism was demonstrated within the context of community planning. Specifically, the urban renewal plans generated by the city, as well as those generated by TWO, are read as artifacts that expose views on modernity, anti-blackness, structuring of consumer spaces and the implicit social contract between communities and businesses/merchants.

Chapter 5 addresses class aspirations expressed by CWRO members through intersectional political consumerism during the late 1960s, specifically how consumerism constructs middle-class neoliberal identities and is used by the welfare apparatus to deconstruct the poor. Specifically, the chapter considers the role of consumer credit as a liberatory (middle-class) tool utilized by the poor, as well as a neoliberal mechanism serving to mask growing gaps in income and social deprivation. The chapter also highlights the failings of NWRO’s Sears Credit Campaign and its attempt to engage capitalist mechanisms such as retail credit to secure socialist outcomes. The NWRO’s entrenchment in freedom from poverty through liberalism (choice), capitalism (retail credit), and proximity to white middle-class materiality ultimately led to the failure of their Sear’s campaign. In this way, the author makes the case that intersectional political consumerism cannot be successful when there is an ideological disconnect between strategy and desired results.

Chapter 6 considers the role of welfare policy and the defining of poverty as well as the relationship between the state and private industry during the 1970s, which led to a specific type of commodification of life of poor people. The welfare policies introduced during the Nixon administration and the fight for a guaranteed annual income for the poor were catalysts for
organization and mobilization of the poor. Because poverty metrics were based in consumption patterns, beliefs around what the poor deserved greatly influenced opinions and policy around minimum income levels. The process of standardization of poor people’s incomes served to institutionalize the commodification of poor people’s social lives and restrict them from making budgetary choices for themselves. The chapter also exposes the dysfunctional and symbiotic relationship between the state, private business and the poor. Ultimately, consumerism becomes a site of struggle over legitimacy of needs and choices of the poor.

Endnotes

1 The terms ‘black’ and ‘African American’ are used interchangeably though, of the two terms, ‘black’ would have been used most prominently during the time period of study (1960s and 1970s).
2 These documents are referenced in endnotes along with the primary source information.
3 All but one of the archives I visited allowed researchers to photograph documents. Documents which could not be photographed were photocopied.
4 JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books and primary sources.
CHAPTER 2: INTERSECTIONAL POLITICAL CONSUMERISM

Introduction: Historicizing Consumerism

Historicizing consumerism serves to uncover structural relationships between the material and ideological. The relationship between African Americans and consumerism has often fused together the desire for access to material goods and services and an acknowledgement as first class citizens within the US capitalist society (which has embedded meaning within access to consumer spaces). The residue of the historical legacy of slavery complicates efforts to distance African Americans from a shared identity as commodities of whites and be acknowledged as full citizens. Subjects are no more separated from our histories than we can be separated from our social locations. Any attempt to do so ignores a critical component which influences, among other things, how power plays out. The lack of acknowledgement of Blacks’ complicated historical relationship with consumerism causes the consumption literature to fall short when scholars attempt to assign meaning, by imposing an ahistorical logic onto the African American experience. The complication is that consumerism, as a mechanism that was once oppressive to African Americans because of a ‘status AS commodity’, is now being used, at best, as a tool of resistance and change, and, at worst, as a mechanism to mask the system of oppression still present by minimizing indicators of material deprivation. The ways in which commodification influences how power flows has changed for African Americans. Though the commodification is no longer literal, there is still a battle which includes historical legacies related to how consumerism is engaged and through which social positions are empowered and disempowered. Strategies to maintain systems of oppression are more covert and are masked by a coupling of consumerism and neoliberal values which suggest that democracy may be achieved within the marketplace. The discussion of consumerism provides a space for exploration of power (agency and oppression), desire and history. Consumption scholars’ lack of willingness to wrestle with historical legacy and power is a main reason why much of the scholarship on consumerism has failed to thoroughly explain the nuanced relationship African Americans have with consumerism. Scholars have imposed the meaning-making of white consumerism onto the experiences of African
Americans by focusing on the outcomes of the relationships of consumerism. But scholars have yet to explore the relationship itself between historical legacies and consumerism, or between materiality and ideology.

This chapter serves to contextualize CWRO affiliated organizations’ consumerist activities within the larger Welfare and Consumer Rights movements occurring during the same time period. Specifically, the chapter considers the unique challenges facing the poor as consumers and addresses the types of consumerism employed for political purposes. I argue that intersectional social locations shape the consumer strategies chosen by various organizations who advocate on behalf of poor people.

**Consumerism Across Movements**

In the 1950s and 1960s, the consumer movement would intersect with the Civil Rights Movement. In 1966 Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s Operation Breadbasket threatened to employ boycotts as a strategy for securing fair hiring practices from local companies. Operation Breadbasket was launched in Atlanta as a result of Leon Sullivan sharing the lessons from the Philadelphia selective patronage campaigns. Access to credit and freedom from exploitative credit practices were also key areas of concern for Civil Rights leaders as well as Black Power proponents. The National Welfare Rights Organization’s (NWRO) political agenda would converge with the civil rights and women’s rights movements and would also play out within the realm of consumerism. The NWRO’s Sears Credit Campaign serves as the best example of these efforts to combine multiple movements (women’s, welfare rights, consumer and civil rights movements).

In addition to the national organization initiating credit campaigns, the local Welfare Rights Organizations (WROs) made efforts toward engaging consumerism through buying clubs, rent strikes, co-ops, and credit unions. Still, rather than organizing a national campaign around increasing the number of minority owned businesses, community control over businesses serving black communities or securing jobs for Blacks in those stores (as many of the local organizations had done), the NWRO pursued
securing credit from department stores which sold quality products (such as furniture, appliances and clothing). While the former examples appealed to more of a black nationalist approach, the latter was more consistent with an integrationists-type capitalism which sought to include African American poor people.

NWRO members launched a national boycott of Sears in 1969 in an effort to secure credit for welfare recipients. Interestingly, several decades prior, President Roosevelt proclaimed the one book he would give the Soviets to teach them about America would be the Sears catalog. It seemed quite fitting that some 20+ years later welfare mothers would focus their attention on this company as a way of securing what they felt were their citizen rights under capitalism. The boycott of Sears, which began in Philadelphia, was very much linked to the citizen entitlements of welfare recipients, who purported that they were discriminated against by product companies like Sears specifically because they were poor. That the extension of credit was viewed as a fundamental right rather than a privilege reserved for the white middle class was a core tenet of the NWRO. The NWRO specifically targeted Sears because of its dominance within the consumer market and because of their likelihood to be unyielding, which would draw attention to their cause as well as apply pressure to competitors to yield to avoid similar attention. The NWRO fought to secure credit rights for its members and made itself central within the consumer credit chain, requesting in the demands that those welfare recipients receiving credit prove their affiliation with the NWRO via a reference letter.

The national boycott was somewhat successful in that, although the Sears Corporation did not relent, there were several individual Sears stores who yielded to the NWRO demands and extended limited credit to welfare recipients. Cincinnati stores agreed to the NWRO plan in its entirety. Still, there were inherent contradictions of the NWRO movement in terms of seeking liberation and full citizenship through access to credit while also reifying traditional gender roles related to womanhood, motherhood (including women’s roles in the labor market) and materialism (Boris 2002; Piven and Cloward 1977). The NWRO’s focus on credit illustrated the first national concerted effort to actively acknowledge the
poor as consumers. Prior to this time, the poor were not viewed by large retailers as relevant and, aside from the unscrupulous neighborhood businesses who sought to exploit them, the poor were mostly ignored within the larger realm of consumerism.

**Consumerism and the Poor**

Rarely do we hear about the collective purchasing power of those in poverty or think of the poor as consumers. Indeed Zygmunt Bauman (1998) was accurate in his description of the poor as ‘flawed consumers’. Bauman explains that flawed consumers are viewed as incapable of adequately performing their roles within a consumer society because they do not have the financial means to participate in a consumer society. The poor are viewed as “a collective victim of the ‘multiple collateral damage’ of consumerism.” (Bauman 2007:30) Bauman describes the ‘collateral damage’ of consumerism as its commodification of human life and social relationships. If social relationships are reduced to one’s ability to engage with commodities as consumers, the poor have no sustainable point of entry and are, therefore, devalued. In turn, there is no real value placed upon the poor because they are viewed as useless within a consumerist society.

Contemporary society engages its members primarily as consumers; only secondarily, and in part, does it engage them as producers. To meet the standards of normality, to be acknowledged as a fully fledged, right and proper member of society, one needs to respond promptly and efficiently to the temptations of the consumer market; one needs to regularly contribute to the ‘supply-clearing demand’, whereas in case of economic fallback or stagnation be part of the ‘consumer-led recovery’. All this the poor and indolent, people lacking decent income, credit cards and the prospect of a better time, are not fit to do. Accordingly, the norm that is broken by the poor of today, the norm the breaking of which sets them aside and disqualifies them as ‘abnormal’, is the norm of consumer competence or aptitude, not that of employment. (Bauman 2007:33)

Bauman makes a distinction between non-consumer and unemployed. The women and men during the Welfare Rights Era, however, were demanding they be given the opportunity to engage as ‘citizen-consumers’ (Cohen 2003), whether unemployed or underemployed. This connection of citizenry and consumerism is key as we discuss the Chicago Welfare Rights Organizations (CWROs) and their efforts to secure consumer entitlements for the poor. For CWRO members, navigating the world as consumers was viewed as a right of every citizen, and any barrier put between the poor and their right to
engage as consumers was considered a threat to their ability to create, maintain and enjoy social relationships. That Bauman’s theory lacks an engagement with the intersectional implications of race, class and gender on social relationships inhibits a more complete understanding of the oppressive barriers to consumerism and minimizes the political impact that interconnected social locations have on consumerist outcomes.

**Intersectional Political Consumerism Defined**

*Intersectional political consumerism* is defined as consumer activities motivated by one’s intersecting social locations (race, class and gender). In order for intersectional political consumerism to occur there must be a desire to influence some political condition (of one’s social locations) and evidence that marketplace sites of consumerism are used or targeted for some political purpose designed to influence how resources are allocated (toward a specific group). Intersectional political consumerism is not limited to subaltern groups, as groups with power can exercise intersectional political consumerism just as those groups who are marginalized. These groups, though, will come into intersectional political consumerism and make meaning of their experiences with consumerism differently as a political project. As indicators of intersectional political consumerism, the project looks specifically at the Welfare Rights Era for the presence of a political agenda, engagement of the marketplace via consumerism, and intersectional social locations serving as a primary motivation for mobilization. The presence of intersectional political consumerism was measured via computational analysis of writings covering the historical time period and a content analysis of archival data describing contextual historical events within the Welfare Rights era that engage race, class, gender, access to resources, and consumerism.

Of key importance to the analysis is the uncovering of how African Americans made political meaning of consumer activities and consumer spaces, the economic and social conditions which led to the implementation of consumerist activities as an act of protest, and the political and economic structures which promoted and inhibited this form of political activism in the historical periods just prior to and
during the Welfare Rights era. By understanding the circumstances within which political consumer activism was deployed and identifying the reasons for its decline as a political project, we might glean transferable knowledge to illuminate the conditions of today and how mass political economic action might be harnessed to improve these conditions.

Figure 2-1: Intersecting planes of social location

Within the illustration exploring race, gender and class, each social location is represented by a plane and together shares a point of intersection. With an infinite number of potential identities, we could in theory have so many intersecting planes that the result would appear to be a solid sphere filled by these social locations. Bauman explores domains through which power plays out via one plane, class; his ‘flawed consumer’ theory relates to identity re-construction of the poor (Marotta 2000). But intersectionality offers a complexity to Bauman’s model by using as a point of analysis the intersection of multiple planes, in this case race, gender and class. This dynamic intersection of multiple social locations uncovers another dimension of how power operates as a result of race/gender/class identity construction.

Bauman (2002) describes power as a battle for legitimacy, the ability to define what is legitimate and the ability to exact or impose one’s will, agenda, beliefs, politics etc. onto another. Through consumerism we can illuminate one battle for legitimacy. We can explore who defines legitimacy, how these definitions are resisted, and since this study is historical, the outcome of the battle. The intersectional political consumerism model serves to reveal that it is not just class which de-legitimizes some subjects as flawed; it is not just class that causes some subjects to be viewed as incapable of adequately performing their societal roles to be consumers or to engage a capitalist “democracy” as
consumers; it is not one plane, but a convergence of several social locations illuminated through intersectionality.

*Intersectional Political Consumerism’s ‘Realms of Power’*

Bourdieu’s social field examines where people negotiate different forms of power. The social field is described as “a social arena within which struggles or maneuvers take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them.” (Jenkins 1992:84) Collins’ (2000) domains of power explain how the matrix of domination, which is the social organization of intersecting oppressions, is organized. The realms of power within intersectional political consumerism are a marrying of the concepts of social field and domains of power in that they describe the ways in which power is negotiated and influenced by intersecting social locations within the consumerist setting. Within the realm of the social, specifically consumerism, there is a struggle over how power is organized through intersecting social locations and how that organizing is used to gain access to resources for political purposes (purposes which influence how power manipulates/distorts intersecting oppressions and transforms to achieve intersecting justices).

In this way, power is multi-directional in that its organization is changing as it is being constructed. These realms are moving power in multiple directions at once, and are capable of having multiple, simultaneous interpretations and consequences. These realms of power represent social, political and economic phenomenon which are legitimized and include historical remnants, traces, and legacies which remain present. For African Americans, one historical legacy represented by the socio-political phenomenon of consumerism would be the unyielding historical denial of access to full citizenship in a consumerism society through access to consumer products, services and spaces. In order to be a realm of power there must be the presence of a struggle over who is viewed as legitimate within the consumer space, there must be a connection with historical context that influences current conditions and there must be a connection to the site of power and a specific ideology seeking promotion.
Realms of power within this study include the Governance (i.e. local, state and federal government), Business/Industry (i.e. African American consumerism), Economic Policy (i.e. neoliberalism), and Condition (i.e. poverty). The Governance realm of power focuses specifically on the role of the state in facilitating and hindering the process of the political transition of citizens from customers to consumers during the 1960s. African American consumerism as a realm of power refers to the growing acknowledgement of the black consumer market and African American consumerism as political entities in the Welfare Rights era. Neoliberalism as a realm of power explores this economic policy and its ideological infiltration and influence during the period of study. The condition of poverty as a realm of power refers specifically to the feminization and blackening of poverty which took place during the 1960s. Governance, African American consumerism, neoliberalism and poverty are all realms through which power played out in Chicago during the 1960s and 1970s. In this study, intersectional political consumerism considers these realms of power and how they work to organize through social locations for political purposes.

Figure 2-2: Realms of power and intersecting planes of social location

Realms of power are the instruments of structures and ideology in that the state, consumerism and neoliberalism are all instruments of capitalism, the feminization of poverty is an instrument of patriarchy and the blackening of poverty is an instrument of racism. These structure and ideologies (capitalism, patriarchy and racism) have historical legacies whose remnants are detected in the instrument. Like a (magic) wand, a realm of power serves to move and manipulate intersecting social locations within its
sphere and contort them to serve the purposes of that ideology. Yet, the exposing of these oppressions (manipulations) can also uncover corresponding resistance (attempts at correction) through the actions of political actors embodying these intersecting social positions. Realms of power serve to push, pull, distort, shape and manipulate intersecting social locations (depending on context). The following sections described the realms of power discussed in this study and provide a context within which to better understand how these realms were organized and their span of influence.

Government and Its Role in the Politicization of Customers to Consumers

Considering the role of government as a realm of power within which to understand Intersectional Political Consumerism, it is important to take into account how the government came into the role of legitimizing citizens as consumers. In 1906, Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act as a way of protecting (white) citizens from inaccurate and/or misleading food labeling (Stein 1980). This regulation is important to note because it marked the government’s first intercession as a protector of white customers. During this time, African Americans still were not allowed to vote, were denied access to much of the labor market and restricted from much of consumer life. In 1914, the Federal Trade Commission was created to protect consumers and promote competition amongst businesses. The (white) consumer movement, which is defined as “the totality of organizations, institutions, regulations, activities, and viewpoints directed at improving consumer welfare”, was a response to the mass production and consumption explosion and set in motion political action in the form of lobbying and organizations created to address fair market labor issues (Tiemstra 1992:2). Workers wanted fair wages, but they also wanted more leisure time. “They argued that, to the extent that they produced the nation’s foods, they deserved to enjoy their fair share of the fruits of their labor. For most white American workers the work week steadily declined: from sixty-four hours in 1850, to sixty by 1890, to fifty-five by 1914, to forty by 1930s.” (Glickman 1999:3) The first iteration of this movement, which was pro-labor and predominantly white and female, was quickly labeled communist. President Roosevelt’s New Deal helped to bolster consumer activity following the depression. To address unemployment, the Civilian Conservation Corps
(CCC) was formed by Roosevelt to employ 18 to 25 year olds. The government wanted people to work so that they could make a wage, which would allow them to participate in the economy as consumers.

Post World War II, consumerism was once again lifted as the torch for capitalism, shining light upon the evils of communism. In an effort to bolster the economy and revitalize consumption, advertisers targeted the baby boomer generation with new ‘needs’ (Glickman 1999). White Americans were eager to spend and white businesses were eager to sell, but not without some backlash from the second iteration of consumer movement. During this time, the relationship between consumers and industry changed with the intercession of more government regulations, thus relinquishing more industry power and placing it in the hands of customers. For capitalism to have been beneficial for the everyday white American as well as the wealthy white industrialist, the government had to heavily regulate its activities. Such regulation not only protected customers, but put forth expectations that there would be some government intercession if they were not treated fairly by businesses. The regulating role of the government also set the stage for the legitimizing of citizens as “consumers” entitled to certain rights. However, the government’s new role as protector of consumers did not extend to include African Americans. Much of the South still had segregated consumer spaces and those spaces proved to be contested areas ripe with protest as “taking a seat at a lunch counter as a paying customer was one of the most powerful forms of political action taken by Civil Rights activists in the 1950s” (Ritzer 2007:706).  

During the mid-1960s we see much discussion within the business industry amongst marketers around the distinction between customers and consumers. Customers were characterized as localized in their interests, loyal to businesses and having limited influence over how those businesses operated. In contrast, consumers held political positions with larger agendas that extended beyond the local, sought protection of rights as consumers and exerted power and influence as they fought to access those rights. A key distinction in these discussions of customer versus consumer rests in the consumer identity’s access to rights and protections. These rights and protections were defined by the state. While customers were viewed as apolitical and docile, consumers were seen as potentially dangerous for businesses. The
consumer identity demanded that shoppers be informed by businesses about the products being sold and that they be protected from unethical practices. But the distinction also serves another purpose of expressing how differently power is shared and exerted. Whereas customers had some power in terms of offering their loyalty to businesses who served them well, much of the power rested in the hands of merchants, who were allowed to make claims about products and services (through marketing) that served to mislead and/or confuse customers. Because there was little regulation around businesses and because what was lawful versus what was ethical(fair) were two distinct spheres, customers, particularly those customers with few merchant options due to economic and/or geographical restrictions, were largely at the mercy of merchants. Consumers, on the other hand, had an intermediary in the form of the government, who would demand of merchants that they adhere to ethical business practices and who would attempt to educate consumers so that they could make more discerning and informed decisions. While this provides some liberatory power, through education of the consumer, this power is filtered through the government so it is far from complete. It is the government, through education, who is ‘turning customers into consumers’ by legitimizing the consumer identity. Those who control the transitioning process ultimately control the end result, so the opportunities for resistance become limited. But the message that is perpetuated is that the power, however incomplete, is in the hands of the informed consumer. Organizations such as the Better Business Bureau (BBB) helped to manage the consumers’ frustrations and keep them focused on merchants which resulted in the (perhaps unintentional) hindering of critique around larger issues, such as increases in food prices and cost of living, or lack of jobs due to discriminatory hiring practices in certain targeted communities that have many patrons.

The city and state governments would continue to build structures such as education that served to support the consumer movement as an apparatus with which to promote capitalist ideology. Within this context, the discussions around the transition of citizens from customers to consumers, and the government’s efforts in facilitating that process, become much clearer. Earl Lind, President of the BBB of Metropolitan Chicago was appointed to the Consumer Education Curriculum Development Committee.
and Mayor Daley set up a budget in support of the Consumer Education Plan to establish multiple counseling centers throughout the city to educate on issues of buying and credit.\textsuperscript{10} Illinois was the first state to require that consumer education be included in high school curriculum.\textsuperscript{11} In a 1968 speech given to the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, State Senator Cecil Partee, who pushed for the consumer education legislation, stated

The young who will be adult buyers of tomorrow must be given the knowledge that consumer credit is a vital part of their future lives – either a great opportunity or a frightful menace to their economic and social lives. They must see consumer credit for what it is – an economic device through which they may acquire what they want and pay for it out of future earnings. They must be impressed with the understanding that consumer credit serves to maintain the important balance between America’s production, distribution and consumption. They must be taught that properly regulated and properly used consumer credit is absolutely essential to acquire the sales volume needed for more and more jobs, more and more spendable income and more and more taxes to pay for the solvent operation of an enlightened Nation.\textsuperscript{12}

Without explicitly stating, Partee has clearly drawn consumer education, and consumerism generally, into the realm of the political. This statement about education perpetuates capitalist logic as superior, never questioning whether the promotion of artificial growth, which would be further perpetuated by consumer credit tools, is necessary or desirable. The Senator asserts that the only way for an “enlightened nation” to generate jobs is through increased sales volume, and without explicitly saying so, acknowledges that Americans cannot support such volume through their own current earnings. So, the solution proposed is to sacrifice expected future earnings in order to keep up with the consumption required by the capitalist system to maintain itself. Not only is the relinquishing of future earnings a privileged position of those who are confident in their job security, it also leaves no room for critique related to why this type of economic growth is the only option offered. By controlling the curriculum, the state essentially obscures the public’s understanding of the economy and consumerism’s role within it to the perpetual benefit of capitalism.

\textit{Consumerism: The African American Consumer Market and State-Sanctioned Consumer Education}

Though certainly not prominently displayed within the discussions, the educational apparatuses and consumer organizations did make efforts to acknowledge African Americans as potential consumers.
Nationally, Better Business Bureaus were reaching out to African American consumers including offering buying advice and encouragement for new black home owners. Locally, consumer education efforts included African American Chicago high schools such as DuSable. In 1968, the Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago would begin its organized effort to educate consumers, including focusing some resources toward black consumer education.

Within the Chicago Woodlawn area, there was also an interest in African Americans and their potential in the consumer market. In May 1961, the Industrial Area Foundation (IAF) contacted the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) on behalf of the Woodlawn Business Men’s Association (WBMA) requesting they do research on the Woodlawn consumer market. Specifically, the WBMA was interested in conducting a survey to determine the existing and potential consumer market, whether or not higher income black people in Woodlawn shopped outside the community, Woodlawn businesses primary retail competition, and efforts that could be made to “win neighborhood consumers to the street.” NORC would decline the invitation, stating their research related to those projects of broad public interest and referred the group to “existing commercial research organizations.” Still, the efforts of the WMBA to seek out NORC to understand the consumer market in Woodlawn demonstrates an acknowledgment and interest in African Americans as desirable consumers. African American business owners, professionals and consultants had long understood the existence and value of the black consumer market.

The National Association of Market Developers, formally organized in Nashville at Tennessee A & I State University in 1953 was created for the specific purposes of collecting and sharing information about the ‘Negro market’, developing standards of professional conduct for businesses, and protecting the image of ‘Negro marketeers’.

In the 1950s, industry boycotts encouraged black customers to use their purchasing choices and speak with their dollars. As a result, during the 1960s, consumer education was on the minds of black people. In 1960, the Chicago Urban League initiated a project on consumer credit education that was concerned with what the League viewed as an increase in exploitation of black customers. The historical
role and treatment of African Americans in the consumer market included being ignored, disrespected and exploited by white businesses (Weems 2009). While gains in home and business ownership, increased wealth and education, and urbanization all contributed to opening up opportunities for blacks, through the creation of a ‘negro market’, they also opened up opportunities for further exploitation. This exploitation was exasperated by an in-migration of blacks from rural and Southern communities along with dishonest credit practices of predatory businesses. Along with the migration came an increase in wage garnishments, so the Chicago Urban League launched a credit education initiative focused on teaching better buying practices. The League’s primary focus was related to credit, communicating to community members current Illinois statutes related to credit buying. The government was also concerned with ensuring consumers were informed and, in 1962, passed the Consumer Bill of Rights. Additional legislation would soon follow, with the goal of adding more consumer protections (See Table 2 -1).

In a flyer simply titled “Beware”, there is a page long warning to customers about unscrupulous merchants, stores, contracts and solicitors. The informational material highlights business practices such as dealers who did not explain finance charges and/or did not list retail prices on merchandise. The flyer names State Jewelers and Clothiers, State Furniture, Ellis Jewelers and Clothiers, Chicago Jewelers and Clothier and all Furniture Dealers among a list of unscrupulous businesses. State Jewelers and Clothiers was the target of a legal case for its enforcement of an inaccurate wage assignment on the brother of a patron. Mr. Henry Honore’s lawsuit stated that wage assignments were served at Michael Reese Hospital where he was employed as an oxygen technician, despite the fact that the firm had prior notification that his signature was a forgery. Though Honore’s case was one of mistaken identity, those entering into such agreements had little legal recourse regarding their enforcement. If a customer fell behind on their payments (often paying excessive interest fees) the merchant could obtain a court order to garnish all but $45 of their weekly wages, every week until the debt was paid. In this case, the state would be working in favor of the merchants. Still, African Americans viewed themselves as a political force within consumerism’s realm of power and were validating themselves as legitimate consumers. They were also
organizing and educating their communities so that this role would be acknowledged by white power structures as well.

The state government and the local BBB were nearly a decade behind the Chicago Urban League in considering the need for more extensive consumer education, specifically credit education, for the citizenry. In 1967, Illinois Governor Kerner approved Senate Bill 977 which amended The School Code of Illinois (Section 27-12:1) and stated that: “Pupils in the public schools in grades 8 through 12 shall be taught and be required to study courses which include instruction in consumer education, including but not necessarily limited to installment purchases, budgeting, and comparison of prices.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Consumer Bill of Rights</td>
<td>States that consumers have right to safe products, the right to be informed about products and services so that they may make informed choices, have the right to choose from a variety of products and services at competitive prices, and that consumers have a right to be heard as it relates to consumer government policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>IL Senate Bill 977 – Consumer Education Bill</td>
<td>Requires that students in public schools study courses which include instruction in the area of consumer education, including but not limited to installment purchasing, budgeting, comparison of prices, and an understanding of the roles of consumers interacting with agriculture, business, labor unions, and government in formulating and achieving the goals of the mixed free enterprise system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Truth in Lending Act</td>
<td>Part of the Consumer Credit Protection Act that requires lenders and creditors to disclose annual percentage rate (APR), term of the loan and total costs to the consumer before any agreement is signed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Fair Credit Reporting Act</td>
<td>Part of the Consumer Credit Protection Act that regulates how consumer reporting agencies use consumer credit information and ensures consumers have access to their credit information as well as the right to have any inaccurate information corrected in a timely manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Equal Credit Opportunity Act</td>
<td>Part of the Consumer Credit Protection Act that ensures consumers seeking credit will not be discriminated against based on religion, sex, race, color, marital status, national origin, age or because they receive public assistance</td>
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A memo dated December 1967 to Illinois school administrators from the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ray Page, addresses two bills, 19H dealing with the teaching of US History to include lessons about more ethnic groups throughout the year, and 977 which dealt with consumer education. The irony within the memo rests in its discussion of seemingly unrelated bills with directly related issues. One of
the major failings of consumption scholars in providing theories has been their lack of historicizing consumerism when attempting to uncover structural relationships between the material and ideological. How history is taught and whose history is taught (and from what perspectives) greatly influences our ability to understand and be critical of various relationships and their implications. As we uncover the various histories of consumer activism as told and lived by African Americans, we are able to offer up better theories around how consumerism exposes relationships of power and resistance, and the degrees to which positionality influences meaning making.

The passing of Bill 977 was the result of the collaborative efforts of the BBB of Metropolitan Chicago and the state government during the 1960s-70s to incorporate consumer education into the public school curriculum. The formal guidelines that developed through this collaboration stated that the objectives of consumer education included helping students “to understand the role of the consumer in our economy…to develop the ability to make rational choices among alternatives…to show the relevance of economic principles to personal economic competence and develop basic economic understanding requisite for responsible citizenship…to become aware of dependence on society for consumption, and of reciprocal responsibilities.” This focus on consumer education signaled a connecting of consumerism with national economic health and responsible citizenship. The nation’s dependence of consumption was not questioned, but encouraged. The use of the public school system as an apparatus to push the education of consumers had, perhaps, an unintended consequence of extending access to consumerism to African Americans.

Consumer education topics included kinds of consumer credit, the use and cost of credit, consumer credit laws, borrowing money, buying goods and services, and renting or owning a home. The materials also provided curricular information and references for teachers and students, including listings of available films and slides. One filmstrip, entitled “Price of Credit,” featured the main character, who was a white male recently laid off, and focused on educating him about consumer credit and his
responsibilities to be an informed consumer. The necessity to educate customers about their rights and obligations served to bring an emerging national movement to the forefront.

Neoliberalism realm of power and ideological stealth

Neoliberalism is an important realm of power within which to understand African American poor people’s intersectional political consumerism because it has several ideologies embedded within that are best understood within the larger context of welfare rights. The Welfare Rights Movement ended just prior to Ronald Reagan’s formal adoption of neoliberalism as economic policy in the US. Neoliberalism is defined as the belief that human well-being is best advanced through individual freedom, free markets, free trade and strong private property rights (Harvey 2005). Therefore, the role of the state is to secure an institutional framework that allows for these things. Neoliberalism calls for a hands-off approach by the state, giving tax cuts to the rich, and letting the economy regulate itself. Neoliberal policies contributed to a deep concentration of wealth amongst a relatively small percentage of the American population, a trend that has persisted since its introduction. Neoliberalism led to sweeping economic reform which caused irreparable harm to poor people. In many ways, the treatment and opinions about the people of the Welfare Rights movement, particularly African American women, were driven by neoliberal policies that foreshadowed what would become an unexamined and widely-accepted cultural narrative which further pathologized impoverished black people.

One appeal of neoliberalism is its claim that democracy can be reached through unencumbered free (consumer) markets. Baudrillard (1998) explored economic pushes and pulls by describing democracy through consumerism as myth; that structurally, it is impossible for growth (often read through various indicators of levels of consumption) to promote democracy. Instead, growth through consumption contributes to the perpetuation of poverty, a poverty that is masked by a consumerist society. The Kerner Commission Report of 1968, in response to the protests/uprisings occurring across the nation spoke to the promotion of democracy by calling for, among other things, an end to discriminatory consumer and credit practices. The report specifically addressed the poverty conditions...
faced by African-Americans, which, the report determined, were caused and perpetuated by white racism deeply embedded within the neoliberal discourse. So as American society began to adopt neoliberal economic policies promoting market-based consumerism, poverty conditions, particularly among African Americans, were exacerbated.

Ideology holds together society and therefore can affect social relationships and distort our understanding of them. In this same way, the market serves as a way of explaining social relationships. For example, globalization connects our consumption practices to other parts of the world (products made in developing countries for cheaper) while masking and distorting the exploitative nature of the relationship between capitalism’s labor and production. Hall et al. (1996) suggested the way to make the distortions more apparent was to determine the underlying ideology. He made the case, borrowing from Gramsci, that what we understand as ‘common sense’ is actually distorted ideology with a historical imprint that is uncritically accepted. So, ‘common sense’ really doesn’t help one understand social relations as much as helping to understand how what is happening fits into the accepted ideology. In thinking about the impact of neoliberalism and how it informed how WRO members’ actions and intentions and our understanding of their social relations might be distorted by neoliberal ‘common sense’, this deeper search for hidden ideology and historical imprint serves as a reminder of the challenges present in dealing with such distortions (of a group of people and a movement). In Sister Citizen Harris-Perry (2011) advances the theory of the crooked room, that because black women are assaulted with distorted representations of their humanity, they are constantly maneuvering and contorting in attempts to stand upright in this crooked room. In order to understand the actions of black women you must then understand the ways in which these rooms are crooked, and the (biased) systems that design them this way. In understanding political consumerist activities of marginalized groups with intersecting social locations, one must be mindful of the ways in which the crooked room of neoliberalism forces actors to contort in ways that might not ultimately serve them. An example might be the perpetuation of credit purchasing. This dissertation project considers what these crooked rooms looked like for those
engaging in intersectional political consumerism, including how the realms of power and social location furnishings are arranged, and how they attempted to resist and rearrange the room as well as themselves.

Despite the obligatory contortions, the women and men of the local organizations studied insisted that they engage as consumers\(^\text{35}\), even those who resisted or were denied access as wage-earners. The view was that citizens engaged society as consumers and that the poor should have a right to engage just as any other American (Bauman 1998). This line of thinking was out of step with neoliberalism which attempted to regulate away the condition of being poor by punishing those who operated under the conditions and system of poverty. And neoliberalism intended to make clear the consequences of what happens when citizens attempted to reject this ideology.

Another way in which neoliberalism served to mask its aversion for certain segments of the population was through what is termed as ‘abstract liberalism’, which is described as a strategy of whites that resists institutional changes by invoking liberalism ideas of equal opportunity, choice, and individualism to vaguely explain issues around race (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011). Neoliberalism as a realm of power has characteristics that overlap with other realms of power, including (conditions of) poverty; specifically, the feminization and blackening of poverty. By framing race-related issues, such as the simultaneous feminization and blackening of the welfare state, in the language of liberalism, whites could appear “reasonable” and even “moral,” while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto patriarchy and racial inequity (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Postmodern critiques of consumerism reject the idea of a ‘rational’ stance of neoliberalism as equalizing within a consumerism framework while supporting the idea that consumerism has the potential to expand access for marginalized people to realms of power previously denied (engaging with this system of consumerist signs).

*The Feminization and Blackening of Poverty*

Neoliberal capitalism, racism, and patriarchy are interconnected structures. Inclusive capitalism (Prahalad 2005) attempts to detach the problematic by suggesting that there exists an opportunity for inclusion of the poor as consumers and markets while also alleviating poverty as a form of development. While the poor are 'benefited' through increased access to goods and services, it is uncertain whether their
political position significantly changes. One way to test this possibility is to identify the political activities of the poor, within a neoliberal frame, that seem to alleviate poverty. Perhaps there is something to be learned from the concept of ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ (Bayat 2009). The concept focuses on everyday practices of the poor that diminish the state's governmentality and power and results in sociopolitical changes to their communities and government. Within the ‘ordinary’ signals strategies employed by marginalized groups, particularly women who were poor and black, to resist disparaging narratives thrust upon them within a consumer activist context.

The feminization and blackening of poverty are important to acknowledge within the larger discourse around poverty. These serve as sub-realms of the (condition of ) poverty realm of power and help to provide a more nuanced understanding of what ideologies were legitimizing and influencing the intersectional political consumerism of the various WRO members. In the early 1960s, the US saw substantial gains in civil rights and anti-discrimination legislature. During this time, the US also saw the ‘face’ of poverty change, as the poor shifted from concentrated rural areas to increased urban poverty (Mingione 1996). Prior to this shift, there was disproportionate focus on whites in Appalachia. This awareness of a different type of poor was beginning to emerge in the late 1950s and early 1960s with Galbraith’s 1958 piece The Affluent Society and Harrington’s 1962 piece The Other America. These pieces, among others, were the budding fruit of what Oscar Lewis, an anthropologist, would later coin ‘culture of poverty,’ which described what he observed and identified as maladaptive behavior demonstrated by the poor as a result of their marginalized positions in a capitalist society. The new face affixed to poverty was unmistakably urban and black.

In these poverty studies the authors (Galbraith and Harrington) would argue that a lack of opportunity led to maladaptive behavior of urban black poor. Studying behaviors of the poor, Galbraith (1958) and Harrington (1962) determined that in order to change these cultural behaviors of the poor there must be structural changes which allow for increased opportunities. It was also during this time that Moynihan released a report in 1965 related to the black family. In this report Moynihan argued that the black community essentially consisted of a stable middle class and an unstable maladaptive lower class,
consisting of ‘broken’ homes, female-headed households with ‘illegitimate’ children, and rampant welfare dependency. This disorder was caused in large part, according to Moynihan, by slavery’s disruption of the family structure and previous discrimination. The solution to resolving this ‘pathological’ behavior was not so much about government interventions to provide more opportunities for blacks, but rather to restore the black male as patriarch and bring stability back to the black family. Ultimately, Moynihan’s perspective would be rebuked (temporarily) in favor of Galbraith and Harrington, whose work made quite an impact on Kennedy’s poverty policy perspective (Wilson 1987; Murray 1984; Mead 1986). As problematic as Harrington’s (1962) thesis may have been as it relates to identifying maladaptive behaviors of poor blacks, in comparison to Moynihan, this vantage point did allow space for empathy. The culture of poverty thesis emerged during the apex of the Civil Rights Movement and during a time of increased legislation around consumer protection issues. With such intense perspectives swarming around blacks and equal rights at the time, it is not difficult to imagine the impact of such a contentious environment would have in shaping and directing discourse (not only around the poor but also around the poor’s characterization as consumers). In an environment where people were attempting to appeal to white’s sense of individual equity, the culture of poverty thesis had useful (and also deeply problematic) consequences as it related to policy development and anti-discrimination legislation to address the issue of limited opportunities for poor blacks.

While the early 1960s saw promise in legislation, the late 1960s saw tremendous turmoil, with the assassinations of major Civil Rights leaders and explosive protests across many urban cities during that time. What we also see after 1965 was a proliferation of research on poverty, an area that was largely ignored by academics prior to this time. During the 1960s, policymakers were compelled to do something about perceived poverty because people were afraid of the frustrated poor and the related social unrest (Murray 1984). There was urgency in dealing with structural elements that limited opportunities and manifested themselves in behaviors specific to those in a ‘culture of poverty.’ During the late 1960s black culture was associated with political protest (Smethurst 2005; Gans 1974) as much as with social unrest and maladaptive poverty culture. By the 1980s, however, the transition from a narrative of culture of
protest to a coupling of black culture with a culture of poverty would be complete. The ideologies of patriarchy, racism, and neoliberal capitalism would come to the forefront of ‘culture of poverty’ discourse.

This transition would cause irreparable damage to welfare rights. The New York city-wide coordinating committee of Welfare Groups, which later became the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) demanded decent shelter, adequate food and clothing, and human dignity for the nation’s poor. The main goal of the NWRO was winning a federal guaranteed income (Kornbluh 2007). The welfare rights movement, made up mostly of poor women of color, had among its primary goals securing what it felt were citizenry rights to participate in the economic system and that government benefits should be made available that allow the poor to more equally engage as consumers.

In The Feminization of Poverty Goldberg and Kremen (1990) suggested that social welfare should be utilized to facilitate women’s participation into the workforce by supplementing low wages to offset the high financial costs of parenting or provide support for those women who, for whatever reason, were not in the workforce but were caring for children. The view that women should be able to choose to rear their children rather than being forced into the workforce disrupted capitalism but also reinforced and sustained patriarchy. In “Subversive Potential, Coercive Intent: Women, Work and Welfare in the 1990s,” Kornbluh described the government’s role in subscribing the basic needs of the poor. Welfare was described as giving “material aid to poor people while denying the minimum necessary for dignity and decency. It establishes unmarried women as social pariahs while providing the financial resources that allow women with children to make it alone” (Kornbluh 1991:23). The dichotomy of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor was invoked.

The welfare agencies provided itemized lists of what they felt the poor deserved, and by omission, made commentary on what they did not. This effort to regulate the budgets and choices of the poor (poor black women in particular) was resisted by the welfare rights organizations efforts to show what needs were not being met through this regulation. WRO members inquired of welfare recipients as to what items were excluded that they considered essential to survival. WROs focus was on welfare
recipients’ right to choose their consumer purchases for themselves. This was a major point of conflict between the state and protestors within the welfare rights movement.

Reese and Newcombe (2003), in their comparison of NWRO and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), make the point that although the two organizations worked with the same constituency, NWRO’s focus was related to fighting for a certain standard of living for the poor that more closely resembled that of middle class whites. The thesis continues further that NWRO’s agenda was not to mobilize the poor beyond obtaining these consumer rights (which would have led to a substantial change in their political position) and suggests that this may have led to the organizations descent. Piven (1998) makes the distinction between mobilizing and organizing and also states that the decline of NWRO was due to its focus on mobilization to the detriment of organizing, and that it was this lack of affiliation which prevented the poor from gaining political influence. She states that the collective political power of unions to influence was not available to the poor and African Americans, and as such, they had to look to other forms for collective political action. They looked to consumer spaces.

Activists as well as welfare recipients were demonized for their tactics to secure more rights, particularly consumer rights, as well as for their usage of those rights. Poor women were accused of getting a free ride or undermining the role of the father by no longer depending on him for a wage. The Welfare Rights movement crumbled under the weight of this backlash. According to Kornbluh (2007), it was not the mistakes of the movement which led to its demise, but overwhelming structural forces including Nixon’s neoliberal Family Assistance Plan, which limited poor women’s agency and ensured full citizenship would be forever married to work (regardless of whether the employment could get one out of poverty). This marriage would become cemented in the wake of the Reagan administration’s neoliberal policies concerning social welfare programs.

The Reagan administration was the period immediately following the Welfare Rights movement and succeeded in conducting an all-out war on the poor. This administration’s policies were particularly hostile toward the black poor, specifically with the passing of reforms that gave significant tax advantages to the most wealthy of the population (known as Reagan’s ‘trickle-down’ economics) and punished the
poor, through programmatic cuts, for their economic status. The Reagan Administration epitomized neoliberal conservatism of the 1980s and was perhaps most damaging with its cuts to major social support programs, extensive increases in defense spending, increases in black community policing, its weakening of affirmative action programs and its ignoring of civil rights violations. Specific assaults on social support programs included significant cuts to welfare and food stamp programs. As social relief programs of the New Deal and Great Society initiatives such as affordable housing, urban development grants, food stamp, and employment and job training programs were gutted, homelessness sky rocketed and unemployment among African Americans continued to increase, even as aggregate numbers decreased (Caraley 1996).

Indeed, the 1980s proved to be a particularly hostile time as it relates to policies toward the poor and signaled a sharp shift in thought of how poverty and the poor should be controlled (Murray 1984).37 Within this environment, the culture of poverty literature and cultural analysis of the poor would re-emerge. On the conservative side of the discussion, Murray (1984) took a quantitative approach to understanding the lack of progress achieved toward alleviating poverty. His focus was on government administered programs. His view was that social welfare programs, instead of reducing poverty, actually contributed to its perpetuation. In the process, he devotes an entire section of Losing Ground to look specifically at black poverty over a 30 year period (1950-1980) and provides statistics consistent with culture of poverty narratives, including unemployment rates, education levels, crime rates, illegitimate birth rates, and female-headed households. The analysis concluded that policies of Lynden B Johnson’s ‘Great Society’ were deeply flawed and dichotomized the poor – the ‘most industrious, most responsible’ versus the ‘least industrious, least responsible’ and reproduced the deserving/undeserving narrative (Murray 1984). The ‘race issue’ was to be settled by administering equal treatment for all by “making the nation colorblind”, eliminating affirmative action programs, and implementing voucher programs for education (Murray 1984). Lastly, Murray (1984) proposed eliminating welfare completely and replacing it with – nothing38. The implication was that people would then be forced into the job market, suggesting that the poor were so by choice and needed to be penalized so they would make different choices. For
better or worse, Murray’s *Losing Ground* was the tone of policy makers, politicians and the general public during the 1980s and would foreshadow a future direction of work-based assistance. So, as the state contributed to the feminization and blackening of poverty, it did so within the context of neoliberalism, and, with it, the promotion of market-based consumerism; this market-based consumerism left little room for the poor. The culture of poverty narrative and the flawed consumer concept are related in that they are classed, however, the culture of poverty narrative present within the neoliberalism and poverty realms of power masks the ways in which poverty was feminized/sexed and blackened/racialized. This masking is a compelling reason why neoliberalism and the feminization and blackening of poverty are identified as realms of power that should be investigated.

**Using Computational Analysis as Context**

Understanding the realms of power within the context of the larger academic discourse sheds light on how these social, economic and political phenomenon are legitimized and helps the reader to understand broadly what themes are included within discussions of business/industry (consumerism), the government, economic policy (neoliberalism), and economic condition; specifically, (the feminization and blackening of) poverty. Topic modeling is one method which allows for the surveying of large amounts of data related to these concepts. Topic modeling is a form of computational analysis that uses statistical modeling to discover abstract themes within a collection of documents, also known as a corpus. The documents are presented as a ‘bag of words’ and the emerging statistically correlated themes across documents have corresponding probabilities of occurrence within the corpus. Themes are grouped together as “topics”, based on their pattern of distribution and the topic output consists of a word list which provides context for the topic. See Table 2-2 for an example of a word list. The topics are given a numeric indicator (i.e. Topic 12) which the researcher can rename to reflect the theme that emerges from the words which make up a topic (i.e.”Labor and Employment”).

Within the JSTOR database, I identified over 1.5 million results of interest to the study. I identified search criteria which corresponded with various ‘realms of power’, searching for publications which referenced poor black women, neoliberalism, consumerism, welfare rights, the US government and
US citizenship. The search parameters included publications written between 1965 and 2014. The output identifies the general themes emerging from the corpus, insight that would have been impossible to uncover by attempting a traditional close readings of 1.5 million texts. The topic modeling results revealed several relevant themes related to the study for the 1.5 million publications identified in the corpus, including: Topic 12 - Labor and Employment, Topic 20 - Schools and Formal Education, and Topic 30 - Markets and Economies. The “consumerism” search terms yielded Topic 12, a theme related to “Labor and Employment”. The topic word list is below, which shows the specific words within the topic as well as the number of times the word is presented within the topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic 12 Word List named “Labor and Employment”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Topic 12, we see that the word “labor” is present 1.3 million times, however, the value of the model’s output is not just determining word frequencies but the ability of the model to identify all of the words in the list that have a statistically significant probability of being represented together within the sub-corpus. Therefore, these words are understood within their context to each other, as they are grounded in word frequencies.
Within the historical/archival record on the Welfare Rights movement there was evidence that welfare recipients wanted access to consumer rights, activities, spaces and relationships that were independent of their employment status. During the time, there was significant debate around whether the poor had rights to be consumers if they were not engaged in the formal workplace. The presence of this theme within a corpus query on “consumerism” shows that, within the academic discourse, there is a subset of literature which considers consumerism and its relationship to workers and employment. Topic 20 represents a theme that emerged around “Schools and Formal Education”. The topic word list is below (See Table 2 – 3), which shows the specific words within the topic as well as the number of times the word is presented within the topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>education</td>
<td>1,625,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td>1,221,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td>1,187,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schools</td>
<td>611,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational</td>
<td>482,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>435,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university</td>
<td>423,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college</td>
<td>408,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research</td>
<td>408,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching</td>
<td>396,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning</td>
<td>394,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language</td>
<td>273,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic</td>
<td>261,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td>249,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher</td>
<td>229,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study</td>
<td>228,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading</td>
<td>227,095</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the historical/archival record, there is discussion around how the government desired to prepare students to be future consumers in order to ensure a healthy economy. The public school system was used to educate students about how to be informed consumers and what financial tools they would have at their disposal to engage the consumer market (i.e. credit). The presence of this education theme shows that there is a subset of literature within the academic discourse which considers formal education within the
context of consumerism. In contrast to the 1960s and 1970s when the discussions about consumerism and public education dealt with promoting capitalism and its financial consumer tools through the mechanism of the school system, more recent discussions around consumerism and education focus on education as a commodity and students as consumers. This distinction marks a transition in the role of education and its relationship to consumerism.

Within the same “consumerism” query there is also a theme around the economy which emerges. Referring to “Markets and Economies”, the presence of Topic 30 is consistent with what is found in the historical record in that discussions about consumers were accompanied by discussions related to the health of the economy. The topic word list and corresponding frequencies is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>market</td>
<td>1,462,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>price</td>
<td>1,222,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>firm</td>
<td>889,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cost</td>
<td>762,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competition</td>
<td>499,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>product</td>
<td>412,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equilibrium</td>
<td>392,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economics</td>
<td>385,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demand</td>
<td>359,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumers</td>
<td>335,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td>332,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economic</td>
<td>317,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competitive</td>
<td>310,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profit</td>
<td>306,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>case</td>
<td>297,103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presence of these topics within a query related to “consumerism” shows a consistency between the related themes within the academic database corpus and the archival records accessed and analyzed for the study.

The themes generated from the topic modeling on the “race/class/gender” query also allow the researcher to see, among other things, whether JSTOR authors/researchers discussed the realms of power engaged in this dissertation and whether race, class and gender intersectionality is present. Similar to the
“Markets and Economies” topic found in the “consumerism” query, the “race/class/gender” search terms yielded Topic 17, a theme related to the economy, industry and consumer market. Here we see a theme emerge that encompasses several realms of power within a query for documents related to poor black women, namely business/industry and (condition of) poverty. The topic word list is below (See Table 2 – 5).

Table 2 – 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>economic</td>
<td>555,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>market</td>
<td>329,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business</td>
<td>252,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tax</td>
<td>213,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policy</td>
<td>199,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>income</td>
<td>179,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trade</td>
<td>170,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>price</td>
<td>169,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economy</td>
<td>168,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capital</td>
<td>160,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth</td>
<td>148,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial</td>
<td>137,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bank</td>
<td>135,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumer</td>
<td>130,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>investment</td>
<td>122,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industry</td>
<td>122,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td>121,137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here I used a technique called ‘intermediate reading’ to better understand the context of Topic 17 (Brown et al. 2015). Interestingly, the (most representative) documents which make up the topic appear to not discuss poor black women at all. Though there are limitations to the search terms used to identify documents which discuss poor black women specifically, we see that within economic literature from which this particular topic is heavily based an absence of discussion around intersectional (race, class, and gender) within the context of economy, industry and the consumer market. In this way, even as we “search” for poor black women within the digital record, there is a segment of the data which still erases them.
Researchers may also find similar discourse themes appearing within different queries, but still discuss the themes differently. For example, a topic related to labor and employment was found within the “consumerism” query as well as the “race/class/gender” query. Comparing the topic word lists (See Table 2 – 6), we see that the separate topics share many of the same words but have different word count frequencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Word Lists for “Labor and Employment”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic 12 from “Consumerism” Query</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,334,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,219,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>842,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>770,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>569,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>425,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>338,461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>320,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>320,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>277,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>264,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206,832</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, upon closer examination of the document titles using the intermediate reading technique, Topic 12 from the “consumerism” query focused more specifically on part-time and low wage employment (and heavily relied on one main primary source for the information) within the context of consumerism while Topic 47 from the “race/class/gender” query focused more on gender and family (See document titles in Appendix C).

The topic modeling results also reveal how discourses can collide, or rather, how different realms of power can be embedded within one another. (See Topics 19 and 35 within the “race/class/gender” query results section found in Appendix C.) Within a query that engages poor black women, there are several themes which focus on the systems of government and law. This collision serves as a reminder that realms of power, while distinct, are also interconnected and can overlap. For example, within a
discussion of neoliberalism, one would expect discussions of government, industry and (conditions of) poverty to emerge. And the topic modeling results on the “neoliberalism” search terms substantiate this observation. Within those topic modeling results, themes emerge around government and economy. One might not expect for a theme to emerge around gender, yet there is one. (See Appendix C topic word lists for topics 19, 21, 28, and 29 under the neoliberal topic modeling results.)

When incorporating computational analysis and the historical content analysis, the researcher must remember that these two approaches are meant to complement, rather than compete with, one another in order to understand if and how the academic discourse engages topics that are found within the historical record. Another benefit to engaging big data in concert with close readings of the archival record is the potential to identify gaps within the research, not just in topics/themes themselves but also in the ways these themes may be analyzed, interpreted and discussed. Computational analysis allows for an omnipresent perspective to research, connecting the distant reading with the close reading, connecting the historical data with more present research, which explores multiple dimensions of research at the same time.

Conclusion

Bauman’s theory of the flawed consumer is helpful in understanding how class impacts one’s ability to engage within a consumerist society, but falls short in explaining how intersecting social locations such as class, race and gender, together, can influence how power operates within the consumer marketplace. Intersectional political consumerism provides researchers with a theory that engages structures and ideologies while simultaneously acknowledging that social identities are interconnected and both influence and are being influenced by these structures. The incorporation of intersectionality within the analysis of political consumerism allows researchers to more thoroughly understand how the activists of the welfare rights movement experienced consumer resistance and power. As these social identities converge, the struggle and negotiation over who is deemed legitimate as consumers becomes more apparent. The social relationships forged through the consumer marketplace and understood within their historical contexts provide meaning for these activists’ intersectional political consumerism. The
following chapters engage these social relationships, tracing the steps of the actors of the movement as they fight for poor people’s rights to be consumers.

Endnotes

1 The focus on quality products derived from African Americans paying inflated prices for inferior products. As a result, they were quite sensitive to product quality.
2 Whiteness or other social frameworks of privilege are not masked. Instead, Intersectional Political Consumerism is used to show how privileged social positions operate differently within the consumer space.
4 I define ideology as a systemic way of understanding and making meaning of the social world which grounds thinking and action. See also Patricia Hill Collins *Black Feminist Thought* (1990) and *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (2005)
7 The concept of consumerism is also connected with an increase in multinational businesses and customers feelings of powerlessness in getting satisfaction from these vast, impersonal institutions. See Better Business Bureau of Metro Chicago Series 1 Box 14 Folder 5 CCCC Mail - Consumer Ed, Handbook for “Committee For Constructive Consumerism” prepared by The National Membership Support Program of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, p. 17
8 See the following for listing of all committee members: Better Business Bureau of Metro Chicago Series 1 Box 14 Folder 3 Consumer Education, Dated January 5, 1968 Document Titled “Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction” Listing of persons invited to serve as members of the Consumer Education Curriculum Development Committee
9 Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago Records Series 1 Box 14 Folder 3 Consumer Education, Letter dated January 25, 1968 addressed to Dr. William Johnston, Director of Curriculum Services from Michael Caliandro, Vice President Public Relations
10 Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago Records Series 1 Box 14 Folder 3 Consumer Education, Meeting notes dated February 26, 1968 titled “Report on Meeting in John King’s Office”
11 Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago Records Series 1 Box 14 Folder 3 Consumer Education, Memo dated January 31, 1968 addressed to Andy Duffy from Michael Caliandro, cover letter
12 Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago Records Series 1 Box 14 Folder 3 Consumer Education, Memo dated January 31, 1968 addressed to Andy Duffy from Michael Caliandro, enclosure (1) press release from BBB/Chicago
14 Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago Records Series 1 Box 14 Folder 3 Consumer Education, Evaluation Sheet – Resource Materials for Consumer Education April 1969 (DuSable)
15 Discussions between Lind and Page began in 1967 with the passing of the Consumer Education Bill 977 but plans would not be formalized for another year. See Better Business Bureau Series 1 Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education Letter dated August 17, 1967 Addressed to Earl Lind from Ray Page regarding the teaching of consumer education in public schools, ;See also Better Business Bureau Series 1 Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education Letter dated August 2, 1967 Addressed to Ray Page from Earl Lind regarding consumer education curriculum
16 Department Store Credit education materials explaining the difference between 30-day charge account, an installment account, and a revolving charge account. See Better Business Bureau of Metro Chicago Series 1 Box 9 Folder 24 Department Store Credit Document Titled “Better Business Bureau Hints Department Store Credit” n.d.
17 Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago Records Series 1 Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education, Letter dated January 25, 1968 addressed to Dr. William Johnston from Earl Lind
intelligent buyers and users can have a mutual confidence in transactions.

Private enterprise, as a principle, underlies the subject so that wholesome sellers of goods and services and distribution processes in the marketplace as the buyer and user of goods and services. It involves an understanding of the total production and dissemination processes.

Memorandum from State of Illinois Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction December 1967

Curriculum Development Committee

BS - Sears, HFC, Montgomery Ward, and Marshal Fields local merchants/small business owners in Illinois, Loyola, Western Illinois and Northwestern university communities, local high schools, businesses such as Sears, HFC, Montgomery Ward, and Marshal Fields local merchants/small business owners; See also Business Bureau Series 1 Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education Dated January 5, 1968 Document Titled "Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction" Listing of persons invited to serve as members of the Consumer Education Curriculum Development Committee


Social Action Vertical File ca. 1960-2002 Box 35 Folder National Urban League (Chicago) Letter Dated October 28, 1958 Addressed to Russell Lesley, International Vice President of United Packinghouse Workers of America from Edwin Berry, Executive Director of the National Urban League regarding his comments during the NUL’s Consumer Credit Education Meeting. See also Document Titled “An Address To Consumer Credit Education Dinner Meeting Wednesday, October 22, 1958 – 6:30 P.M. In The Towers Room of the Conrad Hilton” By Edwin Berry. The seven page document highlighting the goals of the proposed education program.


Ibid


Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Chicago Daily Defender March 9, 1961 “Sues for $25,000 In Garnishee Dispute”

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Chicago’s American March 7, 1961 “Woodlawn Merchants Sell a ‘Square Deal’”

Earl Lind, president of Better Business Bureau of Metro Chicago, was appointed by the IL Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ray Page, to be a member of the consumer education curriculum development committee in January 12, 1968 See Better Business Bureau Series 1 Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education, Press release dated January 12, 1968 regarding Earl Lind being appointed to serve as a member of the consumer education curriculum development committee. List of people invited to serve on committee included members of DePaul, Northern Illinois, Loyola, Western Illinois and Northwestern university communities, local high schools, businesses such as Sears, HFC, Montgomery Ward, and Marshal Fields local merchants/small business owners; See also Better Business Bureau Series 1 Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education Dated January 5, 1968 Document Titled "Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction" Listing of persons invited to serve as members of the Consumer Education Curriculum Development Committee


Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago Records Series I Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education, Memorandum from State of Illinois Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction December 1967

Consumer education was defined as “the teaching of students in the rights and responsibilities individuals have in the marketplace as the buyer and user of goods and services. It involves an understanding of the total production and distribution processes. An emphasis on the marketing function is essential if the student is to learn how to maximize the utilization of available income for the greatest satisfaction of wants and needs. Consumer Education informs students of the functions and services of private and governmental agencies that operate in the best interest of the public. Private enterprise, as a principle, underlies the subject so that wholesome sellers of goods and services and intelligent buyers and users can have a mutual confidence in transactions.” See Better Business Bureau Series I Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education, Letter dated January 25, 1968 addressed to Dr. William Johnston from Earl Lind

Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago Records Series 1 Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education, Report titled “Guidelines for Consumer Education”
Chicago Urban League Series IV Box 234 Folder 2620
See also Duggan (2003) *Twilight of inequality: Neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy* and Melamed (2006) “The spirit of neoliberalism: From racial liberalism to neoliberal multiculturalism” for discussions of how neoliberalism masks inequities while claiming to resolve them and efforts to cast neoliberalism as a democratic capitalist modernity which in reality only serves to perpetuate white supremacy under the guise of race-neutral policy.

Hall et al. (1996) saw consumerism as a way of dismantling class and reshaping how workers saw themselves; not as producers, but as consumers. Though items were encoded with meaning during their production, this meaning making was not complete until the actual product was consumed (Hall et al. 1996). Therefore, consumers have agency to determine the meaning of these items despite what the producers or marketers may have intended.

ACORN was a national nonprofit umbrella organization formed in 1970 to lobby for and mobilize low and moderate-income families. Areas of focus included affordable housing, wages, and voter registration.

Wilson (1987) attributes this to the Moynihan Report’s chilling effect on liberals and social scientists who, in response, refused to discuss culture, thus allowing conservatives to dominate conversation and cast urban poor in the worst light – as undeserving poor.

See Mead (1986) *Beyond Entitlement* for argument that welfare undermines citizenry obligations of the poor to work.

I searched the JSTOR digital library using the search terms listed in Appendix B. I created six separate queries to create six sub-corpora, each related to at least one realm of power identified in the dissertation.

Using the topic modeling software Mallet, I constructed an analysis with an output of fifty topics for each of the six queries. Mallet allows the researcher to set the output for the number of topics, based on the distribution of topics within the data. The number fifty was chosen as a manageable number for analysis, which provided coherent topics.

These results come from a sub-corporus of the 1.5 million documents which focused specifically on “consumerism” search term results.

Intermediate reading is a process of reading the text that is situated between the close readings associated with traditional research and the distant readings of text associated with topic modeling output. To evaluate the relationship between the word lists and the texts used to generate them, researchers developed a simple tool that scanned the word to topic assignments for each document and returned a list of titles that had a given percentage of their words assigned to topics of interest.

The document titles found within this intermediate reading were representative documents for Topic 17. Each document listed had a specific distribution of topics. The threshold (for analysis of Topic 17) of at least 70% was used to identify representative document titles, meaning at least 70% of the listed documents were composed of Topic 17.
CHAPTER 3: JOBS OR INCOME NOW (JOIN) AND THE WOODLAWN ORGANIZATION (TWO) – INTERSECTIONAL POLITICAL CONSUMERISM AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction: Welfare Rights and Consumer Rights

The National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) has been credited with the formal organizing of the first and largest movement on behalf of welfare recipients. The scholarship of Felicia Kornbluh has helped historians to understand the organization’s role in advocating for consumer rights for the poor. Her work in this area focuses primarily on the NWRO’s campaign to secure for its members consumer credit from Sears (Kornbluh 1997). In 1970, George Wiley, Executive Director of NWRO, and Etta Horn, Chairman of the NWRO Way and Means Committee, authored a statement entitled “Consumer Credit and the Poor” that was presented to the Senate Banking and Currency Committee. Among other issues, the statement highlighted the need of poor families to have access to credit at fair interest rates in order to make large purchases for which they are unable to save. But the organization’s interest in the poor as consumers did not stop with its efforts to secure credit from businesses such as Sears and Montgomery Ward.

During the time of major welfare reform there was a simultaneous uptick in consumer protection legislation. The NWRO showed itself to be plugged in to consumer issues as demonstrated by the organization’s presence at various conferences which focused on consumer rights. The Urban Coalition’s Conference held an “Urban Consumer Clinic” in June 1973. NWRO Chairperson Johnnie Tillmon attended this conference, representing NWRO. One topic discussed at the clinic on consumerism was how “Blacks, Browns, Native Americans, Ethnic Whites and other minorities” might collaborate to obtain economic and political power. The Southern Regional Council Food Stamp Meetings held in 1974 were attended by NWRO, Movement for Economic Justice (MEJ), National Urban League (NUL), as well as several consumer groups such as Consumer Federation of America and the National Consumer League. MEJ, which worked closely with welfare organizations to provide administrative support and resources, also participated in consumer information conferences.
Other organizations connected with welfare rights, such as the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, were also concerned with consumer issues. The Welfare Council wrote several position statements related to consumer credit issues and welfare and, within their newsletter NOW (News of Welfare), made many references to the “consumer bill of rights” package as major consumer protection legislation. Harlem Consumer Education, Inc. held annual conferences; during their 6th annual Consumer Education conference in October 1968, consumer co-ops, consumer legislation, economic boycotts, and communication with consumers were discussed. In their “First semi-annual report of the Public Interest Economic Center” written in December 1972, the Public Interest Economic Center (PIE-C) made the connection between the poor, women, minorities and consumers – stating they had common interests and shared a lack of power and resources to fight against political and judicial matters. Though these connections were made in the hopes of nurturing alliances between these groups, within the appeals was a lack of explicit recognition of the intersectionality of many of these identities, particularly poor black women as consumers.

Rent strikes were organized by several NWRO organizations during various periods, including Jobs or Income Now (JOIN) and The Woodlawn Organization (TWO). Tenants were regularly referred to as “consumers” as these groups attempted to draw attention to the exploitation of renters by slum landlords. The Lawndale Tenant’s Union utilized regular rent strikes in Chicago as a way of fighting absentee landlords and forced evictions of neighbors stating “the only way to stop the man is to stop his money”. Another welfare organization, unaffiliated with NWRO, called TACO-Tenant’s and Consumer’s Organization was located in the Chicago neighborhood of Uptown and addressed consumer issues. There remained a sustained interest by the NWRO (and other welfare organizations) in identifying the poor as consumers throughout the duration of the Welfare Rights Movement. Within George Wiley’s personal papers there were many reports and articles related to the “negro market” and consumer boycotts, further evidence that Wiley and the NWRO were conscious of consumer rights issues and activism taking place across the nation.
Given this persistent interest by the national organization in consumer rights, particularly credit for the poor, one question to consider is how local community organizations affiliated with NWRO came to understand their groups’ roles in these national efforts. In comparing two NWRO affiliated organizations in Chicago, Jobs or Income Now (JOIN) and The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), I sought to understand how these organizations came to very different conclusions regarding 1. the role of consumerism within the larger poor people’s movement and 2. the invoking of various types of intersectional political consumerism. How is it that these organizations seemed to enthusiastically adopt some forms of intersectional political consumerism and incorporate its strategies within its efforts to obtain rights for poor people, while openly criticizing and/or resisting other NWROs strategies around intersectional political consumerism?\textsuperscript{14} In order to address this question, the histories of these organizations should be discussed. This chapter will describe the histories of JOIN and TWO, as well as the communities they represented, and identify the specific types of intersectional political consumerism representative of these organizations’ ideological influences.

**Chicago: South versus North**

The Woodlawn area\textsuperscript{15}, which extended from 60\textsuperscript{th} – 67\textsuperscript{th} Streets and South Park – Stoney Island Ave\textsuperscript{16}, became predominately black following the major out-migration of whites to the suburbs following World War II. By the mid-1950s Woodlawn had attracted stable ‘middle-class’ black families seeking improved living conditions not limited to affordable housing.\textsuperscript{17} It was not long before the community began to feel the effects of discrimination and exploitation in the form of white flight\textsuperscript{18} of businesses (particularly impactful because much of the area was commercially zoned\textsuperscript{19}), conversion of larger residences into smaller, cheaper and poorer quality dwellings, and the development of transient hotels and taverns. By the 1960s, Woodlawn was 89% black, with an equal minority of Puerto Rican and white people in the community.\textsuperscript{20} With the creation of expressways to annex the black-concentrated area, and as the community property deteriorated and crime increased, the area was quickly classified as a ghetto, vulnerable to unscrupulous business opportunists, politicians and other white institutions.
The local community group TWO began as the Temporary Woodlawn Organization and was a collaboration between clergy, local businessmen and representatives from various block clubs within the community. On January 5, 1961 representatives from the Woodlawn Pastor’s Alliance, the Woodlawn Business Men’s Association, the United Woodlawn Conference, the Block Club Council and the Knights of St. John held a meeting to discuss the forming of this independent, temporary organization that would be charged with “carrying out the will of the people”. This group sought the assistance of Saul Alinsky and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) for organization and administrative resources. Alinsky (and a conglomeration of churches), however, had shown an interest in Woodlawn as a potential project several years prior to the Temporary Organization’s contact asking for assistance. Following a failed IAF organizing attempt in 1954, in December 1958, representatives from the Catholic, Lutheran and Presbyterian churches held a number of conferences discussing what they believed to be pressing issues of Woodlawn. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese, of which Alinsky was heavily involved, suggested the group facilitate forming a large community organization, similar to Alinsky’s strategy with the Back-of-the-Yards neighborhood. The Catholic Church’s interest was actually in securing West Woodlawn, stopping white flight and preserving the neighborhood from the fate of the neighboring deteriorating East Woodlawn, which had more black residents and suffered a “pattern of demoralization”. For Alinsky, the fractured and highly dispersed and decentralized leadership within the community made it an attractive target for organizing. By August of 1961 the IAF would begin formally funding The Temporary Organization (TWO).

The creation of TWO also provided entre of white religious institutions into the discourse of black community development and self-determination. The changing racial demographics of their congregations coupled with the deterioration of the communities within which their churches resided, in their view, gave ‘legitimate’ claim to take institutional actions to assist black neighborhoods. One problematic aspect of this discourse was the privileging of whiteness as religious leaders considered the ways in which they might assist the community in avoiding/preventing the complete
disappearance/absence of white people as they abandoned the area. Under the banner of integration, the organized church’s efforts hoped to improve conditions in Woodlawn to again become an attractive space for white people to live. Rather than directly address issues of black disenfranchisement and racially-motivated divestment and economic exploitation of the community by government and businesses alike, or the impact institutions such as University of Chicago had in targeting vulnerable sectors of the community which were predominately black and economically fragile, the church chose instead to center the presence of whites/whiteness as an indicator of the neighborhood’s health and potential for renewal, thus completely sidestepping any real discussion around how racism operated in the city. By engaging and centering Saul Alinsky and the IAF during their discussions about ‘what to do about Woodlawn’ the church essentially conceded to the notion that white men must be brought into black communities to assist in their organization. White men could have just as easily been used to organize efforts to combat the racist practices of other white men which stifled the viability of communities such as Woodlawn, however, this strategy was not a consideration for the clergy. They instead opted for an organization whose program solutions did little to disrupt the status quo.

In contrast to Woodlawn, Uptown was described as one of the toughest neighborhoods in America with:

more street fights and bar fights and back-alley fights than in all the other Chicago precincts put together. First in wife-beatings … second in Chicago robberies … second in knifings and among the worst in the world for “just plain senseless vandalism. … More American Indians live here than anywhere else outside the reservations. East Indians are here, blacks, the Spanish-speaking, Orientals. … But it’s the white southern migrants-mountain folk from eastern Kentucky, East Tennessee and North Carolina-that make Uptown what it is. More of them set down here than anywhere in the country. One out of every three men, women, and children that walk Uptown streets is originally from Appalachia.

Institutions such as the press and police defined the area by its crime and poverty rather than identifying root causes of these community issues, thus ignoring efforts of the people within community and describing them as helpless and needing to be saved from themselves.
Of the estimated 10,000 ex coal-miners of Appalachia and their families who migrated to Chicago, many of them moved to the Uptown neighborhood. By 1967, Uptown was estimated to have approximately 50,000 residents, with the majority being Southern-Appalachian whites. The Uptown area was frequently referred to (by those outside of the community) as a white hillbilly ghetto. Yet the organization Jobs or Income Now (JOIN) described the Uptown community as a multiracial area with many of its community members being Puerto Rican, Indian, and Black as well as White. In speeches and written communications regarding Uptown, JOIN would frequently make note of the attempts of institutions in power to divide poor people along racial lines as they fought and struggled for rights to quality welfare, employment and housing.

JOIN, a community union in Uptown, started in Fall 1964 (three years after the Temporary Woodlawn Organization) as one of a dozen Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) projects in Northern cities that came out of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The SDS projects were originally administered by the Economic Research And Action Project (ERAP) sponsored by the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) (Frost 2001). After spending time in the community and surveying the problems and needs of the community (by way of having the people come to them for help with their problems), the organization began to focus on housing conditions, police harassment, and quality of welfare programs. The group believed that if people received help with their specific issues, they would come to trust and accept the organization, which would then connect their specific issues with structural issues that could be organized around. With 1200 members, JOIN had 21 full time staff (11 of which were from the community and the other 10 were college graduates) and it was the largest organization during the 1960s in Chicago that was organizing poor (Southern-Appalachian) whites in an urban area. Peggy Terry, who was white and was born in Oklahoma and moved from Alabama to Uptown Chicago in 1964, was an active member of CORE, became active in local welfare rights as a key leader of JOIN and the editor of its newsletter *The Firing Line*, and later united the local group with the NWRO. Terry was also vocal about JOIN needing to break away from SDS people in the organization and that the poor and working poor begin to speak and lead themselves. “We believe that the time has come for us to turn
to our own people, poor and working-class Whites, for direction, support and inspiration, to organize around our own identity, our own interests.” Eventually, JOIN would come to separate itself from SDS influence. Unlike the Temporary Woodlawn Organization’s founders, JOIN members were interested in disrupting status quo inequities related to class, politics, and people’s relationships with the state (See Table 3-1). JOIN was also outspoken in its desire to organize itself from within rather than be organized by outside influences.

**Different Communities, Different Goals**

What precipitated the creation of the Temporary Woodlawn Organization was an urban planning initiative by the Land Clearance Commission and City Plan Commission that was drafted without the consultation of community members and excluded the community from decision making. The plan, which was drawn up by the South East Commission was heavily influenced by the interests of University of Chicago, which was land-locked and in need of cleared ground for their South Campus expansion plans. This prompted a reactionary measure; the development of the Woodlawn Community Rehabilitation Plan was created by leaders in the community who felt there should be a response and resistance to the initial city plan which excluded input and oversight from the community of Woodlawn. Essentially community members were attempting to thwart a land grab by the University of Chicago. The demands of the Temporary Organization’s rehabilitation plan spoke to the interest of Woodlawn business owners, various community groups and clubs, and religious institutions. The Temporary Woodlawn Organization’s plan included a demand for a more comprehensive community plan, and a call for respect for the rights of Woodlawn residents. Specifically, the plan called for a guarantee that the area would remain a neighborhood that included affordable low and middle income housing, that the people of Woodlawn would be represented and heard related to all planning, that priority be given to first rehabilitating non-residential properties so that new affordable housing might built for current Woodlawn residents living in dangerous conditions, that small, neighborhood retail businesses be provided with additional incentives that would facilitate their viability, and that special aid be provided to property owners to rehabilitate their dwellings.
Table 3 – 1

Chicago Welfare Rights Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Woodlawn Organization (TWO)</th>
<th>Jobs or Income Now (JOIN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Make-up</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year created</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Woodlawn – South side of city</td>
<td>Uptown – North side of city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for creation</td>
<td>Short term response to urban renewal and University of Chicago encroachment on neighborhood</td>
<td>Long term response to job creation and other issues of poor stemming from SDS Project following March on Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intersectional Identities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership make-up</td>
<td>Predominately poor and working class African American women and men</td>
<td>Predominately poor and working class white women and men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership make-up</td>
<td>Predominately church-affiliated men-led, with majority women taking up organizational and protest roles</td>
<td>Predominately women-led, with majority of women taking up organizational and protest roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power Navigation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major campaigns</td>
<td>“Square Deal Campaign”, rent strikes</td>
<td>Welfare programs, rent strikes, ending police brutality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliances / Affiliations</td>
<td>Industrial Area Foundation (IAF), Woodlawn Business Men’s Association (WBMA)</td>
<td>Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading ideologies / structures</td>
<td>Patriarchal, capitalist, anti-communist</td>
<td>Feminist, anti-capitalist, socialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary realms of power engaged</td>
<td>African American Consumerism</td>
<td>(Condition of) Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of intersectional political consumerism employed and major successes</td>
<td>Commercial-centered</td>
<td>Community-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successfully negotiated with landlords for rental housing improvements; Lobbied major retail chain stores for employment for blacks; Managed and rented community housing; Opened local supermarket and employed 50+ community members</td>
<td>Successfully organized 1200 poor (primarily white) people within community; Successfully negotiated with landlords for rental housing improvements; Started community buying clubs and food co-ops; Lobbied welfare offices on behalf of Uptown residents, securing benefits for them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uptown would also become vulnerable to city planning several years after the Temporary Woodlawn Organization. Addressing issues of decent housing for low-income families, there were concerns of Uptown residents being displaced/relocated by city hall and the community felt the Lakeview-Uptown Community Council, who was responsible for drafting plans for the neighborhood,
was seated by Mayor Richard J. Daley supporters who remained complicit to the neighborhood’s demolition and poor people’s displacement, in the name of urban renewal.  

“This is a slum!”: Rental Consumers and the Slumlords Who Hate Them

During the 1960s, landlords of low-income properties began to see an increase in tenant demands for accountability related to the condition of their properties. Renters began seeing themselves as consumers – and as such, these consumers had expectations as well as rights. Recognizing their rights to decent housing, afforded to them through rent payments, rent strikes, similar to boycotts, became a common strategy for rental consumers to fight back against slumlords. In order to have successful rent strikes, tenants needed to be organized and unified.

TWO began organizing pickets, rent strikes and sit-ins demonstrations in efforts to force unscrupulous landlords to improve tenant conditions. In May 1961, TWO took actions on behalf of the residents of 6244 S. Greenwood to get major repairs to the building, including fixing the heat, leaky ceilings and walls, having garbage removed from basement, fixing rotten window sills and frames, and fixing chipped paint and plaster. The first in what would be a series of rent strikes took place during December 1961, which included a picket of thirty-three TWO members, targeted the home of Julius Mark who was the landlord of 6434-36 S. Kimbark. TWO had organized rent strikes against Mark because of his refusal to address rat and roach infestation, falling plaster, hazardous electrical outlets and a broken water pipe, which resulted in tenants having no water, and coal for heat stored in basement being ruined. TWO would later purchase and deliver four tons of coal so that rent strike residents would have heat (since the landlord had not replenished the supply since the rent strike). In February 1962, another demonstration (held in building owner Millard Brown’s office) on behalf of the residents of the 6110-12 S. Woodlawn and 6338 Harper buildings focused around getting heat and electricity back into the building after the owner refused to pay or allow Commonwealth Edison assess to basements to have the meters read. Thirty members of TWO’s Housing and Planning Committee picketed Brown’s office and TWO assisted the tenants in getting an injunction to order Brown to allow Edison access to the basement to read the metes and have the power restored. Five months later, TWO would claim a rent
strike victory after Victory Mutual Life Insurance took over the building from Brown and agreed to make repairs. Two rent strikes were successful because they had notable numbers of people willing to picket and strike and because they also had resources to assist these rental customers as they weathered the storm of the strikes. JOIN would take on TWO’s successful strategy as their own several years later. JOIN organized multiple rent strikes which served to improve conditions for Uptown residents. In May 1966, JOIN assisted the tenants of 4107-15 Broadway by organizing a rent strike and picketing in front of the building to discourage the landlord from collecting the rent and in getting the landlord to sign a contract with JOIN to make various repairs to the building and exterminate rats and roaches. JOIN also organized the tenants of the 1128-38 Sunnyside building, and the rent strike there resulted in a contract signed by the landlord to fix broken toilets and water system, hire a janitor for the building, put lights in the hallways and exterminate rats and roaches. The rent strikes were a good organizing strategy for getting neighborhood people involved with JOIN by addressing some immediate issues.

Despite several successes with rent strikes and obtaining collective bargaining contracts with landlords as a strategy, the larger housing goal for JOIN was to end slums in the Uptown area. JOIN recognized that rent strikes led to the improvement of conditions for the tenants within those buildings, but in order for the poor to have decent housing, politicians needed to be held accountable and the poor needed to resist the city’s efforts to push them out through urban planning. In 1967 JOIN embarked on a more aggressive effort targeting Mayor Daley’s Urban Renewal plan. Collecting signatures and calling for the city to provide decent housing and schools for the poor and to “Stop Urban Renewal. Start Poor People’s Power.”

A key aspect of JOIN’s organizing strategies was the studying of the histories and strategies of other Chicago organizations. Specifically, black organizations, including workshops related to the histories and strategies of The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), the West Side Organization (WSO), the Coordinating Committee of Community Organizations (CCCO) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). JOIN was heavily influenced by the efforts of the SCLC and the black freedom movement, which resulted in improved race relations (and more connectedness) between southern whites
participating in JOIN and blacks. The group even modeled the phrase “People’s Power” and “Hillbilly Power” after the “Black Power” rally cry. It was in October of 1965, inspired by Martin Luther King’s SCLC staff, that JOIN became active in a citywide movement to end slums. JOIN also worked collaboratively with The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), participating in a demonstration together against Poverty Director Shriver and Mayor Daley after they excluded poor people from a poverty conference and banquet held December 1965. JOIN would later build formal coalitions with black organizations it had previously studied. In 1966, for example, the City Wide Welfare Union (CWWU) was created as a joint organizing of JOIN, WSO and the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (KOCO). They offered a joint statement of support for the candidacy of William Robinson as new director of the welfare department, to succeed then recently deceased Raymond Hilliard.

Within JOIN’s community organizing training materials, common themes emerged such as the need for political and economic power for the poor, the impact of urban renewal for the poor, and the creation of new and strengthening of existing independent grass root organizations of black, brown and white poor people. Community organizers gave a history of the role of the organizer within American history as well as the history of the Chicago political machine, the role of the democratic party in Chicago, as well as the various ethnic blocs represented, the structure, policies and common practices/operations of the city government, illegal activities within politics, and the independent organizations that function outside of the political machine. Other parts of this training focused on the different types of community organizations and what decision-making and financial structures work best for organizations depending on their constituencies and their community’s needs. Here, there is a recognition that because JOIN and TWOs, for example, communities had different constituencies and varying needs, it was possible, and likely expected that they would be structured differently. Still, the ideological differences and histories that become embedded in these organizations may focus and limit the strategies employed to meet the organizations’ goals.
Visions of Self-Determination

Fifteen months after its creation, TWO would become a permanent organization and be renamed The Woodlawn Organization. The goals of The Woodlawn Organization were to work toward integration of housing, schools and jobs, to ensure the Woodlawn area received city services, and to preserve the existing housing in the neighborhood.86 TWOs first convention was held in March 1962, with delegates representing over 100 organizations from the Woodlawn area. The group elected Reverend Arthur Brazier, pastor of the predominately black Apostolic Church of God, as president.87 The convention’s theme was “Self-Determination” and the delegation voted in favor of community self-governance and planning related to housing, jobs, and schools in the area88. Reverend Ralph Abernathy of the SCLC was the keynote speaker for the inaugural convention. Like JOIN, TWO had connections with SCLC. SCLC’s presence, which included Ralph Abernathy and C.T. Vivian as keynote speakers during multiple conventions89, and their messages of non-violence echoed SCLC’s efforts to promote civil disobedience/demonstrations in the north. The group committed itself to conducting mass demonstrations addressing job discrimination and rent strikes to stop slum housing, and, unlike JOIN, explicitly stated a commitment to fighting communism.90 Also, unlike JOIN, TWO received early positive attention from Mayor Daley91 and began with a less than antagonistic relationship. Mayor Daley, speaking at the convention, assured the membership that no final plans related to Woodlawn would be made without first consulting with and gaining approval from the people of Woodlawn.92 These comments came after the mayor released the city proposal for the new “Woodlawn Plan”, which was sharply criticized as a plan to remove black people from the area.93 One Woodlawn resident stated in a New Crusader newspaper article “We have come to realize that all Negro-owned property, however new, modern or well-kept, is ‘slum’ or ‘deteriorated.’ We have come to realize that white-owned property ‘Back of the Yards’ (where the mayor lives) is, however old and decrepit, worthy of preservation and is not to be rehabilitated.”94 The resident’s comment spoke to what was believed to have been an anti-black sentiment amongst city officials that labeled black neighborhoods as inferior and white neighborhoods as ideal, regardless of the physical condition of the area. Interestingly, the Back-Of-The-Yards neighborhood referenced by the resident is
the same Back-Of-The-Yards neighborhood previously organized by Alinsky. A year later, Daley would announce a plan for the city to buy commercial property from 61st to 63rd on Cottage Grove (part of which was previously being considered for University of Chicago’s South Campus) to build low cost relocation housing.95 By its third convention in 1964, TWO had counted among the organizations accomplishments the cleaning up of 200 slum buildings in Woodlawn and the securing of over 400 area jobs for black people.96

In 1965 TWO issued a working paper related to poverty and race (in Chicago) which discussed the people’s fight for self-determination through representation and voice related to urban renewal plans initiated by the city and University of Chicago, as well as poverty initiatives controlled by the Office of Economic Opportunity and Chicago Committee on Urban Opportunity.97 The paper laid out how, on an institutional level, blacks were being disenfranchised, pointing to the segregated housing market, segregated schools and lack of employment opportunities and union representation as but a few examples. The call for self-determination was a call for local and national government officials to get out of the way and allow the community to decide how to allocate resources earmarked to combat poverty98. Early on, TWO incorporated anti-communist rhetoric within their goals and vision statements. Invoking communism was often used as a weapon against black militant groups, so the organization’s efforts to distance itself from communism was understandable. Plus, TWO was clearly capitalist in its economic ideology, as evidenced by its particular brand of engagement with intersectional political consumerism, opting for community and racial uplift by way of business ventures and commercially-centered political consumerism which sought to engage merchants.

The Future Outlook League (FOL) was a fledgling black capitalist organization in the area which had a healthy presence in Woodlawn, with ten squad leaders in the area.99 The FOL, formed in 1935 in Ohio and influenced by the Chicago boycotts, was a direct action organization whose goal was to target white-owned stores “that depended on African-American customers but barred them from employment” (Phillips 1999:190). Arthur B. Carlson, who was the President of the Future Outlook League in Woodlawn, worked collaboratively with George Kyros, President of the Woodlawn Business Men’s
Association and owner of Alexander’s Restaurant, on a program to integrate the service staff. Carlson would later briefly become directly affiliated with TWO (as an acting temporary Vice President) but by October 1961, the FOL had withdrawn from the organization. While Carlson and the FOL were initially drawn to TWO because its calls for self-determination and its engagement with a form of political consumerism related to the “Square Deal” campaign seemed to be consistent with the goals of FOL, ultimately the groups diverged over strategy. Still, TWO would later take on strategies reminiscent of FOL’s goals around employing blacks at white businesses they patronize. For example, in July 1963 TWO representatives approached Marshall Field’s demanding that at least 20 black people be hired immediately, stating that Marshall Field’s had longstanding discriminatory hiring practices against blacks while benefiting from black patronage. Several months later (bargaining began Sept 24, 1963), after threatening a boycott and picket, TWO negotiated with High-Low Foods Inc., a local grocery chain store, to hire 12 black employees, including a black manager. Here lies another distinction between JOIN and TWO. TWO employed its intersectional political consumerism as strategy to secure employment (in white businesses) for its community members. This quid pro quo follows a line of thinking that suggests merchants who benefit from the money of black patrons have a responsibility to the black community to employ some of its members. In essence, TWO attempted, through intersectional political consumerism, to alter the social contract between black residents and white businesses.

**Community-Centered Versus Commercial-Centered Intersectional Political Consumerism**

During the mid-1960s TWO began more financial ventures, including managing and renting a 600 unit housing project, operating a bus company, and opening a supermarket employing 56 black people in the TWO-Hillmans shopping complex, with two-thirds of the board members of the shopping center belonging to TWO. For TWO, self-determination included being directly engaged in capitalism and helping to start several black-operated businesses in the community. One such business, Observer Printing and Publishing, was responsible for publishing TWO’s newsletter *The Woodlawn Observer* as well as a dozen other community organizations and commercial businesses to print their publications, including a weekly publication for Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). While JOIN clearly
expressed a disdain for capitalism, TWO used its capitalist ventures to promote their political agenda. The Observer’s tagline was “Craftsmanship for Self-Determination”.

In contrast, JOIN’s focus was on community-centered forms of intersectional political consumerism. It was on March 1, 1967 during a welfare committee meeting that JOIN first discussed starting a buyers’ club food co-op for the poor and working poor of Uptown. The food co-op would allow members to pool their money or food stamps to buy from wholesalers, rather than large chain stores. In The Firing Line, Terry makes reference to the “big chain stores who charge us much too much for low grade food, and who would see us die of starvation rather than lower their prices.” Within a month, JOIN was encouraging people to join the new Leland Food Buying Club and expected more buying clubs to be formed on Kenmore, Clifton and Lakeland. Here, there is a clear sentiment that capitalist, big corporations care more about profit than the welfare of people. The comments signal a history of exploitation and distrust of chain stores/corporations, and a preference for wholesalers who are perceived to be less interested in raising prices for profit. With this suggestion of a food co-op, the members of JOIN are allowed to be ‘consumers’, and through the process are relieved of the stigma attached with using food stamps in stores, and are able to choose the items they want to purchase. 25 families participated.

The organization JOIN saw a clear link between the realm of consumerism and political protest. Terry writes “Poor people are fighting back. They are setting up Food Co-ops, forming their own Credit Unions.” But tools such as co-ops and credit unions are community-centered mechanisms that harness the collective power of individuals without the incentive of profit. This is not a support of capitalism within the context of consumer activities, but rather a call for poor people to work collaboratively, without the influence or surveillance of the private sector. This is a very different political consumer strategy than The Woodlawn Organization, whose ideological roots embraced capitalism.

The residents of Uptown and Woodlawn both experienced discriminatory price gouging and unfair treatment from store merchants. JOIN was aware of the retail practices in their community stores that negatively impacted the poor, such as false packaging to conceal contents and mislabeling packaging.
of items to appear to be cheaper (or have reduced prices) without actually lowering prices. Though there was federal legislation to prevent such deceptive practices, there were no federal penalties associated with breaking these laws. JOIN also organized a boycott and picketing of Price Rite repair shop after a local woman brought in two radios and a phonograph to have them repaired only to have the radios sold without her permission and the phonograph returned with the arm missing. JOIN drafted a consumer and business agreement, with the sentiment that the agreement might expand to include other businesses. This was a strategy TWO had employed several years prior. Still, these strategies were employed far less frequently by JOIN than more community-centered forms of intersectional political consumerism.

Woodlawn residents made efforts to work collaboratively with local business owners to ensure its residents were treated fairly and were dealt with respectfully. The community’s relationship with the Woodlawn Businessmen’s Association (a TWO member organization) was but one demonstration of how the Woodlawn residents went about holding merchants accountable to the community. TWOs Resolution on Retail Trade spoke directly to the communities desire to have businesses within its neighborhood (to provide important goods and services at low cost), the organization’s promotion of shopping in the Woodlawn area (and supporting efforts that would facilitate shopping such as parking lots) as well as the insistence that these businesses demonstrate fair retail practices.

The Woodlawn Business Men’s Association (WBMA), which was all white and started in 1955 when University of Chicago launched its land clearance deal, joined TWO in the hopes of remaining viable in Woodlawn. WBMA President George Kyros was a strong advocate/spokesman of TWO, stating

> We must each support the other if we are going to have economic security, social equality and business prosperity. That is why the business men are such vigorous supporters of our new Temporary Woodlawn Organization. This is a single, unified effort from which everyone will benefit. We business men know that we cannot prosper unless all the people prosper with us.

In March 1963, the WBMA gave a $600 check as membership dues to TWO. Kyros, who presented the check on behalf of WBMA to TWO President Arthur Brazier during a photo op for the Woodlawn Booster stated the WBMA “appreciates TWO support of the businessmen’s desire to develop in
Woodlawn shopping facilities second to none in the neighborhoods of Chicago. Even as the WBMA organization expressed connection and solidarity with the predominantly black Woodlawn community, local businessmen had a clear financial interest in supporting TWO and its efforts to resist University of Chicago’s encroachment as well as its continued efforts to conserve the area of Woodlawn. Having seen the effects of urban renewal in other parts of the city lead to the removal of small businesses with the insertion of large chain stores into commercially zoned spaces, local white business owners were afraid of being pushed out of the Woodlawn area and losing their investments. Still, not all of the business owners were eager to support TWO. A good portion of Kyros’ efforts went toward halting white flight by easing the minds of his fellow white business owners that Woodlawn and their business investments in the area should not be abandoned and that support of TWO would be the best vehicle through which to secure their futures.

Picketing and boycotting as a strategy for fighting discriminatory hiring practices and unfair treatment of customers were staples among TWO’s tactics. TWO’s most public and scrutinized operation was called the “Square Deal” campaign, which included a march on businesses believed to have unfairly treated its customers. The Square Deal Campaign is discussed in Chapter 4. TWO continued these employment efforts, targeting not only businesses but also their suppliers. In 1966, CCCO and SCLC sponsored an Operation Breadbasket initiative to get jobs for blacks with companies that were suppliers for various Chicago supermarkets. The company Certified was one of the targets of this campaign and its Chairman of the Board, Mr. DaVinci, was also President of the company’s milk supplier Country Delight. Country Delight was known for not hiring black people and DaVinci confirmed this during a meeting with several CCCO representatives, calling black people lazy. With the CCCO getting nowhere with DaVinci, TWO decided to intervene and was able to broker a deal with 43 owners of Certified stores in the Woodlawn area to pull Country Delight products from their stores. Worth noting is the contrast in dominant strategies of the predominately white and poor JOIN organization and the predominantly black and poor TWO organization.
JOIN and its members were privileged in their choosing of community-centered forms of intersectional political consumerism, such as food co-ops and credit unions, and in their criticism of the CWRO’s efforts to obtain credit from merchants, including NWRO’s national Sears credit campaign, because their access to whiteness did not prevent them from being identified in the role of ‘consumer’. Bauman’s theory of the flawed consumer ignores the intersectionality of race and class in understanding how, even as class could have prohibited these white community members from being seen as legitimate, their race did not disqualify them, rather it validated them as consumers. The Consumer Rights Movement and the legislation that followed was unquestionably tied to whiteness, as whites remained the standard bearers while African Americans protested in consumer spaces for access to equal treatment as consumers. In contrast, for TWO members to take up commercially-centered forms of intersectional political consumerism meant to continue a long tradition of resistance to a system that refuses to acknowledge them as legitimate consumers precisely because of race, regardless of class. So, the distinction between community-centered versus commercially-centered forms of intersectional political consumerism is intentional and is influenced by a long history of these people’s relationships with consumerism and capitalism, relationships heavily influenced by class as well as race. The anti-capitalist, pro-communal, poor and working poor centered stance of JOIN as it related to its engagement with intersectional political consumerism is not without its inconsistencies. One JOIN flyer stated:

How long will welfare recipients have to wait to enjoy Christmas?? Forever???....As long as Americans think poor people should be punished for being poor. Illinois welfare recipients will get over 30% below the government’s minimum income for survival. Their children will grow up hungry and cold, poorly dressed and poorly educated and without anything in their Christmas stockings. Christmas is just like any other day for public aid recipients except their kids will look a little hungrier and sadder knowing other Americans are enjoying their Christmas.

Here, JOIN is acknowledging the discrepancies between the poor and others and the material deprivation of the poor that is magnified during holiday seasons. However, in their effort to demand additional allowances for such holidays, and that these allowances be expedited so that the poor may have some of what others have, there is a relenting that this engagement will be with a marketplace that supports and perpetuates capitalism and big business. And this message is a different kind of political engagement.
from the rent strikes, co-ops and credit unions\textsuperscript{135}, as it is wrapped in a holiday that is cemented within (white) middle class consumerism. When JOIN says “Hilliard is no Santa Claus” and “Christmas is like any day on welfare—terrible”\textsuperscript{136} and implore shoppers to “consider what it would mean to have no money for toys, food or clothes this Christmas”\textsuperscript{137} they are calling on (white) middle class values of materiality. In this way, though JOIN is privileged in its position to choose and more forcefully advocate community-centered intersectional political consumerism (because denial of access is not based on race), there is no complete divorcing from capitalism precisely because they use both mechanisms of political consumer activism, community-centered and commercially-centered. What all these protests come to represent is a desire for closer proximity to middle class symbolism and materiality. Ultimately, this proximity does nothing to dismantle systemic oppression of the poor, white or black.

So, when Terry says “what we have to do is tear this system down and build it back to suit ourselves. The reason we believe that JOIN is a success is because it produced a core of strong, serious working-class whites who are willing to help them tear it down and rebuild it for the benefit of both races”\textsuperscript{138} she is speaking of the capitalism which is implicated within much of JOIN’s organizing and protesting, yet calls on the same system to improve the material position of the poor. Still, that the poor should be expected to be without, within a society that couples materiality with citizenship is equally problematic.\textsuperscript{139} Oscar Wilde said “to recommend thrift to the poor is both grotesque and insulting. It is like advising a man who is starving to eat less.” It is disingenuous to promote a narrative that marries democracy and citizenship with middle-class consumerism and then deny the poor access to that ‘role’ and chastise them when they demand it as a right.

**Race, Class, Gender Reflexivity**

Ideologically, those from SDS who would later form JOIN took to heart Huey Newton’s call for whites to organize their own communities. The organization was interested in cultivating ‘radical opposition and consciousness among whites’. Recall, the UAW were the original sponsors of this project, and organizers felt that automation was a threat to workers. As a result, in preparation of this threat, they felt poor whites needed to organize around issues such as guaranteed annual income\textsuperscript{140} JOIN’s
ideological lineage points to organized labor influenced by Marxism as an (ideological) movement
compass. The group strongly objected to urban renewal plans of the city stating “the institutions of
housing and urban renewal is a dominant manifestation of capitalism at the local level.” 141 JOIN also
housed former members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress of Racial
Equality (CORE) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) who became disillusioned
by the hierarchal nature and tactics of these organizations . 142 In addition, within JOIN were members
who recognized that the whites in organizations like SNCC and CORE had middle-class backgrounds and
were more interested in trying to organize black people than they were with organizing their own people.
And further, that middle-class whites needed to come to terms with the idea that working class and poor
whites were ‘their own people’. 143

JOIN viewed itself as a “conflict organization” aimed at resistance and revolution rather than a
resolution community organization aimed at compliance and reform, and explicitly rejected the ‘Saul
Alinsky model’ of community organization, stating “JOIN’s approach to the community is to involve the
poor first, to build a union that the non-aligned, non-established, low-income people control and which
brings ministers, social workers and progressive shop owners into support at a second stage on the terms
of the poor.” 144 This is in direct contrast to TWO, which not only focused on working within the confines
of systems and government (in some cases) but was also an Industrial Area Foundations supported
organization and project of Saul Alinsky.

JOINs female leadership was visible and critical in the organization centering women’s concerns.
During her time with JOIN, Terry was invited by Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 to be a part of the
steering committee for the Poor Peoples Campaign 145 and spoke on Solidarity Day on June 19, 1968. 146

Within her speech, Terry states:

Poor whites are here today because we found out that 65% of the poor in these United States are
white. We are here today united with other races of poor people, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-
Americans, Indians, and Black people, in a common cause. That COMMON CAUSE is
FREEDOM! …. We hereby serve notice that poor whites are beginning to understand that black
and white in this country are pitted against each other for no other reason than that it is profitable
for the rich white folks to do so. 147
Dovie Coleman, a black Uptown resident who was chair of the Organizing Committee for JOIN was also on the steering committee of the Poor Peoples Campaign with Terry. In comments to a reporter she stated “They have taken away everything from the poor…Now with this new welfare legislation they are even trying to take away our children. That’s too much. I guess that’s why we’re all here. We’ve never had much, but we intend to change things so at least our children will have a chance.”

According to a May 23, 1966 JOIN news release, Dovie Thurman (Also known as Little Dovie), Dovie Coleman and Harriet Stulman were arrested for remaining in the Cook County Welfare office building after officials refused to meet their demands. Thurman explained she was arrested protesting the inhumane treatment within the welfare system. She stated in a JOIN community union newsletter “My reasons for going to jail was to prove that welfare recipients should have a union that’s able to demand collective bargaining and to be able to approve any welfare laws that are passed by the legislature. I feel the only way people are going to know how bad conditions are for recipients are for recipients to stand up and protest for their rights, even if it means going to jail. I’ll tell you one thing, the matrons in prison treat you better than some of the caseworkers. And they see to it that you get baloney sandwiches which welfare sometimes doesn’t allow.”

“In my husband’s fighting for this country over in Vietnam and I can’t even get the welfare department to pay the $6 a month they owe me.”

In July 1966, JOIN, along with members of Kenwood Oakland Community Organization (KOCO) marched and picketed the downtown welfare office to protest welfare conditions and get a meeting the director of public aid. Dovie Coleman and Dovie Thurman were among the JOIN representatives who secured a meeting as a result of the demonstration and spoke with the director, Raymond Hilliard, regarding welfare conditions. This was the first time such a meeting had taken place. Hilliard had agreed to have regular meetings with JOIN and KOCO to discuss these issues but died shortly thereafter.

In 1967 Dovie Thurman, who would later serve as one of the regional delegates for the Poor Peoples Organizing Convention in June 1968 and assisted JOIN’s theater initiative, met with the Director of Public Aid William Robinson (who replaced Hilliard after his death) at the beginning of his
tenure with the welfare office. They met to discuss the Welfare Rehabilitation Service Center and the department’s current policies and treatment of the poor. In the “Welfare Rights” column of The Firing Line Thurman stated “I told him that Springfield should mail out all checks in advance of holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas so welfare people could enjoy a little of this middle class season of fun.”

The leadership of JOIN reflected and centered the issues affecting the people of Uptown. That these women served in visible leadership positions, protested and were arrested for their resistance spoke to the integral role these women played in influencing the direction of the organization.

TWO, in contrast to JOIN was a very patriarchal organization. The president of the organization was Pastor Arthur Brazier and most of TWOs formal leadership positions were held by men. Despite the fact that 60% of the organization’s inaugural delegates were women and women were very visible as foot soldiers on picket lines for rent strikes, TWO, as well as its primary sponsor, the IAF, remained openly hostile toward women leadership within the community. While doing due diligence to determine if Woodlawn was a viable project, Nicholas von Hoffman (who was a lead field representative for IAF) in a memo to Alinsky states “The West Woodlawn area has long been dominated by a clique of formidable matriarchs who have been running their husbands and the show for years. Without a doubt one of the important organizational tasks that would confront us in West Woodlawn would be gathering the men and putting some spine into them.” This hostility toward female leadership persisted as the organization grew. For example, in a memo to Alinsky from IAF Woodlawn field representative, Leon Finney referred to TWO member Rosa Pitts (who was also area Vice President of South Shore organization) as “an ungrateful bitch”. In the same memo, Finney also stated that TWO should “get a strong man” in the area of Parkside where Ada Moore was currently acting as Vice President after another woman, Johnson, had been removed. Rather than finding ways to incorporate indigenous leadership within the area, part of IAFs strategy was to remove women’s leadership and influence. This can help to explain the gender dynamics and apparent sexism embedded within TWO, particularly when contrasted with JOIN.
One of TWO’s more vocal critics was the West Woodlawn Woman’s Community Club (WWWCC).\textsuperscript{165} The WWWCC had extensive roots in the Woodlawn neighborhood, dating back as early as 1954, concerning itself with such varying issues as garden parties, keeping the community clean and well-kempt, discussions of fluoride being added to city drinking water, and illnesses of residents.\textsuperscript{166} Dedicating a full page of the club’s newsletter to address the creation of The Temporary Organization, the writer encourages the club members not to be “unthinkables”. The newsletter states that the WWWCC had worked tirelessly to address issues of the community and criticized the presence of ‘outsiders’ attempting to speak on their behalf, stating “Why should strange people who have never lived among you come to you as “paid workers” (by whom?) and be so eager to “organize you” and then move out? Why follow any group that tells you in the front they are “Temporary”?\textsuperscript{167} The primary issue WWWCC had with TWO was its focus on West Woodlawn and questioned what efforts the organization made to improving East Woodlawn. The WWWCC was also critical of efforts being led by church leaders in TWO that they felt were already being done by current block clubs, and that TWO’s motivations rested in grandstanding rather than making decisions that improved the community and utilized the resources already within it.\textsuperscript{168}

TWO also received harsh criticism in the local black paper, The Crusader. The publication was clear in its stance that the first aim of the community should be economic control. Invoking an internal colonialism narrative, the paper pointed to non-black owned businesses of all types (from supermarkets to filling stations) for examples of exploitation of the community (i.e. refusal to hire black employees and selling of inferior goods). While TWO’s call for self-determination seemed very much in line with the black nationalist paper’s insistence that “NEGROES MUST CONTROL THEIR OWN COMMUNITY”\textsuperscript{169}, instead the paper named outsider organizational involvement as deliberately interfering with and manipulating the initial intent of TWO (and the Pastor’s Alliance) in developing a community betterment program to oppose the University’s ‘south campus’ project.\textsuperscript{170} The paper stated “IAF operators Mitch Von Hoffman, boss of the setup; Walter Schaibel of the Steelworkers Union AFL-CIO and Arthur Carlson, Future Outlook League promoters, have already been accused of fomenting
strife in the mixed religious leadership of TWO.”\textsuperscript{171} According to the paper, the interracial Pastor’s Alliance was splintered over a financing issue instigated by Von Hoffman, Schaibel and Carlson in which the Protestants were told that the Catholic Archdiocese had given $64,000 to finance IAF’s Woodlawn program\textsuperscript{172, 173} The paper asserted this money was nothing more than a ‘slush’ fund for the IAF to push forward its objectives to allow exploitation through “stores, apartments and other places made “available” by crooked real estate operations now reportedly busily “scaring” white home owners and tenants out of the district and throwing open homes and apartments at five times the rental paid by whites to the oncoming Negro home seekers.”\textsuperscript{174} Here the consumer market is viewed as battleground for the claiming and reclaiming of the Woodlawn community’s economic liberation and black consumer exploitation is laid out as the collateral damage. TWO’s affiliation with IAF made it susceptible to this type of criticism because IAF was often credited as an entity that organized “the unorganized, the powerless and property-less so that they can possess both the opportunity and the power to act on all affairs …”\textsuperscript{175} Presenting Alinsky and the IAF as white saviors of the Woodlawn community\textsuperscript{176}, this type of narrative serves to ignore and erase much of the community work done by such organizations as WWWCC and the Woodlawn Conference. This erasure of local group’s efforts and labor is dangerous to the community because it devalues (some of) the indigenous leadership within it. And much of the resistance to TWO’s affiliation with IAF stemmed from the weight of the white savior narrative with which the organization brought with them, and the concern that issues of the community might become white-male centered as a result of their presence.

The privileging of patriarchal and white-centered forms of organizing communities provides insight into which intersectional political consumerism strategies were chosen and how they were employed. For TWO, there is a correlation between the patriarchal power structure of the organization and its desire to replicate forms of (white) capitalism for the purposes of community uplift. In contrast, JOIN, whose leadership was not patriarchal, but still embedded in whiteness, sought out more communal forms of intersectional political consumerism\textsuperscript{177} – in some ways explicitly rejecting (white) capitalism (as was the case with their criticism of seeking out credit as a viable strategy for transformative intersectional
political consumerism) while in other ways, proving susceptible to capitalism’s allure through promises of middle class materiality.

Conclusion

For both organizations, battles for legitimacy around access to consumerism for the poor were priorities within their communities. The ways in which the (African American) Consumerism and (Conditions of) Poverty realms of power influenced the types of intersectional political consumerism employed relied heavily upon the intersecting social locations of JOIN and TWO’s leadership. For TWO, patriarchal ideologies which focused on capitalism resulted in an affinity for commercial-centered intersectional political consumerism. JOIN, a female-led organization with a privileged racial social location (among its primary membership) and a generally anti-capitalist stance, preferred community-centered forms of intersectional political consumerism. Neither dimension of intersectional political consumerism was fully exhibited in its “purest form”, nor were intersectional social locations of all its members uniform. However, the intersectional locations of the organizations’ formal leadership affirm an understanding of the connection between intersectionality and realms of power and their subsequent influence on intersectional political consumerism.

Endnotes

1 NWRO Papers Unprocessed Collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2105 Folder NWRO Statement “Consumer Credit and Poor” - 1970
2 Movement for Economic Justice Records Box 11 Folder 7 National Urban Coalition (NUC)
3 Movement for Economic Justice Records Box 23 Folder 2 Consumer Concerns – Food Stamps
4 Movement for Economic Justice Records Box 12 Folder 17 National Consumer Information Center Convention, January 11-16, 1976
5 NOW was the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago’s newsletter.
7 NWRO Boycott discussions, such as was the case with discussions of boycotting Standard Oil in Mexico (See Social Action Vertical File ca. 1960-2002 Box 36 Folder Nat. Welfare Rights Org, Workshop report), frequently made mentions of imperialism and the company’s perpetuation of it and the group’s need to divest from such endeavors.
8 Scholarship, Education and Defense Fund for Racial Equality Records, 1944-1976, Box 51 Folder 19 Consumer Credit (Harlem Consumer Education)
9 Movement for Economic Justice, Box 3 Folder 3 Public Interest Economic Center and Foundation, 1973-March 1974
clippings of The Yards model was viewed by some "Chicago's Woodlawn Movement of the People" Vol 1 No. 1. See also 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn correspondence and minutes of meetings January, 1961, Letter dated January 6, 1961 addressed to Saul Alinsky April, 1961, Chicago Sun Times May 1961 "A Movement of the People" Vol 1 No. 3. 22


Charles Chiakulas Collection Box 32 Folder Lawndale Tenants Union (Lawndale Union to End Slums) Flyer titled “Lawndale and East Garfield Pk on a Rent Strike”


Wiley Papers Box 5 Folder 6 Miscellany, 1957-1965 Box 8 Folder 5 Membership Miscellany 1967-1972; Box 17 Folder 6 “Being Poor is Expensive”

Though these organizations were clearly affiliated with NWRO, they did not hold themselves accountable to NWRO in any way related to their decision making and activities. These organizations were loosely affiliated and detached from the national organization. Though JOIN was an active participant in early NWRO meetings (See Social Action Vertical File ca. 1960-2002 Box 36 Folder Nat. Welfare Rights Org. (Poverty Rights Action Center), Attendance list for the National Welfare Rights Meeting, Chicago, Illinois August 6-7, 1966) and local organizations did participate in some national organization’s activities (See also Social Action Vertical File ca. 1960-2002 Box 36 Folder Nat. Welfare Rights Org. (Poverty Rights Action Center), Memo dated September 1966 written by Sam Clark, p.3) NWRO had no oversight of these organizations. So their level of connection to anything the national campaigns were calling them to do, such as rent strikes, boycotts, or demonstrations, was likely not directed/organized/coordinated with NWRO but rather were parallel activities. These organizations were tapping into larger needs of poor people that existed nationally rather than taking their cue from NWRO.


For more information on rapid white flight in area see IAF Records Box 64 Folder 800 Industrial Area Foundations TWO-Chicago 1958-1961, Memorandum re: State of Woodlawn at this time dated November 23, 1960 to Saul Alinsky from Nicholas von Hoffman

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, Awareness May 1961 “A Movement of the People” Vol 1 No. 1 p.3


Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 462 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous-correspondence and minutes of meetings January, 1961, Letter dated January 6, 1961 addressed to Saul Alinsky from Juan Sosa, Corresponding Secretary of Temporary Woodlawn Organization

More background/history about Alinsky and TWO can be found in Awareness newsletter. See IAF Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, Awareness May 1961 “A Movement of the People” Vol 1 No. 1. See also IAF Records Box 27 Folder 446 Woodlawn-The Woodlawn Organization-articles May-November, 1962, Forum May 1962 issue, reprinted and published by TIME, Inc in 1962 "Chicago's Woodlawn - Renewal By Whom?" For more information on why the Industrial Area Foundations Back of The Yards model was viewed by some as problematic see IAF Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Chicago Sun-Times April 9, 1961 "Woodlawn: The Head-On Clash of Urban Forces", p.36


See Also IAF Records Box 30 Folder 502 Alinsky, Saul 'The IAF - Why Is It Controversial' Church in Metropolis, Church In Metropolis Summer 1965 “The Archdiocese Responds” p.16 regarding relationship between Alinsky, Industrial Area Foundations and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese.


Anti-blackness is embedded in not wanting to be like East Woodlawn, that black is synonymous with dilapidated, and beyond repair, something to be halted, requiring immediate intervention.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 64 Folder 800 Industrial Area Foundations TWO-Chicago 1958-1961, Memorandum re: State of Woodlawn at this time dated November 23, 1960 to Saul Alinsky from Nicholas von Hoffman

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961 Letter dated August 15, 1961 addressed to Right Reverend Robert McGee, President Temporary Woodlawn Organization from Saul Alinsky

Also see IAF Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, Awareness May 1961 “A Movement of the People” Vol 1 No. 1 p.3 for more information on race demographics and role of church in creation of TWO


According to U.S. Census, in 1960 the area of Woodlawn (community area/census tract 42) was 89% black while the area of Uptown (community area/census tract 3) was 60% Appalachian white. See LeGates and Stout (2011) and Pacyga (2009) for information on Woodlawn and Obermiller et al. (2000), Guy (2007) and Frost (2005).

Peggy Terry Papers Series JOIN Box 3 Folder 8 JOIN Community Union, 1966, True October 1971 “What’s the Toughest Neighborhood in America? Wrong.”

Peggy Terry Papers Series JOIN Box 3 Folder 8 JOIN Community Union, 1966, Chicago’s Free Weekly Reader November 19, 1976 “Who Pays For Black Lung Disease? A Working Man’s Wages” Vol 6 No. 8


Peggy Terry Papers Series JOIN Box 3 Folder 16 The Firing Line, 1967 Booklet titled “Get Ready for the Firing Line” dated March 1968 p.1


The northern cities were chosen because the north was viewed as less tumultuous and would allow northern students tangible things to do such as organizing, fundraising, research. See Peggy Terry Papers Series JOIN Box 3 Folder 16 The Firing Line, 1967, Booklet titled "Get Ready for the Firing Line" printed by SDS March 1968 p.3

Peggy Terry Papers Series JOIN Box 3 Folder 19 Org History etc. 1966-1968, Document prepared by Peggy Terry titled “Organizing Poor Whites in Uptown, Chicago A History and Prospectus of JOIN Community Union”

October, 1962, Woodlawn Booster October 17, 1962 “Rent Strike in Woodlawn”

They proposed to take 60th to 61st, Stoney Island to Cottage Grove for the South Campus. See IAF Records Box 28 Folder 464 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, Awareness May 1961 “A Movement of the People” Vol 1 No. 1


From the beginning TWOs interest included objectives of business and commerce within community. Did not start as a desire to build a movement (revolutionary) but more as a reactionary measure (reformist) in response to land ownership and usage (which are premised by capitalist frame)


Peggy Terry Papers Series Uptown Chicago Box 6 Folder 6 Intercommunal Survival Committee, 1972, Response to questionnaire for Lakeview-Uptown Community Council from Luevelle (Peggy) Terry n.d.


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Center), Memo dated September 1966 written by Sam Clark; See also George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 8 Folder 4 Membership and Chapter Records, 1967-1972, NWRO Membership listing July 1, 1970, p.6 and NWRO Membership listing December 3-5, 1971, p.3 and NWRO Membership listing February 4, 1972, p.6
88 Peggy Terry Papers Series JOIN Box 3 Folder 15 Welfare Rights, 1964-1968, Document titled “Minutes of Meeting To Form City Wide Welfare Union JOIN, KOCO and WSO” dated July 30, 1966
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid. 
93 Ibid.
94 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 464 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Flyer titled “What is TWO?” n.d.
96 There was much excitement that this new organization would provide a militant presence that some community members felt was lacking in Chicago’s black organizations. See IAF Records Box 64 Folder 800 Industrial Area Foundation TWO-Chicago 1958-1961, Chicago Defender dated April 18, 1962 Article titled "The Woodlawn Organization"
99 TWO had a meeting with Daley in Dec 1961 where they told him “TWO expected to be in on the planning for the rehabilitation of Woodlawn from the beginning” See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 478 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous November, 1961-March, 1962, The Chicago Courier December 23, 1961 “Rent-Struck Tenants Get TWOs Help”

When discussing aids and grants, TWO was referring to four million dollars earmarked by the Chicago Dwelling Association. TWO wanted spot clearances of empty/vacated/dilapidated land and the re-sale of that cleared land to non-profit and limited profit corps that would be affordable for Woodlawn residents. The organization also pushed for the building of new affordable housing for residents (low rise public housing on scattered sites throughout city) before the demolishing/spot clearances of other areas. There was also an issue around black small resident owners not being able to afford repairs demanded upon them by the Building Department and TWOs insistence that these owners were provided with assistance so they did not lose their homes. See IAF Records Box 27 Folder 450 Woodlawn - The Woodlawn Organization - Constitutional Convention clippings, The Woodlawn Organization Self-Determination Newsletter Convention Issue April 17, 1964 “Third Annual T.W.O. Convention Agenda” Vol. 1 No. 5. Also See IAF Records Box 64 Folder 800 Industrial Area Foundation TWO-Chicago 1958-1961, 16 page document outlining a proposed program by the Industrial Area Foundations targeting Woodlawn as a neighborhood to be organized, p.4


Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 464 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Document titled “Service Staff Integrated” dated March 24, 1961


Carlson was viewed as a great ‘race man’ whose loyalties lied with FOL rather than TWO. FOLs primary concern in the area dealt with promoting African American products and improving African American employment conditions. And Carlson pitched this idea/program to many organizations over the years in Chicago. There was recognition that FOL had a small but loyal following, and leaders within TWOs primary concern with FOL members had to do with ensuring the people of FOL ‘fall in line’ with the wishes of TWO and not cause dissent within the organization. See IAF Records Box 64 Folder 800 Industrial Area Foundation TWO-Chicago 1958-1961, Report on TWO activities from Robert Squires to IAF, Document titled “Report on Woodlawn – Robert Squires” dated March 2, 1961


For information on financial ventures with Blackstone Rangers see IAF Records Box 64 Folder 799 Industrial Area Foundations Records - TWO, 1965-66, 9 page memo addressed to Saul Alinsky from Leon Finney re: T.W.O. dictated on August 13, 1966, received and transcribed on August 17, 1966 p. 8


Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 64 Folder 798 Industrial Areas Foundation Records - TWO-Chicago, 1965-66, 8 page memo addressed to Saul Alinsky from Dick Harmon dictated on April 2, 1966, received on April 4, 1966 and transcribed on April 5, 1966


Dovie Coleman was also a key Chicago leader of JOIN and WRDA in Uptown. WRDA, KOCO and JOIN also participated in June 30th demonstrations that would mark the formal beginning of the NWRO. See George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 14 Folder 9 (NWRO) Birthday Demonstrations, 1966-1970 Document Title "Round-up of June 30th Welfare Demonstrations" Dated June 28, 1966 produced by the Poverty/Rights Action Center p.4; See also George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 14 Folder 9 (NWRO) Birthday Demonstrations, 1966-1970 Document Title "Cities Participating in June 30th Nationwide Welfare Demonstrations" Dated 1967 names Dovie Coleman and the Welfare Recipients Demand Action (WRDA); Also see NWRO Papers Unprocessed collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2150, a collection of documents from NWRO papers for meeting minutes, informational materials and advocacy/recruitment letters
from the Chicago Friends to their middle class contacts asking for support. The documents also describe Coleman’s background before she joined the NWRO and became the first staff member and organizer for the CWRO office. Eleven months prior to her appointment to the CWRO office, Coleman started WRDA. Originally from St. Louis, Coleman moved to Chicago in 1948. In 1964 Coleman began working with the JOIN. In 1966, Coleman was chosen as the IL state rep for the NWRO and also served as its financial secretary and a member of the NCC. See also Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-wave Feminism in the United States By Stephanie Gilmore (2008) for more information regarding black female leadership within welfare rights organizations, including the efforts of Dovie Coleman and Dovie Thurman (WRDA).

Social Action Vertical File ca. 1960-2002 Box 23 Folder JOIN Uptown Community Union Chicago, Press release dated May 23, 1966 from JOIN Community Union regarding protests at the Cook County Welfare office

Peggy Terry Papers Series Poor Peoples Campaign Box 5 Folder 9 Poor Peoples Campaign, 1968, Document titled “Steering Committee Poor People’s Campaign”

Peggy Terry Papers Series Poor Peoples Campaign Box 5 Folder 9 Poor Peoples Campaign, 1968, The Washington Post May 1, 1968 “Poor Marchers: Actors In A Drama”

Social Action Vertical File ca. 1960-2002 Box 23 Folder JOIN Uptown Community Union Chicago, Press release dated May 23, 1966 from JOIN Community Union regarding protests at the Cook County Welfare office


Social Action Vertical File ca. 1960-2002 Box 23 Folder JOIN Uptown Community Union Chicago, Press release dated May 23, 1966 from JOIN Community Union regarding protests at the Cook County Welfare office p.2


Peggy Terry Papers Series Poor Peoples Campaign Box 6 Folder 1 Poor Peoples Campaign, 1968, 4 page booklet titled “How Did The National Poor People’s Coalition Get Organized” p.3 n.d.


Peggy Terry Papers Series JOIN Box 3 Folder 20 Org History etc. 1966-1968, JOIN Community Union newsletter February 16-28, 1967 “Welfare Rights” column by Peggy Terry Vol. 3 No. 3

Industrial Area Foundations Records Series 1 Box 27 Folder 448 Woodlawn-TWO-convention delegate list February-May, 1962

See also attacks on Johnson, a female staff member within TWO in IAF Records Box 64 Folder 798 Industrial Areas Foundation Records - TWO-Chicago, 1965-66, memo addressed to Saul Alinsky from Leon Finney re: Woodlawn Report dictated on April 16, 1966, received April 18th, p.2; See also IAF Records Box 64 Folder 798 Industrial Areas Foundation Records - TWO-Chicago, 1965-66, 8 page memo addressed to Saul Alinsky from Dick Harmon dictated on April 2, 1966, received on April 4, 1966 and transcribed on April 5, 1966 p.5-6

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 27 Folder 459 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous-correspondence and memoranda February-September, 1959, Memorandum re: West Woodlawn dated May 22, 1959 to Saul Alinsky from Nicholas von Hoffman p.3


Ibid.


Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 500 Woodlawn Union-bulletins and constitution February, 1954-September, 1955, West Woodlawn Women’s Community Club newsletter dated July 12, 1954

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, West Woodlawn Women’s Community Club newsletter n.d. p. 2

For others, the checkered history between the Industrial Area Foundations and Woodlawn residents led to general hostility toward TWO. TWO was criticized by clergy who defected from the Pastor’s alliance as well as the Associated Block Clubs of Woodlawn (a splinter group) for its affiliation with the IAF. These community members withdrew from TWO because they disagreed with the aggressive union-type strategies of IAF against the South East Commission to organize and redevelop Woodlawn. Associated Block Clubs of Woodlawn (and Greenwood block
President L. Eugene Harrison stated that IAF was “following the same line they did in Woodlawn in 1954 when they tried to set up an organization and failed. Nicholas Von Hoffman is in charge now, as he was seven years ago. IAF organizers preach fear and hatred, stir up discontent, exploit antagonisms, try to pit one group against another. … They tried to undermine the existing interracial community group, United Woodlawn Conference, attacking the Conference’s program of organizing block clubs.” See IAF Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, The Bulletin April 20, 1961 “Rift in Woodlawn Alliance Widens” Vol 3 No. 28. See also IAF Records Box 30 Folder 500 Woodlawn Union-bulletins and constitution February, 1954-September, 1955, Document titled "The Woodlawn Union" n.d. for detail on Welfare Union. Von Hoffman attempted to organize in Woodlawn in 1954. Note that the United Woodlawn Conference was part of the SECC that started urban renewal and conservation plans for the south campus area. See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Chicago Sun-Times April 9, 1961 "Woodlawn: The Head-On Clash of Urban Forces" as well as 1961 IAF Records Box 30 Folder 500 Woodlawn Union-bulletins and constitution February, 1954-September, 1955, Byfold pamphlet titled "United Woodlawn Conference" explains the conference's affiliation with the South East Chicago Commission. The political allegiances were clearly drawn. Many people in Woodlawn had long memories and resented the IAF for what was perceived as its outside agitation and tampering/undermining of the community’s efforts to organize itself.

169 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, The Crusader April 15, 1961 “Control Your Own Community” Vol. 20 No. 45
171 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, The Crusader April 8, 1961 “Woodlawn Operators Move In For Big Kill”
172 The protesters were upset because they felt the Catholics had basically bought the IAF and they would therefore push forth their own agenda of maintaining the racial segregation in the area. (See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Chicago Maroon March 10, 1961 “Calls Segregation charge ‘grossly irresponsible’” by Ken Pierce Vol. 69 No. 62; IAF Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Chicago Maroon March 3, 1961 “Church Supports ‘Hate Group’” Vol. 69 No. 61; IAF Records Box 64 Folder 800 Industrial Area Foundation TWO-Chicago 1958-1961, Letter dated September 15, 1959 addressed to Right Reverend Monsignor Vincent Cooke, From Reverend Martin Farrell). The reality was the majority of blacks were not catholic and the catholic churches in the area and surrounding areas were losing parishioners due to white flight.(See IAF Records Box 64 Folder 800 Industrial Area Foundation TWO-Chicago 1958-1961, 16 page document outlining a proposed program by the Industrial Area Foundations targeting Woodlawn as a neighborhood to be organized) To maintain the status quo would mean a stabilization of parishioners. Or the protagonists and Catholics could attempt to build a parishioner base of a darker hue. Though the IAF stated its intentions were to develop an ‘integrated pattern’ thru the city (as demonstrated by its Back of the Yards initiative) some felt IAF was more concerned with keeping blacks in Woodlawn where they were. The Lutherans had backed out because of the strategies and the financial support given by the Catholics
174 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, The Crusader April 8, 1961 “Woodlawn Operators Move In For Big Kill”
176 See IAF Records Box 64 Folder 801 Industrial Area Foundation Records - TWO OSC, 1959-62, The National Observer November 26, 1962 “TWO’s Two-Fisted War On Chicago Slum" article highlighting Alinsky and naming him as founder. Compare this with the Chicago Defender article dated November 19, 1962 "Ministers vs. Evils of Urban Renewal" which also provides a history of the organization but does not highlight Alinsky in a significant way. But then the Defender does the same thing the next day with an article calling Alinsky ‘the man behind TWO’. See IAF Records Box 64 Folder 801 Industrial Area Foundation Records - TWO OSC, 1959-62, Chicago Defender November 20, 1962 "Found: A General to Lead a Slum Army". This white savior idea seemed to permeate for white as well as black people.
An undated memo from strategic action conference planning committee of NWRO references reports on “Alternative economy” that recognizes communes and co-ops to be superior to capitalism in ending sexism and racism. See Social Action Vertical File ca. 1960-2002 Box 36 Folder Nat. Welfare Rights Org. Workshop report.
CHAPTER 4: INTERSECTIONAL POLITICAL CONSUMERISM IN ACTION – THE “SQUARE DEAL CAMPAIGN” AND WOODLAWN’S URBAN RENEWAL PLAN

Introduction: Square Deal Campaign

When the University of Chicago dropped its ‘south campus’ proposal, temporarily easing Woodlawn residents’ concerns of being displaced, the Temporary Woodlawn Organization (TWO) needed a new issue around which to organize the community. The TWO took up the issue of consumer abuses within the community, specifically related to dishonest merchants and their illegal credit practices. The community was extremely dissatisfied with those businesses with a reputation of short-weighting, over-charging and charging excessive interest rates. Woodlawn residents were also dissatisfied with the stringent legal contracts for credit buying of furniture and appliances. Together the United Steelworkers of America (Local #65), the Woodlawn Business Men’s Association (WBMA) and the Future Outlook League (FOL) brought these corrupt business practices to the attention of the TWO. The TWO concluded a massive show of community force was required to address these issues and on February 27th, 1961 launched the “Square Deal Campaign”. The campaign included creating a code of business ethics related to credit buying practices, pricing and advertising. There would be a Board of Arbitrations governed by the “Square Deal Articles of Agreement”, consisting of four representatives of the WMBA, four representatives from the consumer groups, and one impartial chairman from outside the community who was to be elected by the board members. As stated in the ‘articles of agreement’ the role of the Board of Arbitrations was to hear consumer complaints (such as short-weighting and exploitative credit practices) and establish rules for interest rate limits, procedures for dealing with delinquent customers, as well as dishonest merchants.

Political Consumerist Agenda of Woodlawn Business Men’s Association

In February 1961 the WBMA asked the Industrial Area Foundation (IAF) to provide technical and organizational assistance, stating that it was a primary supporter of the Temporary Woodlawn Organization. George Kyros, a white business owner of Alexander’s Restaurant, was elected president of WBMA and was issued a congratulatory letter on behalf of state Senator Marshall Korshak for the
organization’s efforts to address issues within Woodlawn. Woodlawn business owners at the time were not only concerned about the issues which led to the creation of the Square Deal Campaign but also issues around displacement due to urban planning and the possible infiltration of larger chain stores.

Kyros gave an inaugural address to the WBMA in which he cited chain and discount stores as the nemesis of small businessmen in their fight for survival. He went on to cite a University of Connecticut study which found that one in four businesses dislocated by urban renewal would ultimately go out of business. He made efforts in his speech to connect the plight of the Woodlawn businessmen with those of other business owners across the nation. He called for the WBMA’s support and participation in the Temporary Woodlawn Organization stating “the day is past when merchant and community can be allowed to be separated by the counter.” He also stated that Woodlawn business owners should concern themselves with the physical rehabilitation of the community and work with the community to preserve the neighborhood.

There was some romanticizing of the small business owner within the WBMA. Specifically Kyros, while addressing WBMA members, stated “In the days of big organizations, big corporations, big labor unions, he is frequently the last true bastion of individual initiative and independence. More than that he can distribute goods and services with a personal touch and a customer convenience that no mere mass merchandising giant can compete.” Kyros’ use of the word customer alluded to the loyalty of residents to local businesses. Kyros also spoke with a deep suspicion of big business, with a Marcusian-like warning against the ills of mass production and merchandising. The invoking of “individual initiative and independence” was embedded within a racialized narrative that privileged white notions of liberalism and American values. The focus on individual initiative, which implied individual hard work existed within a meritocracy, served to erase both the value of collective community, which in the past has been essential to the survival of black businesses, as well as the unequal treatment of racialized individualities. These individualities rest in social locations where white individualism is privileged while black individualism, particularly black individualism that rejects whiteness, opposes systemic oppression or
otherwise affirms blackness, is demonized and punished. The word choice exposes the naiveté of the assertion that initiative and independence could be defended with the preservation of the (white) small business owner and serves to mask the privileges of whiteness.

Kyros circulated to the WBMA an abridged copy of the University of Connecticut study he referenced in his inaugural address, “The Impact of Dislocation From Urban Renewal Areas on Small Businesses”, in an effort to educate local businessmen on the intent, purpose and implications of urban renewal. The document highlighted national trends of urban renewal’s impact on small businesses including the government’s role under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 to administer grants for purposes of ‘urban blight’ and poor housing conditions. The document also stated that the redevelopment projects that result from these grants were very lucrative for contractors, while being disastrous for those businesses forcibly dis/relocated by the process (as displacement assistance was not required, only encouraged, for businesses).

Further, WBMA members were warned that small businesses that rented their business spaces had even fewer options for assistance, that those businesses who owned the properties where their businesses resided had to have their properties acquired by the municipal agency before they could apply for relocation assistance, and that some small businesses had organized and successfully opposed urban renewal programs in the past. Woodlawn small business owners were concerned with their continued viability in an environment of decreased profit margins, displaced community members/customers, and business liquidation and bankruptcy. They identified their major threat as modernity, stating “the prospect of a chain store society is for most of us an ugly and unpleasant one.”

These objections from small business owners were common themes within city conservation plan discussions. The 1968 City Conservation Plan for the Chicago Lawndale area (predominately African American and located on the city’s west side) consisted of plans to reduce and consolidate commercial space by demolishing certain business areas. “The generally obsolete ribbon development could be gradually concentrated into modern shopping centers through selective demolition. Some of the
commercial ribbons will be eliminated as a result of the arterial widening program.”

Here, the city’s explanation for the destroying of small businesses embedded within the community’s fabric was modernity. This was the city’s attempt to bring a specific ‘order’ to what it viewed as a chaotic and illogical structuring of space. This new order brought with it a desire to organize power by way of space usage and legitimized the city as an appropriate purveyor of this structuring. Individual connectors within the community would be replaced by centralized shopping centers that could be more easily standardized, surveilled and controlled, such that the city might determine who profited from the patronage of Lawndale residents. For example, part of the commercial conservation initiatives was to expand the Sears Roebuck complex in the area into a community shopping center, and supplement that area with a special service district which would house professional offices, financial institutions and entertainment facilities. These struggles over ideology and practical survival of small businesses were the same issues Woodlawn had to contend with seven years prior when the city and the University of Chicago attempted to redesign the spaces and orders of operation for the community. White Woodlawn business owners saw themselves vulnerable to city planning and urban renewal.

The Promotion Committee of the WBMA was responsible for strategizing around the health and sustainability of Woodlawn businesses. The committee identified several causes for the decline in retail patronage in the area, including the decline in public transportation, the regional competition of larger chains (including Carson’s, Sears, and large grocery chain stores in white districts, which also provided the convenience of parking) and the changing racial composition of the Woodlawn area which led to white people in the adjacent area’s refusal to shop in Woodlawn. The Promotion Committee made assertions that white patrons preferred their consumer spaces be ‘convenient’ and that part of that convenience was racial segregation. Another assertion made by the WBMA was related to Carson Pirie Scott’s ability to attract African American clientele. The WBMA determined that black Woodlawn customers were loyal to Carson’s because of their non-discriminatory hiring practices, and that, as a result of this ‘pioneering step in democracy’, Carson’s was able to win desirable black patrons who were from
higher incomes and who were more educated around consumer issues. The WBMA concluded that “businesses like Carson’s attract Negro consumers with the most purchasing power when they identify themselves with the search for equal rights and equal opportunities.”

In the spirit of ‘pioneering democracy’, the WBMA Promotion Committee suggested the best areas for promotion of their businesses were in the areas of fighting residential segregation, job discrimination, and slum landlords. The WBMA presumed, since there was great interest in these issues by the black consumer market, businessmen could profit by having their names connected with these initiatives. This was the same logic that led many of them to support the Square Deal Campaign. “THE IDEA IS TO TURN FAST-BREAKING, TOPICAL EVENTS TO THE BUSINESSMEN’S ADVANTAGE”. This logic followed that the support of ‘topical events’ would generate good will of residents toward these businesses resulting in an altering of the social contract which would then demand that black residents (read as a monolithic group) return the favor by patronizing their stores.

This logic, which appeared reciprocal and democratic on the surface, with people being able to speak to issues that were important to them based on where they spent their consumer dollars, in many ways relied on a neoliberal logic which suggested that ultimately the market would require businesses to behave equitably toward all consumers or risk losing profits; that, in the end, the market was able to transcend discrimination and racism because purchasing dollars were the great equalizer. And to maximize this opportunity, businesses would serve themselves well to be ahead of the curve. This logic was flawed and harmful for African Americans as they had to deal directly with the consequences of white businesses making decisions that were not in the businesses’ best financial interest. White businesses did not always adhere to the tenets of capitalism, which required that they always seek to maximize profit. Instead, white business owner sometimes chose to maintain a white supremacist racial order that reaped dividends not found within their financial statements. How does one quantify the safety and comfort of one’s misguided sense of superiority? That white consumers would reward businesses with their consumer dollars to support racially discriminatory practices was simply a ‘convenience tax’
that white consumers of Woodlawn would eagerly pay so long as their consumer spaces remained unburdened by the presence of Negroes. The realm of neoliberalism served to distort the narrative by masking the impact of racism on business decisions. Neoliberal logic fails to explain how the realm of consumerism had shifted and bent for whites in order to accommodate their desire to uphold white supremacy. Intersectional political consumerism reminds observers how the realms of power in consumer spaces can influence which social identities are more prominent or privileged in specific settings and during various times, and how power is shaped and directed depending on those identities’ prominence.

The WBMAs efforts to politicize consumerist activities for the purposes of improving their businesses also serves as an example of how intersectional political consumerism helps to expose directions in which power flows. As white male business owners, WBMA members’ privileged positions of race, class and gender served to encourage that they exploit their intersectionality in service to capitalism (profit). The political interests in issues affecting black people is secondary to the monetary interests and exposes the businessmen’s motivations and willingness to engage these issues only when given a monetary incentive. Essentially, the WBMA’s explanation for why it should involve itself in black political interests demonstrated what happens when white male business owners engaged with the African American consumerism realm of power. Even though African Americans appeared to be centered in the discourse on consumerism, the intersectional positions of white, male and business owner allowed for a distortion of the discourse which led to a re-centering of white men and their desires and needs.

There was also an underlying anti-blackness embedded in the WBMA’s claim that many black consumers preferred to “shop in stores principally patronized by white people”. On one level, black people understood as well as anyone that whites did not want to shop in their black neighborhoods. Because black areas were limited to black patrons, these neighborhoods were more susceptible to unfair business practices such as deceptive credit practices, higher prices, inferior merchandise with no warranties or guarantees and short weights. So the solution, using anti-black logic, was to go where white people go to shop because merchants would not dare treat white patrons in such a manner. So, anti-black
logic demanded that black consumers relinquish or redirect their political power and reward white businesses with their patronage. This reward of black patronage would essentially be given because white patrons in white consumer spaces were treated with respect, even as those white patrons wished nothing more than to maintain segregated consumer spaces. This ‘solution’ also served to distort the issue of socially accepted unfair treatment of African American patrons. But the TWO, in its efforts toward self-determination attempted to disrupt this cycle of anti-blackness by holding merchants within its community accountable and demanding fair treatment for its black residents. This serves as an example of how two very different ideologies could come to support similar intersectional political consumerist activities. Though the Promotion Committee of the WBMA was clearly capitalist in its motivations and used anti-black logic when trying to understand the black consumer market, it saw value in participating in the Square Deal Campaign. The TWO, with its focus on black self-determination and centering black community members’ desire for respect and fair treatment within community consumer spaces also saw value in the campaign, even as its ideological underpinnings differed greatly from its primary collaborator.

**Who Gets a Square Deal?**

The campaign kicked off with a parade on March 6, 1961, estimates ranging between 600-1000 demonstrators (mainly black and Puerto Rican) carrying signs and marching from 63rd and Cottage Grove, then east to 63rd and Dorchester, and returning to 63rd and Woodlawn for a TWO meeting to conclude the rally. Much of 63rd St. was commercially zoned; a number of reputable stores and restaurants sprinkled amongst many taverns, pool halls, and unscrupulous credit stores.

The campaign attracted much criticism for its aggressive union-like tactics such as marching and picketing stores, as there were questions related to the legality of such tactics when the demonstrators were unaffiliated with a union. The TWO also distributed flyers warning customers not to patronize certain stores that failed to join the campaign and were believed to be cheating its customers.
criticism was that the campaign was divisive and that the IAF, AFL-CIO and FOL co-opted the TWO in order to ‘strong arm’ the merchants in the area.48 Years later, some members of the TWO would reflect on the campaign with great criticism stating it was nothing more than a “2 day campaign against cheating merchants so heralded in national magazines to the shame of all honest members of TWO.”49 Here there is an implication that the Square Deal Campaign was nothing more than a charade used to raise the national profile of the TWO without leading to significant change for the community.

The WBMA believed that the unscrupulous businessmen among them, though few, had the potential to erode the trust of all businesses within the community. The WBMA viewed the “Square Deal Campaign” as a way of publicly demonstrating their commitment to business ethics, as well as a powerful promotional device for their businesses.50 The businessmen hoped that potential Woodlawn shoppers who were buying outside of the community would return to local stores as a result of the campaign.51 This hope highlights consumerism as a contentious space for power negotiation. The idea of the WBMA was to turn the focus away from the needs and reasons for the creation of the campaign, and toward the merchants who showed support for the campaign; in essence, re-centering the issue of discriminatory business practices and exploitative power relationships between business and community to focus instead on applauding and rewarding businesses with the “Square Deal Emblem” (for doing that which they would be expected to do had they occupied white spaces with white patrons).52

In exchange for being ethical business merchants who adhered to the law, WBMA called upon organizations such as the TWO to discontinue their bad publicity about unscrupulous merchants to the papers, stating that one of the purposes of the Board of Arbitrations was to “smother bad publicity and keep these cases private”.53 This was one reason for the FOL’s retreat from the TWO in October of 1961. Arthur Carlson, president of FOL, who had initially said of the campaign that it was “the kind of program that the people in our organization have been looking for”54 had become disillusioned with what he viewed as the Board of Arbitration’s lack of action. The FOL issued the following statement regarding its withdrawal from the TWO:
First, T.W.O. seems to have forgotten the square deal program it promised the people of Woodlawn. This promise was made to Future Outlook League too. Upon investigation we find almost as many unfair practices as before the parade last March. The Future Outlook League’s President tried for four months to get a meeting with the Board of Arbitration to discuss the two (2) square deal agreements. The first square deal principles would have protected the consumer. The second square deal agreement left no doubt that the makers of this agreement did not have the welfare of the people of Woodlawn at heart. We have the two agreements for comparison for anyone wishing to examine them. Second point: We feel if a merchant makes his living in a community and will not help the community, the merchant does not deserve the support of said community. We would like to point out a few things in the now infamous Green Fair deal agreement. It asks that T.W.O. have nothing to say about how a business is run, or what products are sold. This is in direct opposition to the By-Laws of the Future Outlook League. We have on record several complaints of unfair treatment to employees, long hours, low pay, and as few Negroes as possible hired. Every product that is delivered in Woodlawn can help build Woodlawn if the people organize to help themselves. They can make new jobs, go into new businesses and subsequently reduce relieve loads. Third and last point: The Future Outlook League will work with any organization working honestly for the economic good of our city.

FOL’s first point related to the focus of the first set of stated principles in comparison to the second, revised Articles of Agreement. The first set of Square Deal principles, drafted on March 1, 1961 were very consumer-centric, focusing on wage assignments, hardship forgiveness, and regulation of interest rates. Of the eighteen points in the document, twelve spoke directly to the merchants’ responsibility to the customer and/or merchants’ expectations of conduct.

The FOL’s second point was related to the Square Deal Articles of Agreement dated March 8, 1961, two days after the parade, whose clause under Jurisdiction of the board section stated, “the Square Deal principle does not include regulation of a business’ internal affairs. This also means that any discussions or disputes concerning hiring practices or union organization of any kind ARE NOT in the Boards jurisdiction.” In addition, under the Square Deal Code section, “Any attempt to dictate or otherwise force a store to sell certain brands of merchandise, or to buy from specified jobbers, suppliers or wholesalers is a violation of the Square Deal Code. Any merchant with a complaint in this regard may bring it to the Board of Arbitration which can, if the complaint is justified, call upon the TWO and all its affiliated groups to resist such tactics.” Though the second document did retain much of the language related to the responsibilities of the merchant, this additional language related to limiting the jurisdiction
of what the Board was willing to advocate was a/the major point of contention for the FOL. The Board was created in response to the TWOs campaign for its residents to be treated fairly by merchants. Within the revised articles there was a clear indication of the message being co-opted and the board serving in an advocacy capacity on behalf of merchants. Recall in Chapter 2, five years later, TWOs intervention with Certified Chain stores to pull Country Delight products from its stores.

There was also a “Promotion” clause added to the articles stating “ALL TWO affiliated organizations pledge themselves to aid in promotional campaigns designed to encourage business in Square Deal stores, and to do all in their power in other ways to promote the prosperity and the general well-being of Square Deal merchants.” As SIX2. Again, Woodlawn residents and the representing organization of TWO were being asked/required to help ensure the viability of white businesses, yet white businesses had no explicitly stated obligation to consider the viability of residents (or the support of blackness), either through its hiring practices or other business operations. The variations in the two sets of Square Deal agreements demonstrates what happens when different intersectional identities (of the members of the TWO and WBMA) converge within the consumerism realm of power. The agreement served as a vehicle through which power was to be directed, either in favor of the customer or in favor of the merchant. The FOL objected to the cooptation of the Board of Arbitration by the WBMA, which allowed for changes in the original agreement that had the potential to differently shape consumer outcomes. Because WBMA’s framing was embedded in neoliberal and anti-black logic, the power struggle that followed led to an agreement that privileged merchants as much as it did Woodlawn residents. In this case, it was the WBMA’s (white) capitalist and liberal leanings that were at odds with the FOLs calls for an adherence to TWOs self-determination demands for accountability to the black community. The WBMA wanted the community to be held accountable to businesses while TWO wanted businesses to be held accountable to the community. With this disconnect embedded within the mechanism used to manage the campaign, the articles of agreement, the enforcement of rules holding merchants accountable to the Woodlawn community would become greatly compromised.
Board of Arbitration members did meet with store owners it believed were practicing short-weighing. By June 1961, the Board had sent letters to 77 area grocery stores related to the consequences of inaccurate weights and measures and organized a volunteer group of “citizen shoppers” (solicited mainly from the Spanish-speaking and block club members) to check weights in all area grocery, meat, fish and poultry stores. The board seemed equally concerned with investigating accusations of dishonesty among merchants as it did with providing those found guilty of infractions to the “Square Deal Code” with time to rectify their discretions. The board withheld names of those found to be in non-compliance with local laws and regulations and was concerned with not unduly damaging the reputations of businesses based on hearsay. These practices drew attention to the inability of this system, namely the Board of Arbitration, to regulate businesses. Half of the board was made up of white business owners. These business owners essentially extended benefit of doubt to stores that had been called out by the community, thus privileging their ‘legitimacy’ over that of the Woodlawn residents. For those who were blatantly found to be guilty of noncompliance with the law, rather than reporting these business owners to the local government authorities, or seeking aggressive actions such as boycotts, the board extended an opportunity for the merchants to correct themselves, extended benevolence based on presumed good intentions, and purported that now that the merchants were aware they had been caught, they would be compelled to do the right thing. Such benevolence was rarely extended to the residents of Woodlawn, or poor and working poor blacks generally. Yet, here we see embedded within the Arbitration Board’s processes an implication of white innocence. White storeowners were presumed innocent until proven otherwise, and even then, their intentions were presumed to direct them to ethical business practices, never mind if they were deferred. The area black customers however were to have their accusations heard, but with discernment and skepticism. This type of black skepticism and white innocence was inconsistent with the TWO organization’s vision of black community self-determination.

There was evidence in the historical record that the Board met, though the meeting minutes showed evidence of some businessmen’s desire to use the meetings to inquire about the TWOs
commitment to encouraging residents (namely congregants of churches) to patronize their stores. The WBMA even went so far as to suggest the TWO peddle business’s coupon books, for an incentive, so that they might exploit the organization’s manpower and reach potential customers in the community.

Though there was some evidence that some uncooperative merchants were brought to the attention of local government (namely 5th Ward Alderman Leon Despres and the Department of Weights and Measures), there appeared to be no actions taken by the city against these merchants. TWO members were instructed to phone the Department of Weights and Measures if short-weighing practices within a store were suspected so the department could schedule an inspection. In the case of actual short-weighing, customers were instructed to do their shopping with another person who would act as a witness and take their items to another scale and weigh them. If there was a discrepancy, the department instructed the customer to stay in the store until the inspector arrived. Much of the governmental response around consumer issues focused on placing responsibility on the consumer. The Department of Weights and Measures produced various educational materials, film strips and literature with the intent of arming consumers with information so that they might advocate for themselves. What this approach did not take into account was the way social locations such as race and class worked together to influence outcomes related to such advocacy. Specifically, whether Woodlawn residents were aware of their rights was only part of the issue. The bulk of the issue centered on merchants who felt compelled to exploit these customers because they recognized their marginal statuses as African American or Puerto Rican and poor and understood how, systemically, the people had little recourse within the law. That inspectors notified store managers prior to investigating them, or placed the onus on consumers to arrange for another person to shop with them and call an inspector while in the store and wait, spoke to the types of bureaucratic strategies which were designed to frustrate and deter individuals who already felt marginalized.

The campaign was deemed a success after several merchants suspected of cheating customers adjusted their scales and totalizers. A year and a half after the parade, the campaign was still considered
active but, with the majority of businesses becoming Square Deal merchants, the campaign was left struggling for purpose. One of the misconceptions about political consumerist activity is its effectiveness in achieving long term goals/plans of action as opposed to a short term strategy which provides an opportunity for systemic change. Every successful political consumerism project has been but one, of a multi-pronged strategy toward some larger political and/or social goal. Nearly fifty years after the Square Deal Campaign, the Woodlawn area still suffers from sub-standard housing and schools, lack of employment opportunities, high rates of poverty and crime, and lack of consumer shopping choices in the neighborhood.

“Control Your Own Community”: Intersectional Political Consumerism and Community Planning

For Woodlawn residents, the idea of self-determination of the community was embedded in the economic life and consumer spaces of the area. Following the TWO’s battle with the University of Chicago and the launch of its Square Deal Campaign, the community began focusing on its own urban renewal plans. The proposal drafted by the Department of City Planning in March 1962, a full year after the Square Deal march, was prepared as a “long range proposal to meet the needs of the community” between 60th and 67th streets (going north to south) and Cottage Grove and Stoney Island (going west to east). Most of the plan focused on residential housing redevelopment and allocation of space to schools, including a section on the University of Chicago. Owner occupancy housing units stretched along the 67th St. border of Woodlawn with little to no owner occupancy housing in the center of the area where the area was most densely populated, according to the plan.

TWO’s Plan for Renewal

The Woodlawn Organization’s response to the city plan was swift. TWO and WMBA secured Nelson & Associates Planning and Designing Consultants out of Milwaukee, WI to provide professional planning and urban renewal services. The consultants were to draft plans for the Woodlawn community
independent of the city of Chicago and included a multi-phased approach.84 The first phase dealt with the preparation of the report used as a discussion guide to facilitate community conversation.85

By April 1962, TWO had devised a structured organizing of various Woodlawn constituencies for the purposes of educating area residents about the city’s plan and obtaining feedback from the community on what should be included in their plan. TWO, in conjunction with the WBMA, coordinated roughly twenty local community meetings. Representatives from the local meetings would comprise the overall planning committee, which would give direction to Nelson & Associates. Part of TWO’s strategy was to communicate with residents during block club meetings, facilitate discussions and critiques around the city plan, provide background of facts and events, translate the planning jargon and techniques86, and gather information about what the residents wanted for their community.87

**History As Context**

TWO’s presentation was deliberate in its efforts to make connections with the area’s history as it considered the city’s current plans for Woodlawn. The slideshow presentation discussed how 15 years prior, in 1946, there was a conservation plan drafted for the area. During that time, when the area was still primarily white, the city’s efforts were around conservation/preservation (and preventative measures) and the area residents were described in favorable terms, as was the area. In 1946, Woodlawn was worth saving. This perspective about the ‘worth’ of the area and its people was contrasted with the 1962 plan, which was focused on corrective measures. 1962 Woodlawn was not characterized as a ‘good community’ but rather a decaying community plagued with crime and uneducated and underprivileged people. So, what changed so drastically in 15 years? The racial demographic shift from 1946 to 1962 was as obvious as the anti-black ideology which sought to pathologize and ‘correct’ the Woodlawn residents of 1962. In many ways, the city’s plan represented a common strategy employed by institutions such as local governments to address the ‘negro problem’. This strategy was consistent with an ideology that had haunted black people since their enslavement on the continent. Black people were perpetually labeled as
problematic and in need of correction. Rather than identify structural issues (such as racism and discrimination) which would lead to serious community issues and deterioration of communities, issues were identified on community members’ skin. And the land on which these people resided had to be ‘cleared’, similar to the process of burning the earth with fire, destroying everything in its path so that the land may someday be fertile again and ready for cultivation. To be black and poor was to be deemed deficient by default. There was little identified as redeemable or worth preserving. So what we have in the 1962 city plan is an artifact of anti-black ideology, working through the blackening of poverty sub-realm of power, which pathologized the very condition of blackness and provided a reason/motivation/excuse for powerful institutions, such as the city government, to exact their will with a form of covert colonization. The plan, through its reports and maps, was presented as logical, objective and pseudo-scientific in that it was not distracted by the voices, hopes and desires of the people within the community. It exposed the privileging of a specific type of logic, which was based in the idea that the presence of poor black people was an indicator of immorality, destruction and hopelessness. This logic required that poor black people be thought of as unable to chart their own path for their community. This logic demanded a ‘drastic surgery’ type of intervention by those untainted by such blight and lack of foresight. The city plan was a physical expression of the one-directional power dynamic between the city government and the black residents of Woodlawn. And that this artifact sought its full manifestation in the form of brick and mortar buildings, concrete roads and patches of grass provides new clarity to the pervasiveness of monuments (of white supremacy) to be erected, such as the expansion of University of Chicago’s south campus.

But, where there was suppression and oppression, there was also resistance. The disruption to this dynamic came in the form of another artifact; the response was the plan of the people.88

While a great deal of lip service is given by the planning profession to “citizen participation” it is unfortunately true that in most cases the attitude is like that of the medical profession, who, though they may listen patiently to their patient’s opinions, actually pay little attention to them but proceed with the autocratic and arbitrary authority of the demigod, complacent in the assurance that they know better than the patient what is wrong and what to do about it.
Unfortunately in terms of planning, the people themselves are basically to blame because of their typical apathy and lack of initiative and aggressiveness in regard to their community and its operation. Perhaps the planner cannot be blamed for his mere lip service to “citizen participation” after a few futile and disheartening attempts to get any realistic participation from the people.\(^\text{89}\)

TWO exposed the hypocrisy of the city’s claim to “citizen participation”, demanding that the Woodlawn residents be recognized as full citizens, and calling upon the people to utilize the democratic process developed by TWO to develop a new plan and direction for their community. This was one reason why TWO was so adamant about the words “self-determination” being included in the verbiage for the plan. There was also a clear call to action for more radical initiative within the planning process than had been exhibited in the past but also a presumption of blame toward apathetic community members not involved in TWO.

TWO is a rather unique and “to some people” a somewhat disturbing example of realistic citizen participation in action! Bureaucracy, long used to the disgruntled apathy of typical citizenry, is understandably somewhat taken aback by this unorthodox phenomenon. The professional planner, still thinking of himself as the doctor for community ills, is upset by the patient who vociferously disagrees with both the diagnosis and the treatment. What he forgets is that planning is not an exact science, and that the mental attitude, the opinions, the desires, and factors to be given full consideration if his work is to accomplish its rightful purpose.\(^\text{90}\)

This statement spoke clearly to TWO’s demand that the people be recognized as multi-dimensional and significant. Embedded within the plan of the people, and the process for drafting it, was a plan with a very different ideology from that within the city’s plan. One that valued the people as capable of self-determination and one that viewed the people worthy of preservation/conservation. The people’s plan was a manifestation of their desires and objectives for their community. And those desires very prominently included spaces of consumerism.

**The Material Manifestation of Political Consumerism**

This first phase of TWO’s plan also included abstract sketch illustrations\(^\text{91}\) of the possibilities recommended. There were three sketches that spoke directly to the community’s vision of the role of commerce in Woodlawn.
The first sketch was in resistance to large modern shopping malls and inspired by old world market squares. At the top, the sketch had in large lettering “EXCITING ACTIVITY” and at the bottom of the sketch, the words “The market square is the traditional city activity center.” This language was speaking directly to how the community envisioned consumer activities as a ritualized and integral part of their city experiences. The planning consultant’s description was as follows:

It might be more feasible to achieve the desired pedestrian orientation by widened sidewalk areas effectively used to make them pleasant shopping promenades and by creating more intimate “shopping courts” off the main street at the appropriate locations. These market courts, like the large public squares, can be ideal transitions from the business areas to the residential uses adjoining them.

The Nelson consultants were responding directly to TWO and WBMA’s insistence that businesses remain integrated into, and not set apart from, the community. The community was also rejecting the infiltration of large chain stores within shopping centers which could impact the relationship and power dynamics between residents and merchants.

The second sketch had in large lettering on top of page “COLORFUL DIVERSITY” and on the bottom “Woodlawn Businessmen want to continue to serve Woodlawn.” Here the area merchants were taking the lead (within the language) in defining a relationship of service to the Woodlawn community. It is important to note how the WBMA positioned itself as part of the community, implicitly positioning the shopping mall as an outside entity compelled by its own interests rather than interests in service to the community. There was much negotiation between WMBA and the Woodlawn community (namely TWO) regarding how power was directed and who had input into the direction of the area. The sketch sought to contrast the old business street as well as the city’s interpretation of what the commercial space and its borders should look like, with the community’s vision of improved commercial buildings still integrated into the community and preserving Woodlawn’s character. The corresponding text for this image focuses on judicious spot clearance and revitalizing rather than eliminating businesses from the community. A section of the text states explicitly
For renewal not to mean “removal” of existing businesses it is essential to think in terms of practical revitalization of the present business area. This process begins with the improvement of individual properties. The concept of diversity and flexibility in the plan arrangement makes practical varied architectural treatment and encourages all degrees of remodeling from simple paint job to complete new façade. The businesses use their position as being a part of the community as a foundation on which to advocate for their preservation and remodeling. The case to have renewal efforts center around improvement of individual properties rests on the view of these businesses as fellow community members and thus connecting them under the common concern around massive clearance and resident removal. The implication is that a fresh coat of paint will cost the residents much less than the mass removal of local businesses and the community connections that would go with them. Such action would only serve to revert all of the efforts and gains established through the Square Deal Campaign.

The second phase of the professional planning by Nelson & Associates was the preparation of the formal counter proposal to the City’s preliminary recommendations, based on the community’s feedback. Ultimately, TWO’s proposal would receive no reply from city planners, but both the city’s proposal as well as TWO’s response are useful artifacts in understanding how notions around consumerism were constructed within a community planning context.

In reviewing the city plan, there was clear research of the area’s physical space and census demographics, but no sense that the planners investigated the social history of the area, its residents or the community issues as told by the people. The city plan also failed to acknowledge the positive aspects of the community (besides location) and the people within it. The plan discussed the community without discussing its people. As a TWO representative stated in an April 10, 1962 letter to Bill Nelson (of Nelson Consulting), “nowhere in the entire document does the word “Negro” appear.” Midway through the document was the first mention of “public and private agencies” and a stated concern for a coordinated effort, but still there was no mention of people. On page thirteen of the proposed city plan, citizenship duties were mentioned and identified as individual citizens’ ability to join together for the improvement of their community. This point 2 was titled “Community Organization (Training in
citizenship)” and implied that the people needed to be directed on how to join together and that this city plan would facilitate that ‘training’. This presumed need for direction from the city was particularly ironic for two reasons. First, it completely disregarded the community’s existing forms of organizing, which led in some ways to the forming of TWO. It also showed how the city made clear the de-valuing of Woodlawn residents by not hearing the voices of the people, as it went about “the numerous studies of the community, its land use, physical problems, housing and structural deficiencies and the general indices and criteria necessary in the study and formulation of an urban renewal program for the area”.

Commerce/local businesses appeared to be an afterthought with the city plan. “It is suggested that additional facilities be provided … and that the area (including commerce) be generally improved to serve as an attractive, efficient center for community life.” The plan called for a redirection of flows of traffic as well as a consolidation of commercial space and activities. Two commercial locations were identified, near the intersections of 63rd and Woodlawn and 63rd and Cottage Grove. All other details about commercial space remained vague. “Without the results of city or area-wide commercial studies and plans, the exact content and size of these areas cannot be determined. However, it is likely that they can and should be arranged somewhat more compactly than at present.”

There are other casual mentions of business within the document but their lack of depth and implicit paternalism did nothing more than insult Woodlawn residents.

The condescending attitude of the planners toward the people in Woodlawn shines throughout the list of services and promises. Thus the planners offer to tell the people how to buy and use credit. That nothing is more bitterly resented than being told how to spend one’s money is evidently of no standing for Woodlawn people.

Here, a clear statement was made regarding consumerism’s connection with freedom (through freedom of choice) and how the city plan showed a complete disregard for the people of Woodlawn through its ‘direction’ of commerce. TWO also showed its clear alliance with the business owners of the community when stating its opposition to any plans that would push out small businesses entrenched in their locations.
In addition to a complete omission/lack of acknowledgement that Woodlawn was a ‘negro’ neighborhood\textsuperscript{106}, TWO had a number of other problems with the city’s plan. Among these issues was the city plan’s identification of community needs and objectives and how the city identified the community itself. TWO objected to the boundaries of 63\textsuperscript{rd} and Woodlawn and 63\textsuperscript{rd} and Cottage Grove stating that the community understood Woodlawn to extend all the way to the western side of South Park Ave from 60\textsuperscript{th} St. to South Chicago Ave, and south from the eastern side of Chicago Ave to 71\textsuperscript{st} St., which the residents considered ‘West Woodlawn’. Another issue was the city plan’s characterization of densely populated areas as undesirable. TWO stated “Woodlawn is part of a big city, and big cities customarily have a lot of people living in relatively little space. Furthermore, to lower the density means that the T.W.O. must lose substantial numbers of its people and that the cost of housing will of necessity have to shoot up.”\textsuperscript{107} TWO exposed how a seemingly objective metric was serving as a proxy for the conflation of high density, which in TWOs view could be characterized as neither good or bad, with excessively high population concentrations (of black people) which was presented as requiring major sections of the area to be completely razed.\textsuperscript{108} The city plan, through its metrics of ‘adequate space’, positioned occupancy that exceeded more than one person per room as problematic. TWO’s point was that the metrics, which were assumed to be objective, were impractical and flawed and would not have been used for other areas in order to paint them as in need of rehabilitation. “If we do not come out of this thing with another set of standards, it means that there is nothing we can do with virtually every Negro area in the United States but rip it down, and, of course, move people into almost the same set of physical circumstances a little further down the pike.”\textsuperscript{109} TWO also took exception to the ways in which the city was absolved of its inability to enforce building code violations. The point was made that, without addressing this issue, no plan, not one devised by the city or one created by its citizens, would be successful. This lack of faith in the city to enforce its own building codes was what led TWO to take matters in their own hands and organize rent strikes against landlords, thus relying on the power of the people as consumers rather than the presumed power of the local government (as was the case with the South East Commission) to improve housing conditions. TWO also noted that the Department of Planning that hinted that
discrimination and segregation shaped the environment and might have caused some ‘anti-social’ activities within the area was the same department that erected Chicago’s enormous and deeply segregated public housing ghettos. TWO also pointed out, related to the city’s plan to foster a “sound relationship” between the University of Chicago and Woodlawn, that the university had a white student body and had gone to considerable lengths to separate itself from the surrounding black community. TWO was opposed to every aspect of the plan involving the University South Campus, calling for the needs of the university to be explicitly listed and for a distinction to be made between the university’s true needs for land and its desires to build a campus. In addition, the lack of acknowledgement and attempted erasure of the black churches and their needs spoke, in TWO’s view, to the disregard of the plan to the people. Seeing that much of the leadership within the community came from the church, this was another way in which the city plan showed disrespect toward the community.

When considering how to facilitate dialogue amongst residents around planning for Woodlawn’s future, TWO developed twelve principles/criteria within which it hoped to ground the conversation. These principles were consistent with TWO’s advocacy of self-determination and focused heavily on recognizing the existing value of the community (the spirit of its residents, the architecture of its buildings, etc.). Several principles called upon an appreciation of urban values; these values viewed high density areas as an essential characteristic of city living, called for flexibility around zoning, and recognized streets as being an important area for community life and not just places for cars to drive and park. Half of the principles outlined directly referenced and centered on the people of Woodlawn. TWO sought to frame the Woodlawn planning conversation around the people of Woodlawn and recognized the positive aspects of the community. As it related to retail businesses, TWO’s frame of reference was in clear support of commerce in the area, seeing it as critical to the community’s sustainability. Unlike the city’s plan, TWO’s proposal viewed residents as potential consumers in need of spaces within their community to participate in the marketplace. Spaces of consumption were described as communal spaces of activity. TWO also saw the unique value in the “neighborhood establishments” and the relationship
between the small business owners and the residents of Woodlawn. TWO acknowledged the symbiotic relationship between the community and business owners. The mutual relationship between businessmen and the community was considered so important that it was outlined in the foundational criteria established by TWO for the planning of Woodlawn.

A more stable and prosperous community will contribute to a better business district and an improved business district will help produce a better total community environment. A new shopping center oriented to a different market might appear attractive physically but it would not produce any benefit to the Woodlawn community itself. In a true city environment the commercial areas play an entirely different role than they do in suburbia. They not only serve as a market area but as a community activity center. They help meet the entertainment, social, and cultural needs of the community and in planning for Woodlawn, this broad role should be recognized and encouraged. Adequate recognition must also be given to the special role of the small businesses and shops scattered throughout the community. Pre-occupation with creating copies of outlying shopping centers has tended to obscure the need for these “neighborhood” establishments. They not only serve a unique need of the neighborhood area but they also offer an important opportunity for the marginal enterprise which is economically unable to exist in the more highly developed commercial centers. Impersonal studies of marketing economics tend to dismiss these enterprises as not able to compete and survive in the trend for larger and larger commercial center combines, but realistic community planning must recognize and provide for their existence.111

In TWO’s depiction, power was shared and was multi-directional in its flow, unlike abusive relations where power flowed unilaterally, either through the exporting of dollars out of the community or exploiting local residents with high prices and inferior products and services because there were no viable consumer options within the community.

Conclusion

TWO’s community plan was a fuller enunciation of its vision for how consumerism was to be embedded within the community. Thus, the community’s urban renewal plan was an articulation and continuation of the work that was started with the Square Deal Campaign. Working in conjunction with the WMBM, and seeking to preserve local business owners’ presence within the community, TWO constructed what the city would not. While the city ignored Woodlawn residents’ role as consumers within their own community, TWO acknowledged and affirmed this role and sought, through the
organization of a new community plan, to ensure spaces of consumerism were rooted within the fabric of the community. If measured by sustained systemic change, TWO’s Square Deal Campaign and urban renewal proposals were failures. However, the organization, in representing its community, was successful in naming their own issues and specific oppressors, mobilizing their community to identify appropriate solutions whereby commerce could be community focused and integrated into community life and resisting external forces that wished to exploit, redefine, occupy and displace them. Using these metrics as a measure of success, there is victory in TWO’s resistance.

Endnotes

1 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, Awareness May 1961 “A Movement of the People” Vol 1 No. 1
2 According to a Chicago Defender article dated November 29, 1962, the campaign was originally an idea suggested by a group of Puerto Rican Woodlawn residents who found that area merchants who cheating them in the same way Blacks were being cheated. This group would later be part of the “citizen shoppers” team charged with visiting various stores in search of short weights and inaccurate/misleading pricing. See IAF Records Box 64 Folder 801 Industrial Area Foundation Records - TWO OSC, 1959-62, Chicago Defender Magazine November 29, 1962 “Square Deal Campaign Cracks Down On Cheating Merchants” See also Black Power/White Control by John Hall Fish p49 and Black Self-Determination by Arthur Brazier.
3 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, Awareness May 1961 “A Movement of the People” Vol 1 No. 1
5 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, Awareness May 1961 “A Movement of the People” Vol 1 No. 1
6 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 464 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Document titled “A Summary Of Events Related To The Temporary Woodlawn Organization For Community Planning And Rehabilitation” n.d. p.2
7 Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, The Bulletin March 2, 1961 “Lutherans To Meet TWO Head” Vol. 3 No. 21
9 The four WMBA representatives were Perry Schwartz of Jeffrey Acceptance, Irv May of Mayson’s, Bernie Silverman of Ellis Jewelers and Clothiers and a fourth person not named at the time of the news release. See IAF Records Box 28 Folder 470 Woodlawn-TWO-news releases March-August, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Campaign Okayed! Group Signs Pact” dated March 11, 1961 p.2 The fourth person was Bernie Hahn of Red Rooster Super Market. See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled "Members of the Board of Arbitration" dated May 19, 1961; See also IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Letter dated May 19, 1961 addressed to Kermit Eby of the Social Science
The four consumer representatives included “one from organized labor, one from the Spanish-speaking community, one from the Woodlawn Block Council and one from the Future Outlook League.” See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Defender March 18-24, 1961 “Woodlawn Group Probes Race Bias Charges” Mildred Kendall was the FOL representative. See IAF Records Box 28 Folder 470 Woodlawn-TWO-news releases March-August, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Campaign Okayed! Group Signs Pact” dated March 11, 1961 p.3 and also IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Letter dated May 19, 1961 addressed to Kermit Eby of the Social Science Division at University of Chicago from Nicholas von Hoffman p.2 The other three consumer representatives named were Joseph Haygood (of United Steelworkers of America), Don Maldonado (Spanish speaking groups), and Gilbert Sweden (Woodlawn Block Club Council) See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled ”Members of the Board of Arbitration” dated May 19, 1961 Ultimately the Board of Arbitration would opt not to elect an outside chairperson but instead have a rotating chairperson from amongst the eight members.

The senator’s office would also attempt to leverage its relationship with WBMA to gain access to the space of TWO as illustrated in a letter from the Senator Korshak’s office asking Kyros to arrange an invitation for the senator from TWO to their next meeting so that he might appear and address the group. See IAF Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Letter dated February 8, 1961 addressed to Saul Alinsky from George Kyros dated February 16, 1961

Similar letters were sent to TWO and Spanish-speaking affiliate organizations of TWO

The four consumer representatives included “one from organized labor, one from the Spanish-speaking community, one from the Woodlawn Block Council and one from the Future Outlook League.” See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961, Defender March 18-24, 1961 “Woodlawn Group Probes Race Bias Charges” Mildred Kendall was the FOL representative. See IAF Records Box 28 Folder 470 Woodlawn-TWO-news releases March-August, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Campaign Okayed! Group Signs Pact” dated March 11, 1961 p.3 and also IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Letter dated May 19, 1961 addressed to Kermit Eby of the Social Science Division at University of Chicago from Nicholas von Hoffman p.2 The other three consumer representatives named were Joseph Haygood (of United Steelworkers of America), Don Maldonado (Spanish speaking groups), and Gilbert Sweden (Woodlawn Block Club Council) See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled ”Members of the Board of Arbitration” dated May 19, 1961 Ultimately the Board of Arbitration would opt not to elect an outside chairperson but instead have a rotating chairperson from amongst the eight members.

Amendment to the 1956 Housing Act permitting local planning agencies (at their discretion) to make relocation payments to dislocated businesses. This includes moving expenses, personal property loss and the cost of disassembling and reassembling equipment, for a max of $3000. See IAF Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum re: “The Impact Of Dislocation From Urban Renewal Areas On Small Business” dated May 5, 1961 to Members of the Woodlawn Business Men’s Association from George Kyros


Ibid.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 28 Folder 465 Woodlawn-TWO-general & miscellaneous May-September, 1961, Awareness May 1961 “A Movement of the People” Vol 1 No. 1 p.7

Institutional lenders that finance redevelopment require that 65-70% of the floor area of buildings being re-used be leased to firms with a triple A Dun and Bradstreet rating. These ratings are only made available to larger firms with a min number of employees. So, small businesses would not have a D&B rating and would therefore be ineligible to be housed in the majority of commercial space. See IAF Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum re: “The Impact Of Dislocation From Urban Renewal Areas On Small Business” dated May 5, 1961 to Members of the Woodlawn Business Men’s Association from George Kyros


Charles Chiakulas Collection Box 32 Folder Lawndale Tenants Union (Lawndale Union to End Slums) Minutes of Tenants' Meetings and negotiation meeting; CC notes; Lawndale Conservation Plan; WestSide Torch, Jan.-Feb., 1968, Welfare Handbook (IUPAE) Document titled “Lawndale Conservation Plan January 1968”

Charles Chiakulas Collection Box 32 Folder Lawndale Tenants Union (Lawndale Union to End Slums) Minutes of Tenants' Meetings and negotiation meeting; CC notes; Lawndale Conservation Plan; WestSide Torch, Jan.-Feb., 1968, Welfare Handbook (IUPAE) Document titled “Lawndale Conservation Plan January 1968”


Ibid.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men’s Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum dated May 27, 1961 to WBMA Membership from WBMA Promotion Committee p.2

Ibid.

Ibid.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum dated May 27, 1961 to WBMA Membership from WBMA Promotion Committee p.5

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum dated May 27, 1961 to WBMA Membership from WBMA Promotion Committee p.6

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum dated May 27, 1961 to WBMA Membership from WBMA Promotion Committee p.3

That blacks preferred white businesses, that blacks were scared to shop in their own neighborhoods, that whites did not want to shop in black neighborhoods or share consumer spaces with whites, etc. were all presumptions of the WBMA and IAF that they hoped would be verified by a NORC study.

Copy of Parade permit can be found in IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961

A portion of the area was referred to as ‘Baby Skid Row’ and was the target of clergy and neighborhood leaders for its so-called physical and moral blight on the community.

Flyers were distributed targeting Wonder Foods as well as Nick’s grocery store both on 61st and Woodlawn. See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Flyer titled “Buyer … Beware” n.d. and IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Letter dated July 17, 1961 to Honorable Raymond J. Fahy, Department of Weights and Measures from Leon Depres, Alderman p.1

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Flyer titled “Buyer … Beware” n.d.

The emblems were used to identify businesses who had committed to the campaign and to treating Woodlawn customers fairly. “Square Deal!” Large emblems bearing this legend will begin appearing in the display windows of many Woodlawn area business establishments within the next few weeks. The emblems are to be distributed by the Temporary Woodlawn organization.” See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961 Chicago’s American March 7, 1961 “Woodlawn Merchants Sell a ‘Square Deal!’”

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum dated May 27, 1961 to WBMA Membership from WBMA Promotion Committee p.6

The emblem was used to identify businesses who had committed to the campaign and to treating Woodlawn customers fairly. “Square Deal!” Large emblems bearing this legend will begin appearing in the display windows of many Woodlawn area business establishments within the next few weeks. The emblems are to be distributed by the Temporary Woodlawn organization.” See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 475 Woodlawn-TWO-clippings-miscellaneous March-April, 1961 Chicago’s American March 7, 1961 “Woodlawn Merchants Sell a ‘Square Deal!’”

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum dated May 27, 1961 to WBMA Membership from WBMA Promotion Committee p.7

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 486 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign Board of Arbitration-newspaper clippings March, 1961, Woodlawn Booster March 1, 1961 “Launch Square Deal Drive In Woodlawn” Vol. 28 No. 9
First set of principles, dated 3/1/61 can be found in IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Principles” dated March 1, 1961

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Principles” dated March 1, 1961

The second agreement had more than double the list of expectations/responsibilities (30) but the majority of those responsibilities, 14, rested with the Board of Arbitration. In the second document, the customer also shouldered more responsibility related to making and proving claims. See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Articles of Agreement” dated March 8, 1961. In comparing the two documents, we observe a shift in decision making power (decision making around presumption of guilt or innocence of merchants as well as what is deemed legitimate proof) going to the arbitration board. The initial document’s focus was on laying out what was acceptable and unacceptable behavior/business practice for merchants. The second document is about laying out who has the authority to determine acceptable and unacceptable behaviors/business practices. Though an argument may be made that the second document is a predictable progression of the first, as FOL points out, the shift in focus works in the favor of merchants more so than resident consumers.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Articles of Agreement” dated March 8, 1961

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Articles of Agreement” dated March 8, 1961 p.3

Ibid.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Articles of Agreement” dated March 8, 1961 p.9

The original agreement called for TWO organizations to “pledge themselves to promote buying in the square deal stores in every way possible” but comes short of pledging commitment to the prosperity and well-being of these stores. See IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Square Deal Principles” dated March 1, 1961 p.5

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Minutes of Meeting, Board of Arbitration, held June 16, 1961, St. Clara’s Church” n.d.

Copy of letter verbiage can be found in the IAF Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Draft form letter sent on behalf of Board of Arbitration warning businesses of the consequences of being in violation of Chapter 16 of the Chicago Municipal Code prohibiting short weighting related to the sale of meat. The letter informs the business that shoppers will be used in local businesses to verify proper measuring and that stores are not in violation of the municipal code.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Memorandum re: “Decisions of Board of Arbitration at May 9th Meeting” dated May 12, 1961 to Mr. Faustino Ayala et al. from Nicholas von Hoffman


Quote from the Board of Arbitration meeting May 29, 1961 “The names of the individuals and firms involved are confidential, in order to protect the innocent and also to give the guilty a fair chance to mend their ways. Publicity is one of the weapons the Board of Arbitration has to force compliance with the “Square Deal Code” and it is only used in case a firm refuses to deal honestly and fairly with its customers. The Board has to be careful that it is not party to damaging a store’s reputation on the basis of hearsay evidence, gossip and unproven talk. Of course the Board will not allow its fairplay rules to be used by an unethical business to hold up to justice."

See also July 22,1968 Better Business Bureau memo from M. John Madsen to Mr. Lind of BBB who expresses his disbelief that dishonest business practices are a systemic issue within low-income communities, saying “Does Mr. Friedman ignore, or lose sight of the US study or John O’Brien’s data, refuting the canard of “gouging” in the slums?” See Better Business Bureau of Metro Chicago Series 1 Box 14 Folder 2 Consumer Education, Memo dated July 22, 1968 addressed to Mr. Lind from M. John Madsen re: Guidelines for Consumer Education
Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Minutes Board of Arbitration Meeting Friday, July 21” n.d.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 492 Woodlawn Business Men's Association-memoranda May, 1960-June, 1961, Memorandum dated May 27, 1961 to WBMA Membership from WBMA Promotion Committee p.7

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Letter dated July 17, 1961 to Honorable Raymond J. Fahy, Department of Weights and Measures from Leon Depres, Alderman

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Document titled “Minutes Board of Arbitration Meeting Friday, July 21” n.d.

Ibid.

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 29 Folder 485 Woodlawn-TWO-Square Deal Campaign-Board of Arbitration Correspondence March-July, 1961, Letter dated July 12, 1961 to Temporary Woodlawn Organization c/o Rev. Mario from Alderman Leon Depres

Ibid.


See IAF Records Box 30 Folder 494 Woodlawn Plan-Nelson and Associates Planning and Design Consultants March-May, 1962, Booklet prepared by The Department of City Planning titled “Proposal for a Program to Meet the Long Term Needs of Woodlawn” dated March 1962 p.2 for full listing of City Plan Commission

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 494 Woodlawn Plan-Nelson and Associates Planning and Design Consultants March-May, 1962, Booklet prepared by The Department of City Planning titled “Proposal for a Program to Meet the Long Term Needs of Woodlawn” dated March 1962

Ibid.

By 1962, the Temporary Woodlawn Organization has decided to become permanent and named themselves The Woodlawn Organization and retained the acronym TWO

Nelson & Associates charged $5000 for their services, $2000 for the first phase and $3000 for the second. Industrial Area Foundations was responsible for paying this fee. See IAF Records Box 30 Folder 495 Woodlawn Plan-Nelson and Associates Planning and Design Consultants June, 1962, Proposal submitted by Nelson and Associates regarding plans for urban renewal, p.2

Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 494 Woodlawn Plan-Nelson and Associates Planning and Design Consultants March-May, 1962, Booklet prepared by The Department of City Planning titled “Proposal for a Program to Meet the Long Term Needs of Woodlawn” dated March 1962

Ibid.


The correspondence between TWO and Nelson & Associates was filtered through IAF. All of the correspondence within the historical record is between Nick von Hoffman (speaking on behalf of TWO) and Bill Nelson. It is important to be aware that this Black neighborhood’s vision of self-determination is being told by a white man to another white man (who is also head of the firm). Race and rank must be considered in interpreting the messages that are privileged. This is definitely a limitation of the historical record.


Ibid.


In 1963, TWO would actually be the institution to reintroduce the South Campus proposal as an option because the community needed the low-income housing and spot clearance that came with it after proposal to finance renewal with bonds failed. See Black Power/White Control chapter 2 for more information of South Campus and the erection of Woodlawn Gardens


Industrial Area Foundations Records Box 30 Folder 494 Woodlawn Plan-Nelson and Associates Planning and Design Consultants March-May, 1962, Booklet prepared by The Department of City Planning titled “Proposal for a Program to Meet the Long Term Needs of Woodlawn” dated March 1962 p.6

14 Point Tempo Light”

“Spartan Book”

14 Point Tempo Light”

Spartan Book”

“Spartan Book”

Spartan Book”

“Spartan Book”

Black Power/White Control chapter 2 for more information of South Campus and the erection of Woodlawn Gardens


Many of these businesses, not owning their own properties, had invested large sums of money in fixtures, or businesses franchised to specific addresses, and were unable to move. See IAF Records Box 30 Folder 494 Woodlawn Plan-Nelson and Associates Planning and Design Consultants March-May, 1962, 20 page document dated April 10, 1962 addressed to William Nelson p.15

The omission of Woodlawn as a black neighborhood also serves to erase the area as a black consumer market.


See also comments in Chapter 3 regarding the white Back of the Yards neighborhood.


CHAPTER 5: CLASS ASPIRATIONS – INTERSECTIONAL POLITICAL CONSUMERISM, POOR BLACK WOMEN, AND CREDIT

Introduction: The Politics of Fashion

The first annual Temporary Woodlawn Organization (TWO) fashion show “The Cavalcade of Fashions” was held on December 3, 1961. This was one of the few TWO public events where women were showcased as formal leaders and organizers. Interestingly, within the description of the Temporary Woodlawn Organization given by the Defender newspaper article publicizing the event, the TWO was described as a “non-sectarian, non-political and interracial” organization. Since its inception, the TWO had taken a clear political stance related to the desire for ‘self-determination’ for its community. Yet, within the context of a woman-led fashion show event which promoted and raised funds for the TWO, there was a political positioning which was diluted and downplayed. That women’s participation in the TWO was highlighted through their non-political display of ‘fashions’ speaks to the level of dismissiveness that existed within and outside of the organization as it related to the permissible leadership spaces and contributions of women.

Figure 5-1: Various photos from the Chicago Defender newspaper displaying models from TWO Fashion Show event "Cavalcade of Fashions" Retrieved from Industrial Area Foundation Records
TWO hosted its second annual fashion show on December 9, 1962. The show consisted of “high fashion glamour” hair styles and clothing. A small number of young girls and men also participated in the show.\(^3\) The fashions displayed within the show, including an “elaborate beaver collared jacket” and a “gown from far-off Hong Kong, a beautiful vibrant blue woolen topped by a cashmere jacket covered in iridescent sequins”\(^4\), were examples of luxury, elegance and expensive ‘high quality’ which occupied the same Woodlawn community space as slum landlords, dilapidated schools, and eroding merchant consumer spaces. The fashion runway within the backdrop of ‘baby skid row’ illustrates the extreme class border-crossing these annual fashion shows represented.

Less than a decade later, on April 7, 1969, the Chicago Welfare Rights Organization\(^5\) (CWRO) would attend the Sears Annual Fashion Show. Though the CWRO did not plan the fashion show, they did plan a demonstration during the show in an effort to disrupt the event and draw attention to the disparities that existed between those on welfare and the middle-class patrons attending the event. The women wanted to raise awareness about the discriminatory credit practices of Sears against welfare recipients and hoped to make its case by modeling the ‘current welfare fashions’ during the show.\(^6\) The National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) national boycott of Sears began in March 1969. Coordinated demonstrations against Sears took place across the country. In Chicago on March 27\(^{st}\), approximately sixty people, mostly black women, from the CWRO marched and picketed the downtown Sears store and met with store management.\(^7\) The CWRO’s list of demands included that Sears enter into a formal agreement with the NWRO to offer credit to NWRO members, that credit of at least $150 to be extended to NWRO members, and that there be no extra credit charges against welfare recipients.\(^8\) The CWRO demonstrators wore fashions dated 5-6 years prior, stating that the clothes they were wearing were not sold in stores like Sears and that if Sears granted them credit accounts, they would be able to afford to wear the current fashions that Sears was modeling in the April 7\(^{th}\) show.

We are not seeking accounts for the purpose of seeking accounts. These accounts will give us the opportunity to “buy better” clothing for our loved ones and children. It is a known fact that if children feel part of their environment, they participate more in school activities and are more hesitant about dropping out of school. If we were able to clothe them better, we might be able to help stop them from dropping out. P2 \(^9\)
The idea that wearing more expensive, newer clothing would lead to improved school outcomes for the children of welfare recipients, though flawed, illustrates a connecting of consumerism with structural outcomes such as educational attainment. The invoking of maternal concerns related to children also focused on the same demographic targeted by Sears who would be in attendance at the Fashion Show, women and mothers. While efforts were made within the press to display the TWO as a non-political organization within the context of a fashion show organized by women of the organization, the CWRO took an event that was initially positioned as apolitical and politicized it, by bringing issues of disparities to the forefront and literally putting them on display rather than using fashion to mask such inequities. This chapter explores the class aspirations that are revealed through the CWRO and NWRO’s fights for access to consumer spaces by way of consumer credit. The chapter looks specifically at the liberatory role consumer credit played for the poor during the welfare rights period and the contradictions embedded within the NWRO’s attempts to pursue socialist ends through capitalist means.

**Fashion as a Battle Site of Class Attainment**

Simmel, in his *Fashion 1904*, discussed the ways in which fashion trends spoke to issues of class and served to illuminate many of the issues apparent in the orchestrated spectacles of both the TWO and the CWRO. During Simmel’s time, fashion was used to define and shape one’s identity in a stratified society. “Imitation in all the instances where it is a productive factor represents one of the fundamental tendencies of our character, namely, that which contents itself with similarity, with uniformity, with the adaptation of the special to the general, and accentuates the constant element in change” (Simmel p295). Simmel observed that the individual and society were inextricably connected and, as such, the structure of their relationships had an effect on individuals as well as society as a whole. Simmel also discussed how consumption could be used to define and shape one’s identity in a stratified society, thus creating for the consumer a persona that was imitative of an aspired higher class or one that was distinctive from lower classes. The dynamic play between imitation and distinction relied on specific tensions between the two classes that required a constant imbalance. In other words, once something (within the higher classes) is
imitated (by lower classes), the very act of imitation forces the need for distinction (by the higher classes). The two, imitation and distinction, are not able to exist simultaneously. These are the contradictory realities that not only explain how fashion specifically perpetuates itself, but also how consumerism generally perpetuates itself. Concerning consumerism’s rapid spread, one can determine that, just like fashion, consumerism can only exist within a stratified capitalist society. One may consume to emulate someone else who is deemed superior, but once a particular item is purchased, it is replaced with another desire, thus perpetuating more consumerism. The fashions that were emulated in both the TWO fashion show as well as the CWRO demonstration provided insight into the class aspirations of these black women during the 1960s. Neither organization prominently displayed African-inspired fashions to emulate but instead coveted the same fashions desired by white women. The TWO in particular took to privileging fashions of European origin. “Mrs. Blowe, who made four trips abroad and three to Africa, wore a two piece gold straw cloth gown she bought in Florence, Italy. Her bag and gloves were purchased in Paris, France, her jewelry from Venice, Italy.”

Glamor and luxury were described in ways that did not include fashions inspired by these women’s own cultural roots. Fashions from France, Italy and those that could be pulled from “out of Vogue” magazine or embodying the “Jackie Kennedy relaxed look” were instead the fashions of focus. Even within the organization whose goals included ‘self-determination’ the emulation within the fashion show was white-centered when attempting to epitomize elegance.

In *Conflict & The Web of Group-Affiliations*, Simmel (1955) describes social networks and how one can be affiliated with a small sub-section of a group and that affiliation can be extrapolated to imply the person’s connection with the larger group. This concept is key when exploring the role of these fashion shows on the CWRO women’s identity formation. A desired affiliation with white middle-class women’s fashions, suggests that those CWRO demonstrators who perceived department store credit as an entitlement and who viewed themselves as consumers of department stores such as Sears would receive a psychological benefit whereby they felt appropriately affiliated with the (white) middle class. This affiliation comes from their ability to patronize these types of stores as a significant aspect of the middle
class experience. The CWRO speaks specifically to this perceived psychological benefit’s impact on the educational outcomes of their children. Though, one of the challenges with applying Simmel’s theory is that it does not account for the resistance to affiliation imposed by systems (such as capitalism) and ideologies (such as neoliberal racism) which prevent women from connecting based on gender. However, interpreting such dynamics through specific realms of power allows for such an analysis. The infiltration of neoliberalism into the welfare discourse along with the blackening of poverty provided unique challenges for poor black women seeking recognition in consumer spaces. That the CWRO member’s sub-affiliation as consumers would not have allowed them access to a space to be viewed and celebrated as ‘women’ in the same way that white women were respected and celebrated in consumer spaces highlights one flaw in the CWRO approach to obtaining equality through department store consumerism. Group affiliation is not accepted because the neoliberal and economic conditions (of poverty) realms of power shaping the discourse around the CWRO members did not acknowledge the women as consumers. *Intersectional political consumerism* is present and useful in providing clarity around how the group’s consumerism was strategic yet ineffective, as neoliberalism and poverty influenced how these women were ‘othered’.

The distinction of middle class, defined as a collective group with an ideal combination of education, wealth, and income, affords the group opportunities and access to resources not available to the working class and poor. It should be noted that the term ‘middle class’ is racialized to mean white middle class. Therefore, the emulation of middle class is about the acquisition of social and cultural capital to obtain resources. In Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, he discussed the intentional nature of consumer spending in order to maintain social status (1994). “As wealth accumulates, the leisure class develops further in function and structure, and there arises a differentiation within the class” (Veblen p.76). Again, we see here the role of consumerism in constructing and reproducing culture.

When we talk about economic, social and cultural capital and their role in obtaining a specific status, what we are really talking about is the class patterning (or imitationist approach) to consumerism. We must consider imitation’s impact on past, present and future consumer preferences as well as past
consumption and experiences that shape present and future preferences. What we find here potentially is an impenetrable loop which prevents people from making consumption choices outside of their past cultural experiences which would allow them to elevate their social status. For Bourdieu (Jenkins 1992) social capital, found in relationships with significant others, cultural capital derived from legitimized knowledge and symbolic capital of prestige influence how we make consumption decisions and can elevate our status. Bourdieu positions capital beyond the economic as something to be used to enhance one’s position as an attempt to counter inequities. In The Social Structure of Economy, Bourdieu (2005) stated that a home was a “consumer good, which, because of its high cost, represents one of the most difficult economic decisions and one of the most consequential in the entire domestic life-cycle” (Bourdieu p.33). Within the context of TWOs rent strikes (and these consumers’ very limited choices around housing) we see a drastic difference in the amount of social, cultural, and symbolic capital that TWO participants can muster in efforts to change their status in comparison to the white middle-class. CWRO members are also at a disadvantage as the past consumption experiences that shape their present and future preferences are, by their own reporting, 5-6 years behind those of the middle-class white women they wish to emulate. They cannot, therefore, use cultural capital to enhance their position and counter inequities because the realms of power at play keep them locked in, not only economically stifling circumstances which stunt their experiences but also, socially restrictive circumstances which keep them from accessing consumer spaces that construct the domestic lifestyles they wish to access.

Applying Simmel’s imitation/distinction model, the belief of the CWRO that welfare recipients had a right to credit so that they might engage as consumer citizens causes a fundamental conflict within a stratified society.

“The fashions of the upper stratum of society are never identical with those of the lower; in fact they are abandoned by the former as soon as the latter prepares to appropriate them. Thus fashion represents nothing more than one of many forms of life by the end of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and change” (Simmel p.296)
Explained above is what Simmel calls the need for distinction by the upper stratum of society. C.W. Mills (1976) term, status panic, describes the middle class’ anxiety that their position is being threatened, in terms of participating in exclusive activities. Those who experience a need for distinction or status panic have a need to reinforce their standing through consumerism. What this status panic meant within the context of the TWO and CWRO in their efforts to access not only middle-class indicators but also the aspirations of the middle-class was a strong and hostile resistance to assertions of entitlement around credit or access to any consumer product markers that might make poor black women indistinguishable from middle class white women (regardless of whether black women had the cultural capital to accompany the material markers).

“Give Us Credit”: Class Aspirations Through Consumerism

An analytical deconstruction of the document titled “Being Poor is Expensive” exposes the distinctions made between the middle class consumer and the poor consumer and how these distinctions serve to reify class inequities and leave poor consumers worse off in the consumer market. The document is found within a collection of files which include materials related specifically to the NWROs Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI) campaign. GAI documents within the same folder utilize the similar arguments outlined in the “Being Poor is Expensive” document, suggesting that these were common examples used when articulating the specific challenges facing the poor. Prepared by the NWRO, the “Being Poor is Expensive” document is clearly in conversation with the debates occurring during the welfare rights movement. In contrast to the numeric facts and figures given in institutional reports, the document takes an ethnographic approach to communicating the lived experiences of the poor, similar to other narratives produced by the NWRO. The document is important because it clearly positions the poor as consumers and offers a critique of access to consumer spaces rather than a critique of the poor as flawed. The document mentions the specific challenges faced by the poor to gain access to credit, and concludes with a statement related to the elusiveness of credit for the poor, making the case that (low interest) credit offered to middle class consumers is a tool with the potential to assist the poor with managing their finances and obtaining access to consumer spaces. The document suggests that middle
class consumers have the benefit of time on their side in that they can afford to use the fluctuation in pricing of goods and services to their advantage. Because they are not perpetually deprived, middle class consumers have the privilege to wait for certain foods to go on sale, to buy in bulk when those items are reduced, and that generally, they have the privilege of shopping out of convenience rather than necessity. “Of what use is a sale on children’s summer clothing in October, when a poor family can’t even afford to purchase a winter coat.”\textsuperscript{15} Also speaking to access, Mrs. Rose Thomas, a leader of the New York based NWRO group called Concerned Parents for Adequate Welfare, stated “Well, I would like to stay here in Queens, have my own home and a station wagon. Mostly to get around, especially when I see sales on a lot of things I like, and I try to travel on the bus. When I get there, I see so much and I can’t travel back with it. Food especially, groceries, meats. Sometimes clothing.”\textsuperscript{16}

This issue was viewed as much more than an issue of consumer convenience. The issue of available consumer options and choice was viewed as a social justice issue. The Chicago Archdiocesan Committee on Poverty (ACP) advocated for nearby shopping for residents of Lawndale, Cabrini-Green, Englewood, and Altgeld Gardens (African American areas with high concentrations of poverty).\textsuperscript{17} The Committee drew attention to rising food prices and a dearth of major grocery store chains in these areas and offered several solutions to address these issues. The ACP became involved with the Self-Help Action Center (SHAC) in 1973. SHAC, a nonprofit program which began in 1968, sold and distributed food to impoverished areas.\textsuperscript{18} Paul Horvat and Dorothy Shavers created the program. Horvat’s personal biography seemed to greatly influence his political consumerist perspectives, specifically his adoption of what I interpret as community-based intersectional political consumerism.

As a youth in Yugoslavia during the early part of this century, Horvat identified with the land, with what it produced, and very early developed a concern for broader distribution of food. Having lived through both World Wars and under various political regimes, his concern for food distribution and self-determination has not wavered. He carried his concerns with him to the United States in 1952 and, after becoming financially self-sufficient here, he began to organize food buying clubs, sponsor demonstration sales and tried to sell the concept of consumers purchasing food directly from producers.\textsuperscript{19}
Horvat was able to make connections between the political climate and food distribution and sought to offer to the people food sale and distribution alternatives that were more independent of large corporations and which promoted socialist, rather than capitalist ideas. Mrs. Dorothy Shavers, a Southside resident and teacher who grew up in Arkansas on a cotton farm, contacted Horvat after reading an article about his ideas around food distribution.²⁰ Having seen both rural and urban poverty, Mrs. Shaver believed food cooperatives and buying club concepts could greatly benefit the poor.

The “Being Poor is Expensive” document also speaks to the choices that are available to middle class consumers around geographical options and store choice (i.e. shopping around for the best prices and merchandise), the higher quality of products available to middle class consumers, and the flexibility in payment options available to middle class consumers including access to credit.

The poor have no flexibility in the method by which they must make purchases. It is almost impossible for a poor family to obtain credit without collateral. Even if they manage to obtain credit, the poor become trapped by exhorbitant [sic] carrying charges, high interest rates, and unreliable merchants. Conversely for most Americans credit is an outlet to cost effectiveness and financial convenience.²¹

It was under this premise that the NWRO organized a major campaign to secure credit for its members.²² Similar to the TWO organization’s direct action efforts during the ‘Square Deal Campaign’, local welfare rights organizations marched on local businesses to apply pressure to secure credit to the poor.²³ This site of struggle was set within the consumer market and centered on choice – choice as freedom.

The NWRO pursued companies such as General Mills²⁴, Proctor & Gamble²⁵, and The Sterling Drug Company²⁶ requesting the companies give coupons that were redeemable for General Motors products as a way to “distribute a share of your great wealth to those poorest of the poor”. Women of the NWRO felt they had a right to choose what their needs were and a right to consumer choice in meeting those needs. The Home Economics Unit of the Cook County Department of Public Aid offered ‘homemaking education’ which included sewing classes.²⁷ As one NWRO member indicated, welfare mothers of the NWRO wanted to buy clothes off the rack like middle-class white women and not spend their time and energy making clothes. The NWRO member is resisting the notion that the poor have endless disposable time to be used in such ways.
During the 1960s there was not only a focus on consumerism as part of civil rights but also a focus on intersectional aspects of identity and oppression and the impact of interconnected social locations on consumer experiences. In a July 31, 1966 speech addressed to the National Urban League (NUL) during its annual conference, Assistant Secretary of Labor for the NUL Esther Peterson emphasized the need to focus specifically on the conditions and issues of ‘Negro women’ and stated

Equality in the marketplace belongs right beside equality in education, in housing, in job opportunity and in the polling booth…Not having enough income is only part of the predicament. In many cases, for a variety of reasons, the price paid by the poor for products and services is higher than the price paid by those with higher incomes. There seems to be an extra penalty for being poor. The people with the least money are often the ones who pay the highest prices.28

Within her comments, Peterson brought attention to the realities of those who occupy the social locations of black, poor and female. Her emphasis on the marketplace demonstrated her belief that consumer spaces were a site of struggle, similar to educational and housing spaces, and required a critical analysis to uncover systemic inequities that were embedded within a capitalist society. While her comments do not overtly link capitalism and consumerism with the oppression of poor black women, they do signal a desire to center women, specifically African American women, in discussions of social problems affecting the race. The comments also serve to link women with consumer concerns, in some ways reifying consumerism as a gendered realm accessed by women.

“Public welfare is the only governmental program operating in the United States today which has as its assigned task the provision of an ultimate guarantee against poverty and social deprivation.”29 There were separate standards of ‘social deprivation’ for poor African American women versus middle class white women, which intersectional political consumerism serves to illuminate.30 Intersectional political consumerism also serves to illuminate the inconsistencies with NWRO’s approach of engaging capitalist businesses with hopes of obtaining socialist-type outcomes. That a capitalist marketplace would be expected to serve as a site for promoting equity across classes demonstrates the failings of a strategy so deeply disconnected from ideology. The blackening and feminization of poverty31 served to shift the larger narrative around what minimal conditions for the poor were acceptable within a capitalist society.
Though the blackening and feminization of poverty led to the narrative of the typical person on family assistance being a black female head of household, according to the Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare, in 1971 those family heads of household receiving childcare assistance were 60% male and 62% white and those receiving family assistance benefits were 54% male and 55% white. Despite these realities, the public opinion related to the welfare rights movement and the activists and organizers within it was extremely racialized and hostile. When the Washington Post ran a story on Johnnie Tillmon and the NWRO in 1968, the response was swift and unsympathetic. Responders to the article, mostly white women, articulated Bauman’s flawed consumer characterization of welfare recipients as irresponsible, unwilling to work, poor parents, and eager to take advantage of tax payers who are struggling to make ends meet themselves. The NWRO members’ efforts to gain freedom through choice (of consumer goods) use the realm of consumerism to navigate and resist the tensions that existed between their deprived consumer conditions and their middle-class aspirations. The ‘social deprivation’ experienced by NWRO members (within the realm of consumerism) also served to illuminate the gap between the treatment, material realities and proximity to choices (through which liberalism played out) and, by extension available acts of citizenship, that existed between poor black women and middle-class white women. This gap is precisely what the women of the movement were attempting to illustrate by creating the deliberate spectacle of “Welfare Fashions” during the Sears fashion show in 1969. The garments modeled were the realized manifestation and presentation of the ‘social deprivation’ and social affluence that existed between the space of these two groups and a demonstration of the material failure of the welfare system.

The NWRO also sponsored “Live On A Welfare Budget” weeks in which members encouraged concerned middle-class citizens, including the wives of public officials to try living on a welfare food budget for a week and contribute the difference between the welfare budget and what they would usually spend to their local welfare rights organization. The welfare budget challenge illuminated the ways in which the state commodified the social lives of the poor and highlighted how this type of drastic commodification was intolerable for those accustomed to a middle-class lifestyle. Just as the case of the
welfare fashions, the NWROs welfare budget weeks were successful in demonstrating the social
deprivation of the poor by highlighting the differences in consumptive patterns, options and expectations
between the poor and the middle class.

**NWRO and Sears Credit**

When the NWRO began targeting national chain stores such as Sears and Montgomery Ward on
March 27, 1969\(^36\) in a campaign to secure credit buying rights at these stores to welfare recipients, the
organization provided the following rationale:

This became a pilot program, with purposes of ensuring welfare recipients non-discriminatory
treatment by narrow-minded local credit personnel; remove poor people from the exploitation of
unscrupulous ghetto merchants, and give poor people the security of knowing that, when large or
special items, such as beds, stoves, winter clothing, etc., are needed by their families they will
have credit available at reputable stores to permit them to secure good merchandise at reasonable
prices.\(^37\)

The idea of major white retail stores having the best merchandise and services and that having access to
those services would somehow lead to less exploitation of the poor is taken as fact without much critique.
This stance is peculiar given the historical context of black and poor people’s experiences with white
consumer spaces. In some cases time served as an organizing structure for what campaigns were chosen
and well as what targets were chosen. The Sears campaign began just before Easter.

Welfare Recipients need credit arrangements with Sears and other stores. At certain times of the
year, in the fall, at Christmas time, in the early summer, and Now with Easter and the beginning
of warm weather, it is necessary to make larger purchases for the family than at other times.
Welfare recipients should be able to buy on credit the special needs of the season.\(^38\)

The needs of welfare recipients were in large part directed by family seasonal desires. Though new Easter
clothes would not be considered a necessity for life and health, for the members of the NWRO this was
seen as a necessity of dignity and a demand that mothers were willing to fight for on behalf of their
children.\(^39\) As the campaign continued into October, NWRO flyers and communications for local welfare
rights organizations emphasized its “Credit for Christmas” push to secure an agreement with Sears and
other stores.\(^40\)
Opposition to the credit campaign comes from two sources: a) real conservatives, who judge our tactics to be threatening; b) fiscal conservatives, who feel that poor people will not pay their credit accounts. The credit campaign became a national issue only after a year of experimentation in Philadelphia where several large stores extended credit to welfare recipients, and it turned out that their rate of repayment was higher than in the general population. One must realize that a welfare check is guaranteed income! At present, the basic factor in extending credit is income; but it should be ability to repay. I would like to suggest that the only way welfare families can live in the city on $3,000 a year is to be more economical than the average person. Welfare families will know how to make credit repayments.41

Hulbert James, the NWRO Director of Field Operations42, had good reason to address concerns about the poor’s ability to responsibly manage their government benefits. From the time of Roosevelt, black poor people were stigmatized and viewed as incapable of making good consumer choices with their relief payments. Roosevelt’s policies were susceptible to the same paternalism we would see later during the Welfare Rights Movement. “By 1934, 80 percent of the black population received either direct or indirect relief. Superadded to the disproportionate burden of unemployment, those African Americans on relief did not receive cash like white recipients; instead, blacks had to buy from stores authorized to fill orders. In justification, the Cuyahoga County relief administration claimed that African Americans “would prove unable to properly manage their affairs” if they gave direct payments to the poor” (Phillips 1999:197).

The democratic socialist policies of the Roosevelt administration, which would assist in slowing the underdevelopment reestablished after Reconstruction, would be fiercely attacked during the Cold War when the national anti-communist sentiment weakened the effectiveness of the black civil rights struggle. Important to note that, though the women of the welfare rights movement viewed access to credit as a right to which they were entitled, the use of such credit was frequently positioned as extending only to special one-time purchases of items, such as appliances, or special seasonal items. Credit was not positioned as an instrument which would allow the women to sustain a lifestyle beyond their means. Credit was presented as a budgetary tool rather than a lifestyle tool. Yet there is an inconsistency in the message that credit is simply a way for the poor to obtain needed items they otherwise couldn’t because they lacked capital/savings and the Sears protest calling for access the ‘latest fashions’ as well as the seasonal pushes for Easter clothes and Christmas items. NWRO members attempted to appeal to middle-class white women’s sense of empathy by highlighting the disparities in the quality and newness of
garments or ability to buy holiday gifts, which were heavily encouraged by marketers and encouraged by a shifting consumerist society that insisted these were necessities. There is embedded inequity within a system that requires certain groups pay higher prices for goods and services. Consumerism as a democratizing tool serves as a myth of capitalism which masks this embedded inequity (and allows the exploitation of African American consumers to go unchecked) and disingenuously purports equity is achieved through consumer choice. The notion that consumers have power through their choices of where they consumer/who they give their money to provides agency for those disenfranchised but lacks an acknowledgement of the entrenched inequalities that are reinforced through neoliberalism. Unsurprisingly, this strategy of acquiring credit for the poor backfired and served to further cast welfare recipients as unwilling to work and perpetually seeking ‘handouts’ for which they were undeserving. In February 1967, the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, understanding the implications of the poor as consumers, took formal positions on several consumer issues. The Welfare Council, an advocacy organization comprised of a conglomerate of social service agency representatives which would later become the United Way of Chicago, issued position statements on the need to abolish the ‘wage process’ which included withholding wages of consumer borrowers who defaulted, the need to change default remedies such as deficiency judgments that exceed the original cost of the item, and the need to more clearly and fully disclose credit charges. The Welfare Council also issued a statement of support for a guaranteed annual income in June 1968. The Welfare Council interpreted poverty within a context of the marketplace and understood the poor as a type of consumer several year’s prior when the Consumer Rights Movement was first gaining momentum. During the 46th Annual Meeting of the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago on February 23, 1961, G. Edward McClure, executive director of the Evanston United Fund, delivered a speech in which he compared the shopping center with welfare services and by extension retail customers to welfare clients.

Convenience, accessibility-whatever you choose to call it – has been an important consideration in the retail field. It is good business sense to have stores grouped together—a drug store, a department store, a supermarket, an apparel shop, and so on—so that the customer can save time and effort. This principle was recognized long ago when our neighborhood business districts developed, and it has been pursued even more consciously in our modern shopping centers. The
key to the effectiveness of such a center, whether it is a shopping center or a welfare center, is the extent to which the various services needed by the customer, or client, are available to him.\textsuperscript{48}

Though McClure is attempting to make a point about the need for increased efficiencies of the welfare system and the importance of proper planning to best serve welfare recipients’ needs, the choice to compare welfare services to a shopping center and to invoke marketplace language speaks to the insidious ways in which neoliberal thinking began infiltrating the welfare discourse. That supporters of welfare would offer up consumer spaces as a model for welfare systems served to reify notions of individual choice/freedom, market-based approaches to achieving democratic outcomes and (economic) growth and health being achieved through consumption.

There were conflicting views within the NWRO of whether credit was viewed as a citizen’s right. Though George Wiley and Etta Horn state in “Consumer Credit and the Poor” that credit was a right of all citizens\textsuperscript{49}, when asked this question during a February 6, 1970 interview Hulbert James, the NWRO Director of Field Operations, stated

\begin{quote}
We do not say that credit is a “right”. The issue is one of exploitation. Poor people have obtained credit for quite a while – from ghetto merchants, but at higher rates, and for shoddy goods. One of the ways we can get more money into poor homes is to get them cheap credit, well-made products, guarantees on quality, in respectable stores. We are trying to tell merchants that they must change their practices.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Etta Horn, chairperson of the NWRO Way and Means Committee responsible for negotiating credit agreements for its members, provided very pointed commentary related to society’s use of credit and its views of the poor. Horn believed that the extension of credit would lead to increased buying power and economic stability for poor people.\textsuperscript{51} She viewed Sears’s refusal of credit to welfare recipients as an indicator that “there was something wrong with America.” (p.1)\textsuperscript{52} Here, Horn is speaking directly to issues of ‘fair play’ and credit in America for poor people. She is making a commentary on how capitalism, big business and class interact related to allocation of resources (i.e. credit).

\begin{quote}
We feel that President Wood is part of the sick society that is prejudiced against the poor. This whole society is run on credit, especially for the rich man. So why can’t we have it. The poor need it more than the rich. We’re going to disrupt every damn Sears store there is until we get our demand of $150 in revolving credit for every WRO member who has a letter of reference from
the organization. We’re going to sit-in, march-in, rally-in, sleep-in until the economic oppression of recipients by Sears is ended.\textsuperscript{53}

Here, Arthur Wood, Sears President, served as a straw man for multi-million dollar capitalist corporations who, according to Horn, represent a sickness within society which discriminates against and condemns the poor by imposing a different set of rules onto them which prevents them from accessing a mechanism which rich white men themselves have used without restriction to gain profit. Horn is pointing out the power dynamics that exist between political actors representing the rich and the poor (namely company presidents and the NWRO) and how the consumer market persists in being a space of tension, negotiation and resistance. Horn also compares Sears and Montgomery Ward, in which Wards is viewed as reasonable and ideal (as a corporation) because of their willingness to extend credit to welfare recipients. Important to note is that during the 1960s retail credit was considered a new and novel financial tool for consumers. Public schools were beginning to educate high school children on the function of credit within society and for many consumers, particularly poor consumers, credit was viewed as part of a liberatory financial management strategy. NWROs credit campaign was revolutionary in that it fought for the poor’s access to what was, at the time, a relatively new financial management tool being offered by major retailers as opposed to potentially unscrupulous ghetto merchants. Not only were NWRO campaigns directly related to the larger consumer movement taking place during the same period, but NWRO national headquarters personnel also connected their personal consumer experiences to skills they felt were applicable/transferrable to tasks carried out in the national office. Jonquil Lanier, in her application for employment as an administrative assistant, included the following amongst her list of qualifications for the position “Consumer buying and comparative shopping – We took many shopping trips, had parent meetings, developed, compared and tested recipes designed for low income families.”\textsuperscript{54} Another applicant, Ms. Constance Sadlow, wrote in her cover letter “I am constantly waging my own private battles in this field against false interest charges, poor public services, rude and deceitful sales people, defective appliances, etc.”\textsuperscript{55}
The Consumer Action Bedford-Stuyvesant (CABS) a community organization in New York, seeing a need for the poor to access credit, formed the Consumer Action Credit Union. Mrs. Gladys Aponte, executive director of CABS, stated “We have proved to the League of Credit Unions and the regional office of the Federal Credit Union Bureau that poor people are capable of utilizing middle-class institutions by adjusting them to their own needs.” In Waterbury, Connecticut the low income area of Berklee also sought out a credit union as a solution to the community’s credit need and its desire for economic control. The New Opportunities for Waterbury (NOW), a consumer action group that serviced a low-income area of Berklee envisioned cooperative economic institutions working together to generate wealth within the community. Gaudencio Obligacion, assistant director of NOW, stating

When NOW opens a branch office of a credit union in Berklee…it will be a step closer to complete community control. … a person will be able to cash his check at the credit union and buy food stamps. Afterwards he will be able to go downstairs to the buying club. This keeps the money right where it belongs. … This money can be put in the credit union for people to borrow. As the club continues to grow it eventually can open a neighborhood grocery store and even a supermarket.

Accessibility to credit through credit unions for several low income communities offered inroads to more/broader opportunities to engage as consumers without perpetuating overtly capitalist values. This type of community credit-seeking, in contrast to the corporate credit-seeking employed for NWRO’s Sears Campaign, had the direct goals of strengthening the entire community using ‘middle-class institutions’ rather than strengthening the status of individuals through the achievement of acquiring middle-class aspirations.

Conclusion

Using an intersectional political consumerism analytical lens allows for a reinterpretation and distinction to be made between the NWRO Sears campaign and the intersectional political consumerism promoted by Horvat and Shavers as well as CABS. The NWRO Sears campaign was a commercial-based form of intersectional political consumerism, entrenched in freedom from poverty through liberalism in the form of consumer choice, the perpetuation of capitalism in the form of consumer credit, and proximity to white middle class materiality through its imitation. In contrast, the cooperative economic consumer
options such as food buying clubs and credit unions were forms of community-based intersectional political consumerism which promoted socialist ideals. The difference in approaches also illuminate how local organizations engaged actors on a local level while the NWRO, as a national organization, attempted to tackle national retailers to obtain credit for their affiliated chapters. The NWRO’s top-down approach to organizing around consumer credit was not only logistically driven but also influenced by the national leadership’s proximity to middle-class whiteness. This proximity influenced the national organization’s stated aspirations for what the poor deserved.

Endnotes

5. TWO was an affiliated organization of CWRO
7. NWRO Papers Unprocessed Collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2143 Document Titled "MARCH 27 - Presstime Bulletin WRO's Sock Soul to Sears"
9. Ibid.
10. See Allison Pugh (2009) Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children and Consumer Culture. Berkeley: University of California Press regarding the concept of “shielding consumption” which suggests that low-income parents carry out certain consumption practices on behalf of their children in an effort to shield them from the stigma attached with being poor. For example, parents might spend money on expensive clothing and shoes for their children so that they are not ridiculed by peers.
12. Though a newspaper article does reference that jewelry from Accra, Ghana were worn during the fashion show to accent the fashions modeled, no African-inspired clothing was prominently displayed.
13. Ibid.
15. Ibid.


Important to note that the President of Carson Pirie Scott & Co., C. Virgil Martin, served on the advisory council which produced this report suggesting a corporate interest in public welfare standards and allocation. The recommendations of the council outlined in this report would have allowed for public welfare recipients to have a more prominent role in the marketplace. The report states “Social services, like those in education, health and recreation, are not only needed by people in their role as consumers but are also a necessary development in furnishing them with outlets to serve in the role of workers.” See Wisconsin, Div of Comm Svcs Bureau of Planning and Implementation Files, 1950-1979 Box 20 Folder 16 Welfare Recipients Budget Cuts, Poor, Negro Report Titled "Having the Power, We have the Duty" Summary of Recommendations to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare compiled by The Advisory Council on Public Welfare Dated June 29, 1966

See 10 pg. document “Welfare is a Women’s Issue” which attempts to connect the (black-led) welfare rights movement with the (white-led) women’s rights movement found in George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 17 Folder 3 NWRO Public Statements (Press releases, articles, testimony, etc.), 1969-1973 Document Titled "Welfare is a Women's Issue" n.d.

Wisconsin, Division of Community Services Bureau of Planning and Implementation Files, 1950-1979 Box 20 Folder 16 Welfare Recipients Budget Cuts, Poor, Negro Booklet Titled "Welfare Reform and Work Incentives" Dated March 1970 produced by the Department of Labor and Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 21 Folder 4 General Correspondence, 1968 Letter Addressed to George Wiley Dated June 4, 1968 from Carolyn Lewis, The Washington Post discussing the response to the article written about Johnnie Tillmon and the welfare rights movement. Lewis includes a series of disapproving letters received by the post in response to the article. These responses include but are not limited to a
letter from Eunice Rodriguez expressing her disapproval of The Washington Post article written about Johnnie Tillmon, and a letter expressing disapproval of women who continue to have children when they cannot afford to raise them. The letter also references being a proud taxpayer who is dissatisfied with mothers who expect society to take care of their children. n.d.


36 NWRO Papers Unprocessed collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2143 NWRO "WRO's in Action" newsletter Dated April 1969 Document Titled "NWRO Launches Sears Boycott" Vol. 1 No. 1


38 NWRO Papers Unprocessed Collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2143 Document Titled "Why Don't Buy Sears" n.d.

39 NWRO Papers Unprocessed Collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2143 Press release dated April 9, 1969 Document Titled "Sears Boycott Action to be Stepped Up by NWRO"

40 NWRO Papers Unprocessed Collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2150 Document Titled "Credit for Christmas"

41 George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 11 Folder 18 IFCO NWRO Correspondence [sic], Reports, and Notes, 1968-1973 Document Titled "Interview with Hulbert James, 2/6/70 For Seminar of February 16th" p.2-3


48 Ibid.


50 George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 11 Folder 18 IFCO NWRO Correspondence [sic], Reports, and Notes, 1968-1973 Document Titled "Interview with Hulbert James, 2/6/70 For Seminar of February 16th" p.2

51 NWRO Papers Unprocessed Collection Accessed August 7, 2013 Box 2105 Press release dated December 8, 1969 Titled "Hold for Release" Regarding Montgomery Ward's credit agreement with NWRO

52 NWRO Papers Unprocessed Collection Accessed August 7, 2013 Box 2105 Untitled document written by Etta Horn discussing NCC and NWRO credit campaign, n.d.
NWRO Papers Unprocessed Collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2143 NWRO "WRO's in Action" newsletter Dated April 1969 Document Titled "NWRO Launches Sears Boycott" Vol. 1 No. 1

George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 9 Folder 1 Job Applications and Resumes L-R Resume materials and narrative of Jonquil Lanier for position of Administrative Assistant at NWRO Headquarters

George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 9 Folder 2 Job Applications and Resumes S-Z Cover Letter Addressed to Nancy Barnes from Constance Sadlow Dated December 12, 1969 describing application materials for secretarial position with NWRO Headquarters

Institute of the Church in an Urban Industrial Society Box 29 Folder 448 Archive 'Low-Income Units Form Credit Aids,' Leslie G. Range, 23 May 1967 Document Titled "Low-Income Units Form Credit Aids" By Leslie G. Range

Institute of the Church in an Urban Industrial Society Box 29 Folder 448 Archive 'Low-Income Units Form Credit Aids,' Leslie G. Range, 23 May 1967 Document Titled "Low-Income Units Form Credit Aids" By Leslie G. Range
CHAPTER 6: THE COMMODIFICATION OF POOR PEOPLE’S LIVES – POWER DYNAMICS OF BEING IDENTIFIED AS A POOR CONSUMER

The NWRO, Nixon’s Welfare Policies and Guaranteed Annual Income

The formal welfare rights movement began in June 1966 with welfare recipients marching from Cleveland to the Ohio state capitol to demand higher benefits. Hearing of the march, George Wiley, who was previously an associate director for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and would later form the Poverty/Rights Action Center (along with Ed Day and Tim Sampson), decided to help coordinate welfare rights rallies in other cities across the nation, later known as the June 30th demonstrations, and hold a national convention of welfare recipients which led to the formal organization of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). When the organization began, the infinity link, which was emblematic of the NWRO, was initially an open-ended link. According to the organization, as the years stretched on and poor people continued to organize and exercise their rights, the link gradually began to close. As the organization would later learn, the link would remain perpetually open-ended, as the work of organizing the poor proved to be complex and thorny.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the welfare policies created by the Nixon administration and the NWRO’s efforts to organize against those policies, advocating instead for a guaranteed annual income. The chapter explores how various metrics determining poverty levels, and the ideologies which influenced them, led to the commodification of the social lives of the poor. The attempts of both the Nixon administration and the NWRO to standardize the budgets of the poor impacted not only their (consumer) choices but also vulnerability to exploitation by the state and private businesses.

Wiley was heavily influenced by the work of Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, who wrote about welfare and the need to organize the poor. Cloward and Piven, professors at Columbia, conducted research on the welfare system and its mistreatment of welfare recipients and became strong welfare advocates whose ideas heavily influenced the movement. The strategies proposed by Cloward and Piven were radical and considered very ‘Alinsky’ in nature in that they exploited the weaknesses of the welfare
system and tried to encourage as many eligible poor people as possible to sign up for welfare in order to ‘break’ the system and force it to be reformed.5

Many of the groups that Wiley organized had deep and complicated local histories that existed prior to the creation of the NWRO. The Chicago Welfare Rights Organization (CWRO) began with four pre-existing welfare rights groups in Chicago. A group of social workers, clergy, lawyers and other citizens of various interests formed the Chicago Friends of Welfare Rights to assist in welfare organizing efforts of the CWRO.6 The NWRO would later open an office in Chicago and recruit staff, including Dovie Coleman and Nezzie Willis.7 These organizers and other staff would work to build up the CWRO and recruit local existing groups to the organization.8 These local WROs remained autonomous in their decision making and operations.9

The collapse of the NWRO began with the aggressive assault of welfare policy by the Nixon Administration, which splintered the group. During Lyndon Johnson’s presidential term, a major aim of his ‘Great Society’ was the eradication of inequalities through government policies targeting poverty and deprivation.10 In August 1966, public assistance in Illinois was paid out to 402,742 people11 to the amount of $25.4 million. There were five major public assistance programs in Illinois during the 1960s targeting five different groups; Aid to Dependent Children which, in October 1966, served 180,583 people in Cook County, Assistance to the 19,959 Aged people, 1,086 Blind people and 20,236 Disabled people, and general assistance to 20,236 people.12 The total number of families receiving assistance through Aid to Dependent Children program was 37,565, with a total of 250,362 people from 95,155 families receiving some form of aid from Cook County programs13 and October 1966 expenditures for these programs was estimated at $14.7 million.14 Politicians in Illinois and across the nation viewed these expenditures as excessive and began to move away from reducing (income) inequalities and toward reducing (certain) government expenses.

When Nixon took office in 1969 approaches related to addressing poverty began to shift. A special study of the Illinois Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program from April-June 1969, which
focused on providing information that identified those capable of obtaining employment including a focus on locating absent parents, found that there were 67,900 mothers in the home\textsuperscript{15} and 114,100 absent fathers and that those fathers\textsuperscript{16} contributed $847,500 per month toward the support of dependent children. The 24 page report also determined that, of the 67,900 mothers living in the home, 78\% were unemployed.\textsuperscript{17} The report focused on identifying who was unemployed and determining their reasons for being unemployed. If the reasons were deemed by the Department of Public Aid to be ‘illegitimate’ (meaning they were able-bodied, in good health and had skills that could be used toward employment) the government’s goal was to transition these people to employment and off the assistance rolls. But for those African Americans most affected by such policy changes, finding enough jobs to employ everyone would prove challenging, as high concentrations of unemployment generally centered in poor black neighborhoods in the city. Also, the ‘employ everyone’ approach was somewhat at odds with NWRO and CWROs stance that welfare recipients, specifically mothers, should have the right to choose whether they wish to participate in the capitalist workplace or remain at home to care for their children while being provided with a livable income. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (from July 1968-June 1969), unemployment rates in Chicago’s predominately black west side neighborhoods were two and one-half times greater than the unemployment rates for the city of Chicago.\textsuperscript{18} In addition, the Bureau found the following for these west side neighborhoods: teenagers in the area made up 12.3\% of the labor force versus 7.6\% for the city, adults were more likely to be in the labor force with 49\% of adult women working compared to 45\% for the city and 85\% of adult men compared to 82\% for the city\textsuperscript{19}, 1 out of 4 people in the area who were not working indicated that they wanted to be working compared to nationally that number being 1 out of 10\textsuperscript{20}. Also, teenage workers on the west side were more likely to have white collar jobs and adult workers more likely to have blue collar jobs, all were concentrated in low skill positions\textsuperscript{21}, 4 out of 10 women in the area 25 years and over had completed four years of high school versus 3 out of 10 men\textsuperscript{22}, 1 in 8 full-time workers on the west side made less than federal minimum wage and women were four times more likely than men to be earning less than minimum wage (which was $65 per week in 1969\textsuperscript{23}), and 20\% of four person families were low income.\textsuperscript{24} There were not enough jobs for people in poor communities who
wanted to work and those who were able to find jobs found them in low skill positions making less than needed to keep them out of poverty.

In November 1969, the Chicago Urban League issued a subcommittee report regarding President Nixon’s welfare proposals. The report referenced a $27 million monthly expenditure by the Cook County Department of Public Aid (CCDPA), related to the administering of aid to 55,000 families through Families with Dependent Children assistance, general assistance which met the needs of 40,000 people, and assistance to meet the needs of 19,000 aged individuals and 24,500 blind and/or disabled people. In all, the report stated the CCDPA was responsible for the welfare of 330,000 people from 119,000 families. The needs and expenses of the poor were growing steadily.

Still, by the late 1960s there was a strong and ferocious backlash against welfare programs. Nixon proposed massive reforms in the form of the Family Assistance Program (FAP), whose drafters/authors included Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The NWRO strongly resisted Nixon’s welfare reform, though in theory it was quite progressive. The NWRO’s specific objections was that Nixon’s proposed guaranteed annual income of $1600 was too low and that the work incentive program constituted “slave labor” that sought to benefit corporate industrialists at the expense of the poor. The position of the NWRO related to Nixon’s FAP stated that:

NWRO’s response must be to escalate the “welfare crisis” which forced Nixon to make his token proposals; continue to press demands for school clothing through more militant action; launch campaigns and law suits for free school lunches for all school children; step up the boycott and action against Sears Roebuck to get credit from all major department stores; plan for campaigns against Proctor & Gamble and other corporate giants in the consumer products industry, and make them share their profits with poor people by giving $5,000 family allowance grants to NWRO members; plan now for winter action for clothing, furniture, and full utility checks, plan now to get middle income supporters to live on the Nixon “illfare” food budget for a week in November; plan new campaigns to recruit low-paid workers and other poor people into the movement and onto the welfare rolls.

The NWROs strategy was to overwhelm the welfare system with additional eligible poor people being added to the welfare rolls, which they hoped would force the government to implement the NWRO’s proposed changes and fix the system once and for all. Clearly, the NWRO viewed the consumer market as a key strategic component of this plan with its insistence on targeting large corporations and demanding
that they not only extend services to the poor but also be accountable to these citizens by contributing a share of their profits to them. The NWRO’s insistence that the relationship between corporations and consumers should be similar to that between the government and its citizens not only spoke to a level of mutual benefit/reciprocity not espoused by capitalism, but also attempted to explicitly integrate a socialist agenda as it simultaneously strove to legitimize the poor as consumers.

The NWRO also issued a formal statement related to its position on Title I and the proposed changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that exposed the organization’s views on power and how it was negotiated between the poor, and the local, state and federal governing bodies. The NWRO opposed the revenue sharing proposal, which sought to redirect educational money to the local and state governments. NWRO’s main objection was that, without the federal government to regulate these funds and ensure that the poor and disabled were considered, the local and state politicians would fight amongst themselves over the money. “Because there is no provision for Federal regulations, the money would go where the power is. Federal regulations are necessary to protect the needs of the powerless.” The NWRO was stating clearly that it did not believe the local and state governments were concerned with the needs of the poor. The poor were described as ‘powerless’ and interestingly enough the federal government was viewed as a protector and potential advocate for the poor. The NWRO’s concern was that the state would corrupt local school boards if given latitude with funding and this would result in money being redirected to schools that served areas with higher incomes. The efforts of the NWRO to organize parents and demand that Title I be retained so that, among other things, supportive services which allowed for money for children for “clothing, transportation, medical and dental care, books, supplies and food programs” spoke to the organization’s focus on mobilizing local community members who were their core membership base (primarily poor African-American women). The NWRO’s attempts to subvert the local and state systems of government spoke to the brokenness of these systems and their lack of promotion of democratic ideals.
Illinois Governor Richard Ogilvie became the target of major demonstrations by various Chicago welfare organizations and Operation Breadbasket as a result of the massive cuts to welfare which occurred in Illinois in 1971. The new state rules went into effect November 1st, with cuts to welfare general assistance as well as medical allowances. Cook County Board president George Dunne filed suit to block Ogilvie’s plan and Cook County Circuit Judge Daniel Covelli approved a temporary restraining order stalling Ogilvie’s plan to withhold $6.4 million per month in welfare funds to Cook County. The Illinois Supreme Court upheld the restraining order. One solution to addressing the $6.4 million gap in funds was to have the county screen some 54,000 general assistance recipients to determine their eligibility to receive benefits (because the general assistance funds came from the state, whereas funds for dependent children and the aged, blind and disabled were partly funded by the federal government). It was also during this time that the House passed a bill to require mothers and children 16 and older receiving assistance under the aid to dependent children program to register for public work or have their welfare benefits revoked. Though welfare caseworkers seemed to be invested in getting much needed funds to their clients, they were at least equally if not more concerned with their own job security, as the cuts were not only to welfare benefits but also to public aid staff. As Ogilvie struggled to resolve Illinois’ welfare crisis, asking that the federal government take over public aid, Ronald Reagan, governor of California, was making major cuts to his state’s welfare caseloads. Reagan would later roll out a nationwide assault on welfare with his ascension to the US presidency.

The CWRO, led by their chairman Mrs. Ruby Mabry, had a strong presence during the demonstrations against the welfare cuts. Interestingly, within the daily newspaper discourse which took place in the month of November 1971 in newspapers such as the Chicago Tribune and Times, there was much discussion about the politicians and judges and budgets and spending and very little discussion about welfare recipients themselves or the leaders who organized them. Mainstream media outlets contributed to the erasure of black female leadership, either through the occasional highlighting of white priests’ marches or Jesse Jackson’s involvement in demonstrations through Operation Breadbasket or
through a focus on rich white men who made up the state legislature and public aid leadership. The diminishing of demonstrations and resistance and the erasure of black women leadership served to reify the message that welfare recipients were objects of need rather than subjects of resistance worthy of respect and inclusion into discussions of how the welfare system should operate.

There was also evidence of dissention present within NWRO’s National Coordinating Committee (NCC) Executive Board meeting minutes which referenced growing conflict between the NCC board, comprised of welfare recipients representing local, city and state welfare rights organizations, and NWRO National Headquarters staff in Washington, D.C., many of whom were middle class whites. Some members of NWRO were accused of colluding with the government to break trade-unions by encouraging force-labor programs amongst welfare recipients. There were also organizers who were critical of NWRO, its Guaranteed Annual Income campaign and the movement’s inability to connect the interests of workers with the interests of welfare recipients. The Students for a Democratic Society, the former parent organization of Jobs or Income Now, was among those critics who felt the NWRO’s agenda for a guaranteed annual income detracted from the larger fight against big business and workfare programs that weakened workers’ interests while forcing welfare recipients into ‘slave labor’. The National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC), a socialist organization, was expelled from the 1972 NWRO convention, accused of being ‘disruptive’ at previous NWRO events. The NCLC claimed that the expulsion was the result of their organization providing alternative policy recommendations which encouraged strike support and coalition building between welfare recipients and trade unionists.

Efforts were made to align the political agendas of welfare recipients and union workers with the forming of the National Unemployed and Welfare Rights Organization (NU-WRO). What began as the Committee to Rebuild NWRO, NU-WRO’s objective was to organize union workers and welfare organizers to jointly fight “slave labor” and push for an adequate income for everyone. The organization was founded following a March 31, 1973 convention in Philadelphia which assembled 470 working class organizers, including welfare organizers, trade unionists, G.I. groups, socialists, and unemployed groups. Interestingly, the NU-WRO organization claimed that Jennette Washington, who was on the
The Steering Committee to Rebuild NWRO, was a co-founder of NWRO. The Chicago NU-WRO claimed that the government had taken deliberate efforts to sabotage and infiltrate the organization.

Nixon operating through the FBI, HEW, and other police agencies has waged a five-week campaign of harassment and terror against NU-WRO … culminating with an intensive drive against the founding convention in Phila. on March 31. … Because of the implied strength of the unemployed and employed in depression conditions, the government and certain demented leftist such as the Communist Party USA, have attempted to destroy this new organization. NU-WRO calls on all civil libertarians, socialists, and others to support and defend NU-WRO’s right to organize free of harassment.

The NU-WRO opposed Nixon’s Phase III welfare reform plans and was concerned with what it saw as a reducing of standard of living for the working class. The organization felt that those on welfare were being used as cheap labor to weaken the power of unions, thus weakening the working class and that forced work programs were equivalent to slave labor, which is why the organization supported an adequate guaranteed annual income.

Other critiques of NWRO came from within, with accusations that the organization was dominated by “whites and whites with black faces”. The dissenters inquired about the NWRO’s financial claims of being nearly bankrupt while receiving thousands in private and government funds as well as the racial and economic composition of the national leadership and accusations of collusion between the NWRO and the Labor Department. These claims included the charge that, though NWRO fought against the Work Incentive Program, the organization used the Work Incentive Program trainees and had a half-million dollar contract from the Labor Department to give recipients information about the Work Incentive Program. Wiley himself was personally attacked for his personal and professional relationships with whites as well as with, what some perceived, as his exploitation of the poor in order to gain prestige and favor from whites within the organization. Marion Stamps, Chairman of the Near North Chicago welfare rights organization, during a meeting with the Misedduc Foundation, expressed her frustration with the leadership of the NWRO stating she “had problems with black men who go around talking black and sleep white. She considered this an insult to her black womanhood.”

There were also
issues of sexism embedded within the movement and the tension between the national organization and the women-led local organizations was apparent.

“Those broads just hate men,” says a friend of the movement, not altogether humorously. And the welfare mothers occasionally express deep contempt for the failure of black men in their communities to support them, especially in street actions.55

Despite this intra-group conflict, the NWRO continued its campaigns for consumer credit and guaranteed income for several years. The issue of who warranted a guaranteed income would invoke a common dichotomy of deserving and undeserving poor as various political actors fought to define poverty thresholds and standards.

**The Power to Measure Poverty**

The NWRO used consumer credit and guaranteed income as strategies for managing poverty. Poverty, however, is intentionally constructed, oftentimes by governmental policies. The way poverty is constructed and who falls within the definition serves a societal purpose that typically benefits the orchestrators of poverty. Just as there is power within poverty’s orchestration, there is also power within its measurement. Within the poverty literature there are two general measurement categories of poverty, absolute (which was utilized by the government at the time of the Welfare Rights Movement) and relative (which was advocated for by the NWRO). Different definitions exist for different people to delineate between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor. These definitions also serve a purpose of helping locate where power resides. How those who are labeled or defined as poor feel about their situation is irrelevant and, typically, the poor are not in a position to reject this labeling anyway.

Historically, the poor emerge when society elects to recognize poverty as a special status and assigns specific persons to that category. The fact that some people may privately consider themselves poor is sociologically irrelevant. What is sociologically relevant is poverty as a socially recognized condition, as a social status. We are concerned with poverty as a property of the social structure”. (Coser 1965 p.141)

These definitions for poverty challenge dominant ideologies and either illuminate their hypocrisy or reinforce it. For example, consumption as a base absolute poverty metric reinforces capitalism. Absolute
income metrics are embedded in patriarchy, as they are based on a family of four (a man, a woman and two children). Nixon’s and Ogilvie’s policies, with their breakdowns for need and thresholds to determine who was in poverty, were absolute measures. Embedded within the valuation and commodification of life was a dehumanizing element that exposed ideology around what the government felt the poor deserved. During the late 1960s, the government felt the poor should have been able to get by on $1600 per month (for a family of four).

The NWRO’s version of the guaranteed annual income (GAI) was a shift to a relative poverty measure. Relative poverty metrics go against the grain of liberalism. The history of liberalism began to shift between WWI and WWII from classic liberalism, with the insistence upon limited government control and interference, to a form of New Deal liberalism which attempted to temper capitalism in an effort to save it (Gerstle 1994). Still, what remained consistent with liberalism, in its various forms throughout history, was its unwillingness to significantly disrupt other dominant systems such as capitalism, patriarchy, and racism. This sheds light on our understanding of the environment within which social scientists would come to produce influential research related to poverty in the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s. The ideologies of racism, capitalism, and patriarchy provided a deeply flawed foundation with which to construct a deserving/undeserving dichotomy.56

Much of the tension that existed between the NWRO and the Nixon Administration over poverty policy centered on how poverty was measured. Absolute poverty measures have thresholds that remain constant over time, a minimum measurable subsistence level, do not fluctuate with changes in standard of living and conceptually are easy to understand and gain consensus (Iceland 2006). Simply, thinking of the poor as merely numbers allows us to make 'logical' and 'objective' policy decisions that do not engage the very people these policies are to impact. It also does nothing to inform our understanding of how the poor manage their available resources to make ends meet (or not). Another consideration is that poverty is not a static condition. Yet absolute poverty measures do not consider increases in standard of living. The NWRO’s charge to public officials to ‘live on a welfare budget’ was an attempt to demonstrate the
practical challenges of managing such limited resources, a particularly difficult task during a time of rising food prices and high inflation.

Relative poverty measures focus on how close or far away the society is from total egalitarianism. Poverty is determined to be relative to the income of the overall population. Relative poverty measures include, for example, average income of people at the lowest income percentile of the population, or the number of people whose income is less than the mean income of the population (Blackwood and Lynch 1994). Relative measures are also sensitive to periods of economic growth and recession and are more responsive to income inequity. The egalitarian approach of relative poverty measures was counter to the neoliberal shift that was emerging during the time of the Welfare Rights Movement. Both absolute and relative measures, then and now, were becoming more polarized between the very wealthy and the rest. High unemployment rates, coupled with stifled wages, reduced returns on financial investments (such as housing and stock markets), and a general perception that people's children will be less well off as a generation ago speak directly to one’s perception of income adequacy.

Simply, the measures greatly influence how we construct the poor. If we want the poor to include those with higher levels of education, those who are male or male-headed households, those who do not receive welfare assistance, there are appropriate measures which will include them. Likewise, there are appropriate measures to exclude them as well. To have a poor that the majority can directly identify with would jeopardize the position of the very wealthy and, in all likelihood, provoke revolution. That the NWRO encouraged more people to identify as poor in order to overrun the system into a forced reform had the potential to either formally stigmatize larger groups of people who were eligible for benefits but had not previously asked for them or reduce the stigma of living in poverty. When looking at the poor in these terms, it is apparent that, far from being an objective measure of subsistence, how ‘the poor’ is determined and classified is ripe with political implications. And the implications of a poor population perceived as being overwhelmingly black and female were severely felt by the welfare movement and the NWRO. Returning to Simmel’s description of the poor as being defined by their acceptance of assistance
and being declassified from any previous status once their ‘private trouble’ become a public burden (Simmel and Jacobson 1965:138), the blackening and feminization of poverty proved a convenient scapegoating strategy for the very wealthy who, in a decade’s time, would come to widen their income gap to obscene levels.

Absolute income measures consider the overall welfare of the population by looking at the average income, as opposed to looking specifically at the poor and focusing on income growth and distribution. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Gross National Product (GNP) was a commonly used absolute income measure. The GNP measures national income and national expenditures in a particular country plus net property income from abroad (i.e. dividends, interest and profit). During the Welfare Rights Era, the GNP was between 691.03-1549.20 (in billions). See Table 6 - 1. Though the country’s economic income was rising, that growth was not a valid metric for citizen welfare. Growth is, just that – growth. Relative income measures look for the degree of inequity in income distribution. The Gini coefficient is the most widely known example of a relative income measure. The Gini coefficient measures how equally distributed an individual or household’s income or consumption levels are within an economy. The measure ranges from 0, indicating perfect distribution equality, to 1, which indicates perfect distribution inequality. Between 1947 – 1968, the Gini coefficient decreased, with a decrease in income inequality for families of 7.5%. The U.S’s Gini coefficient in 1969 during the start of the Nixon administration was .391. The Gini coefficient remained relatively stable until 1980, and has since trended upward, indicating that the U.S. as a nation continues to expand income and consumption disparities as the gap between those who are rich and those who are poor grows. Important to note that another indicator of income inequality, the Mean Logarithmic Deviation (MLD) index, rose significantly between 1975-1982, suggesting the rise in income inequality began in the mid-70s, which was also the end of the Welfare Rights Movement.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GNP (1972 dollars – in billions)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
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<td>1966</td>
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<td>992.73</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>1077.65</td>
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<td>1972</td>
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<td>1975</td>
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These metrics have significant implications in that the government’s use of absolute metrics influenced how it determined what the poor needed (within a racialized and gendered context of the blackening and feminization of poverty). The goal was not egalitarianism but rather meeting a minimum level of subsistence. These metrics provided the blueprint for how the government would (impersonally) commodify the lives of the poor. In contrast, the NWRO pushed for relative metrics that considered quality of living and the changing standard of living. The NWRO used the GAI as the mechanism through which they commodified the social lives of the poor. Though different from the government’s absolute measures, the GAI (as defined by NWRO) still relied on a standardized budget which required a commodification and, at times, reification of attitudes about the lives of the poor.

**Standardized Budgets and the Commodification of Life**

The NWRO’s insistence on a GAI to better manage poverty called for a level of respect for the poor that acknowledged their ability to make sound budgetary decisions for themselves and their families without further intervention and/or surveillance of the government. All measures of poverty are not equal and therefore cannot be used interchangeably. But just as important as what the measures evaluate is how the measures shape the discourse and change the ‘face’ of poverty. Metrics that create the female-headed family as the face of poverty run directly opposed to patriarchy. Measures that create the welfare
recipient as the face of poverty must contend with liberalism. As Alice O’Connor notes (2002) in her criticisms of poverty research

That this tension [between understanding poverty rooted individuals or structures] has more often been resolved in favor of the individualist interpretation can be seen in several oft-noted features in poverty research. One is the virtual absence of class as an analytic category, at least as compared with more individualized measures of status such as family background and human capital. A similar individualizing tendency can be seen in the reduction of race and gender to little more than demographic, rather than structurally constituted, categories. Poverty research treats the market and the two-parent, male-headed family in much the same way, as inevitable, naturally occurring ways of ordering human relations rather than as institutions that are socially created and maintained. (p.9)

As more non-whites began using welfare and gender roles began to shift, the welfare professional agenda shifted from developing a new, more comprehensive system to improving the unpopular Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) program. Welfare recipients were presented as single mothers with individual issues and welfare workers began to conflate welfare as an income-support program with ‘rehabilitation’ efforts. By focusing on individual behaviors rather than larger issues of racism, sexism and poverty, policy makers and their opponents were not forced to acknowledge that black mothers were not able to find employment, much less employment with a living wage.

As a result, liberal welfare experts helped to undergird white privilege and arguably contributed to a weightier anti-black backlash against public assistance. The negative public response was intensified by the vitriolic Louisiana and New Jersey campaigns targeting primarily black recipients as “loafers” in 1960 and 1961, and by the rise of welfare-rights protests predominately led by black women in the mid 1960s and 1970s (Williams 2006:345).

The measures for poverty as well as the strategies for addressing it served to reify existing ideologies and structures which further perpetuated poverty rather than alleviating it. So, just as Audre Lorde asserted you cannot dismantle the master’s house with her tools, it would seem outrageous to think we could address issues of poverty using measures that reinforce it. The major disconnect within the poverty discourse when using cultural analysis is that this analysis is interested in determining and identifying a poor subculture, not in measuring poverty (Williamson and Hyer 1975). And the major disconnect
between the NWRO and the state in their fight for a guaranteed income was a difference in beliefs around whether poverty was to be simply managed or overcome.

Dispelling myths about who was on welfare go hand in hand with defining who was considered poor and thus eligible for benefits. Despite the realities that more whites than blacks were on welfare and that fraudulent welfare cases made up less than one percent of the rolls,\textsuperscript{63} the fact that the leadership of the movement was overwhelmingly black and female served to further encourage the demonizing of welfare recipients as well as black women. The NWRO, in its efforts to fight for a Guaranteed Annual Income that would not require poor families to pinch every penny and still end up short, was as much an attempt to reclaim poor black women’s personhood and freedom of choice as it was an attempt to manage poverty.

\textbf{Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI): Poor People’s Right to (Consumer) Choice}

In 1963 the Kennedy administration, under the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), ushered in a poverty definition that would support economic growth policies rather than income/wealth distribution and a minimum living standard (Iceland 2006). The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) eventually adopted a poverty threshold based on the economic food plan "as a working definition of poverty for statistical, planning, and budget purposes". (p.19) In 1969, this threshold became the official definition of poverty, an economic (income) deprivation measure. The argument that a government guaranteed adequate income be used to manage poverty was frequently engaged by welfare organizations such as the NWRO and CWRO. On May 21, 1966, following the University of Chicago’s Ad Hoc Committee conference on Guaranteed Annual Income, Wiley’s Poverty Rights Action Center (PRAC) sponsored a strategic planning meeting to discuss organizing what would later become the national organization, NWRO.\textsuperscript{64} On August 6, 1966 the first national meeting was held and the National Coordinating Committee of welfare rights groups was formed.\textsuperscript{65} Under Wiley’s direction, the NWRO set guaranteed adequate income as a national campaign of the organization.

Also during this time, The West Side Organization (WSO), a CWRO affiliated welfare union with a membership of over 1500, mobilized its members to fight for a federal guaranteed income
program. Given excessive unemployment and high populace of mothers with young children in the area, the WSO recognized that strategies other than demanding more jobs were required. Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO), modeled after WSO, also protested in favor of guaranteed income. Its leaders, Jan Linfield and Ruth Walker, organized poor residents on Chicago’s Near South Side around welfare grievance issues as well as overall improvements to welfare programs, such as a guaranteed income. The NWRO partnered with the National Tenants Organization (NTO) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to develop the Poor People’s Platform. Included in this platform was not only a call for a guaranteed income but also a call for the federal government to protect the rights of tenants to organize and negotiate collective bargaining agreements with private landlords. These demands were in the context of a more aggressive presence of government regulations protecting the rights of consumers.

Arguments for a guaranteed income varied. Arguments included the need for an income guarantee system because of concern over technological developments that would lead to automation. The view was that such rapid automation would result in loss of jobs and a break in the work-pay link whereby people would work without pay (because technology would alter the type of ‘work’ humans would be inclined to do). The argument concluded that a guaranteed minimum income would protect from this technological unemployment. This perspective spoke as much to the concerns of organized manufacturing laborers becoming obsolete (due to technology) and not having an adequate source of income to replace what would be lost as it did to concerns of the poor who were unemployed or unable to find employment that paid a livable wage. There was also an argument that an economy that relied solely on wage earnings to ensure sustained growth would ultimately slow and fail, while a system which had a guaranteed income would allow for the maintaining of high levels of demand for goods and services (particularly during times of technological job displacement). Arguments around job displacement resulting from technological advances were not considered nearly as seriously as arguments related to consumer demand. The concern about ensuring sufficient consumer demand in order to maintain GNP growth was an argument most frequently offered by economists. There was a direct link between
consumerism (as a mechanism for growing the economy) and the guaranteed adequate income debate (as a mechanism for poverty management). While economists were able to get the attention of some legislators, more than the concerns over such a plan resulting in increased inflation, the feminization and blackening of poverty more severely distorted the narrative toward an evaluation of deserving and undeserving poor and measures needed to incent them to work. The NWRO, understanding the impact of race in determining appropriate resources for the poor, publically opposed people identifying their names or race in the 1970 Census citing the “extermination of the Black Panthers and the under-representation of blacks in Congress” as examples of how the poor being identified as black would serve to disadvantage the movement to allocate government funds toward assisting the poor. This blackening and feminization of poverty narrative would prevent a severing of the work-pay link.

The nation has long accepted, its adherents state, that no one in the society should starve—why, in the midst of unheard-of affluence, do we permit people to live in and suffer from poverty. Opposition to this idea comes from those who still maintain that no man, able to work, should be paid for not working.

Intersectionality offers insight as one considers the racialized and gendered dynamics embedded in the above statement. For a nation that found black people to be undisciplined, lacking work ethic and pathologically flawed because of single-mothered households, the blackening and feminization of poverty helps to explain how the nation could be satisfied with black people (even women and children) suffering from poverty. The views on black women, as the ‘mules of the world’ would not allow the (white) US collective conscience to divorce income from work. For white women, patriarchal gender roles allowed for the privilege of an option, without ridicule, to remain at home with children. However, black women were expected to work. Though there were still more whites in poverty during the time, the extreme focus on urban blacks as a result of the blackening and feminization of the poverty narrative laid a path that would not only halt consideration of a guaranteed income for all citizens but would, within the next decade, lead to a government orchestrated full on assault of the poor.

Collaboration between the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration and their Ad Hoc Committee for a Guaranteed Income resulted in the publication of the Guaranteed Annual
Income Newsletter (GAIN). The Ad Hoc Committee’s goal was to promote the adoption of a government guaranteed adequate income and it first began publishing GAIN in June 1966 in order to educate those interested in poverty and welfare issues about both sides of the guaranteed annual income debate. One of NWRO’s strategies for obtaining political power to win a guaranteed adequate income was through coalition building and developing a wider base. “…by broadening our organizational base with inclusion of the organized blind, aged, disabled, we, in essence, will be developing the power needed to acquire an adequate income program.” Extending the focus to include the blind, aged, and disabled not only served to make more visible the population of poor people of color with disabilities but also resisted the blackening and feminization of poverty by bringing into the organizational fold poor white individuals whose adequate income needs were higher than the average per person cost of someone on public assistance. Though the organization since its inception was concerned with the needs of all poor people, this strategic reassertion (of solidarity with all assistance recipients) in response to Nixon’s welfare reform suggested the organization understood some of the ways the race, gender, class positionality of its base impacted how power was negotiated and legitimized. Though the NWRO’s formal campaign related to securing a guaranteed income for the poor, in January 1970 the CWRO, TWO, Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO), Chicago Urban League (CUL), the Lawndale People’s Planning and Action Committee and Cook County Department of Public Aid (CCDPA) and other local organizations began working collaboratively and, under the direction of CWRO’s Ginger Mack, these groups took part in a conference to discuss the best ways to inform the working poor about the wage supplement program.

Initially, the NWRO had determined an adequate income for a family of four living in an urban area would be $5500 per year in 1969, but later, in 1971, determined that number should be $6500. For Chicago, the NWRO determined the GAI should be $6760. In addition to the adequate income, the NWRO called for grants for clothing and furniture to ensure recipients adhered to a minimum standard of ‘health and decency’.
In calculating its budget NWRO specifically rejected the official Poverty Level as a measure of what a family needs to live at a minimum adequate level. The Poverty Level was devised by the Social Security Administration on the basis of the Agriculture Department’s economy food plan. But the Agriculture Department has said that the economy food plan “is not a reasonable measure of basic money needs for a good diet. The public assistance agency that recognizes the limitations of its clientele and is interested in their nutritional well-being, will recommend a money allowance for food considerably higher than the cost level of the economy plan.

The Social Security Administration ignored the USDA warning. They took the cost level of the economy plan and simply multiplied it by three to determine the total “poverty level” budget for a family of four. This procedure is made totally inappropriate because, in addition to the Agriculture Department’s own statement, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has pointed out that a family of four has a total budget closer to four or five times the cost of it’s [sic] food component.84

Embedded within the discussion of how the cost and poverty levels are devised by the Social Security Administration is a general assertion that the sum of one’s social life can be commodified. Within these discussions are negotiations of power over who is legitimate to determine the commodified needs of citizens. Though there are other spaces of struggle and resistance, such as the NWRO’s proposed adjustments around the cost of housing and clothing, this specific example illustrates how the NWRO used other government organizations, such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, to attempt to invalidate another – namely the Social Security Administration (SSA). In essence, the NWRO is finding legitimacy within one part of the government to refute the legitimacy of another part of the government. But this explanation of reasoning on the part of the NWRO also serves as an example of how the organization resisted what it felt were oppressive systems that limited the choices that could be made within the realm of consumerism. These absolute poverty measures, which focus solely on the poor, look at how many people are poor, how much money would be required to raise them from the poverty threshold, how income is distributed among the poor or some combination of these.

Absolute poverty measures minimum subsistence based on a family budget (Williamson and Hyer 1975). Within this frame, there are many opportunities to institutionalized views/biases around what the poor deserve. Something perceived as an objective measure, in reality, can be quite subjective, in that
the 'rules' that apply to the poor (in terms of what is determined that they need and how much is allotted for each of those determined items) do not apply to anyone else.

The SSA poverty index is well suited to what has been referred to as a "head count" measure of poverty. Such a measure tells us how many fall below the specified poverty line, but tells us nothing about the difference in degree of poverty between families below the line. It also leads to a rather arbitrary difference in classification between families with incomes a few dollars above the poverty line and those with incomes a few dollars below the poverty line. (Williamson and Hyer 1975 p.653)

Though food is a necessity to survival, the NWRO was rejecting the idea that the SSA could legitimately determine what amount constituted above poverty level as well as the means by which one would rise above that level. In this way, as in the case of clothing and furniture grants, consumerism is a site of struggle over legitimacy of needs and choice. But even as the NWRO is resisting the mechanism used to commodify the social lives of the poor, it is also reifying a commodification of the poor as it attaches its own proposed weekly, monthly and yearly values to food, housing, furnishings, clothing, personal care, and recreation. There is a power struggle/negotiation that occurs when a group or organization such as the SSA is determining adequate levels or thresholds for life, particularly the lives of the poor. And within that commodification, beliefs about a certain group’s worth (in this case, the poor) are uncovered, based on the presumptions about what they would need and what those needs would cost.

**The Poor as Consumers and Pawns of Businesses and the State**

Consumerism is key to understanding the relationship between the state, private business, and the poor. Kiplinger Washington Letter, a Washington, D.C. publication circulated to business owners, stated a positive outlook on customer issues following Nixon’s election, including expected increases in consumer spending. That optimism would prove to be short-lived as unemployment remained high, wages remained stagnate, and food prices increased. Businesses were left holding their breaths to see whether Nixon’s economic program would stimulate spending and result in business growth. The National Urban League also became cautiously optimistic as it related to Nixon’s plan, specifically his wage and price freezing which “could enable Black people to purchase more with their limited dollars.”
Just prior to Nixon’s election, during the 1968 uprisings/protests following King’s assassination, businesses and governments became very concerned with managing the discontent of area blacks. In Chicago, a “riot study committee” was established to determine the causes of the April 1968 uprising in Chicago’s west side neighborhoods and the resulting $10 million in damage to property. The report determined that “the pent-up resentment of Negroes against the economic system was apparent in the selectivity of targets for looting and burning”. Most businesses in these black communities that experienced these uprisings were white-owned and only white-owned businesses were deliberately targeted and burned. A number of these businesses were known to “sell low-quality products at high prices and engage in sharp, often ruthless, credit practices. Important to note though that local merchants were more likely to extend credit to welfare recipients than major chain stores because they were often inclined to sell inventory due to lack of large storage space. They often refused to permit the return of defective merchandise. Many ghetto merchants admit to higher prices but justify them on such grounds as higher insurance costs, higher credit losses, and a high incidence of shoplifting. The relationship between this large group of merchants and their customers is not a constructive one of mutual respect.”

Though this information was reported to the local government, specifically Mayor Daley, little was done to address the issues of customer exploitation at the hands of merchants. The exploitative relationship between the poor and merchants also extended to the reaches of, and was facilitated by, the (local, state and federal) government. During a time of consumer rights legislation, in which the government served as defenders of middle class white customers, the poor were being identified as a bloc to be manipulated.

During the first NWRO convention held on August 27, 1967 both James Farmer and Dick Gregory gave an address. During his comments to the NWRO delegates, Farmer made a clear connection between consumers and the poor as well as consumers and political activism. Farmer stated, “workers have organized …tenants are organizing tenants … consumers are organizing as consumers …the poor have a great strength, when you organize you must organize politically – because the answers will be found in politics.” The NWRO viewed its membership as citizens entitled to engage in political activism, viewed here through the analytical lens of intersectional political consumerism, for the purposes
of organizing poor people around marketplace issues. And the NWRO viewed its organization as an appropriate vehicle through which to carry out that work. While Farmer’s comments focused on political possibilities of organizing the poor, Gregory’s comments illuminated the collusion between government and private businesses to exploit and disempower the political potential of the poor as consumers.

…five minutes after a nigger get his check, you right wing bastards got it. …so if they cut off relief checks in the morning, just in the state of Illinois, that $17M, 5 minutes after those checks come through, that white folks don’t have – then he’ll come up with $17M and in 10 months tops that $170M knocked out of the state of Illinois economy, the damn state would collapse. 96

Here, Gregory is speaking about the amount of welfare aid distributed in the state of Illinois during the 1960s and how the government relies upon their subsidized income to keep the state economy healthy. In 1967, there was $488 million in state and local spending in Illinois for public welfare assistance. 97 By 1968, the amount spent on social welfare (as a percentage of total government expenditures) was 43.7%. 98 This included health, education, veteran and insurance programs in addition to public aid. Gregory made the point that the state and national economies still relied upon the poor as both a subsidized income stream as well as a scapegoat.

That’s why they’ll give you the money, and they won’t give you nothing else with it, ‘cause they know in giving you the money in this hand, they gone get it in this hand over here. That’s why they never tried to do anything but give you money. They not doing you a favor….how many of you have ever kept $5 out of a [welfare] check? … That goes back into this country’s economy. So you got to understand this. White folks done got mad at niggers over the economy. Why you think they haven’t fired us? 99

Here, Gregory is explicit in his assertion that the government is not benevolent and remains unconcerned with the needs of the poor. When he says ‘why you think they haven’t fired us?’ he is speaking to the government’s obsession with the health of the economy for the benefit of the wealthy and that the government remains intentional in its efforts to maintain poverty because it serves capitalism to do so.

Consider that Cook County, during the time, was the largest user of food stamps in the country and that recipients in September 1966 paid $1,017,797 for $1,398,770 worth of food stamps (for 82,466 people or 26,063 households). 100 This meant that over $1 million dollars was funneled into the Cook County economy with food stamps alone at a discount to poor people of only 27%. In other words, for just
The government was able to get over $1 million from the poor and funnel $1,398,770 in food stamps into the economy.

The food stamp program, like other welfare benefits, essentially served to use the poor as a vehicle through which the government could subsidize its own economic system – either through subsidizing of private businesses or farms through the Department of Agriculture. Indeed, the government was not doing any favors for the poor. Of those families eligible for food stamps, only 53% participated in 1969 stating lack of participation due to the program being too costly, too limiting, and inconvenient. There were other voices in addition to Gregory who saw the connection between the government and the poor as a way of subsidizing the economy. An opportunistic view offered in Outlook Magazine which stated that businesses had an opportunity, by extending credit to welfare recipients, to exploit the deteriorating economic conditions because there will likely be an increase in unemployment, and therefore, an increase in people going on welfare. As a result, the logic was that retailers could access a market once ignored, sell off their lower-end merchandise that middle class patrons are less likely to buy, and maintain a steady revenue stream from retail sales that are essentially subsidized by the government. As Irene Gibbs, a welfare recipient from Jamaica Queens New York stated “They don’t do nothing for poor people. Welfare clients are catching particular hell. People say how much money the welfare client gets. Most of the welfare check goes to the slum landlord, Con Edison and the Brooklyn Union Gas Company. And they’re the same folks who are saying welfare people should work.”

Gregory’s view was that the poor were needed, as the poor, in order for the capitalist economy to maintain itself.

… cause the capitalist system in this country functions on 85% credit. And black folks, not to mention poor white folks, but black folks cash value in America is $17 B, its $27B if you want to get our credit, multiply $27B by 85 and that’s what we owe. And we owe all of that to white folks. … Don’t let nobody tell you they doing you some favors because they giving you some money. Look beyond that check and ask why. Because they have to.

In addition to critiquing the capitalist system which perpetuates sustaining poverty, Gregory speaks to the importance of credit within a capitalist society as well as the importance of the poor as credit holders.
Recall, during this time the NWRO had launched its campaign against Sears and other major department stores in an effort to secure credit and eradicate discriminatory credit practices that would exclude the poor. Here, Gregory states that businesses (though they may appear to not want the poor as consumers) heavily rely on the poor. When he says “And we owe all of that to white folks” he is making commentary about how debt leaves blacks in servitude to the white capitalist system and how this system is dependent upon this exploitation.

Endnotes

1 Social Action Vertical File Box 56 Folder Welfare Rights Org Reproduction of New York Times Magazine article Titled "Now It's Welfare Lib" By Richard Rogin Dated September 27, 1970 distributed by the NWRO p.6
5 Social Action Vertical File Box 56 Folder Welfare Rights Org Reproduction of New York Times Magazine article Titled "Now It's Welfare Lib" By Richard Rogin Dated September 27, 1970 distributed by the NWRO p.6-7
6 George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 11 Folder 18 IFCO NWRO Correspondence, Reports, and Notes, 1968-1973 Document Titled "Report to the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization" From: George Wiley Period Covered: May 1, 1968 to December 31, 1968 p.8; See also NWRO Papers Unprocessed collection Accessed August 6, 2013 Box 2150, for meeting minutes, informational materials and advocacy/recruitment letters from the Chicago Friends to their middle class contacts asking for support.
8 Ibid.
...
54 Hull House Association Papers Series VIII Box 38 Folder 447 Chicago Newspaper clippings on welfare crisis 1971 Chicago Daily Article Title "No tax boosts for welfare, Ogilvie repeats" Dated November 2, 1971; Chicago Tribune Article Title "State's high Court to Hear More Debate" Dated November 3, 1971
55 Hull House Association Papers Series VIII Box 38 Folder 447 Chicago Newspaper clippings on welfare crisis 1971 Chicago Sun-Times Article Title "Check of $54,000 on welfare may take 2 months, not one" Dated November 5, 1971
56 Hull House Association Papers Series VIII Box 38 Folder 447 Chicago Newspaper clippings on welfare crisis 1971 Chicago Tribune Article Title "Welfare Jobs Bill Is Sent to Ogilvie" By Thomas Seslar Dated November 13, 1971; Chicago Sun-Times Article Title "Straining at welfare gnats" Dated December 16, 1971
57 Hull House Association Papers Series VIII Box 38 Folder 447 Chicago Newspaper clippings on welfare crisis 1971 Chicago Tribune Article Title "Ogilvie and Reagan Disagree on U.S. Role for Welfare" by George Tagge Dated November 19, 1971
58 Hull House Association Papers Series VIII Box 38 Folder 447 Chicago Newspaper clippings on welfare crisis 1971 Chicago Tribune Article Title "2,000 on Dole March in Capital, Demand Increase in Welfare" Dated November 9, 1971
59 Hull House Association Papers Series VIII Box 38 Folder 447 Chicago Newspaper clippings on welfare crisis 1971 Chicago Sun-Times Article Title "Don't cut welfare, priests, nuns urge" By Roy Larson Dated December 1, 1971; Chicago Sun-Times Article Title "Straining at welfare gnats" Dated December 16, 1971
60 George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 8 Folder 1 Executive Committee Meeting, 1968-1972 Document Title "Executive Board Meeting (September 20 to 26, 1971) meeting minutes submitted by Bertha Cavanaugh, Corresponding Secretary NWRO p.2; See also George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 8 Folder 8 General Personnel Matters 1967,69-1972, n.d. letters of resignation from Roger Kranz, Mary Green, Marie Ratagick, Joyce Rowe, Ms. A Colom, Dale MacLeod related to turnover and intragroup conflict, including racial tension and overpayment of staff, within the national office
61 Institute of the Church in an Urban Industrial Society Box 11 Folder 169 Archive Organizations; Illinois, Chicago; National Welfare Rights Organization, undated Document Title "Rebuilding NWRO: Life or Death Issue for the Working Class" publicizing event for March 4 [1973?] p.2
64 Ibid.
65 Institute of the Church in an Urban Industrial Society Box 11 Folder 169 Archive Organizations; Illinois, Chicago; National Welfare Rights Organization, undated Press Release from National Unemployed and Welfare Rights Organization Dated April 12 [1973] regarding the organization's view that the Nixon administration and FBI were trying to sabotage efforts of the Nu_WRO to organize the working poor and unemployed. p.1
66 Ibid.
68 Institute of the Church in an Urban Industrial Society Box 11 Folder 169 Archive Organizations; Illinois, Chicago; National Welfare Rights Organization, undated Press Release from National Unemployed and Welfare Rights Organization Dated April 12 [1973] regarding the organization's view that the Nixon administration and FBI were trying to sabotage efforts of the Nu_WRO to organize the working poor and unemployed. p.1-2
70 Ibid.
73 George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 7 Folder 8 National Convention, 1969 (Detroit) Washington Afro-American Article Title "Black Voices" by John Lewis Dated August 30, 1969; See also George Wiley Papers, National Welfare Rights Organization Box 11 Folder 18 IFCO NWRO Correspondence, Reports, and
Langston Hughes’ “Harlem: A Dream Deferred” speaks to the hopes and disappointments of African Americans during the 1950s. Hughes paints a vivid picture of dreams decaying under the weight of systemic oppressions. Like Hughes’ Harlem of the early 1900’s, during the 1950’s Chicago was seen as a reprieve from the oppressions of the South and a space brimming with opportunity. And just like Hughes’ Harlem, Hansberry’s Woodlawn neighborhood and other Chicago neighborhoods like it, Chicago became a place of unfulfilled promises and dreams deferred. Still, there is a responsibility to remember the stories of those who resisted and fought to change their plight. The women and men of the Chicago Welfare Rights Organizations battled for legitimacy in a very specific and deliberate way. The site of struggle for their battle for dreams was the consumer marketplace.
The intersectional political consumerism of Jobs Or Income Now (JOIN) and The Woodlawn Organization (TWO) served multiple purposes. First, the rent strikes conducted by both organizations positioned poor and working-poor apartment dwellers of slum housing as legitimate consumers with legitimate expectations and demands. Though the two organizations were very different ideologically, they shared in the belief that political and economic power for the poor could be achieved by invoking their rights as consumers. The ideological differences of these organizations also reveal two diverging dimensions of intersectional political consumerism, namely community-centered and commercial-centered intersectional political consumerism. While JOIN wanted buying clubs and food co-ops in their neighborhood, TWO demanded their community build supermarkets. Though both communities were marginalized within their (conditions of) poverty, Peggy Terry’s proximity to whiteness differently affected her organization’s fight for the (white) poor’s legitimacy as consumers. TWO members, on the other hand, dealt with the layered burden of being invalidated as legitimate consumers due to their race and class. The historical legacy of denial of access to consumer spaces precisely because of race made it that much more difficult for the members of TWO to relinquish their dream of being accepted in a capitalist society. The embedded social relationship between capitalism and consumerism and the desire to be acknowledged as full and equal citizens propelled TWO into a commercial-centered intersectional political consumerism which ultimately hoped to emulate middle-class (white) America.

The study of the “Square Deal Campaign” was useful in illuminating how intersectional political consumerism may be employed not just by those who hold marginalized social positions but also by those in privileged social positions, as was the case with the white, male business owners of the Woodlawn Business Men’s Association (WBMA). The WBMA members saw consumerism as a political project which could be manipulated through their perceived interest in ‘topical events’ affecting the lives of African Americans. Though the WBMA and the Woodlawn community shared a common threat in the form of the city’s urban renewal plans, the WBMA did not seek to change existing structures resulting in shared power between the community (which was predominately black) and the city government. Instead the WBMA wanted to divert consumer dollars to their own businesses while maintaining the status quo,
which ultimately required the community to be held accountable to local businesses without a reciprocal accountability to the community. The Woodlawn community’s response to the city’s urban renewal plans revealed how the city attempted to use the structuring of consumer space to control the community. Their response also provided a platform whereby they could validate themselves as consumers and ‘dream’ about how they wished to integrate consumer spaces into the community’s social life.

In the same way TWO, a decade earlier, took up the heavy load of attempting to emulate (white) middle-class values through consumption, the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) and Chicago Welfare Rights Organization (CWRO) would pick up this white albatross in the form of a national consumer credit campaign. Though the leaders of the CWRO were attempting to draw attention to the expensiveness of poverty and the ways in which the poor are punished and taxed for their condition, seeking retribution/relief from a private capitalist entity such as Sears only served to inflame hostility towards the poor. It is important to note that, during the welfare rights era, consumer credit was a relatively new financial tool for everyday consumers and the poor, black women of the movement were very audacious in their claims for access to the same tools businesses sought to be used by middle-class white women. Unlike today, access to consumer credit for the poor was viewed as a reprieve from, not an entrée into, exploitation. Still, the structural loads of the feminization and blackening of poverty, and the stigmatization and hostility that followed, were too heavy to tip the scales toward a more equitable consumer experience for poor people. The credit campaign, as well as the national and local welfare organizations would ultimately collapse under the weight of false representations of the poor as loafers, which were fueled by neoliberal logics.

Today, African Americans have an estimated one trillion dollars in disposable purchasing power. Though the “value” of black people to the U.S. economy has grown since “A Raisin in the Sun”, black people are no more valued within U.S. society or better off financially as a result. The numbers of African Americans living in poverty remains double that of whites. With the recent gutting of the Voting Rights Act, and new legislations around voter identification requirements disproportionately impacting poor people of color, African Americans are experiencing high levels of disenfranchisement. In recent years,
there has been a raised awareness around state-sanctioned violence targeted specifically at the black community and the disproportionate effects of mass incarceration on African Americans is being more heavily scrutinized (Alexander 2012).

Though blacks have substantial purchasing power and there is an increase in black-owned businesses, led by African American women, ninety-eight percent of those dollars still go to white-owned businesses. Spurred by murders of seventeen year old Trayvon Martin in Florida and eighteen year old Michael Brown in Missouri, there has been a massive call for boycotts of businesses and encouragement to patronize black-owned businesses. In response to the state-sanctioned violence carried out by local police against black bodies, hashtags such as #BlackOutBlackFriday and #NotOneDime have encouraged African Americans to mobilize and withhold their consumer dollars until reforms are made. These activities serve as examples of how the most egregious injustices assaulting the African American community are met with strategies which include politicized consumerism. That the intersections of race, class and gender appear in living technicolor across our televisions, newsfeeds, cell phones, and social media provides researchers and citizens alike more (big) data with which to analyze how intersectional political consumerism can assist in our understanding of how power and resistance are shaped.

When evaluating the success or failure of the intersectional political consumerism engaged during the welfare rights movement, it is critical that the reader understand, respect, and appreciate the social and political barriers which served to marginalize and devalue the people of the movement, particularly poor black women. To exert any amount of resistance, to demand any level of freedom through choice, to audaciously dare to define oneself and one’s own circumstances, and inspire others like you to do the same, is a type of subversiveness that cannot be measured by systemic change alone. When one understands how individuals make meaning of their own activities, and specifically their political consumerist activities, we tap into an internally defined source of power and reclamation that has the ability to sow a seed that may be reaped generations later.

Intersectional political consumerism encourages a critical engagement with our subjects interconnected social locations as we seek to understand both how they make political meaning for
themselves as well as how they go about the process of using consumerism for political purposes. Intersectional political consumerism provides an avenue with which to understand how power is enacted, resisted and reclaimed differently depending on one’s intersecting social locations. Just as TWO and JOIN show us how two very different approaches to intersectional political consumerism can engage similar power structures yet achieve different ends, we can today apply an intersectional analysis to consumer initiatives which serve to engage power either through capitalist or socialist means. Today, the role large multinational corporations play, in efforts to protect their brands and images, to convince customers that they are responsible global citizens engaging in ‘conscious capitalism’ speaks to how the politics of consumerism continues to shape messages, images, and how power is (seemingly) dispersed. Just as the WBMA showed us how intersectional political consumerism could be used to reinforce the status quo during the 1960s, today intersectional political consumerism can illuminate the ways in which strategies, activism and even movements can be co-opted to advance the agendas of the privileged.

Instead of the liberatory access to credit, which the NWRO fought for so that its members could engage in some semblance of white middle-class consumption (in the hopes of being accepted as full citizens), today we see a backlash of credit practices specifically targeting the poor as predatory. Yet again, the poor shifts and struggles to reclaim for itself what should be considered freeing or debilitating. What the most marginalized among us know to be true is that so long as there are dreams, there are dreams deferred. And as power shifts, so do our strategies which aim to circumvent. We bring our whole selves into these struggles for legitimacy. And our whole selves extend beyond class, and beyond the label of ‘flawed consumer’.
REFERENCES


Appendix A – Archival Collections

Archival Collections

ACORN Records, 1965-2008
Annetta Dieckmann Papers Records, 1944-1976
Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago records, 1940-1980
Charles Chiakulas Collection
Chicago Council on Urban Affairs
CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), Chicago Chapter Archives
Industrial Area Foundations / Saul Alinsky Papers
Chicago Urban League
Hull House Association Papers
Institute of the Church in an Urban Industrial Society
Movement for Economic Justice Records
Brenda Eichelberger / National Alliance of Black Feminists Papers
Peggy Terry Papers, 1937-2004
Social Action Vertical File, 1960-1980
Scholarship, Education and Defense Fund for Racial Equality
Wisconsin, Division of Community Services: Bureau of Planning and Implementation Files, 1950-1984
George Wiley Papers, Early Civil Rights and Poverty Activities 1949-1975

Archival Sites

Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, IL
Daley Library, University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL
Moorland-Springarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, MI
Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI
Appendix B – Topic Modeling Queries

Listed below are the six separate queries created within JSTOR on January 19, 2015. Upon reviewing several articles from the search query results to ensure the search terms were accurate, I requested the metadata through JSTOR’s Data for Research website dfr.jstor.org which allows researchers to make large dataset requests.

JSTOR Search criteria

All texts in the collection should accord with the following parameters in a Full Text Search Query of the DFR database: Language: English, Year of Publication: 1965-2014

- Search query for “Condition – Race/Class/Gender” - All of These Words: “(black OR “African American” OR “afro American” OR negro OR colored AND poor OR poverty OR “welfare recipient” OR underclass OR disadvantaged AND girl* OR wom?n OR female* OR lady OR ladies”)

Dfr beta search with parameters – 1965-2014, English only, search terms from above yielded 892 results

- Search query for “Economic Policy/Neoliberalism” - All of These Words: “(neoliberal* OR liberalism OR "economic liberalism" OR “classical liberal”)” in Full-Text + All Fields

Dfr beta search with parameters – 1965-2014, English only, search terms from above yielded 110,375 results

- Search query for “Business/Consumerism” - All of These Words: “(Consumerism OR consumer* OR customer* OR patron* OR patronage)” in Full-Text + All Fields

Dfr beta search with parameters – 1965-2014, English only, search terms from above yielded 668,386 results

- Search query for “Governance/Welfare” - All of These Words: “("great society" OR "welfare rights" OR "welfare rights movement" OR "NWRO" OR "government assistance" OR "AFDC" OR "aid to families with dependent children" OR "ADC" OR "aid to dependent children" OR "TANF" OR "temporary assistance for needy families" OR "guaranteed adequate income")” in Full-Text + All Fields

Dfr beta search with parameters – 1965-2014, English only, search terms from above yielded 31,096 results

- Search query for “Governance/Law” - All of These Words: “(legislation OR law* OR legal OR right* OR “civil right” OR government OR judge OR plaintiff OR defendant OR court* AND “NWRO”)”

Dfr beta search with parameters – 1965-2014, English only, search terms from above yielded 89 results

- Search query for “Governance/Citizenship” - All of These Words: “(citizenship OR citizen* OR “tax payer”)”

Dfr beta search with parameters – 1965-2014, English only, search terms from above yielded 731,559 results.
Appendix C – Topic Modeling Results

Representative document titles from “consumerism” query for Topic 12 (with at least a 60% threshold) include:


Nardone, Thomas. 1986. “Part-time workers: who are they?” Monthly Labor Review. Threshold - 0.6723090277777778

Hammida, Mustapha. 2004. “Job mobility and hourly wages: is there a relationship?” Monthly Labor Review. Threshold - 0.6557438794726931


Mellor, Earl and Steven Haugen. 1986. “Hourly paid workers: who they are and what they earn?” Monthly Labor Review Threshold - 0.6096636665087636


Hipple, Steven. 2001. “Contingent work in the late-1990s” Monthly Labor Review Threshold - 0.6186941372519316

Representative document titles from “race/class/gender” query for Topic 47 (with at least a 60% threshold) include:

Hodgkins, Donna. 1982. “Divorce and Remarriage at Middle Age and beyond.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Threshold - 0.6517199017199017

Stewart, Susan. 2010. “Children With Nonresident parents: Living arrangements, visitation and child support.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* Threshold - 0.6780476075979803


Solebello, Nicholas. 2011. “We want them to be as heterosexual as possible.” *Gender and Society* Threshold - 0.6170444638186574

Biblarz, Timothy. 2010. “How Does the Gender of Parents Matter?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* Threshold - 0.6070542129327237

Stewart, Susan. 1999. “Nonresident Mothers’ and Fathers’ Social Contact with Children.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* Threshold - 0.6372353176188573

Kauffman, Gayle and Frances Goldscheider. 2007. “Do Men ‘Need’ a Spouse More Than Women?: Perceptions of the importance of marriage for men and women.” *The Sociological Quarterly* Threshold - 0.6396853590459274

Booth, Alan and Paul Amato. 1994. “Parental Gender Role nontraditionalism and offspring outcomes.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* Threshold - 0.6437529029261495


Campbell, Kelly and David Wright. 2010. “Marriage today: Exploring the incongruence between Americans’ beliefs and practices.” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* Threshold - 0.625438596491228
### Topic 19

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### Topic Word Lists for query “Economic Policy/Neoliberalism” - Partial Listing of Topic Modeling Results

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Appendix D – List of Organizations

List of Chicago organizations

Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago
Chicago Archdiocesan Committee on Poverty
Chicago Urban League
Chicago Welfare Rights Organization  (Related to: JOIN, KOCO, TWO, WRDA, WSO)
City Wide Welfare Union  (Related to: JOIN, WSO, KOCO)
Coordinating Committee of Community Organizations
Future Outlook League (Related to: TWO)
Industrial Area Foundation
Jobs or Income Now   (Related to: CWRO, SDS, KOCO, WRDA)
Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (Related to: JOIN, WSO)
Latin American Defense Organization
Lawndale People’s Planning and Action Committee (Related to: CWRO, TWO, KOCO)
Lawndale Tenant’s Union
Movement for Economic Justice
Self-Help Action Center
South East Commission
Tenant’s and Consumer’s Organization
The Woodlawn Organization  (Related to: CWRO)
Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago
Welfare Recipients Demand Action  (Related to: JOIN)
West Side Organization (Related to: CWRO)
West Woodlawn Woman’s Community Club
Woodlawn Business Men’s Association (Related to: TWO)
Appendix E – List of Acronyms

List of Acronyms

ADC/AFDC – Aid to Dependent Children Program/Aid for Dependent Children Program
BBB – Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Chicago
CABS – Consumer Action Bedford-Stuyvesant
CCCO – Coordinating Committee of Community Organizations
CCDPA – Cook County Department of Public Aid
CEA – Council of Economic Advisors
CORE – Congress of Racial Equality
CUL – Chicago Urban League
CWRO – Chicago Welfare Rights Organization
CWWU – City Wide Welfare Union
ERAP – Economic Research and Action Project
ESEA – Elementary and Secondary Education Act
FOL – Future Outlook League
GAI – Guaranteed Annual/Adequate Income
HEW – Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
IAF – Industrial Area Foundation
JOIN – Jobs or Income Now
KOCO – Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization
LADO – Latin American Defense Organization
LTU – Lawndale Tenant’s Union
MEJ – Movement for Economic Justice
NCC – National Coordinating Committee
NCLC – National Caucus of Labor Committees
NTO – National Tenants Organization
NU-WRO – National Unemployed and Welfare Rights Organization
PRAC – Poverty Rights Action Center
SCLC – Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SDS – Students for a Democratic Society
SHAC - Self-Help Action Center
SNCC – Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SSA – Social Security Administration
TACO – Tenant’s and Consumer’s Organization
TWO - The Woodlawn Organization (formerly Temporary Woodlawn Organization)
UAW – United Auto Workers Union
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
WBMA – Woodlawn Business Men’s Association
WRDA – Welfare Recipients Demand Action
WSO – West Side Organization
WWWCC – West Woodlawn Woman’s Community Club