PRAIRIE FIRES: URBAN REBELLIONS AS BLACK WORKING CLASS POLITICS IN THREE
MIDWESTERN CITIES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the social, economic and political upheavals caused by the urban rebellions of the 1960s. Using Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Omaha, Nebraska as case studies, this dissertation argues that the uprisings were historically informed acts of resistance, which demonstrated a Midwestern, gendered, and working-class character. *Prairie Fires* registers the significant impact the rebellions had not only in transforming the consciousness of African Americans but also in altering the relationship between Blacks, urban communities, and the State as well as highlighting class fractures within Black politics. This interpretative lens validates the black urban rebellions not only as legitimate responses to oppression, but part of an American tradition of working class insurrection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Between 1965 and 1968, 329 urban rebellions took place in 257 American cities, resulting in nearly 300 deaths, 60,000 arrests, and hundreds of millions of dollars in property loss. Tempting as it may be, scholars cannot allow the urban rebellions of the 1960s to remain solely a collection of statistics and vivid accounts of a response to inferior conditions in the black community. More than forty years after the National Guard marched from the ghettos, the rebellions still hold tremendous power in the collective memory of black Americans and the State. Scholars must register the significant impact the rebellions had not only in transforming the consciousness of African Americans and the strategic vision of black liberation movements but also in altering the relationship between blacks, urban communities, and the State, and how they highlighted class fractures within black politics. *Prairie Fires* argues that the urban rebellions of the 1960s were not merely spontaneous acts of violence and resentment but instead a form of gendered, working-class black community activism. At its core, this study asserts that by understanding the urban rebellions of the 1960s, scholars can better understand the broader analytical categories of gender, class, region, and protest within the Black Freedom Movement.

Scholarship of the Black Urban Rebellions

The literature on the urban rebellions can be separated into four different scholarly approaches: sociological and psychological studies, historical works that emphasize structural failure, historical works which argue that rebellions were protests, and finally, urban studies monographs. The first approach consisted of works published immediately following the revolts. Frequently penned by journalists and sociologists, this scholarship was featured in edited

collections that investigated the causes of the rebellions.[1] Additionally scholars produced numerous studies which theorized the causes, benefits, and ideologies behind the uprisings. These researchers employed a variety of methodological approaches including participant interviews, socioeconomic correlations, and mailed questionnaires. These contemporary scholars, in addition to the rebels themselves, helped to assign meaning to these events for the general public. However important such field studies were, they are flawed for four main reasons.

First, the majority of the researchers were white, thus the authenticity of the responses they received must be questioned in that many uprising participants were deeply suspicious of outsiders. Second, following the uprisings scholars flooded black urban America to conduct research. Historian Gerald Horne best articulated this super-saturation of researchers in his book on the 1965 Watts rebellion, *Fire This Time*. There he humorously quoted *Los Angeles Times* writer Art Seidenbaum who mentioned that he had a "mental image of a USC sociologist interviewing a man on the street who turns out to be a psychologist from UCLA."[2] It can be assumed therefore even if a researcher interviewed a person he or she thought actually resided in the area, this person may have been interviewed so many times before that they may have provided pat, pre-rehearsed answers. Third, these early studies were very narrow in focus, seeking to validate a singular hypothesis based on assumed characteristics of black rebellions such as diminished occupational opportunities, growing ideological militancy, or distrust of white merchants. These limited explanations provided a corroboration or rebuttal to what the scholar believed to be the cause of the urban rebellion, overlooking that these events were the

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[1] August Meier, Elliot Rudwick, and John Bracey Jr., eds. *Black Protest in the Sixties: Article for the New York Times*. (New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, 1991). Gerald Leinwand, ed. *Riots* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970).

[2] Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1997), 39.

culmination of multiple grievances. Finally, and most importantly, though these scholars

provided insight into the contemporary moment, they failed to speculate on the broader historical

meanings of these uprisings.

The second bibliographic context, some of the first historical works on the topic,

examined the structural break-down and ultimate decline of cities.   Represented by monographs

by Thomas Sugrue and Sidney Fine, this scholarship directly challenged notions of black family

breakdown and criminal deviance.   They attributed the violence to structural failure, both

economic and political. As Sugrue argued in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, "the results of

housing desegregation, in combination with persistent workplace discrimination and

deindustrialization, were explosive." In *Violence in the Model City*, Fine, like Sugrue avoided

stereotypes of black pathology, but neither scholar provided adequate discussion of the changes

in black consciousness and intra-class struggles within the African American community.[3]

The third approach is best characterized by Gerald Horne's and Cheryl Greenberg's

respective books, *Fire this Time* and *Or Does it Explode?* These historians centered their

research on the Watts 1965 uprising and the Harlem 1935 and 1943 uprisings. Both Horne and

Greenberg argued that institutional racism and repression of civil rights and labor organizations

created a void for working-class activism. Greenberg elaborated, contending the conflagration

was "essentially the raw expression of anger taught by political organizations whose collapse left

a vacuum." Although Cheryl Greenberg's work, *Does it Explode?* uncovered women's activism

before and after the rebellion, her study does not focus on their roles during the rebellion.

Similarly, Horne asserted that the Watts uprising in Los Angeles was a reaction "against the

historic and stereotypical notion that blacks were the 'female' of the races: subordinated,

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[3] Thomas J. Sugure, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 258. Sidney Fine. *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanaugh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Rebellion of 1967*,(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989).

subordinate, dominated, timid."[4]   Though he made a critical contribution to the scholarship by choosing gender as a category of analysis, he did not specifically focus on women's involvement.

The final approach to urban uprisings is most frequently seen in historical monographs on black urban communities. Scholars explore the broader Black Freedom Movement in a particular locality but do not fully delve into the rebellion experience.   Although a series of photographs accompany the text, rarely do these scholars devote more than a few pages to the uprisings. Their monographs focus on the political economy and organizational activism that occurred in the metropolis they studied. Moreover scholars such as Winston Grady-Willis in *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*; Matthew Countrymen in *Up South*; and Heather Ann Thompson in *Whose Detroit?,* by showing the triumph of local activism or the growth of radical politics treat the urban revolts as a minor setback in narratives that extol successful struggles. Thompson penned that "despite the tremendous shock of the civic uprising…white liberal leaders, along with their allies in the black middle class, still refused to abandon their plans to improve the city."   In spite of their shortcomings, these books remain vital for identifying the particularities of place and offer a trajectory of events beyond the revolts.[5] I add to the above scholarship in three major ways: by focusing on smaller Midwestern cities, uncovering the gendered nature of the rebellions, and by demonstrating that rebellions were working-class activism.

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[4] Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time,* 12. Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Or Does It Explode?: Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3-6, 105-108. Though Greenberg's book deals with urban rebellions prior to the 1960s, I use her case study as a model because she details a grievance-based protest where black participants caused strategic property damage. Earlier uprisings such as Detroit 1943 or Chicago 1919 were communal uprisings which featured reciprocal violence (usually instigated by whites) over contested public spaces.

[5] Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit?: Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 72. Winston A Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977*(Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). Matthew J. Countrymen, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.)

Role of Violence in Political Change

Although these events have often been described as riots, I will not use that term here unless directly quoting from a source. Correspondingly, I refer to individuals who took part in these activities as rebels or participants, not rioters. The term riot conjures up images of chaos and wanton destruction. Additionally, when using this term there is no delineation between sports riots, bread riots, or race riots. Therefore when referring to the uprisings in the 1960s, I will label these events as conflagrations, rebellions, revolts or civil disorders. It is also important to differentiate between the events that took place in the 1960s and previous other racial disturbances. There is an extensive literature documenting the long history of violent uprising in this county, however sociologist Morris Janowitz describes the difference rather concisely, as communal and commodity riots. He defines a communal riot as "an interracial clash, an ecologically based struggle at the boundaries of the expanding black neighborhoods." Janowitz defines a commodity riot as a "more selective, terroristic use of force with political overtones, again mainly against whites, by small organized groups of blacks." Although his descriptions begin to demonstrate the changing nature of violent confrontation in the mid-twentieth century, both his definitions and terminology have somewhat limited explanatory power.[6] The urban uprisings in the 1960s were communal activities, in which the grievances expressed were not limited to the material obtainment of goods, but also encompassed the social, political, and economic impotency that many black Americans felt.

The broadest definition of a "riot" is the legal precedent of "any group of twelve or more people attempting to assert their will immediately through the use of force outside the normal bounds of law." However the Lemberg Center think tank at Brandies University put forth the

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[6] Morris Janowitz, "Patterns of Collective Racial Violence," in *The History of Violence in America,* eds. Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, 413 (New York: Bantam Books, 1969.)

most frequently used definition of these events. They defined civil disorders as: "incidents

involving crowd behavior, characterized by either damage to persons or property and/or defiance

of civil authority. More specifically, crowd behavior refers to the activities of four people or

more acting in concert." This defiance of civil authority could include one or more of the

following behaviors: verbal harassment of a legitimate authority; direct disobedience of orders

given by an authority agent; and physical attacks against police, National Guard or their

"symbolic equivalents."[7]

     I have further bounded my case studies by employing sociologist Seymour Spilerman's

approach for tightening the temporal and racial components. Therefore when I refer to the

uprisings of the 1960s; I exclusively mean acts of black aggression which were spontaneous.

Finally, I find it useful to employ the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders',

hereafter referred to as the Kerner Commission, definition of major, serious, and minor

disorders. Both Milwaukee and Cincinnati's uprisings could be classified as major disorders in

that there were "1. Numerous fires, intensive looting and reports of sniping; 2. Violence which

lasted longer than two days; 3. Large crowds; and 4. The use of National Guard forces."

Omaha's 1966 uprising is categorized as a serious disorder. According to the commission's

specifications, serious disorders featured "1. Isolated fires and some rock throwing; 2. Violence

for one to two days; 3. Only one sizeable crowd or many small groups; and 4. Use of National

Guard forces. Finally minor disorders had "1. Few fires or broken windows; 2. Violence lasting

less than one day; 3. A small number of participants; and 4. The use of local police forces."[8] By

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[7]Janet L. Abu-Lughood, *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1. Quote originally attributed to Paul Gilje in *Rioting in America.* Jane Baskin and others, eds.*, Riot Data Review* (Waltham, MA; Brandies University Press, May 1968), 2.

[8] William R. Morgan and Terry Nichols, "The Causes of Racial Disorders: A Grievance-Level Explanation *American Sociological Review* 38:5 (Oct., 1973): 611-624. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,

utilizing these categories to determine severity, I am able to show that midsized cities often had

multiple minor uprisings in lieu of one major uprising like some metropolitan areas.

Although this study is guided by the relative deprivation and rising expectations theories,

I would briefly like to define some of the other prevailing uprising theories here. The

explanation for the 1960s urban rebellions that has had the most staying power is the riff raff

theory. First advanced in the McCone commission report "Violence in the City: An End or a

Beginning?" which detailed the causes of the Watts 1965 uprisings. There public officials

explained away the disturbance by stating that all those who participated were "riff-raff" or

hooligans, seeking only to cause trouble and obtain material goods.   The corollary to the riff-raff

theory is the assumption that the social structure and institutions of America are without flaw.

By making African Americans more middle class, these proponents argued that blacks "will have

a greater stake in the system and will thus be less likely to riot in the future." However this

assertion does not address broader problems of general black powerlessness in realms outside of

economic solvency.[9] Other non-specialists, such as city officials and the general public also

cited increased criminality, outside agitation or a "pressure valve" being released. However

within the scholarly community there are three dominant theses: relative deprivation, community

structure, and ethnic identity.

Sociologist Alan Berk divided the types of scholarly uprising analysis into three

categories the first, riff raff theory, was mentioned before. Second was the approach taken by

the Kerner Commission in that the uprisings were articulations of legitimate grievances within

the black community. The final scholarly approach was often taken by a number of Marxist

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Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Executive Order 11365, March, 1968, 65-66. Hereafter referred to as the Kerner Commission.

[9] William Melvin King, "Ghetto Riots and the Employment of Blacks: An Answer to the Search for Black Political Power?" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1974), 136.

scholars who argued that these uprisings were a response to inequitable political, social and economic systems of the United States.[10] Within this framework acknowledging the failure of the American system are the resulting response theories identified as relative deprivation, community structure, and ethnic identity. Although I will briefly describe the core tenets of each of these theories, they are not mutually exclusive but rather influence and reinforce one another.

Within the theoretical framework of relative deprivation there are several strains including black-white deprivation and status inconsistency advanced by sociologist James A. Gerschwender. He argues that blacks' acknowledgment of a lower quality of life in comparison to their white peers led to the uprisings, in an attempt to right the system. Additionally, sociologist James Davis cites rising expectations for the feeling of relative deprivation, insisting that the increased expectations African Americans held following major civil rights legislation led to a bigger letdown when these acts failed to fundamentally change the Northern urban experience. Within the community structure argument there are two schools, social disorganization and political responsiveness. Sociologist Robin M. Williams argues that one of the causes of the uprisings is social disorganization, meaning that a change in the status quo, such as an increase in police brutality or diminished political efficacy can lead black urban dwellers to demand change through violence.   Similarly, scholars Stanley Lieberson and Arnold Silverns argue that the uprisings were a form of political responsiveness, again to shift the balance in a political struggle. Finally in the third category, ethnic identity, social psychologist T.M. Tomilson argues that the rebellions augmented black nationalistic identity, in codifying a

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[10] Richard Alan Berk, "The Role of Ghetto Retail Merchants in Civil Disorders" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1970), 4-9.

common enemy.[11]   The multiple levels of black grievances in the 1960s: personal, political, social, and economic, resulted in the impossibility of isolating a solitary reason for why individuals rebelled.   However the combination of feelings of deprivation, raised expectations, and an increased sense of racial pride all contributed to everyday African Americans actively protesting their conditions in new, more violent ways.

What is often forgotten when dealing with the urban rebellions of the 1960s is that violence has been a constant force in American history. The numerous studies that came in the aftermath of these events only confirmed this. H. Rap Brown, now Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, best articulated the ubiquity between this country's cultural values and the role of bloodshed asserting that "violence is as American as cherry pie." Although violence has been used by those in power to maintain social hierarchies and control; violence has also been used by the oppressed as an effort to have their voices be heard. Social psychologist Hans Toch captures the prevalence of violence throughout global history stating that, "Violence cannot be remedied when there is in fact no other way to achieve dignity and status." It is not my intention to advocate or encourage violence. The uprisings were conducted in a particular historical time and socioeconomic condition.   Ultimately, I subscribe to political scientist Ted Gurr's assertion that "violence generally consumes men and goods, it seldom enhances them."[12] Moreover political violence or violence as protest does not occur without a context. Historically, it has been the purview of the most desperate, the most oppressed; those without anything to lose.

Gurr describe the three part sequence in which political violence occurs. The first phase is the realization of dissatisfaction. The second phase is that this dissatisfaction becomes

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[11]Carol Elizabeth. Mueller, "Riot Negotiations: Conditions of Successful Bargaining in the Urban Riots of 1967 and 1968" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1971), 76.

[12] Hans Toch, *Violent Men* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1980), 239. Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebe*l (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 4.

politically articulated.   Finally this discontent is manifested against representatives or symbols

of the state. As discussed above, this dissatisfaction is often defined as relative deprivation or

the "perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities."

Similarly sociologist Neil J. Smelser argues for the importance of relative deprivation, noting

that feelings of deprivation do not necessarily need to be objectively codified rather this

deprivation can be "real or threatened, absolute or relative." Sociologist John Freeman argues

that "black-white residential and occupation interaction is a major mechanism by which the

awareness of relative deprivation is intensified." However in this study I go beyond a white-

black framework to address deprivation dissatisfaction intra-racially. Finally, as Gurr

demonstrates, the potential for collective violence is highest in a nation "whose citizens felt

sharply deprived with respect to their most deeply valued goals, had individually and collectively

exhausted the constructive means open to them to attain those goals, and lacked any nonviolent

opportunity to act on their anger."[13] What were these values most prized in America in the

1960s? The right to own a home where you could afford? The right to be gainfully employed

and provide for one's family? The right to effective political representation? Regardless of what

an individual understood as core American values, undoubtedly working-class blacks received

the rawest deal.

For purposes of this study I utilize Ralph Conant's framework for violence as protest

where he outlines the several functions this type of action can serve. First, it can be used a

communication tool when resources to express grievances are "blocked or ineffective." Second

the threat of violence can be used to bring about more widespread attention to an issue. Third,

violence as protest can be used as a symbol for the exchange of property or political control.

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[13] Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 12-13, 92. Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1962), 24. John Esten Freeman, "A Social and Demographic Analysis of Urban Racial Violence" (PhD diss., University of Colorado, 1969), iv-v.

Finally, violence can be used as justified "redistribution" of goods through looting. Apart from the political and psychological functions violence can achieve for participants; political scientist Charles Hamilton argues that the political system can respond in three different ways. First, the government can respond by greater repression on a population through curfew and increased policing. Second local government can listen to the demands of the participants to better distribute tangible resources throughout the community. Third, and perhaps the most influential, is following an uprising a city can provide the opportunity for "equitable distribution of decision-making power."[14] In this study I utilize these frameworks by demonstrating how participants strategized and justified their actions as political violence. Lastly, I use Hamilton's assessment of municipal response to structure the aftermath of the uprisings, and the shifting relationship between the State and the African American community.

Using Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Omaha, Nebraska as case studies, I argue that the urban rebellions of the 1960s were neither aberrant nor pathological but rather the final attempt for a politically impotent populace to have their grievances acknowledged. These uprisings were the critical event fueling the shift from the Civil Rights to the Black Power movement and the subsequent conservative backlash. Moreover these historically informed acts of resistance, demonstrated a Midwestern, gendered, and working-class character. Finally, *Prairie Fires* investigates the roles women played in the rebellions, making the full collective community nature of the uprisings apparent. By placing this study in conversation with classical violence theory, I highlight the coeval nature of organized protest and violent outbursts. This interpretative lens validates the black urban rebellions not only as legitimate responses to oppression, but part of an American tradition of working-class insurrection.

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[14] Ralph Wendell Conant, *The Prospects for Revolution: A Study of Riots, Civil Disobedience, and Insurrection in Contemporary America. (New York: Harper Row, 1971)*, 40. Charles V. Hamilton "The Politics of Race Relations" in Charles U. Daly, ed., *Urban Violence*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 43.

Uprisings in the Midwest

It is difficult to define the cultural characteristics of the Midwest beyond being in the

center of the nation. At first glance when defining the Midwest, one may wish to evoke the

method Justice Potter Stewart used in his concurring opinion of "hard-core pornography" in

Jacobellis v. Ohio 378 U.S. 184 (1964), "I know it when I see it." Coming to a standard, agreed

upon definition of this region has eluded many scholars. In *The Identity of the American*

Midwest, historian Andrew Cayton articulates the difficulty in defining the Midwest "since the

burden of life in the Midwest has been to deny any kind of difference, the whole notion of

asserting a unique or peculiar configuration of people and environment contradicts its

unarticulated sense of regional identity."[15] For purposes of this study, I use the Kerner

Commission's definition of the North Central region, which included the states of Illinois,

Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin (East North Central) along with Iowa, Missouri, Kansas,

and Nebraska (West North Central). 36% of the disturbances in 1967 occurred in these eight

states, which represented the largest percentage regionally.

The above division assigned by the census bureau is somewhat dubious in that it does

not take into consideration the particularities of place and space. The Midwest can be further

divided into categories such as urban and rural or border and far west, demonstrating again that

the Midwest can mean many things to many different people. Previously historians who have

attempted to define the Midwest fall short on two accounts. First they limit discussions to the

industrial Midwest or the powerhouse cities of the East North Central region. Second their

definition of the Midwest is established prior to the arrival of African Americans in any

significant number. Therefore I choose to focus my regional study on the "urban Midwest" by

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[15] Andrew Cayton, "The Anti-Region: Place and Identity in the History of the American Midwest," in *The Identity of the American Midwest: Essays on Regional History*, eds. Andrew R.L. Cayton and Susan E. Gray, 158 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 158.

looking at the cultural, industrial, social, and economic conditions which unified this region, and foregrounding the African American experience in this area.

I argue that the urban Midwest must be examined separately from the Northeast or South for three key reasons. First, operating as industrial centers, railroad hubs, and sites for increased opportunity, Midwestern cities have served as the final destination for many black migrants from the South. Second, these African Americans combated a white Midwestern mentality which distinguished itself regionally by arguing that racial discrimination was a distinctly Southern problem. The majority of the discrimination that Midwestern blacks faced was de facto, not de jure, and was often couched in paternalist language, not the explicit, violent racism of the South. Finally by focusing on smaller-scale effects and discrimination, regionalized perceptions of self, and acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of Midwestern freedom organizations, the Midwest becomes an exciting and dynamic region to chart the successes and failures of the Black Freedom Struggle, beyond the national metanarrative. Historians, sociologists, and urban planners alike must take into account regional differences to demonstrate that "the Negro in the Midwest feels injustice and discrimination no less painfully because he is a thousand miles from Harlem."[16]

The Midwest as industrial hub

Historian John C. Teaford imagines the Midwest as a "region whose cities possessed certain social, political, economic, cultural, and ethnic characteristics that distinguished them as a class apart from the other metropolises in the nation."[17] Despite this assertion Teaford argues

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[16] Mary L. Dudziak, "The Limits of Good Faith: Desegregation in Topeka, Kansas, 1950-1956," *Law and History Review*, 5:2 (Autumn, 1987): 369-371. David L. Lawrence, "Bias Felt Anywhere," *Omaha Star*, December 10, 1965.

[17] John C. Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), vii.

that although "Kansas City, Omaha, Minneapolis, and Des Moines were the sites of many mills and factories….they were not Detroits, Milwaukees, or Garys" or industrial powerhouses. Rather his "industrial Midwest" is defined as cities within the Old Northwest region with the inclusion of St. Louis. However by taking into account industries of scale, midsized metropolises in the West North Central are just as vital to understanding the role of the "industrial Midwest" in the black experience.

Between 1940 and 1970 the number of individual African Americans in both the West North Central and East North Central regions grew exponentially, by approximately two and three and a half times, respectively.   In 1940 African Americans numbered 1,069,326 out of a total population of 26,626, 342, representing 4% of the total population in the East North central Region. In 1940, African Americans in the West North Central region numbered 350,992 out of a total population of 13,516,990, or 2.5% of the total population.   By 1970 the black population in the East North Central region numbered 3,872,905 or 9.6% of the total population. The black population in the West North Central in 1970 numbered 698,645 or 4.2% of the total population. When looking at these statistics it is easy to see why places like Chicago and Detroit, dominate the narrative of the black Midwestern experience. However by utilizing my definition of the urban Midwest, a very compelling argument takes shape to understand African American life completely differently. In the same period, Omaha's black population grew from 5.3% of the total population to 9.9%; similarly Cincinnati's black population went from 12.2% of the total population to 27.6% of the population. Perhaps most astoundingly was the growth of Milwaukee's black population which skyrocketed from 8,821 in 1940 to 105,088 in 1970; representing a percentage increase from 1.5% to 14.7% of the total population. Although the numbers in Chicago and Detroit demonstrate larger aggregate and percentage increases, the

population growth in midsized municipal areas demonstrate that African Americans created

institutions, cultures, and lives for themselves apart from major metropolises.[18]

Historian Nicole Etcheson argues that a region "is more than simply an area marked by

common geographic features, accidents of history and cultural values also defined it."[19] In

addition to smaller sized metropolises such as Omaha, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee having similar

industrial profiles, they also experienced many of the "accidents of history" that defined other

Midwestern cities. Omaha, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati had a strong manufacturing base

providing industrial jobs for black residents, a history of organized protest by African

Americans, as well as municipal initiatives to proactively deal with race relation problems. Thus

culturally each of these cities had a number of elements in common not only with each other but

also the Midwest as a whole.

Beyond these cultural considerations from a purely statistical view, these midsized cities

proportionally compare to larger Midwestern cities. Sociologist John Freeman measured social

conditions of black communities by looking at the following indices for Standard Metropolitan

Statistical Areas (SMSA): 1. Median income of African Americans; 2. Median education level of

blacks; 3. Percent of the black civilian labor force unemployed; 4. Percent of nonwhite housing

units defined as sound by the census in each SMSA; 5. Percent of nonwhite housing units

defined as overcrowded; and 6. Percent of African Americans in white collar, farm, and

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[18] "No. 4 Components of Change in Population Between 1960 and 1965—States and Puerto Rico," U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1967. (88th edition.) Washington, D.C., 1967. "No. 12 Population, Rank, Percent Change, and Density—States and Puerto Rico: 1910 to 1960-Continued," U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1967. (88th edition.) Washington, D.C., 1967. "No 14. Population, Urban and Rural—States and Puerto Rico: 1950 and 1960." U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1967. (88th edition.) Washington, D.C., 1967. "No. 17 Cities with 100,000 inhabitants or More in 1960—Population, 1910 to 1960, Area 1960" U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1967. (88th edition.) Washington, D.C., 1967.

[19] Nicole Etcheson,. *The Emerging Midwest: Upend Southerners and the Political Cultures of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861(*Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), xi.

craftsmen occupations.[20] By using these indices we are able to tell that Milwaukee, Omaha, and Cincinnati have a similar social index for African Americans.

In all three case study cities the average income in 1959 for African Americans fell between $3,946 and $4,872. The high end of these figures represented Milwaukee and the low end Cincinnati, Omaha's median family income was $4,202. All three cities had the median education level achieved by African Americans as below high school diploma earners. Again Cincinnati ranked lowest in this measure at 8.6 median grade level completed, followed by Milwaukee at 9.2, and Omaha at 9.6. Finally, each city had African Americans in white collar jobs as less than 4% of the total employed population and unemployment rates around 6%.[21] These socioeconomic indices corresponded to broader trends within the United States. Related directly to the socioeconomic profile of African Americans in the 1960s is again Etcheson's notion of "accidents of history" in that with every progressing decade that African Americans resided in these cities, the promise of a more prosperous future waned.

White Midwestern mentality

In many ways African Americans Midwestern migrants carried the same goals that Eastern transplants and white immigrants held in moving to the region decades before. The uncharted frontier served as a metaphor for opportunity; opportunity to escape, to succeed, and to make good on the promise of America. Historians Andrew Cayton and Susan Grey demonstrate these hopeful considerations in assessing the impact of the Great Migration to the Midwest. "Here seemed to be a region where black people could succeed economically and participate

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[20] Freeman, "Social and Demographic Analysis,"44-45.

[21]"No. 157 Years of School Completed—States and Puerto Rico: 1960" U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1967. (88th edition.) Washington, D.C., 1967. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Income in 1959 of Families and Unrelated Individuals, by Color for the State Urban and Rural, 1960.* Prepared by the Geography Division, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1963.

fully in the public realm as citizens." However this dream of full inclusion also created an identity crisis for white Midwesterners. Again Cayton and Grey argued that

> African Americans posed a serious challenge to the self-image of white Midwesterners…For the first time in the history of the Midwest, racial prejudice made European Americans see themselves as one people…Blacks became to whites in the Midwest the epitome of people who failed to realize the potential of the Midwest because they failed to inculcate its central values of self-discipline and industry.

This becomes a central theme in Midwestern black and white relationships, particularly in the negotiation of concessions following the uprisings.

White Midwesterners could not understand what black Midwesterners had to complain about. In citing their own virtue in comparison to Southern cities, many white Midwesterners ignored the subtle, yet powerful ways in which discrimination stalled black progress. Ultimately by "blaming blacks for their poverty and unemployment, affirmed the legitimacy of white Midwesterners' collective self-image," as industrious, resilient, boot-strappers.[22] This superior self-image was augmented by the frequent citation of proactive though ineffective measures in race relations culminating in human relations boards, civil rights committees, and groups of "concerned businessmen" prior to the uprisings.

As Nicole Etcheson argued, Midwesterners constructed a regional identity on the "denial of very real class and racial tensions." She extends this argument by comparing Southern and Midwestern racism arguing that the South's "racial etiquette is rigidly defined" where as in the Midwest it was only a "loose system of social controls." However, despite this laxity of Midwestern racism, it still had devastating effects. She continued: "The very flexibility of the Midwest made it harder for blacks to predict white behavior and perhaps created greater

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[22] Cayton and Gray, *Identity of the American Midwest,* 24-25.

'insecurity and tension' for blacks than in the South."[23] Therefore black Midwesterners had the dubious task of not only fighting racial discrimination and unequal opportunity, but had to do so in a context which refused to acknowledge any difference, and against people who felt that African Americans' inability to get ahead was due to their own lack of effort.

Case study specifics

I shift the scholarly focus on uprisings from metropolises like Detroit, Los Angeles, and Newark to midsized cities. I define this as a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) whose central city has less than one million inhabitants. Although scholars have understudied these locales, the majority of urban uprisings occurred in smaller metropolitan areas. In 1967 alone, 80% (128 uprisings) took place in cities with a population under 500,000 people. The Kerner Commission reported that seven out of the eight major disturbances in 1967 occurred in cities with populations of less than one million. Moreover 91% of serious disorders and 89% of minor disorders took place in these communities.[24] Similar to African Americans in non-metropolitan and suburban areas, black Midwesterners have faced many if not all of the hallmarks of the national freedom struggle. By demonstrating the industrial, socioeconomic, and cultural profile of each city, I am able to create a snapshot of the Midwestern black experience. Additionally, by focusing on the urban rebellions regionally, I am better able to demonstrate the national trends of these events while maintaining a tightly focused urban study.

As my case studies, I have chosen three cities, Omaha, Nebraska; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which fit the two criteria, of being midsized and Midwestern. According

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[23] Nicole Etcheson, "Barbecued Kentuckians And Six-Foot Texas Rangers: The Construction of Midwestern Identity," in *The Identity of the American Midwest: Essays on Regional History*, eds. Andrew R.L. and Susan E. Gray, 79, 85 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.)

[24] Kerner Commission, 66. Statistically, the next largest region for uprisings was the East with 35% followed by the Southern and the Western regions with 16% and 13%, respectively. In the aggregate 26 out of 33 serious disorders and 96 out of 119 minor disorders took place in small and midsized metropolises.

to the 1960 census, Omaha's population stood at 300,674; Cincinnati's at 487,462; and

Milwaukee's at 734,788.[25] In addition to meeting the initial criteria, each of these cities had a

history of traditional civil rights activism and Black Power organizations, police incidents as the

catalysts, and articulated explicit grievances during the uprisings. Using these three cities as case

studies, I build on individual local events to argue that nationally the uprisings served the

function of working-class politics which articulated gender norms and intra-racial class struggle,

and were a transition from Civil Rights to Black Power.

Omaha's first urban rebellion occurred over the Fourth of July weekend in 1966. Late

Saturday evening on July 2, a neighborhood woman called the police because a large group of

teenagers had gathered in a parking lot. After a brief confrontation between the youth and

officers, violence began at 1:00 a.m. as rumors of police brutality circulated throughout the

community. Recognizing they were undermanned, the police immediately requested National

Guard assistance. After the National Guard occupied the area for two nights the violence

stopped. However twenty businesses reported broken windows and police arrested 122 people.

Despite the end of the violence, Mayor A.V. Sorensen still met with 100 young black men at the

North Side YMCA. This upset the NAACP who charged that Sorensen was listening too much

to the youngsters and not enough to the established leadership in the black community. The next

day, the young leaders provided the mayor with a list of demands. They requested more

educational training facilities, more recreational outlets, the immediate end to police brutality

and abuses, more jobs, and the release of youths jailed in the disturbance. [26] While the

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[25]"Preliminary Report: Population Counts for the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area" U.S. Census Bureau, 1960 Population of the Census. (18th edition.) Washington, D.C., July 1060, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/15611098ch1.pdf

[26] "Extra Police on Duty in Wake of Near Riot," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 4, 1966. "Violence Erupts Third Straight Night," *Omaha World-Herald,* July5, 1966. "Mob Tosses Bottles but Few Injured," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966. "Police Arrest 78 Adults, 44 Juveniles on North Side," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966. "Labor

traditional outlets for change had made little headway, the uprising in Omaha brought drastic and rapid changes. The most glaring example of this occurred in the relocation of a state employment office to the Near North Side. What had taken "respectable" entities two years of unsuccessful lobbying, a group of teenage rebels accomplished in a weekend.

Like many other urban locales, Cincinnati, Ohio in 1967 was experiencing a tense racial climate. For the past two years, an unknown assailant had been assaulting middle age women. In 1966, jazz musician Posteal Laskey was convicted of one of the murders and sentenced to death. Many African Americans believed he received an unfair trial. Peter Frakes disputed his cousin's conviction, walking the streets carrying a sign which read "Cincinnati Guilty-Laskey Innocent!" In response to Frakes defiance, police arrested him. Citing Frakes' arrest as an example of continual police harassment, the black community took to the streets, and set fire to over 100 businesses. The uprising lasted from June 12 until June 17, although major violence ended after the state deployed the National Guard on June 14. Mayor Walton H. Bachrach met several times with African American leaders and participants throughout the uprisings. Despite the initial hopefulness of such meetings tangible gain efforts, such as increasing the personnel in the police-community relations department, fell short.[27]

Milwaukee's rebellion began on July 30, 1967 and lasted until August 6, though a specific incident which began the uprising is difficult to pinpoint, residents cited continuous police harassment as the instigating factor. In total four people died in the uprising and over 1,700 people were arrested during the rebellion. Mayor Henry Maier imposed a city-wide curfew and deployed 43% of Wisconsin's National Guard forces to quell the uprising. In the aftermath

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Dept. Open North Omaha Office Today," *Omaha World-Herald,* July 9, 1966. "New demands after Tuesday Meeting," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 6, 1966.

[27] "Mind Over Mayhem," *Time*, June 23, 1967. Kerner Commission, 25, 85.

of the conflagration numerous community organizations became increasingly politicized.

Liberal, radical, religious, and secular groups, including the Young Commandos affiliated with

the NAACP, collaborated to bring open housing to Milwaukee. However due to Maier's belief

that outside agitation led to the uprising, he was reluctant to implement change.[28]

Omaha, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee's uprisings though individually unique, demonstrate

broader trends of rebellions throughout the United States. The uprisings in these cities shared

numerous similarities. First, in regards to the rebellion action, each cited police brutality as a

major grievance. Second participants targeted white-owned business and agents of the State.

Third, casualties and arrests were proportional to the city's size and response. Finally, youth

representatives met with, or in the case of Milwaukee continually petitioned, the municipal

government following the uprisings to make their demands. The similarities of these case

studies create the context for studying the gendered and working-class nature of the uprisings.

Intra-racial Class Struggles in the Uprisings

Perhaps no two issues are intertwined in this dissertation more than the role of region and

class in the urban rebellions. As African Americans moved to the urban Midwest in search of a

brighter, more prosperous future, by the 1960s the occupational prospects that they once relied

on became scarce. Sociologist Janet Abu-Lughood noted that the uprisings occurred in an

"economic recession whose effects appeared first in black areas but subsequently spread to the

wider U.S. economy. It was almost as if blacks were the 'canaries in the mines' signaling

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[28] "Janitor Charges in Slaying of Policeman," *Chicago Defender*, August 9, 1967. "Milwaukee Calm After Negro Riot," *New York Times*, August 1, 1967. "Milwaukee Commandos," *Chicago Tribune*, October 12, 1966. "Groppi Group Marches into Wauwatosa," *Chicago Tribune*, September 5, 1967. "Memo to staff from Henry B. Taliaferro RE: Milwaukee Trip" National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (NACCD) Collection, Box E4, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. Hereafter all materials from this collection will be cited as NACCD/Box number, Johnson Presidential Library.

economic retrenchments."[29] In that African Americans disproportionally suffered the effects of the economic crisis because of their race, the decline of the Midwest as an industrial powerhouse would more greatly affect them. Furthermore as both Horne and Greenberg argue in their books the repression of union organizing and the systematic exclusion of African American laborers for union membership left many working-class blacks in a particularly unique position. They found themselves closed off from the traditional outlets for class protest, and those whom they shared a racial identity with largely felt that their lots were improving. More specifically, the gains won for the majority middle class led Civil Rights Movement could claim modest victory, while working-class African Americans found themselves in increasingly dire straits with no political recourse. Therefore working-class blacks developed dual and symbiotic feelings. The first was that of rising expectations, inspired by the optimism of Civil Rights legislation. The second feeling that they coped with was that of relative deprivation, not only in comparison to the quality of life of their white peers, but also that of the black middle class.

Utilizing theories of labor violence, I have developed five characteristics as hallmarks of working-class rebellions. Though some scholars of the 1960s revolts made the connection between social position and violence as protest, none have placed these disturbances in the broader context of working-class political behavior. The extensive literature on crowd violence as politics largely concerns itself with Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the United States during the revolutionary period. Rebellion historians include bread riots, peasant revolts, and coup d' etats as the objects of their analysis, but the modern day mob comparisons end with the labor protests in the inter-war era.

Several characteristics of black urban rebellions mark them as working-class activism. The first and perhaps the most obvious, is that the participants were clearly identified as a

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[29] Abu-Lughood, *Race Space, and Riots*, 25.

working class or an impoverished demographic.   Second is that although African Americans have the constitutional right to vote, participants of the rebellion were politically impotent because elected officials did not represent their interests and the intentional diluting of black voting blocs. The third and fourth considerations are that participants believed that some tangible gain would come from the use of political violence and that it was in their collective interest to engage in the rebellion. Essentially, participants trusted that positive change would come from their actions and if they did not act on their own behalf, no one else would. Finally, rebels usually aimed their aggressions towards outsiders. In the case of the 1960s urban rebellions, whites and objects or agents of the state, served as these outside elements.

The first characteristic of working-class rebellions is well documented in the multiple studies conducted following the uprisings. The Kerner Commission described the "average" rebellion participant as better educated than the typical inner-city black resident and likely "working in a menial or low status job as an unskilled laborer" who faced frequent bouts of unemployment. This distinction that the majority of participants held jobs is essential for combating theories of the "riff-raff" or lumpenproletariat participants which dominated the literature on the urban rebellions. Assigning a class structure to African Americans is difficult because it does not mirror the hegemonic class structure due to job discrimination, glass ceilings, and the frequency in which black females worked in the community. For this project I have adapted Gary T. Marx's schematic for determining class in his 1966 public survey of African Americans. I assign scores to individual arrestees based on educational level obtained, income earned, and job prestige. Certainly this method has its flaws but apart from having first-hard testimony on how individuals self-identify, which I include wherever possible, it is difficult to

incorporate personal perceptions of class when using non-subjective sources such as police records.

Marx's schematic divides the categories of education, income, and jobs into high, medium, and low ranking which each having a corresponding value. Job categories are assigned as high, medium, and low, and have corresponding values of two, one, and zero respectively. In terms of educational levels, zero points are assigned for a grammar school education or less, at least some high school or at least some college were given one and two points respectively. In terms of income zero points were awarded for incomes under $2,000; incomes from $2,000 to $3,999 were given one point; all higher incomes, two points. Finally, the division of occupational categories is marked as follows: High professions represent occupations in which employees have a large amount of autonomy and prestige such as professionals, semi-professionals, managers, and proprietors. Medium level employees work in semi-trained positions such as clerical, sales, and craftsmen. Low level positions are primarily comprised of unskilled laborers, operatives, and service workers. After each category is scored, the average is taken to determine social class. Lower Social Class scores fell in the range of 0-2; Middle Class within the range of 2-4 and finally the Upper Social Class fell in the range of 4-6.[30]

The second characteristic stems from political scientists Abraham Miller and Emily Schaen who argued that rebellions most frequently occur in a democracy.   Rebellions are infrequently seen in dictatorships or fascist regimes because participants know that little can come from such rebellions, save death. Thus disturbances were more likely to occur in the North than the South because blacks had already been politically enfranchised, though still politically ineffective. Moreover rebellions occurred in communities where blacks were better off and not

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[30] Gary T. Marx, *Protest and Prejudice: A Study of Belief in the Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), 57, 63.

completely destitute. Sociologist Doug McAdam in his *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* acknowledged that the political conditions in a particular locality determines the efficacy of insurgent actions. Evident in the gains in Omaha and Cincinnati compared to the municipal response in Milwaukee, demonstrates that local climate and prior organizing is essential in determining violence's efficacy. In rebellion cities, the commission found a substantially smaller proportion of black elected officials, relative to the population and ineffective formal grievance policies. As political scientist James Upton remarked, "rioting as a form of violence is conceived as an anger directed at the inadequacy of the political system to process demands, and to make political and economic allocations in a responsive, equitable manner." Thus the average uprising participant's political stance was skepticism, distrustful of the political system and its leaders.[31]

In the article "White Institutions and Black Rage," five urban sociologists conducted a March 1969 survey of black political workers in fifteen cities to describe the inadequacy of African American politics. 92% of the workers said that the young people had become more militant, and only 38% of the political workers thought that the people in their districts regarded their councilmen as friends fighting for them, whereas 51% stated that the people considered their councilmen as "part of the city government which must be asked continually and repeatedly in order to get things done." Six in ten workers agreed that "people have become more fed up with the system, and are becoming unwilling to work with politicians." Kenneth Clark noted that due to these effects a "circular pattern" of political behavior develops in black enclaves. He

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[31]Abraham H. Miller and Emily Schaen, "Democracy and the Black Rebellions: Rethinking the Meaning of Political Violence in Democracy," in *The Democratic Experience and Political Violence*, eds. David C. Rapoport and Leonard Weinberg, 345-362 (London: Frank Cass Publishing, 2001). Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Political Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). James N. Upton, "The Politics of Urban Violence: Critiques and Proposals," *Journal of Black Studies*, 15:3 (Mar., 1985): 257. Kerner Commission, 73-74.

argued that the ineffective use of the vote limits a group's political influence while increasing their feelings of political powerlessness, leading to black voter apathy. Sociologist Louis Coser continued the dangerous "circular pattern." He argued that when black voters found themselves barred from finding legitimate access to the ladder of achievement in the political, social, and economic structures that they resorted to acts of violence in order to achieve their needs.[32] As African Americans felt more politically marginalized they sought out outlets and alternative forms of protest to make their grievances heard.

The third and fourth characteristics, that of collective interest and tangible gain, are difficult to quantify but qualitative analysis of quotes taken from the action zones are rather telling. Evidence of the collective interest was seen, as previously discussed, in that although many people did not participate in criminal activities, many came to observe and provide aid. Historian Gustave Le Bon in his account of the French Revolution noted that, "When the crowd changes into a mob, its individual members lose their identity… as a part of a mob, however, he becomes conscious of the power he shares with others" This collective interest cannot be simply defined in racial terms. For African Americans in the United States their collective interest was at times bifurcated along class lines. Another observation of a researcher who studied uprisings participants in Newark and Detroit found that "those who felt negatively about middle-class Negroes were more likely to have participated in the riot…despite the fact that rioters are strongly identified with other Negroes, they are more likely to agree that rich Negroes are just as bad as white people." As one Detroit activist said in August 1967,

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[32] David Boesel, Richard Berk, and others, "White Institutions and Black Rage," in *Ghetto Revolts* ed. Peter Henry Rossi, 52-53 (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1973). Kenneth B. Clark, "The Power of the Ghetto," in *The Politics of the Powerless*, ed. Robert H. Binstock and Katharine Ely, 135-145 (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, 1971). Upton, "The Politics of Urban Violence," 257. Lewis A. Coser, "Some Social Function of Violence," *The Annals*, 362-367 (Mar., 1966): 10.

It's being played up by some people that there's this schism between lower- and middle-class Negroes and there is this class type thing… I know that there is a lot of feeling in the community now-not only in Detroit but all over the country-that middle-class folk have not done as much as they can for the brethren. I'm sure that you've heard the expression many times that 'When he [middle-class blacks] gets into the system he become whiter than Whitey'.[33]

Therefore the collective stakes for solidarity among black working-class residents would be incredibly high if they had in fact been abandoned by middle-class blacks.

In many urban centers elected officials had abandoned the working class. One black slum-dweller stated that middle-class African Americans "have obtained a certain amount of power and they don't want to rock the boat. They don't want to alienate the so-called white liberal. They don't support us anyway." The Kerner report highlighted the class antagonisms on a national level stating that the average participant, "is extremely hostile to whites but his hostility is more apt to be a product of social and economic class than of race; he is almost equally hostile toward middle-class Negroes." Furthermore many of the counterrioters, those telling the demonstrators to "cool it," were significantly better educated and more affluent than the average inner city dweller.[34] Combined with apathy towards formal politics and the perceived abandonment by the middle class, the urban black working class had to organize for their own collective interest.

These rebellion participants not only realized that their actions represented their own class interests but that something would result from their uprising. Historian E.J. Hobsbawm declared that "The class mob did not merely riot as a protest, but because it expected to achieve

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[33]Willard A. Heaps, *Rebellions, U.S.A.:1765-1960.* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), 5-6. Jeffrey Mayford Paige "Collective Violence and the Culture of Subordination: A study of participants in the July 1967 riots in Newark, NJ and Detroit, MI" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1968), 43.Allen D. Grimshaw, "Three Views of Urban Violence: Civil Disturbance, Racial Revolt, Class Assault," in *Rebellions and Rebellions: Civil Violence in the Urban Community*, eds. Louis H. Masotti and Don R. Bowen, 103-121 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1968).

[34]Stanley S. Scott, "Rebellions Not Over, Many Predict," *Chicago Defender*, September 13, 1966. Kerner Commission, 73-74.

something by its riot." This immediacy was reflected in the comments of participants. Sterling

Tucker, Director of Field Service of the National Urban League recounted at a Congressional

hearing what rebel told him: "you're always in the newspaper and we know that you're fighting

hard to bring about some changes in the condition the brother faces. But who listens Mr. Tucker,

who listens? Why, with one match I can bring about more change tonight than with all the

talking you can ever do." The participant's acknowledgement of his own individual political

power is key to understanding the changing consciousness of young African Americans. In what

sociologist Doug McAdam termed cognitive liberation in his political process model, during the

revolts rebels realized their own potential as individuals to change his or her conditions.[35]

The final characteristic is that rebellions are frequently directed at outsiders is verified

within the context of the black urban rebellions. Social historian Charles Tilly and other Marxist

scholars believed violence occurs when important collective interests hung in the balance.[36] Thus

working-class mob activity, whatever their objective or ideology, always was directed against the

rich and powerful. The Kerner Commission in their analysis of the rebellions found that the

majority of targets were white-owned businesses known for price gouging in the black

community. In the Omaha 1969 uprising, twenty buildings on North Twenty-Fourth Street were

torched to the ground; yet black community institutions such as welfare programs and the

Omaha Star newspaper remained untouched.[37]

As I previously asserted, the uprisings were community events, and although middle-

class African Americans may not have been looting or setting fire to buildings, the uprisings also

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[35] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959)*,* 110-113. Jerome H. Skolnick, *The Politics Of Protest* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), 145. Doug McAdam, *Political Process,* 48.

[36] Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," in *History of Violence in America* eds. Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Roberts Gurr, 10 (New York: Bantam Books, 1969).

[37] Kerner Commission, 73. "Panthers Defend Black Business," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 26, 1969.

held tremendous meaning for them. Sociologist Barry Skura argued that "while they themselves seldom rioted, many middle-class blacks were 'activated' by the violence." Thus in the aftermath of an uprising, more middle-class blacks became involved due to the increased saliency of racial issues. Robert Fogelson best indicated the communal psychological benefit which united African Americans following the uprisings:

> Previously discrimination had been a deeply personal and individual act…But once thousands of blacks rushed into the streets and joined in the riots, they realized that all blacks have suffered similar injustices; that racial discrimination, though personal in its impact, is social or institutional in its origins… Their common predicament revealed in the rioting, blacks looked again at one another and saw only brothers.[38]

This somewhat overly optimistic interpretation of renewed fellowship could be seen among middle-class and working-class African Americans in the creation of large umbrella organizations united to combat grievances brought to light by the uprisings.

The Role of Gender in the Uprisings

Though unproblematized, gender has been central to the discussion of the rebellions from the beginning. The 1965 Los Angeles (Watts) rebellion occurred contemporaneously with the publication of the infamous *Case for National Action: The Negro Family*, commonly known as the Moynihan report. In it Daniel Patrick Moynihan charged the black American family was not only a cause for "national action" but also partially to blame for the rebellion. The report, according to historian Steve Estes, focused on the "weakening of the position of the Negro male" asserting that the inferior position of males in the black family unit was a chief reason for urban

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[38] Barry R. Skura "The Impact of Collective Racial Violence on Neighborhood Mobilization, 1964-1968" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1975),13. Robert Fogelson. "Violence and Grievances: Reflections on the 1960s Riots" *Journal of Social Issues* 26:1 (Winter 1970): 145.

violence.[39] Moynihan suggested that the rebellions represented black male's response to the matriarchal structure of the black family. However these "assertions" are heavily influenced by the lingering overtones and assertions of black matriarchy. Understanding this discursive context is important in making sense of how the State responded to the rebellions.

Historian Marilyn S. Johnsons argues that in order to fully understand race riots and uprisings, these events must be analyzed through the lens of gender "because racial ideologies were closely linked with notions of manhood and womanhood."[40] I argue that by adding gender analysis to interpret the urban rebellions, three key discoveries can be made. The first is that participants' actions, both male and female are largely informed by traditional gender roles. Second by re-inserting women into the narrative, we find that females were present and acting against the intersection of multiple oppressions including race, class, and gender. Finally, by interpreting criminal and non-criminal participation through the lens of gender shows that the uprising was a collective community action.

To read the role of gender and masculinity back into the rebellions we must look at the manifestations of "manly" behaviors during the uprisings. Nearly every case study includes examples of men protecting women. Most notably are the cases reported in Harlem 1943, Chicago 1965, Watts 1965, and Omaha 1969. In each of these cases, the principal catalyst was a police attack on black women. In Chicago 1966 black teenage boys baited police officers by having teenage black girls loot a store and then "protected: the young women by shouting down the officers for harassing the girls. During the Watts rebellion the men who laid siege to Giant's

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[39]Thomas J. Foley, "Racial Unrest Tied to Negro Family Failure," *Los Angeles Times,* August 14, 1965. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Seepage of the Moynihan Report," *Los Angeles Times*, August 19, 1965. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Case for National Action: The Negro Family* (Washington, D.C.:GPO, 1965) Hereafter referred to as the Moynihan Report. Steve Estes, *I Am a Man: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 108.

[40]Marilynn S. Johnson, "Gender, Race, and Rumors: Reexamining the 1943 Race Riots," *Gender & History* 10:2 (August 1998): 252.

grocery store only allowed women to enter, reaffirming traditional gender roles as grocery shopper.[41]

In his book, Estes argued that civil rights activists displayed their masculinity by taking control over their lives, rallying supporters on the imperative of being manly, and by feminizing opponents. For a brief period, in many places just a matter of hours, black inner city residents took control of their own neighborhoods by not allowing outsiders entrance, preventing firefighters and police officers from performing their duties, and targeting stores which exploited the black community. They rallied other supporters by imploring them to "take to the streets" as seen in Donald Henry's direct challenge to officers in Chicago 1966 pleaded to the gathered crowd; "You're not going to let these policemen arrest me. Why don't you do something about it?" Moreover rioters taunted police officers by using gendered language.[42]

However, the rebellions should not be interpreted solely as exercises in black masculinity. Women were present and fully engaged in the rebellions. For instance, though the McCone Commission observed: "this was a male revolt directed at the white power structure," it complicated this observation later when the authors commented, "During the rebellion the women were out on the streets cheering the men on."[43] It is an argument of this dissertation that although often erased from the official accounts women were central to the uprisings. Within these events they played the important roles of defenders, cheerleaders, beneficiaries, and often catalysts, all a product of the intersectionality of their racial, gender, and class discrimination.

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[41] Greenberg, *Or Does It Explode?*, 211. "Angry Crowd Gathers After Fatal Crash," *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1965. Horne, *Fire This Time*, 54-55, 310. "Negro Girl Killed by a Police Bullet at Housing Project," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 25, 1969. "Loot Stores in W. Side Unrest," *Chicago Tribune*, July13, 1966.

[42]"Loot Stores in W. Side Unrest," *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1966. "Guard Finds Streets Quiet but Tense," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966.

[43] Horne, *Fire This Time*, 38-39, cited from McCone transcript. *Kerner Commission*, 1, 74, 331.

By studying arrest records, photographs, and first hand testimony I demonstrate the correlation between uprising participation and age, marital, and employment status.

Cheryl Greenberg in her account of the Harlem 1935 and 1943 uprisings argued that, "Essentially, the experience of black women in that era was a continuation of what had come before: both race and sex discrimination continued to dictate and limit their choices. Gender, race, and class all conspired to determine economic options." Therefore the ways in which women participated in the urban uprisings reflected this triple axis of discrimination. Women often hit stores with predatory pricing, as well as in the context of a "consumer republic" looted the items that they could not afford.[44] Additionally, women also participated in the rebellions by serving as helpmates, lookouts, and as diversions for male participants. Finally the ways in which women participated non-criminally is also essential. Many women patched up those hurt in the uprisings, and provided food and shelter to those whose homes were destroyed. Therefore, the participants in the uprisings cannot be limited to those whose activities can be codified as criminal. Through non-criminal participation, active encouragement of those participating criminally, or their own illegal engagement, women contributed significantly to these events; demonstrating that the uprisings were entire community affairs, not solely the domain of young men.

Project Scope

Central to this dissertation is the simple premise that the urban rebellions matter. Not only did these events matter to the people who participated in and witnessed these uprisings but they also mattered in the way that these events came to shape black consciousness, altered State

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[44] Greenberg, *Or Does It Explode,* 7. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-War America*. (New York: Random House, 2003.)

relationships, and highlighted intra-racial class fractures. In his introduction to *Race and the City* on African American protest and community, historian Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. argued that the 1967 uprising was

> both an epilogue and prologue of the black experience in Cincinnati. It summarized decades of having dreams deferred, of living in a world where things seemed immutable, fixed in time and space; and it introduced the dawning of a new era when unemployment and underemployment, declining participation in the labor force, poverty, the rise of an underclass, and catastrophic social problems would replace civil rights as the dominant issues on the black agenda for advancement.[45]

As was true for Cincinnati, so to for America. There are six major themes which underline the significance of these uprisings in the 1960s. First, these events were working-class responses to limited economic gains from Civil Rights Movement struggles in the Midwest. Second, the gendered nature of political participation in the 1960s is highlighted. Third, I demonstrate that the Midwest is a unique region within the urban North. Fourth, these events highlight the transition between the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement, demonstrating core differences in ideology. Fifth, I illustrate that violence as a force for social change has been a historically-informed tactic in the American past. Finally, this dissertation shows that these uprisings altered relationships and consciousness, leaving a social context markedly different than before the uprisings.

This dissertation could have been written in a number of ways: narratively, city by city, thematically; however I have chosen to recount these events chronologically. This approach best highlights the continuity of grievances, protest, failure to respond, and finally violence in a political continuum. Because the uprisings themselves are fluid, reflecting a number of articulated complaints, rationales, and often conflicting ideological views; the above six core tenets are woven throughout the narrative. Central to this dissertation is the contention that the

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[45] Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., ed. *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 20.

1960s uprisings can better illustrate our understandings of the regional, gender, and class fissures in the African American community during the Black Freedom Movement. Similarly, by using the rebellions as a lens to view the African American experience scholars will be able to see the transition between Civil Rights and Black Power and the historicity of violent protest; challenging notions of pathology from which these events are viewed today.

Prairie Fires approaches the urban rebellions by addressing African American life and protest in the three case study cities of Omaha, Nebraska; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The six chapters can be subdivided in to *precipitating events* (Chapters 1-2), *uprisings and participants* (Chapters 3-5) and *aftermath* (Chapters 6). Chapter One provides a statistical socio-economic profile of black life in the 1960s. This sketch includes statistics on occupation, education, political representation and overall economic solvency for African Americans in each city, plus regional and national comparisons. This chapter also conceptualizes the Midwest as a place, highlighting the community institutions African Americans established in each city. Chapter Two outlines the inefficacy of middle-class leadership and traditional protests, justifying in the minds of rebels the use of violence as protest.

In the second subsection, *uprisings and participants*, Chapter Three will provide a play-by-play account of what happened in the uprisings in each city. By relying on researcher-conducted oral histories, this chapter utilizes a "bottom-up" re-telling of the 1960s uprisings. By providing an alternative to official accounts of these events, I demonstrate how these events were interpreted as political by both the participants and municipal government. In the next chapters, Chapter Four and Chapter Five, I utilize arrest records, interviews, and city directory records to analyze the participants in terms of race, socio-economic status and gender. Chapter Six looks at the immediate aftermath in each city including concessions made by municipal officials and

federal agencies. Moreover this chapter will demonstrate that the "fixes" created to address grievances were often temporary solutions to more systemic problems. These inefficient solutions often resulted in new protest organizations as well as renewed violence in the city.

Conclusion

Black militant Ernie Chambers predicted in a December 1965 article in the *Omaha Star*: "If black men are Frankensteins, white men made them such. And as with the original 'monster' the mechanism for controlling us is rapidly failing."[46] Chambers prophetic assertion acknowledged that the mainstream civil rights reforms did not effectively address all of the issues within the black community. When dealing with the black urban rebellions of the 1960s the efficacy and political nature of violence throughout American history is often forgotten. I intend to more deeply investigate the role of working-class black activism and gender in racial uprisings, and in so doing establish the Midwest and midsized cities as categories of analysis within the Black Freedom Movement. I hope this methodological revision will move the understanding of these disturbances from pathological and aberrant acts of violence to that of historically contingent acts of resistance that help highlight the coeval nature of organized protest and violent outbursts. The reappearance of such events in Cincinnati, Ohio; Oakland, California, and most recently London, England, demonstrates the need for understanding the repercussions of these uprisings. Moreover, it shows that for many underrepresented people the use of violence as a mechanism for protest is just as relevant in the new millennium. The black urban rebellions of the 1960s must be seen in a more complex manner beyond shattered glass and dreams, beyond broken bones and promises to demonstrate the ways in which the desperate seek political recourse.

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[46]"A Militant Look At Black Poverty," *Omaha Star* December 30, 1966.

Chapter 1: 'They've Taken Away My Boots'

In March 1968 reporters from the *Omaha World Herald* interviewed several African American and white residents to understand race relations in the city. When questioned why black Omahans struggled in the city, one white West Omaha housewife replied, "Why don't they do what every minority did? Why don't they pick themselves up by their bootstraps?" The reporter then asked a black laborer who lived on the Near North Side for his response to such thinking. Aghast the man retorted, "They tell me to pick myself up by my bootstraps. Why, hell, they've taken away my boots." [1] This anecdote best describes the disconnect between white Midwesterners' understanding of opportunities for black Midwesterners and African Americans' reality. Many whites felt that African Americans had not taken advantage of the opportunities available to them. However the reasons black Midwesterners struggled to achieve the same markers of success that their white counterparts did reflected a more complex political, economic, and social context of the Midwest. The central assertion of this work, that the urban uprisings were specific responses to the limits of such a political economy, serves as the imperative to define the Midwest. By highlighting the declining social position and political efficacy of African Americans in Omaha, Nebraska; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin immediately preceding the uprisings, I simultaneously reveal the distinguishing characteristics of the Midwest as well as contributing factors for the uprising.

Defining the Midwest

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[1] "Not as Simple as Black and White," *West Omaha-Dundee Sun* March 14, 1968.

The North cannot be collapsed into a single monolithic entity. Although historians have recently begun to recover civil rights struggles above the Mason-Dixon Line, minimal attention is paid to understanding the political, social, and economic context of these areas and how local conditions influenced specific protest tactics and strategies.[2] New York by the mid-1960s already relied on a service economy; whereas Milwaukee and Detroit still provided steady industrial manufacturing jobs for African Americans. Similarly, whereas Washington, D.C. was becoming an increasingly African American city with relatively no representation; Chicago enjoyed an African American sub-machine throughout Richard J. Daley's tenure. These small economic and political differences influenced the ways in which African Americans navigated protest in their home communities.

Additionally, the 20th century African American experience has been distilled into a discussion of the South or major Northeastern metropolises. This myopic view limits our broader understanding of black history. Historian Darlene Clark Hine noted that by 1920, 40% of the Northern African American population lived in eight cities. Of these eight, five were located in the Midwest and three were midsized: Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus all in Ohio.[3] In 1960 more African Americans resided in the North Central region (N=3,446,037) than the Northeast (N=3,028,499). By 1970, 20% of the total

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[2]Although the majority of books written on the black experience in the Midwest are broad histories there are a few books which address the local conditions African Americans faced and their protest. Jack Dougherty, *More than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Gretchen Cassel Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954-1972* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2001). Kenneth S. Jolly, *Black Liberation in the Midwest: The Struggle in St. Louis, Missouri, 1963-1970* (New York: Routledge Press, 2006). Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). Rusty L. Monhollon, *"This Is America?": The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas* (New York: Palgrave, 2004). Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

[3]Darlene Clark, Hine, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945," in *The New African American Urban History.* eds. Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl, 242 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996).

United States' black population resided in the Midwest region[4] Therefore, the black American

experience is just as much a story of the Midwest as it is the rural South or bustling Northern

mega-metropolis.

Beyond the broader black American experience, in order to understand the numerous and

discreet Black Freedom Movement struggles, it is valuable to look at regional political

economies. Currently, aside from master's theses and dissertations, there are very few

published works regarding the Black Freedom Movement in the Midwest. Scholars have tended

to focus on the Southern struggle which has saturated modern media. Only recently has a mass of

Northern black urban histories arisen.[5] Yet black Midwesterners have faced many, if not all, of

the hallmarks in the national freedom struggle. Before Rosa Park refused to give up her seat,

black Omahans successfully boycotted the trolley company; before Newark experienced a deadly

uprising, Des Moines exploded; and finally the landmark Brown versus the Board of Education

took place in sleepy Topeka, Kansas. Despite the centrality and similarities of the Black

Freedom movement in the Midwest, the available published monographs are scant.

This is no more evident than in the books on urban rebellions. A research field where

very few historical monographs are published to begin with, those that are available focus on

Detroit, Michigan; Los Angeles (Watts) California; Miami, Florida; and Newark, New Jersey.

The extant published works truly demonstrate the discontinuity between published sources and

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[4] "No. 28 Population by Race—States: 1940 to 1960," U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1968 (89th edition.) Washington, D.C., 1968. "Table No. 27 Population, by Race—States: 1940 to 1970," U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1971 (92nd edition.) Washington, D.C., 1971.

[5] Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2007). Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle* (New York: Random House, 2009). Jeanne Theoharris and Komozi Woodard, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

the historical record. Between 1967 and 1971 the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence at Brandies University tabulated that 29.9% (n=173) and 29.0% (n=168) of the urban uprisings from 1967 to 1971 occurred in the Northeast and Midwest, respectively. More tellingly in 1967, the year in which the most uprisings occurred, 50% of the major disorders, 33% of the serious disorders, and 36% of the minor disorders took place in the Midwest region. However this is not only a story about the Midwest. Although the largest percentage (33%) of civil disorders took place in cities larger than 250,000; a significant proportion of the uprisings took place in cities with a total population smaller than 50,000. Between 1967 and 1971, 28% (n=162) of the urban rebellions took place in metropolitan areas with a total population smaller than 50,000. Similarly though 56% (n=326) of uprisings between 1967 and 1971 occurred in places with a total percentage of the black population ranging between 10-24.9%; a significant proportion of the uprisings (30%, n=172) took place in urban areas with a total black population under 10%.[6]

Therefore to understand the black American experience in the post-war era, particularly that of the urban rebellions, it is essential to move beyond the often studies locales of Harlem, Chicago, and Detroit. Additionally, in the context of the urban rebellions, the Midwest as a unique region becomes a central feature highlighting the precipitating events prior to the uprising. By describing the socioeconomic conditions, political struggles, and social institutions in the lives of black Midwesterners, I establish the hallmarks which made the African American experience in the Midwest distinct from a generalized description of the North. In the context of this study I am unable to conduct an in-depth investigation of every Midwestern midsized city, so I illustrate the below points through my case study cities and extrapolate broadly where

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[6]Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis.* Horne, *Fire This Time.* Daryl B. Harris, *The Logic of Black Urban Rebellions* (New York: Praeger Press, 1999). Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: NYU Press, 2008). Kerner Commission, 66. Baskin and others, *The Long, Hot Summer?*, 5-6.

appropriate. Ultimately, through this method I demonstrate that the uprisings that occurred were specific responses to the particularities of both local and Midwestern political economies.

In order to determine how the uprisings altered Midwesterners' consciousness and the political economy, we must first define what the Midwest is. In this chapter I outline four distinguishing characteristics of the Midwest and how these acted both as contributing and reinforcing factors ushering in the era of urban uprisings. The first of these characteristics is that the principal industries in the Midwest began to decline. By comparing the impact of the economy of the Midwest versus the Northeast, I demonstrate how concern over political and economic security for both whites and blacks led to a climate of increased mutual hostility. Second and directly related to diminished employment opportunities, is that although African Americans enjoyed a higher standard of living than in the South or Northeast, this standard was still considerably less than their white regional counterparts.   This disparity coupled with feelings of rising expectations and relative deprivation, created the two essential ideologies which led to the uprisings. Third, with the exception of a few major metropolises such as Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland, African American Midwesterners had extremely limited political power. The causes of this limited political clout came from numerous and often interconnected factors including: African Americans comprising a relatively small proportion of the total municipal population, intentional political redistricting, and ineffectual human relations commissions.

The final contributing factor, the one most unique to the Midwest, was a type of white paternalism particular to the region. I define this by outlining two simultaneously held convictions white Midwesterners possessed. First, Midwesterners believed in their own superiority to white Southerners because of the region's lack of Jim Crow laws. Second was

their own blindness to the real legal, political, and economic barriers which prevented African Americans from achieving equal status. This ideology coupled with the three aforementioned factors, created a distinct regional political economy which challenges a homogenous portrait of the North. Most importantly in the context of this dissertation, the combination of white Midwestern paternalism, elected officials indifference to protest, and the subsequent lack of political responsiveness, left African Americans desperate for new methods to make their grievances understood.

Declining Industry in the mid-1960s

In many ways, African Americans migration to Northern urban areas can be read as the prelude to the uprisings decades later. African Americans optimistically arrived in the Midwest hoping for economic and social equality, but with each passing decade found that the opportunities for stable employment through industrial jobs dramatically decreased. By the 1960s these jobs became mechanized and decentralized, and black workers became unemployed. As sociologist Sidney Wilhelm reflected in his book *Who Needs the Negro?* "with the onset of automation the Negro moves out of his historical state of oppression into one of uselessness. Increasingly, he is not so much economically exploited as he is irrelevant." This irrelevancy meant that black Midwesterners were no longer able to leverage the limited political, social, and economic power they possessed as workers and consumers. Additionally, as sociologist John Freeman argued, interracial interaction on the factory floor or mill highlighted status differential amongst employees in terms of wages, conditions, and hiring decisions. Thus the feelings of

relative deprivation and political impotency which led to the uprisings most often were born in the decline of the Midwestern industrial complex.[7]

For this work I utilize the intertwined theories of relative deprivation and rising expectations as motivating factors for the uprisings. My definition of relative deprivation is derived from political scientist Ted Gurr. I define relative deprivation as the individual or collective realization of an inconsistency in benefits, treatment, or power based on socioeconomic or racial variables. Similarly influenced by Gurr, I define rising expectations as an individual or community taking stock of the changing political and social context and expecting better benefits, treatment, and power as a result of the changing status quo. In the mid-1960s these two consciousnesses worked in tandem. African Americans expected better schools, less police brutality, and more political power as a result of the changing status of blacks in America. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and a general (though reluctant) acceptance that blacks should have the rights of full citizens, led African Americans to believe that full equality in the social, economic, and political spheres would soon be theirs. However by being reminded time and again of their inferior status in all aspects of black life, the feelings of relative deprivation became more acute. Finally, as sociologist Neil J. Smelser asserted these feelings of relative deprivation, what he terms "strain" coupled with the lack of appropriate outlets for redress, or "structural conduciveness," led to violent uprisings.[8] This chapter exposes African Americans' deprivation while highlighting the lack of white political empathy.

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[7] Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Mark Naison, "African Americans and the Dawning of the Postindustrial Era" in *Historical Roots of the Urban Crisis: African Americans in the Industrial City, 1900-1950*, eds. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Walter Hill, 281 (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000). Freeman, "A Social and Demographic Analysis of Urban Racial Violence," iv-v.

[8] Gurr, *Why Men Rebel,* 13, 93. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, 237.

African American unemployment

Historian John Teaford stated in his book, *Cities of the Heartland*, that by the end of World War II, though Midwest industry remained at the heart of the country's economy, indications confirmed that the apogee of Midwestern industrial dominance had begun to fade. By 1943, 42% of Midwestern industrial areas expected labor shortages by the beginning of the following year. Furthermore only 22% of the Midwest had industrial areas in which labor supplies met demands.[9] As the old adage states, African American were often the "first fired and last hired." It can therefore be assumed that black Midwesterners suffered disproportionally from these massive industrial failures.

It is often forgotten that in addition to the scores of Southern African Americans who migrated to the Midwest for war-time jobs, a large number of white Southern migrants also moved into this region between the world wars. Both the Midwest and Northeast each received approximately one million Southern-born black migrants, but the Midwest received 1.6 million Southern-born whites, more than double that of Southern-born white Northeastern residents (n=700,000). Thus Southern newcomers to Midwestern cities were predominantly white, whereas Southern migrants to the Northeast were predominantly black.[10] So although the war-time economy boosted an increase in jobs, whites were more often hired and by the 1960s as the industrial economy collapsed, blacks lost their jobs at alarming rates.

In 1970 overall unemployment rates for all males and females over the age of sixteen in the Northeast region was 3.5% and 4.5%, respectively. However for black males and females

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[9] Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland*, xi. Andrew Edmund Kersten, *Race, Jobs, and the War: The FEPC in the Midwest, 1941-1946* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 43.

[10] Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland*, 193.

that number hovered at 6.0%. In the Midwest the total unemployment rate for males was 3.7% and 5.0% of females. When adjusting for African American unemployment rates, in the Midwest 7.8% of males and 8.7% of females were unemployed.[11] Therefore African American Midwesterners were more likely to be unemployed then their Northeastern counterparts, furthermore the regional disparity between white and black unemployment was also higher in the Midwest. By focusing more specifically on African American unemployment statistics in each of the case study cities, African Americans' justification for feelings of relative economic deprivation becomes more evident.

Though the Midwest's industries were in decline, African Americans bore a disproportionate share of the unemployment. In 1963 Cincinnati, 34% of the long-term unemployed were African Americans. In Omaha by 1967, although racial minorities (of which the majority was African American) only made up 2.7% of population, they accounted for 22% of all unemployed workers. An FBI report evaluating the likelihood of uprisings in Milwaukee, noted that the black unemployment rate in the summer of 1967 was at 11% or nearly twice as high as white unemployment rates.[12] However aggregate statistics do not adequately portray the disproportionate burden that African Americans shared. To best understand Midwestern black unemployment and underemployment in the 1960s, a deeper understanding of the industrial and labor conditions in each case study city is needed.

Omaha

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[11] "Employment Status by Race, Sex, and Age for Regions: 1970." U.S. Census Bureau , Characteristics of the Population Volume 1 Part 1 Section 2, (19th edition) Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1973.

[12] Ted Berry, "An Open letter to the honorable Walton Bacharach, Mayor of Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Herald* June 21, 1963. "Agencies: Seeds for Riot Remain," *Omaha World Herald* June 20, 1967. Federal Bureau of Investigation Memorandum, "Milwaukee, Wisconsin," August 1, 1967, NACCD/Box E33, Johnson Presidential Library.

In the early 1960s Omaha operated as the world's largest livestock market and meat-packing center. It also functioned as the hub of eight principal train lines, making it the fourth largest railroad center in the country. Omaha served as the home office for thirty-six insurance companies, and several federal agencies, yet Omaha blacks did not receive their fair share of the wealth. Of the 5,427 black males over the age of fourteen who were employed in Omaha, 1,814 worked in manufacturing, 1,525 worked in meat packing, and 563 worked in transportation and public utilities. Although blacks held jobs in these major industries, they were often in menial roles. A report looking at the hiring practices of the federal government in Omaha found that 522 blacks in Omaha were employed by federal agencies, but only 5% of these employees held supervisory roles. The black employees' pay directly related to their positions. 55% of black workers earned less than $5,000 a year, and less than 3% earned over $7,000, compared to 27% of white workers. Among the general population, Omaha's white families earned a median wage of $4,925, while black families earned only $3,418 in 1960.[13]

Packinghouse positions were considered one of the better jobs an African American male could hold. An unskilled or common laborer at one of the "big four" meat packing companies could earn $2.42 an hour. In an article written for the *Omaha Star,* Ernie Chambers, later the state senator for the North Omaha district, noted that "'Negro' jobs miraculously [become] 'White' jobs when they get cleaned up and become less heavy and risky." When one of the largest employers in Omaha, Cudahy Meat Packing, laid off 470 employees, the disproportionate

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[13] "Industry of the Employed by Race and Class of Worker, and of the Experienced Civilian Labor Force by Color, by Sex, For the State and for Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas of 250,000 or More: 1960." U.S. Bureau of the Census, (18th edition) Washington, D.C., 1963. "17 of 27 Federal Agencies Hire Negroes in Omaha, Survey Reports Reviewed," *Omaha Star,* January 31, 1964. "Income in 1959 of Families and Unrelated Individuals, by Color for the State Urban and Rural, 1960" U. S. Census Bureau, (18th edition) Washington, D.C., 1963.

majority of the jobless were African Americans. More devastatingly 90% of those black males and 50% of the black females laid off served as the primary wage earner for the household[14]

To combat the negative repercussions of the loss of a major industry, Mayor A.V. Sorensen created Project 470 to help workers laid off by Cudahy. Through the aid of this program, 85% of the workers found new jobs albeit at lower pay. However if the 1964 layoffs at the Fort Worth Armour plant are any indication, it can be intuited that what happened to workers there happened to packing plant workers in Omaha. In the case of Fort Worth, of the employees who were laid off and re-trained, 80% of the whites found jobs either directly or indirectly related to their skills and training, compared to only 60% of Latinos and 40% of black employees.[15] Therefore even African American skilled laborers found limitations to alternative employment options in the wake of layoffs in comparison to their white peers. Unfortunately for African American meatpacking employees by the mid-1960s their employment options became even scarcer.

Beginning in 1967 the Big Four meat packing companies left Omaha. Cudahy after the aforementioned layoffs, left in 1967; followed by Armour in 1968; and Swift Meat in 1969. Wilson Packing Company was the last holdout when it closed in 1976, but instituted massive cutbacks in the intervening years. With the failure of these plants Omaha lost 10,000 jobs, plus an estimated $500 million a year in "wages, services, purchases, and taxes." The city remained economically solvent however because it had diversified its economy to include insurance

[14]Lawrence A. Danton, "The Omaha Experiment, A Study of A Community Effort to Cope with Unemployment Resulting From Plant Mechanization" (PhD dis., University of Nebraska, 1964), 66. Ernest W. Chambers, "A Militant Look at Black Poverty," *Omaha Star,* December 30, 1966.

[15]Harl A. Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen and the New Omaha* (Lincoln: Lamplighter Press, 1988), 139. George P. Shulltz and Arnold R. Weber, *Strategies for the Displaced Worker: Confronting Economic Change* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 164.

companies. By 1967 the insurance industry employed 8,500 Omahans with an annual payroll of

$34 million.[16] Unfortunately black Omahans access to these white-collar positions was severely

limited as a result of discriminatory hiring and lack of technological training that would qualify

them for such positions.

By 1970 in the metropolitan Omaha area, the unemployment rates for African American

males were at 7.6% and 7.7% for females, compared to the city-wide rate of about 3%. The

majority of those gainfully employed found work as operatives, general laborers, and service

workers. As a function of their limited job opportunities and payroll discrimination, the median

income for black males was $4,687 a year compared to $7,503 a year for white males. Women's

median incomes were relatively equal for black and white females at $2,455 and $2,585

respectively.[17] For the average Omaha African American male the shift from an industrial to a

technologically based economy left them ill-equipped to participate and thus with few economic

opportunities. Furthermore as I will discuss later both in this chapter and Chapter Six; initiatives

to improve economic opportunities for African Americans including on-the-job training

programs and federally funded projects such as Manpower, Inc. fell woefully short of meeting

the employment needs of African Americans due to deeply entrenched, racist hiring practices.

Cincinnati

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[16] Lawrence H. Larsen, and Barbara J. Cottrell. *The Gate City: A History of Omaha,* 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 250-252.

[17]"Social Characteristics of the Negro Population for Areas and Places" U.S. Bureau of the Census, Characteristics of the Population Volume 1 Part 29: Nebraska, (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1973. "Median School Years Completed and Median Income in 1969 of Persons 18 Years Old and Over With Income by Sex and Race for Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas of 250,000 or More: 1970" U.S. Bureau of the Census, Characteristics of the Population Volume 1 Part 1 Section 2 (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1973. "Employment Status by Sex, for Areas and Places" U.S. Bureau of the Census, Characteristics of the Population Volume 1 Part 28: Nebraska (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1974). "Occupation and Earnings of the Negro Population for the Negro Population for Areas and Places: 1970." U.S. Bureau of the Census, Characteristics of the Population Volume 1 Part 29: Nebraska. (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1973.

In 1966 Cincinnati boasted an unemployment rate of between 3 and 5%, representing a decline from 1960. Despite the city's low overall unemployment rate, African American unemployment rates held steady at 13%. Among certain neighborhoods and census tracts, the lack of employment for its residents was even direr. In the summer of 1967 the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) Survey Team conducted surveys in the West End community on employment issues. The survey area included the West End, portions of the Over the Rhine area and the Mohawk portion of the Cincinnati Basin. Although the workers conducted interviews in each region, only the results of the West End, a 120 square block area with a total population of 15,553; 99% of which were black, were made available in the report. [18]

Out of the 5,036 persons contacted, 3,973 of those respondents were between sixteen and sixty-four years old, typically, the most fruitful years for gainful employment. Of the surveyed population only 46% (n=1,840) of the persons in this age group were employed. Furthermore statistics taken contemporaneously with the uprising in July 1967 showed that 34.6% of respondents between the ages of 16 and 21 were unemployed. Additionally, 39% of male respondents between the ages of 22 and 26 were unemployed. Moreover of the females residing in the West End between the ages of 27 and 40, 58% of the respondents were unemployed. [19] Thus a person living in Cincinnati's West End at the time of the uprising, was likely unemployed or underemployed, as were their neighbors. How is it possible that a city which boasted such an overall low unemployment rate could have such destitution in a predominantly African American neighborhood?

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[18] Reconnaissance Survey Field Report, n.d., NACCD/E44, Johnson Presidential Library, 8.

[19] West End Special Service Project of Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses, Inc., 1967 Summer Employment Survey, Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 12 Cincinnati Historical Society, 4-8.

In the city of Cincinnati, manufacturing provided employment for 36% of wage earners, with the transportation equipment industry being the single largest employer in the city. Although Cincinnati led the world in the manufacturing of machine tools, playing cards, and soap few of these leading manufacturers hired African Americans beyond unskilled and custodial roles. Major local employers, such as Cincinnati Milling Machine, had few blacks in the apprenticeship training program. In 1966, of Procter and Gamble's 8,000 employees, only 129 were black. The U.S. Playing Card Company explicitly reserved several job categories for whites only. James Abernathy, the chairman of the Labor and Industry committee for the state, outlined the stakes of such discriminatory hiring by stating that "those federal officials who do not enforce anti-discrimination statutes and contractual provisions are, at the very least, as guilty of breaking the law as the person who throws 'Molotov cocktails' during disturbances in the ghetto." [20] Although it was apparent to a number of labor officials the direct correlation between civil unrest and lack of viable employment, municipal officials, union representatives, and captains of industry refused to alleviate these problems.

In Cincinnati, of the predominantly African American census tracts (those with black population saturation rates higher than 80%) only eight of the twenty-one tracts had a majority of its residents relying on manufacturing as their source of employment. The majority of residents were employed in the service sector, including healthcare and domestic service. Simultaneously trade and government grew as important employment sectors. As in Omaha, opportunities for African Americans in these emerging industries were limited due to training and education shortcomings, as well as discriminatory hiring practices. In Cincinnati, under the Manpower

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[20] James Abernathy to George Beasley, undated correspondence, Mss 580 Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, Box 6, Cincinnati Historical Society, 1.

Development and Training Act there were 2,943 institutional training opportunities and

$3,338,898 in federal funds given for these opportunities. Furthermore under the act, 671 on-

the-job training positions were created using $535,901 in federal funds from January 1963 until

March 1967. [21] However earnestly such re-training projects were instituted, at the municipal

level it was not nearly enough to offset the significant unemployment in the black community.

Milwaukee

Unlike Cincinnati and Omaha, Milwaukee's major industries of manufacturing and food

production were still in full swing in the mid-1960s. Despite this dissimilarity Milwaukee's

industrial and employment profile looked very similar to other locales in the Midwest. Although

in 1967, the median family income in the city was $6,974, higher than 98% of the counties in the

United States, 26% of nonwhite families earned an annual income under $3,000. The overall

unemployment rate for Milwaukee males was 3.2%, however for black males that number

skyrocketed to 8.2% [22]

One thing that may have exacerbated African Americans' unemployment problems was

as one Kerner commission investigator observed, that Mayor Henry Maier was "baffled" by the

request for new programs, feeling that the city was doing everything that it could to provide jobs.

The Mayor claimed Milwaukee had the largest vocational training program in the country with

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[21] "Characteristics of the Population 1970 in Census of Population Housing Tracts" U.S. Bureau of the Census, (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1973. "Labor Force Characteristics of the Population in 1970 Census of the Population Housing Census tracts" U.S. Bureau of the Census (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1973. Reconnaissance Survey Field Report, NACCD/E44, Johnson Presidential Library, 7. Memorandum to George Task, 24 October 1967 NACCD/E36 Johnson Presidential Library.

[22] Survey Draft-Milwaukee, n.d. NACCD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 6. "Employment Status by Sex, for Areas and Places:1970." U.S. Bureau of the Census, Characteristics of the Population Volume 1 Part 51: Wisconsin, (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1973. "Social Characteristics of the Negro Population for Areas and Places: 1970" U.S. Bureau of the Census, Characteristics of the Population. Characteristics of the Population Volume 1 Part 51: Wisconsin (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1973.

42,000 participants, but acknowledged that the program had been unsuccessful within the African American population. Despite his assurances that municipal and labor officials specifically targeted black Milwaukeeans through radio and television spots, along with billboards in the North End, blacks had not fully taken advantage. Still Maier assured commission investigators that there were a number of available positions for African Americans with training. Mayor Maier's assertion exposed the contradiction that there were jobs available to African Americans who had the appropriate industrial skills, which could only be obtained in a program they were uninterested in, providing a preview to the way in which African Americans problems were amplified by the white Midwestern mentality.[23]

Although there were a number of city initiatives under the Manpower Development and Training Act, the amount of positions offered in the multi-year period are underwhelming. From August 1952 to August 1967, a fifteen-year period; $8,283, 982 in federal funds were used to create 5,953 institutional positions. From January 1963 until March 1967, 613 on-the-job training positions became allocated from $326,187 in federal funds. Finally, the Neighborhood Youth Corps from January 1965 until June 1967 offered a total of 4,355 positions utilizing $1,617,830 in federal monies. Although this created approximately 10,921 employment opportunities for Milwaukee's unemployed, the average unemployment rate at that time was 3.2%, which means approximately 19,504 people remained jobless even with these federal initiatives.[24]

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[23] Memorandum to Staff from Henry B. Taliaferro, 26 Sept 1967 NACCD/E35 Johnson Presidential Library, 5.

[24] Memorandum to George Task, 24 October 1967 NACCD/E36 Johnson Presidential Library. "Employment Status by Sex, for Areas and Places: 1970" and "Employment Characteristics of the Negro Population for Areas and Places: 1970" U.S. Bureau of the Census Characteristics of the Population Volume 1 Part 51 Wisconsin (19th edition) Washington, D.C., 1973.

Trade Union Discrimination

Besides facing major layoffs in the industrial sphere, discriminatory hiring practices by trade unions severely restricted African Americans access to these jobs. This theme was particularly well illustrated in two of the case study cities, Omaha and Cincinnati. African American state senator Edward Danner acknowledged that the building trades in Omaha did not really try to hire African American workers stating that "Mr. [Peter] Kiewit knows that the building industry is controlled by craft unions and there are few Negroes in craft unions."   Those employers who opened up doors to black workers found that when they needed union labor again they often got inferior manpower.[25] In 1963 an investigation of union hiring practices by an Omaha Bi-Racial Board member and attorney Milton R. Abrahams stated that unions set hiring practices to discriminate racially.

Despite the acknowledgement of the reticence of unions to abide by anti-discrimination hiring practices, there was little attempt by those in authority to change the problem. David Weinberg, the unions' attorney replied, "Let's set the record straight. 90% of the discrimination resides with the employers, some of whom are on the Mayor's Bi-Racial Committee, and I can prove it." When Father James Stewart, acting chairman of the committee, suggested that an investigation be conducted to determine which firms contracted by the city had discriminatory hiring, he was prevented from doing so because the City Charter forbade such an investigation.[26] This is the second example of the intersection between the structural and ideological conditions leading to the formation of a particular Midwestern political economy. Although there was

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[25]"4CL: Protest Friday at Sheraton-Fontenelle" *Omaha World Herald* April 6, 1964. Staff Paper No. 7 "Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance," NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 29.

[26] "Labor Union Hiring Starts and Argument" *Omaha World Herald* June 19, 1963.

tangible evidence of racial discrimination in hiring practices, municipal and union entities refused to remedy the problem and instead passed the blame to others.

In 1966, building trade trainees picketed their school run by the Greater Cincinnati Vocational Foundation. This picketing resulted in a meeting between members of the Cincinnati Human Relations Committee (CHRC), two of the men participating in the picket, and the school facilitators. The students presented a list of six grievances which highlighted the general "inadequacies in the operation of this program." One example of these inadequacies was demonstrated by the employment prospects of one of the protestors, Anderson L. Dobbins. The Hampton Institute graduate attempted to enroll in the electrical class but was only given an oral test and then promptly rejected. Although Dobbins had adequate training and had worked for 880 hours as an electrician, he did not pass the informal oral examination.[27] In response to this protest city officials in Cincinnati started the JUMP program for the training of black skilled workers.

The Journeyman Union Manpower Program, or JUMP, was a locally based, federally funded pilot program which helped African Americans qualify for building crafts union positions. In existence for only six months, the program was embroiled in controversy almost as long. Under Lyman A. Slack as JUMP director, the program was shut down for difficulty in the recruitment and training of candidates, lack of successful graduates, and the high program overhead. Under the surface, more race based criticism emerged when JUMP directors were accused of rejecting trainees capriciously. Additionally, white unionized teachers hired to instruct black trainees were unwilling to impart the skills needed to pass the journeymen exam.

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[27] "Negro Trade Trainees Rap Program, Entry Examinations," *Post Times Star* (Cincinnati, OH) February 17, 1967.

This lapse provided the unions with the needed ammunition when charged that they were unwilling to accept black apprentices, they simply claimed that the program sent them insufficiently trained applicants. When the program was shut down there were only seventeen blacks enrolled. Of these enrollees, none of the students had graduated or passed the union and city qualifying tests. [28] Therefore although innovative, this program remained deeply flawed due to a racist super structure and a lack of in-depth knowledge of the needs of the African American laborer.

Unlike Cincinnati and Omaha, the industrial unions in Milwaukee had a substantial number of black members with some African Americans in leadership positions. However the building trades were just as discriminatory as in the other two case study cities. A state survey reported that 14 out of 2,091 apprentices in the building trades, or approximately 0.6%, were black. Through the intervention of prominent state labor relations officials and Cecil Brown, Jr., the director of Milwaukee CORE, they persuaded the Federal government to hire blacks in the construction of a new post office. On this particular job site 32% of the work force was black; however this remained an anomaly in the building trades. [29]

In 1964, 29.5% (n=170,188) of non-agricultural United State's employees were members of a labor union. More specifically in the case study states with the exception of Nebraska (19.3%), union membership was higher than the national average. Union membership in Wisconsin and Ohio was 35.7% and 31.5%, respectively. These positions typically resulted in

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[28] O.F. Knippenburg "U.S. Scrapping JUMP Program for Negroes," *Cincinnati Enquirer* March 17, 1967.

[29] Correspondence from John Boswell to Charles Nelson, 6 November 1967, NACCD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 11, 21.

higher wages, increased job security and employment.[30] When African Americans saw that they were being laid off from industrial jobs and had limited access to union labor, this augmented their feelings of relative deprivation. Furthermore continual advocacy for equal access to union trade jobs by state and some union officials helped to raise African Americans' expectations for such positions leading to disappointment when they did not get these jobs. However the middle age men who migrated to the Midwest as children during the inter-war era were not the most destitute in terms of employment.   Rather the second and third generations, African American young adults, held both the highest of expectations and the most acute feelings of deprivation. Indicative of these feelings, this population most frequently participated in the uprising and the grievance presented by them unanimously articulated the need for increased employment opportunities.

Teenage unemployment

In an FBI Community tension report, written a full month prior to Milwaukee's uprising the agency noted that unemployment among black youth was a contributing factor to racial tension in the city. Additionally, the agent noted that the Neighborhood Youth Corps and Youth Council Operation had 7,000 job applications from Milwaukee teenagers on file but only 100 job slots, which the director of the program regarded as "social dynamite." However this potentially explosive situation was not only unique to Milwaukee. Job prospects for young black males

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[30] "Labor Union Membership total and percent of non-agricultural employment: 1964" U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1967 (88th edition.) Washington, D.C., 1967.

were equally poor in Omaha. In 1960 only 27% of black males ages fourteen to seventeen were actively in the workforce and 79% of males ages eighteen to twenty-four held jobs.[31]

In a 1963 letter, acting director of the Cincinnati Board of Education, Robert D. Van Fossen tolled the warning bell on, as the title suggests, "The Coming Unemployment Problem in Hamilton County." In the report Van Fossen noted that in both 1962 and 1963, 12,000 youth would turn eighteen. By 1965 this number would increase to 17,400. Van Fossen stressed "that this is about TEN TIMES" (emphasis original) faster than the total population grows. However the employment opportunities for these new young workers, was quickly diminishing.[32] He also noted that such unemployment among youth could lead to greater social problems. Taking heed Cincinnati instituted a number of proactive measures, however many of these still fell short of the employment needs.

In Cincinnati immediately before the uprisings the unemployment rate for black teens was around 20%. Despite attempts to employ African American teenagers in summer jobs, results were mixed. A tally of youth employment programs in Cincinnati after the uprisings looked at the success of such initiatives from January until June 1967, essentially pre-uprising statistics. The Neighborhood Youth Corps reported on average before the uprising 767 participants were enrolled per month. After the uprising that number climbed to 1,039 enrollees. However each month the organization placed on average forty-three youths in permanent jobs per month, for a total of 261 placements. The Urban Conservation program had an average of forty-two young people enrolled per month. In the seven months prior to the uprising they had placed forty youth

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[31]Field Community Tension Factors Report-Milwaukee, 30 June 1967, NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library. "Labor Force, by Age and Sex, for States, Urban and Rural, 1960 and for the United States, 1950 and 1940" U. S. Bureau of the Census (18th edition) Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C., 1963.

[32] Robert D. Van Fossen, "The Coming Unemployment Problem in Hamilton County," April 1963 Mssq B952 Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc, Box 6 Cincinnati Historical Society, 1.

in training related positions and thirty-nine in non-training positions. Youth Employment Service had over 3,000 youth enrolled in the program but only sixty-two boys and one hundred and three girls were placed.[33] So although there were support programs in place, youth employment had limited success. Of the programs mentioned, in total the organizations placed 881 enrollees, rather abysmal considering the high percentage of unemployed black youth living in Cincinnati.

Another example of the limits of youth employment initiatives can be demonstrated by a June 1967 job fair sponsored by the Citizen's Committee for Youth in Cincinnati. Unfortunately the business community was not informed of the fair until May, therefore were unable or unwilling to offer jobs to prospective applicants. The fair was cancelled a week before the scheduled date, but rather than the local press reporting the failure of communication between the agency and industry, they stated that the job fair had been so successful that organizers cancelled the event because all applicants had found jobs. The fair cancellation incensed African Americans, heightening feelings that industry was only paying "lip service" to the unemployment problem.[34]

The Committee of 28, a local civic group, promised that industry would deliver 2,000 jobs for the summer of 1967. By the first week of June, the group provided only sixty-five open positions and many of these were well beyond the reach of out-of-school youth. Similarly in 1966, 172 companies had pledged jobs for unemployed people, however as in 1967 nothing

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[33]Reconnaissance Survey Field Report-Cincinnati, n.d. NACCD/E44 RG 282 NAACD, Johnson Presidential Library, 8. "The Citizens' Committee on Youth-Enrollment and Placement Summary Jan-June 1967" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 9 Cincinnati Historical Society.

[34]Memorandum on Cincinnati Trip-June 8 August 1967, NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 1. Staff Report on Youth Opportunity n.d. NACCD/E35 Johnson Presidential Library, 1.

materialized. Finally many of the jobs earmarked for blacks went to middle-class white youth.

This was especially true in that the Cincinnati Recreation Commission staffed many West End

playfields with middle-class white youth workers.[35]

In the three case study cities, as well as the Midwest as a whole, there was a great

disparity between African Americans expectations for employment opportunities and the actual

allocation of these jobs. The declining industrial economy in which African Americans shared a

disproportionate amount of layoffs, racial discrimination in the trade unions, and devastatingly

high youth unemployment rates all served as evidence for blacks' feelings of relative

deprivation. Furthermore as will be discussed later in the chapter, African American

expectations for employment opportunities were high because of constant white Midwesterners

reassurances that for black Midwesterners to better their lot they should find jobs. For many

black Midwesterners despite the limits of declining industry and racist hiring practices, they still

held out hope that job opportunities would provide salvation.

Standard of Living

Related to the above industrial considerations, from a purely statistical view Midwestern

cities had different standards of living. This is significant when analyzing the urban rebellions

through the lens of rising expectations and relative deprivation. Although for many Midwestern

African Americans their quality of life was higher than blacks in the South or Northeast when

compared to white Midwesterners they fell behind. Additionally due to increased legislation for

ending discriminatory housing and hiring practices African Americans had reason to believe that

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[35] "Central Themes for Cincinnati," n.d. NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 5.

the markers of an adequate standard of living would improve. As was surmised in the Cincinnati

West End survey, "high rate of unemployment among the Male, coupled with low income jobs,

makes it difficult for him to maintain the family in adequate American standards."[36] This

coupled with black Midwesterners' political inefficacy and white paternalism led to increased

protest, which when it fell on deaf ears, led to violent uprisings.

For this analysis I discuss issues surrounding housing, education, recreation and police

brutality. I use these areas because participants in the urban rebellions most frequently cited

these issues as grievances. Also these topics can be interrogated both quantitatively and

qualitatively through census record statistics and anecdotal narratives, respectively. In the

following section I look at housing, education, recreation, and police brutality in each of the case

study cities, providing specific narratives to detail the oppressive structures immediately before

the uprisings. By using these indices it becomes apparent that white Midwesterners and black

Midwesterners experienced very different standards of living. These topics will again be taken

to analyze the intersection of quality of life issues, protest, and the grievances articulated in the

uprisings.

Housing

Racial covenants severely restricted black Omahans' ability to leave the immediate area

of the Near North Side. The Omaha Real Estate Board refused to end racial covenants, but

reached a compromise with the Human Relations Board by asking real estate agents to expand a

1959 policy against religious discrimination in housing. Real Estate Board President Norman

Keegan stated that he would ask home sellers to follow the provisions in the 1959 policy but

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[36] West End Special Service Project of Seven Hills Neighborhood Houses, Inc. 1967 Summer Employment Survey n.d. Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 12 Cincinnati Historical Society, 4-8.

ultimately would respect their wishes and would allow for them to alter the disclaimer for racial

discrimination. In 1963 of all the new houses available on the market in Omaha, 25,000 were

allotted for whites and only fifty for blacks. In 1964, Central Surveys Incorporated of

Shenandoah, Iowa conducted a survey which showed that if racial covenants did not exist, 29%

of Near North Side residents would move out of the ghetto immediately, and 48% desired to

move but could not because of insufficient funds.[37] In July of 1966, the city of Omaha

published, through the Community Renewal Project, a report outlining the areas in the city that

the commission considered to be "blighted" and prescribing various methods for improvement.

The city defined "blighted" as an area in which conditions were "below community standards of

suitability for living or doing business." The survey, conducted between January and February of

1964, found that the entire Near North Side qualified as a "blighted" area. No neighborhoods

west of Forty-Second Street, with an almost entirely white population, were considered in need

of help.

In 1967 over 87% of Cincinnati's non-white population lived in the central city.   There

central city African American Cincinnatians paid 30% more of their income for housing then

whites and approximately 75% of blacks lived in rented homes. Cincinnati's Model City

application, focusing on rehabilitating the West End, told of the inferior housing conditions in

which African Americans lived. In 1960 the grant target area had 8,567 dwelling units; of this

number 4,439 (52%) lacked a bathroom. Additionally within Census Tract 3, 45% of the

dwellings located in this area were located in buildings with more than ten units. Finally, in this

entire enclave only twenty-five residential units had been built within the previous decade. A

July 1966 survey of the West End indicated a 15% vacancy rate in the area, even though the city-

[37]Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen*, 200. "Omaha Real Estate Board Head Dedicated to Maintain Ghetto," *Omaha Star,* February 2, 1963. "Housing Attitudes Survey Reveals Different Views," *Omaha Star,* June 19, 1964.

wide vacancy rate was 3.5%.[38] So although there was available space in the West End, living conditions were so dire that it was difficult to attract residents.

Although open housing legislation had been brought to the Milwaukee City Council four times, the bill failed each time, losing 18-1 with Vel Phillips, the single black representative on the body, voting in favor. Thus Milwaukee African Americans were largely confined to the North End. Because of this relative immobility landlords were able to charge exorbitant rates to their black tenants. African American Milwaukeeans paid one-third more than white Milwaukeeans of median rent paid as a proportion of median income. Additionally, between 1940 and 1960 Milwaukee's Inner Core became increasingly crowded. The average number of people living in a housing unit went from 3.4 blacks in 1940 to 4.1 in 1960.[39] Like housing, education also showed a diminished quality of life for African Americans in their communities in comparison to their white peers.

Education

Throughout the 1960s, studies showed drastic segregation in Omaha's public schools. Of the 7,667 minority students enrolled in the district in 1962, 5,113 were enrolled in predominately (80% or more) minority schools. Only 25% of minority students attended white majority schools. African American instructors largely taught at majority black schools. At the beginning of the 1963-1964 school year, there were only seventy-six black teachers employed by the district, less than 5% of the total professional staff. In 1964 the Omaha School Board hired a handful of new

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[38] Cincinnati Profile Supplement, n.d. NACCD/E32, Johnson Presidential Library, 1. Central Themes for Cincinnati, n.d. NACCD/E43, Johnson Presidential Library, 2. Model City Application-Cincinnati, n.d. NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2.

[39] Memorandum to Charles Nelson from John Boswell on Team Trip To Milwaukee, 6 November 1967 NAACD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 13. Survey Draft-Milwaukee n.d., NACCD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 10. Charles T. O'Reilly, Willard E. Downing, and Steven I. Pflanczer. *The People Of the Inner Core-North: A Study of Milwaukee's Negro Community*(New York: LePlay Research Inc., 1965), 42.

black teachers but assigned them to predominately African American elementary schools. While the school board showed no inclination to address the problem of segregation, in November 1962 Superintendent Harry S. Burke did commission a study of school facilities that demonstrated a desperate need for improvement of the Near North Side facilities. Burke then pressed for approval of a $25 million bond which led to the construction of the new Conestoga School complete with twenty-nine classrooms, a library, health unit, teachers' lounge, guidance and counseling suite, and an Operation Head Start program.[40]

In contrast, Cincinnati tax payers were unwilling to support a purposed levy to fund the improvements for African Americans in the public school systems. In November 1966 voters defeated a $13 million dollar tax levy, $8.5 million which would have gone to school renewal. Because the city did not receive this additional income, the school system was forced to end evening and summer use of schools, adult education programs, kindergarten, and reduced the number of temporary classrooms to be constructed. In previous years the tax levy had always passed but due to well organized and articulate opposition from the Real Estate Board and the Tax Payers Association, the measure failed.

Beyond lack of funding, Cincinnati's schools were highly segregated and employed only a handful of African American employees. According to Cincinnati Public School Superintendent Dr. Paul Miller, the public school student population was 43% black yet at the most only 30% of the teachers were black. Although in 1967 the district hired Lawrence Hawkins, an African American as the assistant superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools, most black employees worked as teacher's assistants or aides. Finally, a high school student's

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[40] Preliminary Analysis of Department of Justice, July 16, 1973, School Bussing Vertical File at Florence Branch of the Omaha Public Library. "Number of Negro Teachers Upped," *Omaha Star,* September 4, 1964. Conestoga School Dedication Set for Sunday, March 27," *Omaha Star*, March 25, 1966. "Northside School Among First To Be Planned," *Omaha Star*, February 8, 1963.

educational trajectory was often determined by his or her race. Despite the fact that Hughes

High School had a relatively well balanced demographic, with 60% of its student population

being black, the majority of college preparatory courses were populated with white students and

the vocational educational courses with black students. Correspondingly, the job prospects of the

Cincinnati's West End respondents, which Hughes High School served, aligned with their

diminished educational opportunities. Of the 3,256 interviewed in the West End Survey only 4%

(n=132) of respondents had some college.[41]

Like Cincinnati, Milwaukee had an extensive system of vocational programs or schools

in which about 35,000 students were enrolled in annually. However Milwaukee boasted of their

highly integrated K-12 schools, stating that of the thirty junior high schools in the city, twenty-

nine had a biracial student population. Similarly of the 122 elementary schools, 101 of them had

both white and blacks students. However these statistics are misleading, by looking more closely

how Milwaukee defined "biracial." Three schools in particular demonstrate that just a few

students could qualify a school as integrated, and thus give the city something to brag about.

One "biracial" school had 1900 white students and 2 black; another had 3,000 white students and

58 black; and the third had 1,500 black students and only 5 white. Milwaukee acknowledged

that there was overcrowding in black schools but officials and the public alike were unwilling to

seek a genuine solution due to their own racism.

The "solution" that the Milwaukee Public School system devised was called "intact

bussing." Beginning in the fall of 1965 the school board bussed black students to white schools.

Once they arrived at the physical building black classes were kept intact in separate classrooms

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[41] Reconnaissance Survey Field Report-Cincinnati, n.d. NACCD/E44 Johnson Presidential Library, 28-32. West End Special Service Project, "1967 Summer Employment Survey," Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 12 Cincinnati Historical Society, 4-8.

apart from white students. However even this flawed solution was only a temporary fix until permanent black schools could be constructed. More absurdly black students, if allowed to eat in the white school's cafeteria only did so at separate hours. Often black students were bussed back across town to their own schools to eat. The Board of Education devised a more "permanent" solution to overcrowding in black schools. In violating a long standing policy against building schools over two stories, the board approved a construction plan for a four story building in the North End.[42] This would provide a physical plant large enough to accommodate all black students apart from whites. De facto segregation, lack of black teachers, overcrowded schools, and biased school boards were not the only obstacles black youth had to face in Omaha, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee, they also had limited recreational opportunities.

Recreation

Omaha lawmakers often ignored or underestimated the Near North Side's recreational needs. As early as 1937 one study observed that Omaha's black children were "handicapped" because of lack of recreational activities. Into the 1960s access to adequate recreational facilities remained a central concern for black Omahans. Generally speaking the Near North Side could be divided into two distinct neighborhoods, east of Twenty-Fourth Street and west of that point, in the Western portion there were absolutely no recreation facilities.[43] Omaha's own recreational expenditure's demonstrated that they had limited interest in changing this situation.

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[42] Memorandum to Charles Nelson from John Boswell on Team Trip to Milwaukee, 6 November 1967, NACCD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 5, 18. FBI Memorandum-Milwaukee 1 August 1967, NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library, 2-3.

[43]"Center YMCA Launches Its Fall Programs," *Omaha Star,* September 3, 1965. Glenn Sullenger, "A Study of Opportunities of Boys in Omaha" (master's thesis, Municipal University of Omaha, 1937), 66. Tommy Perry, "City Opening New Teenage Center On Near North Side," *Omaha World-Herald* July 8, 1966.

In 1960 the Parks and Recreation Department planned to increase and update Omaha's recreational facilities. Overcrowding at the city's golf courses prompted the building of a new one costing $300,000 in Benson Park. The committee also proposed to build five swimming pools at the cost $700,000 in Upland Park, Spring Lake Park, and Gallagher Park, none of which would be located on the Near North Side. The city additionally submitted for approval a plan to spend $200,000 for one boat marina. Finally, authorities allocated only $5,000 for landscaping, equipping and improving new or existing parks. Therefore of the over one million dollars that the city allocated for new recreational facilities, none of these new endeavors would be located in the predominantly African American neighborhood, or as in the case of the boat marina would the facility be accessible to the majority of working-class blacks. Milwaukee's response was even more lackluster after the uprisings the council decided to build more swimming facilities and provided a list of vacant land available in local neighborhoods for improvement, but did not actually create a plan or make funds available to facilitate new recreational spaces.[44]

The 1967 Cincinnati Department of Recreation budget was $1,610,500 million dollars and African Americans advocated vigorously to receive some of these funds. On April 29, 1967 more than 200 blacks led by local activist Clyde Vinegar appeared in the City Council chambers to seek more recreation facilities. This unscheduled and unannounced appearance resulted in the Council asking that they schedule appointments in advance, but still allowed Vinegar to speak. Incensed he stated, "I would rather they [African American youth] expressed themselves here [than] in the streets. Council should not be ruled by technicalities that are raising frustrations a Council may not be able to control. Now the only way I am to get heard is to throw a rock at a

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[44] Capital Improvement Schedule, report ordered by Omaha Mayor John Rosenblatt, November 1960, Omaha City Planning Board. Parks and Recreation-Vertical File at Florence Branch of the Omaha Public Library. Survey Draft-Milwaukee, n.d. NACCD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 28, 65.

police man." Although the city later approved a plan to provide $150,000 for a summer recreation program, previous municipal assessments noted that a budget closer to $340,000 was needed. Additionally, a Kerner Commission researcher wrote in his memo about his Cincinnati trip that he was informed that the "operation of recreation programs is cut back during the summer months, rather than increased. This is apparently due to giving permanent employees vacation time, etc."[45] Therefore although Cincinnati was made aware of the desperate need for African Americans to have access to better recreational facilities, city officials deferred to meet the municipal bottom line in lieu addressing the needs of its residents.

Police Issues

Perhaps no issue was more universal to feelings of relative deprivation in every black community in the 1960s than the issue of police brutality or abuse. Like the rest of the county, Omaha, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee shared similarities in their interconnected complaints of their local police departments. The first was a general feeling of police brutality. For most, police brutality meant more than just being roughed up by a uniformed cop. It meant the constant agitation and disrespect by white police officers.[46] This feeling was augmented by the second complaint to local police departments, the lack of black officers on the force. Local African Americans felt that by having proportionally few officers of color on the force contributed to

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[45]Central Themes for Cincinnati, n.d. NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 4. Cincinnati Profile Supplement, n.d. NACCD/E32 Johnson Presidential Library, 3-4. Memorandum on Cincinnati Trip-June August 8, 1967, NACCD/E35 Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

[46] "We Demand Rights Now," *Dundee-West Omaha Sun*, March 3, 1966; "Police Arrest," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966.

feelings of disrespect and disregard in police departments. The third issue African Americans

had with the police department was the lack of responsiveness to the above complaints.

Police brutality

In Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Omaha, police brutality was not only the terrorizing of

black citizens by police officers but also the ignoring at best, and the encouragement at worst, of

such actions by police leadership. In a handwritten note written by Kerner Commission

investigators on the chief African American grievances in Milwaukee they stated that "the police

chief [Harold A. Breier] tackles complaints personally. [He] handles action as a policeman's

policeman." Some community members felt that the police chief was uninterested in

understanding even the "basic rudiments" of good police-community relations, as evidenced by

his refusal to attend the International Association of Chief of Police (IACP) seminar in 1966 on

community relations sponsored by the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance (OLEA).

Additionally the municipal government of Milwaukee did not apply for a community relations

program planning grant and the police department rejected a $15,000 OLEA grant. Investigators

noted that "there is definitely a total breakdown in relationships between the Negro community

and the police department."[47] On Saturday, May 13, 1967; 500 marchers protested police

harassment of blacks. Instead of listening to the complaints of the crowd, they arrested Father

James Groppi and civil rights leader Lucius Walker, who had coordinated the march.

Cincinnati Police Department head, Colonel Stanley Schrotel took a more proactive

stance to dealing with issues of police brutality but his efforts still fell flat. In a 1957 article

Schrotel, described a procedural change he instituted to handle police brutality complaints. The

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[47]Grievances in Milwaukee, n.d. NACCD/E37 Johnson Presidential Library, 1 FBI Memorandum-Milwaukee, n.d.
NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library, 5. Field Community Tension Factors Report-Milwaukee, WI 15 May
1967, NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library.

procedure he developed, although touted as progressive was actually punitive to victims of police brutality.   Any person that a police struck was brought in to be questioned by the supervising officer, where they could face possible harassment or intimidation. He hoped that this practice would serve the dual purpose of protecting the "conscientious officer" from false allegations and to detect the officer who due to "faulty training or emotional instability" used force wantonly. Although he acknowledged the connection between police behavior and public opinion, in the very next sentence he continues that then "the true victims of police abuse were not those individuals against whom the abuse was directed but rather the police themselves." In the six months since the program began, there was not one formal complaint of excessive force.[48] However, even official police arrest records depict a very different picture; the victims of excessive policing were most often African Americans.

In 1967 of the 143 people arrested on suspicion of a crime and released in Cincinnati 48% (n=69) were white and 51.7% (n=74) were black. Although African Americans only comprised 20% of the total population, they were arrested on suspicion with as great of frequency as whites. Blacks also felt this double standard of justice in the enforcement of anti-loitering laws. Although this ordinance had been on the books since the 1940s, between January 1966 and June 1968 police began to more aggressively enforce this code. During this period of time, police made 240 loitering arrests (excluding charges during the uprisings), 170 (71%) of those arrested were African Americans. Although the Cincinnati Police Department was not directly involved in the prosecution of arrestees, their frequent arrests of African Americans contributed to blacks' disproportional conviction rates and augmented feelings of greater incidents of police brutality compared to their white peers.

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[48] Stanley R. Schrotel, "Supervising the Use of Police Authority," *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* 47:5 (Jan.-Feb., 1957): 589-592.

In 1967, 1,387 whites and 1,957 blacks were arrested on felony charges; of this number 60% (n=831) of whites and 57% (n=1118) blacks were found guilty of the charge. Additionally, 3.7% (n=52) of whites and 0.3% (n=70) of blacks were found guilty of a lesser charge. Finally, only 7.4% (n=103) of whites and 9.2% (n=181) of blacks were found not guilty. Despite the seeming equity of these statistics, the predominately black neighborhoods of Avondale, Walnut Hills, and portions of the Basin, were the only areas in metropolitan Cincinnati that had actual offenses (crimes) numbering in the aggregate of over 1,000 in each year from 1965 to 1967. Coupled with the fact that Cincinnati's crime rate was lower than 90% of American cities with a population of 100,000 and over, these statistics seem rather antithetical. In total of the 33,098 people arrested in Cincinnati in 1967, nearly 63% (n=20,790) were African American, similarly blacks comprised 52.5% of juvenile arrests in the same year, and again they comprised only one-fifth of the total Cincinnati population.

However the inequity of treatment by police is not limited to arrest, but also to the proportion to which African Americans were the recipients of police force. The more injurious or deadly the type of force, the more likely African Americans were to be the victim of that violence. Of the total number of incidents where force was used, fifty-five of the victims were white and forty black. For those arrestees subdued with chemical force, such as mace, seventeen were white and ten black. The statistics that most startlingly depicts the unequal police treatment of black and whites are lethal force statistics, including gunfire. Of the eighty-three incidents in which a Cincinnati police officer fired his service revolver, sixty times (72%) the intended target was an African American. The most frequently cited crimes for necessitating potentially lethal force included twenty-four incidents of burglary and seventeen incidents of auto theft, but alleged crimes ranged from seemingly trivial violations including juvenile delinquency and a

stray animal charge. [49] The overuse of deadly force by police officers to black residents was not limited to the Cincinnati metropolitan area.

In 1962, the American Legal Institute developed the Model Penal Code, which Nebraska adopted to codify the state's use of force. Essentially, an individual law enforcement officer's decision to use deadly force was based on the danger presented by the suspect not the nature of the original crime. The Omaha Police Department provided more explicit boundaries for their officers to fire upon a civilian. The three circumstances included: 1. Purposes of self-defense by the officer; 2. Protecting the life of another; and 3. Stopping a fleeing felony suspect after he/she has refused to heed a warning to stop. The final scenario could even be deemed permissible when dealing with a perpetrator accused of a misdemeanor. Between 1966 and 1969, six people were killed by an Omaha police officer. The victims included three black males under twenty, Eugene Nesbitt, Howard L. Stevenson, and Percy P. Hare and two mid-twenties white victims, Gerald W. Mallinger and Robert Gustafson. The police officers who shot these young men were technically within their rights. The final victim of an Omaha police officer in the 1960s was fourteen year old Vivian Strong. James Loder, the man who shot her, was the only officer who fired his service revolver in the line of duty to be indicted on charges.[50] In addition to these headline making deaths, African Americans faced continual brutality, hostilities, and indignity at the hands of law enforcement officials, whether or not they were civilians.

Lack of Force Diversity

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[49] Central Themes for Cincinnati, n.d. NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 3. "Arrests and Convictions for Felonies: 1967," "Part I: Actual Offenses by Census Tract: 1967," "Persons released by Color, Nativity, and Sex: 1967," "Arrests by Color and Census Tracts or Residence of Persons Charged: 1967," "Juvenile Arrests, by Color and Census Tracts of Residence of Juveniles Charged: 1967," and "Incidents Involving Use of Force and Shots Fired: 1967," in Police Statistics of Cincinnati, 1967 Annual Report accessed at the Main branch of the Cincinnati Public Library.

[50] Nebraska Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights "Police-Community Relations in Omaha" (Washington, D.C.,: GPO, 1982), 33. "Six Killed by Police in Three Years," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 26, 1969.

Despite reassurances by police officials that they were trying to bring in officers of color, police forces in Omaha, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee remained disproportionally white. Even in Cincinnati's huge police force, which was larger than two-thirds of all police forces in United States, only 6% (n=60) of members in the division were black. This number also represented a decline in total number of black police officers from 1952 where there were eighty-three black policemen on the force. The Kerner Commission investigators noted that this reduction of African Americans in the Cincinnati Police Department resulted from systematic exclusion through the use of personal interviews and subjective evaluations.[51]

In a questionnaire completed by the Cincinnati Police Department, the Kerner Commission investigation revealed that the department employed 1,036 people. Of the 145 civilian employees, 21% (n=30) were nonwhite; of the 891 sworn personnel, 6% (n=54) were nonwhite. More specifically of the Cincinnati Police Department 544 patrolmen, 6.4% (n=35) were nonwhite; and finally of the thirty-four detectives, two were nonwhite. African American officers were somewhat better represented in the category of juvenile officers with four out of eleven being nonwhite. The higher the rank of an employee in the Cincinnati Police Department, the less likely that person was to be black. In sum, 95% (n=153) of specialists were white; 97% (n=68) of sergeants; and 94% (n=34) of lieutenants were white. Within the thirteen captain positions and the seven positions above the rank of captain; no African Americans served in these capacities. The Kerner Commission felt that the Milwaukee Police Department was intentionally vague about the number of African Americans on their force providing ranges from twenty-four to seventy individuals on a force of 1,800. But the figure most frequently cited by police officials was 2% or thirty-six black officers. Additionally, before 1966 no blacks served

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[51] Central Themes for Cincinnati, n.d. NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 3.

above the rank of detective sergeant.[52] Undoubtedly with such low numbers of black police

officers on the force they faced certain internal discrimination, nowhere was this better

documented in the case study cities than in Omaha.

Although there were African American officers on the Omaha Police force, they were

limited in number and did not receive equal treatment. Officer Marvin McClarty brought a

discrimination case against the Omaha Police Department in 1967. Ernie Chambers describes in

an editorial letter that the suit came about because a number of black police officers were

incensed because William (Bill) Bloom, their union business representative and a city council

member, voted against open housing legislation. Chambers editorialized that Bloom's vote

against open housing was yet another slight in a long list against black police officers,

> Negro officers are made painfully aware that they are to be cannon fodder in the event of
> 'racial disturbances.' At the same time, they are publicly told by a paid representative of
> their union that they are unfit to purchase a decent home for their family…An impossible
> situation is forced upon the Negro officers because they are asked to help 'put down' a
> racial disturbance which they might feel like joining.

Chambers arrived at the heart of many African American police officers feelings of both relative

deprivation and rising expectations. These officers hoped that they would have access to better

housing in the city as a result of their invaluable positions, but a representative of the union to

which their dues paid for helped to deprive them of this right. This affront coupled with other

daily degradations caused most (seventeen out of twenty-six) of the black officers on the Omaha

force to resign from Local 531, the Omaha Police Union.

The reasons for the remaining nine officers staying in the union reflected a variety of

coping mechanisms to continual racial discrimination. Three of the officers had already quit the

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[52] Non-white/White Officers in Cincinnati n.d. NACCD/Box 1 Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2. Memorandum to
Charles Nelson from John Boswell on Team Trip to Milwaukee 6 November 1967 NACCD/E51 Johnson
Presidential Library, 21.

force. Sergeant Pittmon Foxall II, a member of the Police-Community Relations staff, did not

resign because he was awaiting a reply from the AFL-CIO's civil rights section, which the

officer sent a complaint to. The *Omaha World Herald* editorial staff opined "We find it hard to

believe that a pattern of deliberate discrimination can exist in a department whose upper echelon

includes a Negro inspector. Nor can we imagine that if discrimination existed, it would not have

been identified by the more experienced Negro officers. Significantly, these officers did not join

in Patrolman McClarty's protest."[53] The major paper of record's response demonstrates the third

example of the Midwestern mentality's ignorance to class and generational fissures in the black

community. It also made abundantly clear the difficulty that African Americans, whether they

be civilians or on the force, faced to have their concerns with police brutality and misconduct,

actually taken seriously.

Unresponsiveness to Complaints

The desperation which locals sought to have their complaints heard by the police

department often led them to seek outside help after the mechanisms in place failed them. In

Omaha, the Police-Community Relations Council was defunct, although not formally dissolved

due to unwillingness of Omaha officials to address the council's complaints and proposals.

Chambers, who served as the chairman of the complaint committee, wrote to the Department of

Justice in 1966 "It had been our belief at first that this Council had a real function to perform and

that the officials would be fair in dealing with us. We were wrong on both counts." The letter

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[53] *Omaha World Herald* clipping 14 September 1967 NAACD/Box 5 Johnson Presidential Library; *Omaha World Herald* clipping, September 9, 1967 NACCD/Box 5 Johnson Presidential Library.

Chambers wrote implored the Department of Justice to look at bias in the police department particularly in the case of a local black boy who was shot and killed by police.[54]

Cincinnati's Police-Community Relations Committee also was a plagued with problems of ineptitude when it came to dealing with civilian complaints. Per Colonel Henry Sandman's directive on June 19, 1967 the Cincinnati Police Department began writing a history of the uprising. In the report, the Cincinnati Police Department outlined examples of ways they had been involved in the community in recent years. They cited recruitment programs for more black officers; psychological screenings to ensure they hired non-prejudiced officers; and an open-door policy for grievances. Despite these proactive measures, the attitude of the Cincinnati Police Department had not changed. As evidenced by their response to criticism of over-policing at a Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) speaking event, they stated rather glibly "On that occasion accusations were made that police attire (riot gear and helmets) offended the dignity of the Negro community."[55] Instead of taking the suggestions of black Cincinnatians seriously, they wrote off such comments as the African American population being too sensitive.

Furthermore though the Cincinnati police department organized a formal police-community relations program in August 1966, it did not represent the concerns of the entire black community. The Kerner Commission sent a questionnaire to the Cincinnati Police Department asking "what types of groups of people either do not participate or are not represented?" The department replied that the "grassroots citizens not interested or motivated in civi [sic] work, militant and certain civil rights organizations." Also the survey response

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[54] Letter from Ernest Chamber to the Department of Justice, August 18, 1966. NAACD/Box 5 Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2.

[55] Cincinnati Division of Police, "A report of the Riot in Cincinnati, Ohio; The Week of June 11, 1967" NACCD/E73 Johnson Presidential Library, 15.

indicated that the success of the police-community relation council was difficult to assess because "effectiveness [is] no doubt limited to those who participate in the program. Membership in Police Community Relations Committee is favorable in terms of middle class and moderate citizen attitude."[56] As was seen in the *Omaha World-Herald* editorial in their disbelief of black officers' complaints, the Cincinnati Police Department neglected to address the needs and concerns of the entire black community, showing the need for younger, more working-class representation.

Blacks' constant agitation and protest to alter these conditions demonstrate that they felt they received inadequate or lesser services augmenting their feelings of relative deprivation. In terms of treatment of African Americans by police it is determined that there were significant treatment differentials between not only African Americans and whites but also variance in how complaints were handled from middle-class or older generational individuals. For many African Americans the police were a visible manifestation of the State in their communities. Although local blacks had actual grievances against law enforcement, the symbolic power of the police also serves as an important touchstone. Nevertheless, citizens were unable to elicit enough protest or complaints under the law to make change. As we will see in Chapter 3 issues surrounding police brutality served not only as catalyzing events precipitating the urban uprisings in each city, but also as a continual complaint both in the immediate aftermath and the decades following the uprising. However, black protest against police brutality, inferior housing, and unequal labor conditions fell short not because of inadequate organizing, rather African Americans limited political efficacy and the unwillingness of local government to make change stymied their best efforts.

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[56] IACP Survey-Questionnaire "Police-Community Relations"-Cincinnati n.d. NACCD/Box 5, Johnson Presidential Library, 47, 49.

Lack of Black Political Efficacy

As sociologist Louis Coser noted, "Black urbanites resorted to acts of violence to achieve their needs…[offering] a chance for the first act of participation in the polity, for entry in the world of active citizenship.[57] The lack of black political efficacy in the Midwest can be measured by lack of or ineffectual black political leadership; the intentional gerrymandering of districts and allocation of political favors; and toothless human rights commissions. These elements combined to create an environment where electoral politics, political activism, and non-violent direct action, made little headway, laying the groundwork for a more violent form of protest.

Lack of black political leaders

In 1967 there were over five million African Americans living in the nation's ten largest cities, excluding Washington, D.C. Despite the masses of blacks living in locations where they had both the constitutional right and opportunity to vote, only twenty-nine blacks served on the City Councils of these cities. By including smaller cities where African Americans resided, particularly our Midwestern case study cities, these statistics become even bleaker. In 1966, no black members sat on the Omaha City Council and only one of the forty-nine members of the state's unicameral legislature was African American. The Omaha Board of Education included one black board member, but there was no black representation on the Douglas County Board of Health, Board of Commissioners, Metropolitan Utilities District, Omaha Airport Authority,

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[57] Coser, "Some Social Function of Violence," 10.

Sarpy County Board of Commissioners, Omaha Public Power District, or the Omaha County

Planning Board.[58]

In 1967 only two out of the twenty-one member Milwaukee county board of supervisors

were African Americans, and no blacks sat on the county welfare board or on the five member

fire and police board. Both the Planning Commission and the Citizens Planning and Urban

Renewal Committee had one black representative, additionally the chairman of the Housing

Authority was black. The anti-poverty program in Milwaukee was so lacking in diversity that

the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) refused to continue to fund it until they had adequate

representation. The scarcity of elected and appointed black officials was so great that the

director of Milwaukee CORE Cecil Brown stated that if "more than fifty Negroes can be found

working in City Hall, he will roll down Wisconsin Avenue in a barrel without any clothes on."[59]

The confidence of Brown's boast is a powerful testament to the absurd lack of black

representation in Milwaukee.

In a postmortem interview, a Kerner Commission researcher hit upon one of the key

reasons African Americans had limited political positions in municipal governments, highlighted

in Cincinnati. Mayor Walton Bacharach stated there were no blacks on the zoning board and

city planning commission, "Well, let me answer that one real frankly, and I think you'll

understand…Many of them are political appointments, there's no question about it. Now, when

you make political appointments, who do you pick?...The party. I mean, no matter which side it

is; I don't care who it is." When the interview mentioned that 26% of the population was black

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[58]Barbara Newmann and Susanne Schilling, staff paper "Political Structure and Civil Disorders" November 9, 1967 NACCD/Box 2 Johnson Presidential Library,13. "Blacks Serving on Elected and Appointed Governing Boards: 1966 and 1986," *Omaha World- Herald,* September 19, 1986.

[59] Memorandum to Charles Nelson from John Boswell about Team Trip to Milwaukee, November 6, 1967 NACCD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 20, 28.

and that they were represented in both major parties, Bacharach quickly closed off the

conversation by saying, "There aren't many Republicans, I'll tell you."[60] Therefore for many

African Americans it was nearly impossible to even gain entry into the municipal political

machine.

Without a seat at the table many African Americans found it difficult to have the needs of

their community heard. In a typical representational government, a citizen could hope that their

local representatives would have their best interests at heart. However in Cincinnati as one

researcher summarized the city administration was "fundamentally committed to maintain[ing]

the status quo, lacking the 'will' to act on behalf of the Negro community." As one black

Cincinnatian observed "If whitey wants something, he gets it. If he wants a toy [new football

stadium] on the river-front to play in, the mayor and the governor and a convoy of PR men will

rush down to Florida to court the National Football League…Whitey only has to want to do

something and he raises thirty-six million dollars to do it. Well, it's sure as hell apparent they

don't want to do something about us!"[61] Electing black officials to office was not as easy as

simply organizing support and getting an individual on the ballot, institutional structures were

put into place to ensure that African Americans would not have equal representation.

Municipal Structure

The issue of lack of African American representation was endemic in all of the case study

cities and often caused by the actual municipal government structure. The city of Cincinnati had

a peculiar municipal government system. The city was administered by a nine person council

elected at large every two years. The council not only enacted legislation but also appointed a

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[60] Mayor Walton Bacharach deposition, January 8, 1968, NACCD/Series 32, Johnson Presidential Library, 5.

[61] Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance n.d. NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 41.

city manager who administered the affairs of the city. The council also nominated a member from their own ranks to be elected mayor, serving in a primarily ceremonial role, resulting in a "weak-mayor" system.   Prior to 1959 councilmen were elected on a proportional representation basis, enabling blacks to elect at least two members to the council each term.

Typically the council selected their nomination for mayor as the individual with the largest number of votes, in the 1955 election, this person was Theodore Berry. Berry, an African American, through past precedent should have received the mayoral honor but was seated as vice-mayor. Whether this was a political trade-off from white popular pressure is somewhat unsure. However what is certain is that this event catalyzed great opposition against the proportional representation system. In 1959, Council passed a charter amendment changing the election of councilpersons to an at large vote. With this system, an African American candidate would have to win not only his or her district but the city at large. Thus no black councilmen were elected in either 1961 or 1963. This decision greatly alienated the black community; causing African American leader William Bowmen to remark that the city governing body is "completely insulated from and unaffected by the desire and needs of the Negro population."[62]

Like Cincinnati, Milwaukee had at-large elections which undercut the geographically based power of racial and ethnic minorities. Milwaukee's Common Council, comprised of nineteen members, had been non-partisan as early as 1910 when reformers decided to attempt to end corruption which they believed always accompanied party politics.   The city had a weak mayor/strong council system, which resulted from the fact that the mayor's office was an elected partisan position. An unnamed Marquette University sociology professor who spoke to the Kerner Commission aptly stated that "governing the city often boils down to a power struggle

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[62] Reconnaissance Survey Field Report –Cincinnati n.d. NACCD/E44 Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2.

between the Mayor and Council: each looking for publicity and credit, each sidestepping blame for the failures." One Kerner Commission investigator remarked that government power in Milwaukee was "curiously balkanized" resulting in "the diffusion of power resulting in a series of fiefdoms over which the Mayor can exercise little central control." In essence within the political realm of Milwaukee nobody played well with others, and due to the weak mayor system and absence of council party affiliations, there were few uniting factors to push through broad sweeping policy changes. [63]

In addition to having a weak mayor system, many people interviewed for the Kerner report attested to Mayor Henry Maier's great personal flaws. One respondent described Mayor Maier as "at best as extremely sensitive to criticism and at worst as paranoiac." The majority of respondents who discussed the mayor described him "ambitious, temperamental, and thin-skinned." Finally, the most critical observer stated that he was an "egomaniac with delusions of grandeur…[who] considers himself one of the top-ranking mayors in the country, on a par with [Mayor John] Lindsay [of New York City], and that he also regards himself as one of the country's foremost urban experts."[64] This final assessment of Maier, although unnecessarily harsh, best encapsulates how Milwaukee's city government worked against the interest of African Americans. Maier sincerely believed that he understood black people and urban problems. He was remiss to seek the opinion of African Americans outside a chosen few advisors taken from the black elite.

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[63] Memorandum to Charles Nelson from John Boswell about Team Trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, November 6, 1967 NAACD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 6-7. Historian John Buenker claims that nonpartisan elections were adopted as an anti-Socialist measure. John Buenker, "Cream City Electoral Politics" in *Perspectives on Milwaukee's Past* eds. Margo Anderson and Victor Green (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

[64] Memorandum to Charles Nelson from John Boswell about Team Trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 6 November 1967 NAACD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library, 8.

In 1956 Omaha adopted a charter reinstituting a strong-mayor form of government. The original charter drafters, which included future mayor A.V. Sorensen, desired to establish a more professional, educated City Council. Initially, this may have seemed devastating to Omaha African Americans, who were disproportionally blue-collar workers and lacked formal higher education. However by allowing the mayor to appoint professionally qualified candidates without the approval of City Council, this actually opened the door for more progressively minded mayors, such as Sorensen, to appoint African American department heads.[65] However city council elections still remained at-large, resulting in no African Americans to be elected to the Omaha City Council or the Douglas County Board of Commissioners until 1981 when legislation was passed to make elections by district. Therefore, unlike Cincinnati and Milwaukee, if black Omahans wanted their problems addressed in Council, they had no African American councilperson to bring an issue up, they would have to take them there themselves, and were usually met with little to no support.

On October 22, 1964, founders of the civil rights organization Citizen's Civic Committee for Civil Liberties (4CL), Reverends Rudolph McNair and Kelsey Jones engaged in civil disobedience because the Omaha City Council refused to put the men on the speaker's list to express their support of open-housing. Despite the considerable public attention to the issue, none of the seven City Council members was willing to introduce the open housing ordinance, claiming that they were waiting for the Mayor's Bi-Racial Committee to propose it. However the Council was fully aware that the Mayor's fifty-eight person committee would not put forth such a proposition. As Reverend McNair sagely noted, the "Bi-Racial Committee is too large to

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[65] J.R. Daly-Bednarek, (1992) *The Changing Image of the City: Planning for Downtown Omaha, 1945–1973.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 125-126.

be effective…If you want to kill something, just appoint a lot of people so it will bog down." [66]

Reverend McNair observed a point that many in the municipal government structure were unwilling to acknowledge, by creating a human relations or civil rights committees within the city structures, mayors and city councils felt that they could ignore the protest of African Americans, choosing rather to have these committees handle the problem. However, these committees were often too large, too unfocused, or too unwilling to bring about actual change.

Human Relations Commissions

In 1944, Cincinnati became the second city in America, after Detroit, to create a permanent committee on race relations at the municipal level. The resolution signed by City Council on November 17, 1943, authorized the Mayor to appoint an independent committee representing racial, industrial, and local religious interests for the purpose of promoting "harmony and tolerance." Mayor James Stewart appointed 109 committee members, like Omaha's Bi-racial Mayor's Committee, Cincinnati's group was too large to actually affect change in politics. On March 17, 1965, the City Council of Cincinnati adopted an ordinance providing for the establishment of the Cincinnati Human Relations Committee (CHRC), replacing the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee.[67]

City Manager Walter Wichman thought the Human Relations Commission to be ineffective and "had a greater interest in air conditioning its offices and moving from space outside City Hall into the City Hall than it has on the substance of its concern." A Kerner

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[66] "Was 'Sing-In' Disturbance? High Court Hears Argument," *Omaha World Herald*, May 4, 1965;'Pray-in" for City Hall to Follow Rights Split" *Omaha World Herald* July 9, 1963.

[67] Cincinnati Human Relations Commission Annual Report 1977, n.d. Mss 774 NAACP, Box 69 Cincinnati Historical Society, 5. History and Organization of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission n.d. Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 9 Cincinnati Historical Society; Correspondence to Dr. Naomi Goldstein from Arnold Walker April 24, 1945 Mss 580 Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, Box 24 Cincinnati Historical Society.

Commission investigator observed while writing his report that acting Executive Director of the

Human Relations Council, Clint Reynolds proudly displayed a Peanut's cartoon in his office

showing Charlie Brown on the pitcher's mound with the caption, "We don't win many ball

games but we have some interesting discussions." When questioned about the significance of this

cartoon Reynolds agreed that it was a "singularly apt epigram" for his office and the

Commission as a whole.[68] The efficacy of Omaha's Human Rights Commission was no better.

In addition to Omaha's Bi-Racial Mayor's Committee started under Mayor James

Dwoark, the city also began a community-relations forum following the Watts' uprising.

However the group was so far removed from African Americans that they did not understand

their grievances. Mrs. Thomas Hayes vice-chairman of the board said "I don't think the majority

of the board members are in sympathy with civil rights problems….any time anything gets hot,

they start tiptoeing out." President of the NAACP, and member of the Bi-Racial Board,

Lawrence McVoy stated that blacks "bought a mess of pottage" when they accepted the creation

of the board. Responding to the 1966 uprisings, a time when the city was in desperate need of

open racial dialogue, the city council cut the budget of the Human Relations Board from $5,000

to $1,750. An aide to Mayor Sorensen confided that the City Council felt that the Human

Relations Board stirred up trouble causing the uprising.[69] Thus the agency set-up to address the

grievances of the black masses was downsized in the aftermath of the largest protest action they

engaged in.

At the end of summer in 1959, a group of African Americans attempted to interfere with

police who were trying to arrest a group of teenage girls on Milwaukee's North End. Fearing

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[68] Interview with William C. Wichman 21 September 1967, NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 3.
Interview with Clint Reynolds, 6 November 1967NAACD Johnson Presidential Library, 3.

[69] "Human relations Board Target of Two Blasts" *Omaha World Herald* February 26, 1965. Larsen and Cottrell, *The Gate City*, 274.

racial unrest was imminent; Mayor Frank Zeidler called an open meeting at City Hall. This meeting featured over forty-three black Milwaukeeans who presented the grievances of the Inner Core. Following this meeting Zeidler created several committees to conduct investigations on the social, economic, and political problems facing African Americans. The 1,200 person committee met for seven months and created the "Final Report of the Mayor's Study Committee on Social Problems of the Inner Core Area of the City." The committee completed the fifty-nine page recommendation five days before incoming Mayor Henry Maier took office.

Maier greatly resented the conclusions presented in the report and considered it an "idea-sack of miscellany, long on description and short on prescription." Underwhelmed by the specific prescriptions for the Inner Core, Maier desired a more comprehensive approach to African Americans problems stating "You do not solve social problems on a geographical basis. These problems exist in areas of the city besides the Near North Side." Therefore in lieu of finding targeted solutions to African Americans' problems, the provisional committee was not continued and the Mayor attempted to create city-wide solutions to the very specific grievances and need of the black population, completely missing the point of the original committee.[70]

The lack of political representation, the intentional creation of legislation to alienate African Americans from electoral politics, and the reliance by the Mayor's office and City Council on toothless human relations councils to solve racial problems, increased African Americans feelings of rising expectations and relative deprivation. By simultaneously preventing blacks from actively participating in the polity and enacting committees which promised but did not deliver change to the black community, African Americans were left with few options for redress.

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[70] Henry Maier, *The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous: An Autobiography* (Madison, WI: Madison Books, 1993), 38-40.

The failure of the human relations committees begins to hint at the depth of frustration and incompetence caused by white Midwestern mentality. It is best codified by genuinely instituted proactive measures, which fell woefully short of expectations. In turn there is a lack of understanding by the white majority of their complicity in such oppressive systems and that they are in fact directly responsible for African Americans inability to get ahead.

White Midwestern Mentality

Since this chapter focuses on the system in which the rebellions are a response to, the remaining section of the chapter focuses in defining a white Midwestern identity, which is a particular type of paternalism which simultaneously defined itself as progressive in comparison to the South but ignored the effects of discrimination and racism within their own community. Although the above markers characterized the relationship between blacks and the State/white majority throughout the United States, these elements were both exacerbated and reinforced by the white Midwestern mentality creating a political, social, and cultural context that was distinctive to the Midwest. This Midwestern political economy is defined by three characteristics: declining industry, quality of life inequity, and political inefficacy. These three attributes are all social/structural and could arguably characterize the black American experience in nearly every locale. Therefore what makes the Midwest unique is the addition of a white Midwesterner attitude coupled with the above structural considerations. This simultaneously created an environment which expected African Americans to pull themselves up by their bootstraps while disregarding the structural impediments to achieving uplift. Getting at this particular Midwestern attitude is difficult to codify numerically, therefore I address it anecdotally. The key subcategories of this mentality are: smugness, stemming from proactive

though albeit ineffective racial measures; pride, that their community is better than the South or major metropolises; and belief, that the diminished status of African Americans is due to blacks' own inability to take advantage of opportunities presented to them.

Smugness

As was seen in the previous section regarding earnestly implemented, but ultimately worthless human rights commissions, Midwestern politicians remained quite proud of their proactive solutions to race relations in their communities. This smugness enabled them to turn a blind eye to the persistent grievances of the black community and continue to provide piecemeal solutions. On June 25, 1963, Governor James Rhodes of Ohio issued the Executive Code of Fair Practices which set out to end discrimination by race, color, religion, or national origin for all public work agencies and state employees. The final declarations in the code, Articles 8 and 9, mandated that all state employees should be aware and post the antidiscrimination clause. Although newspapers referred to the executive order as a "sweeping executive order banning discrimination" the NAACP argued that it was "window dressing" little more than a re-statement of certain state laws dating as early as 1884. In their statement the NAACP asserted that "We are cognizant of the passive role played by Governor Rhodes in the recent struggle for the passage of a Fair Housing Law in this state. We know of the cut back imposed by his administration upon the budget of the Civil Rights Commission. We therefore refute all claims as to the worthiness of such an order." Similarly, Kerner Commission investigators noted that in Milwaukee although "Mayor Maier appears to be an energetic, hard-working 'liberal' in the traditional sense. As do most white liberals, he appears to resent the fact that his best efforts have not been

rewarded by content among Negroes."[71] Such toothless measures allowed Midwestern governments to remain smug about their proactive racial measures while maintaining a strict racial hierarchy.

This denial of real systemic problems in Milwaukee can be assessed in public opinion surveys conducted after the rebellion.   The majority of African Americans, regardless of uprising participation, cited unequal quality of life markers such as housing, police brutality and jobs as the catalyst for violence. The whites that were polled believed that the breakdown of social controls including outside agitation, rebellious youth, and lack of parental discipline as the cause of the uprising. Similarly the solutions offered by both black and white Midwesterners following the uprisings varied greatly. 84% of black respondents recommended more jobs as the solution for reducing future disturbances while only 35% of suburban whites responded similarly. Furthermore over 51% of whites residing in the central city felt that increased police power for stop and frisk procedures would help stop uprisings, demonstrating a lack of understanding to the actual grievances in the black community.

More telling is the level of perceived black and white equality in job and income opportunities. When prompted "compared to Negroes in other Northern cities, Negroes in Milwaukee have:" 59% of inner city blacks responded either better jobs or same kinds of jobs. Inner city whites responded 79%; however outer city whites, those that did not reside in the North end of Milwaukee felt that 89% of blacks had better jobs than in other Northern cities. Similarly, 52% of inner city blacks felt that Milwaukee African Americans earned higher wages than other Northern cities, while 86% of outer city whites felt the same. Finally, and most

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[71] "Gov. Rhodes Issues Executive Code Proclamation," *Cincinnati Herald* July 5, 1963; "NAACP Calls Rhodes 'Code' Farcical," *Cincinnati Herald* 5 March 1963; Memorandum to Staff from Henry B. Taliaferro on Milwaukee trip August 29, 1967; September 26, 1967 NACCD/E24 Johnson Presidential Library, 10.

interestingly, were responses to the question "In Milwaukee, a Negro employed at the same work as a white person would likely get:" 29% of inner city blacks, 7% of inner city whites, 10% of outer city whites, and 15% of suburban whites said less pay.[72] So despite the acknowledgement that African Americans in Milwaukee received unequal pay for equal work, Milwaukeeans smugly asserted that jobs and wages were better than other Northern cities, demonstrating their lack of understanding to the city's systemic racial inequities.

In addition to a regional sense of self, many smaller sized Midwestern cities felt that urban troubles were problems associated with major metropolitan areas. Civil rights activist Reverend Harold Hunt who had agitated in New York City prior to moving stated, "I think Cincinnati is basically very provincial in its outlook, having a tendency to say that they don't have problems, as stated by even many of the officials. They don't have any ghetto problems. It depends on who's defining the term." Nelson C. Jackson associate executive director for the National Urban League said that "Things are bound to move at a slower pace in Omaha and other Midwestern cities than on the east and west coasts. But I think Omaha is moving without the trauma of some more thickly-populated areas." This feeling that race relations were better managed in the Midwest helped to calm fears of urban unrest.[73] In addition to this reassurance of Midwestern cities own superiority to other major metropolitan areas, Midwesterners took great pride in the fact that they did not have the racial problems of the South.

Pride

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[72] Jonathan Slesinger, "A Study of Community Opinions Concerning The Summer 1967 Civil Disturbance in Milwaukee." Unpublished manuscript, April 1, 1968 ;10-13, 16-17. Accessed at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives.

[73] Deposition of Reverend Harold Hunt, January 8, 1968, NACCD/Series 28, Johnson Presidential Library, 3-4. "Race Strides 'Easier' Here," *Omaha World Herald* September 27, 1963.This historical holdover can also be seen in many contemporary historical monographs titles such as "This is Lawrence?" or Joel P. Rhodes, "It Finally Happened Here" in his book *The Voice of Violence: Performative Violence as Protest in the Vietnam Era* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001.)

Midwestern cities often held the South's racial strife up as a mirror to their own superior dealings with African Americans. In 1963, by a unanimous vote, the Omaha City Council adopted a resolution which rejected all recommendations for an open housing ordinance. One advocate of open housing, listed in the newspaper as Mrs. Warren Schrempp spoke to the body and said "The name of Omaha will start to ring with the ugly sound of some other cities, like Birmingham and Little Rock." Interestingly, although Omaha rejected an open housing bill and had a greater level of residential segregation than Birmingham in 1965, this activist was remiss to definitively compare Omaha with more well-known racist cities. Similarly during the Craft-Orme-Danner bill hearings to abolish Nebraska's law banning interracial marriage, State Senator Edward Danner remarked: "It is astonishing, when you come to think of it –and really quite scandalous—that a supposedly civilized state could live with such an uncivilized law for over a century. This is not Mississippi, after all; this is Nebraska." Finally, David Stahmer a member of the Educational Advisory Committee of the Human Relations Board said that in Omaha "at least we have a possibility of solving civil rights problems. This isn't so in the South."[74] The pride that the Midwest, despite its own shortcomings, was superior to the South led elected officials to think "it's not that bad" in comparison. What they neglected to understand was that for these protesting African Americans their feelings of relative deprivation was not in comparison to their Southern counterparts but rather their white regional peers.

Newspaper editor Ed Steiz described the dilemma that many Midwesterners faced "Sometime this year, Cincinnati awoke to a cold, hard reality: It faced a racial problem…And today, wiping the sleep of a century from its eyes, Cincinnati is asking itself, what's wrong?

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[74]"Housing Ace Voted Down," *Omaha World Herald* November 13, 1963; "Omaha and Birmingham Run Neck-And-Neck in Housing Segregation," *Omaha Star* February 5, 1965; "Negroes Becoming Too Satisfied," *Omaha World Herald* June 13, 1966.

Why are the Negroes protesting? Isn't all that discrimination and segregation the South's worry?" And, more frequently of late: What do the Negroes want?[75] Blacks wanted the opportunity to have fair employment, housing, and equal access to municipal services. However the problem remained, not only in Cincinnati but throughout the Midwest that whites felt that they were providing African Americans every opportunity to get ahead.

Belief

This belief, that black Midwesterners had every opportunity to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, is central to the Midwestern mentality and defining the region. The best place to determine this sentiment would be at the dinner table, the work place, or a local bar, anywhere white people casually gather and one could overhear their conversations. However I am not privy to this type of information, so to get at the feelings of whites' belief that African Americans were unwilling to pull up themselves by their bootstraps I look at the editorial comments in the major newspapers in the case study cities.   This perspective that blacks inability to get ahead despite the opportunities they were provided, allowed white Midwesterners to be more dismissive of black protest, which as we will see in the next chapter, resulted in the need for more aggressive protest tactics.

In a letter to the editor addressed to the "Negro citizens of Cincinnati," George S. Kopp, Sr. stated that his grandfather fought in all of the major battles of the Civil War to "free you from slavery and give you the opportunity to live and progress as free American citizens." He continued:

> Instead of trying to learn a trade and get and education so that you could take your place
> in society, you would rather listen to a few bell sheep who are leading you into violence

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[75] Ed Seitz, "The Negro in Cincinnati: Stop and Listen, Cincinnati, This is the Voice of the Negro," *Cincinnati Enquirer* September 15, 1963.

> with no respect for the law….Those Negroes who think for themselves are industrious, always have a job of some kind, get an education and keep their homes spotlessly clean, airy and well-lighted. They want no part of these agitators; they know a Negro has the same opportunity that a white man has… No, don't say the white man doesn't understand you and your needs. Some of us do; but we also know you have to work for what you want. Study, work. And you can have anything, live anywhere.

Therefore even a self-defined progressive white person had deeply misinformed ideas of the opportunities for African Americans in the Midwest. An Omaha woman, the wife of a railroad worker and mother of six admitted she was sympathetic to African Americans plight "but they're not willing to work for it. They want handouts without working for anything. If you give them a nickel, they want a dime."   A thirty-two year old truck driver echoed similar sentiments, "I've got nothing against the colored people as long as they know their place and stay in it…90% of them just don't want to work."[76] These three average Midwesterners came to their conclusions about black opportunity and employment from a place of observation not understanding. They observed that African Americans were often unemployed but did not acknowledge the social, political, and labor forces preventing black Midwesterners from obtaining gainful employment.

Besides the assumptions that African Americans were unwilling to work, many white Midwesterners felt that they best knew how to solve blacks problems, betraying their own racial and class biases. Mrs. Eloise Taylor of Montfort Heights suburb wrote that:

> We are quite sure the decent Negro citizens of Cincinnati are embarrassed and ashamed of their fellow Negroes. Those of us who happen to be white are embarrassed for them but more than just being embarrassed, we are shocked and puzzled…We know, for a certainty, of the plentiful jobs available. We know without question, of the employers begging for help-but dependable, reliable and honest help—and finding it very hard to locate. If the rock-throwers are doing anything worthwhile by day (even walking the streets looking for work) how do they have some much energy left for rioting by night? None of us could do it. We're too busy and too tired to march, much less riot! Why not put this tremendous energy to work in Uncle Sam's uniform—over in Vietnam, for instance?

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[76]George S. Kopp, Sr. "A Few Bell Sheep," *Cincinnati Enquirer* June 26, 1967; "Reporters Find Reactions to Negro Violence Varies," *Omaha World Herald* June 2, 1968.

It would be wrong to assume that white Midwesterners were the only bootstrappers. Many middle-class African Americans could not understand the chief grievances of working-class African Americans. In an editorial letter to the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in the days after the second uprising, African American A. Edgar Aub, Jr. quoted Abraham Lincoln, who he referred to as the "white man who originated the civil rights crusade to gain freedom and equality for the Negro."   Citing that "Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him work diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built."[77] Both Taylor and Aub acknowledge only the economic hardship that comes from being unemployment. They ignore the degradation, limited opportunity, and frustration that accompanies being at the bottom of a racial and social hierarchy.

Conclusion

As evidenced in the individual case studies, local conditions contributed to the difficult circumstances African Americans faced in each city. Rising expectations for a better life coupled with feelings of relative deprivation left black Midwesterners disenchanted. Labor organization discrimination and a declining industrial base closed off many employment opportunities for African Americans.   As a consequence of their race and class positions, black Midwesterners' faced substandard housing, inferior schools, inadequate recreational facilities, and frequent police harassment. Furthermore due to the Midwestern mentality, African Americans were blamed for their inability to overcome the numerous social, political, and structural impediments placed in front of them. With the promise of a better life in the North only half-fulfilled; blacks continued to agitate for a better quality of life. In the next chapter I

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[77] Eloise Taylor, "Puzzled" *Cincinnati Enquirer,* June 22, 1967; A. Edgar Aub, Jr. "Fruit of Labor," *Cincinnati Enquirer* July 2, 1967.

establish the failure of traditional avenues for protest and a growing sentiment that working-class African Americans needed to act in their own interests to bring about tangible gains. By outlining the political impotency of this group I demonstrate that the uprisings in Omaha, Cincinnati, and Milwaukee were not aberrant or senseless but specific responses to the local political economy.

Chapter 2: 'This Can't Be the Parade'

In the aftermath of the city's first uprising in 1966, an *Omaha Word Herald* reporter questioned one young participant on how he felt traditional civil rights leaders responded to the revolt. He summarized that leadership was "acting like the old drum major, standing on the corner as the parade came by saying: 'This can't be the parade; I'm not leading it.'" Similarly, Reverend Harold Hunt of Cincinnati noted on June 13, 1967 two days after the rebellions had begun that there had been increasing "dialogue between the leaders and those who think they're leaders." According to Hunt the community meeting revealed that established black leadership was "out of touch with the man on the street" and that those participating in the uprisings represented a new militant leadership in the community.[1]

These two examples expose that during the urban rebellions something new was at play, more complex than just racial angst stemming from inferior treatment. Contemporary observers and modern-day scholars often viewed the urban uprisings as a minor detour in an overall triumphant Civil Rights narrative.[2] I argue that these events were in fact an integral stage within the Black Freedom Movement. By focusing narrowly on race as the impetus of the rebellions, observers have ignored equally salient, but overlooked contributing factors: intra-racial class tensions, increasing Black Nationalist consciousness, and changing tactical approaches. The urban rebellions of the 1960s represent a transitional moment within the Black Freedom Movement, amplifying long standing concerns about class, tactics, and militancy in the community. While the Midwestern political economy laid the structural conditions for the

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[1] "More Apps. Than Placement Orders," *Omaha Star*, July 15, 1966. "Negro Cleric Hits at Some Leaders," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 14, 1967.

[2] Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*, 72. Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*. Countrymen, *Up South*.

uprisings; frustration with the strategy and tactics to counter this oppression caused working-class urban dwellers to view violent protest as an attractive, necessary, and viable option. I argue that three significant factors contributed to this psychological shift necessitating tactical change: black working-class disillusionment with middle-class leadership, a growing sense of black pride, and dissatisfaction with the pace of traditional Civil Rights protest.

I structure this chapter by first defining the terms "middle class" and "working class" in the black community context. Next I briefly discuss distinct trends of organizing within the Black Freedom Movement. Then I detail the development of working-class feelings of disillusionment, growing black pride, and dissatisfaction with the pace of the traditional Civil Rights activism in each case study city establishing these elements as the driving force between the Civil Rights and Black Power phases. Finally, I address the curious case of Milwaukee, which although the city experienced an uprising, the black community had not yet built the collective consciousness to make the uprisings an expressly articulated political event. By discussing Milwaukee as an outlier, I set the context for Chapter 3 which discusses the political nature of the uprisings.

Defining Class

In the context of the African American experience the designations "middle class" and "working class" can be particularly imprecise terms. This difficulty stems from the manner that racial prejudice affected the class structure in the black community. Glass ceilings, union discrimination, as well as impediments to higher education and industrial training severely limited African Americans' opportunities to climb the social ladder. At its broadest meaning

class is the relationship one group has to others, goods, and the amount of labor autonomy.

Sociologist William Julius Wilson stated that class is "any group of people who have more or

less similar goods, services, or skills to offer for income in a given economic order and do

therefore receive similar remuneration in the marketplace."[3] Although this begins to outline a

concept of class, Wilson's definition is limited because relatively speaking the black middle class

and black working class had "more or less similar" positions in the economic order.

To tease out the material and ideological differences between the black working and

middle classes, I utilize political scientist Michael Zweig's definition of class. He argues that

class is "about the power some people have over the lives of others, and the powerlessness most

people experience as a result." Zweig's definition moves beyond the shop floor stating that "to

be in the working class is to be in a place of relative vulnerability—on the job, in the market, in

politics and culture."[4] Therefore although black middle and working classes when placed in the

broader American context had similar opportunities due to the presence of racial discrimination,

at the micro-level the black middle class wielded significant power.

I define middle class African Americans as those who had both prestige and autonomy in

their occupations. This included not only doctors, lawyers, and entrepreneurs, but also teachers,

skilled operatives and social workers. These individuals often enjoyed steady, salaried income

as well as home ownership. Additionally, a key difference in middle class behavior stems less

from these markers of "wealth," but from the social structures in which they chose to be

members of including churches, neighborhoods, and fraternal organizations. Similarly, although

the black middle class lived in the same neighborhood as working-class blacks, they tended to

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[3] William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) ix.

[4] Michael Zweig, *The Working-class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2001) 11, 13.

cluster together in certain residential sections within the African American enclave. For example

in Cincinnati middle-class African Americans tended to live in the racially integrated section of

North Avondale, which was congruent with but apart from Avondale proper.

I define working-class African Americans as those with high employment instability. For

men these jobs usually included general labor or service work such as porters, waiters, and

unskilled operatives. For females in the Midwestern economy this often amounted to unskilled

factory labor or domestic work. But beyond a labor or social status understanding of class, it is

vital to look at the differences between black working and middle-class ideology. By

acknowledging the important differences in their placement in the political economy, perceived

opportunities, and feelings of efficacy, I can begin to tease out certain raced and classed

ideologies which ultimately informed individual's protest tactics and strategies.

Black Freedom Movement Approaches

Over nearly two decades the Black Freedom Movement took on different characteristics,

tactics, and strategies based on the needs of the principal participants. At its core, the goal of the

Black Freedom Movement was quite simple: better treatment for African Americans. However,

the implementation, definition, and approach to "better treatment" was anything but simple.

Better treatment often became a function of different understandings of activism as viewed

through a classed ideology. Malcolm X best described the interaction between class and

militancy in black America:

> When you have two different people, one sitting on a hot stove, one sitting on a warm
> stove, the one sitting on the warm stove thinks progress is being made. He's more
> patient. But the one who is sitting on the hot stove, you can't let him up fast enough.
> [The upper-class Negroes] aren't suffering the extreme pain that the masses of the black

people are. And it is the masses of the black people today; I think you'll find, who are the most impatient, the most angry, because they're the ones who are suffering the most.[5]

Black working-class feelings of impatience were fueled by distrust of the middle class, the perceived failure of traditional protest strategies, and a growing Black Nationalist consciousness. Thus the gradualist, integrationist approach espoused by many Civil Rights leaders led the masses of the blacks to feel desperate for a new tactic.

Historian Charles Tilly wrote that "instead of constituting a sharp break from 'normal' political life, violent protest tended to accompany, complement, and extend organized, peaceful attempts by the same people to accomplish their objectives." I argue that within the Black Freedom Movement varying protest strategies stemmed from the same feelings of dissatisfaction, but represented discrete tactical protest trends based on the current socio-political economy. A Kerner Commission reporter noted the relationship between dissatisfaction and tactical protest development in Cincinnati. He observed that "non-violent protest provided the initial impetus for a growing sense of community self-assertion and race pride. As the effectiveness of non-violent protest as a method… tapered off, a twofold movement toward nationalist sentiment and community development began."[6] Therefore the relationship between the uprisings and formal traditional civil rights organizing was one which occurred naturally, not only in Cincinnati but throughout the United States. Thus the urban rebellions are a part of the same protest spectrum not aberrancy.

Within the Black Freedom Movement three dominant strategies emerged, respondent not only to changes in the socio-political economy but also to changing perceptions of black

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[5] John Henril Clarke, ed. *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times* (Toronto: Collier Books, 1979), 155-156.

[6] Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective,"10. "Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 37-38.

consciousness. I identify these trends as integrationist, militant, and Black Nationalist. In their

final report on the June 1967 uprising the Cincinnati Police Department made an astute summary

of the major trends in the Black Freedom Movement and their inherent interconnectedness:

> a certain climate is requisite to a community before violence can occur. Our community,
> therefore, had such a climate. It did not transcend overnight from dignified and
> intelligent negotiations to breaking windows and setting fires. Like many other cities we
> first experienced the sit-in, the stand-in, the line-in and freedom marching. Petitions were
> circulated, committees became organized and expressions of discontent took as many
> different forms as there arose new organizations with different ideas.[7]

These ideas were not formed in a vacuum nor were they formed suddenly. African Americans'

tactical ideology was formed in conversation with and respondent to several factors including:

political disillusionment, Midwestern perspectives on protest, and finally growing black

militancy.

In part civil rights organizing strategy in the Midwest was able to transform through so

many iterations because of the long history of formal race-related organizing. Beginning as early

as the 1940s in Omaha and Cincinnati, protestors consistently adapted their tactics. Black

Midwesterners had nearly two decades of organizing experience as a widespread Southern

movement began to take shape. The development and evolution of these methods is partly

attributed to shifts in black ideology which allowed for the possibility of violence, in the shape of

the urban rebellions, to be viewed as viable protest action. Before I address these causative

factors it is important to understand the contours of earlier iterations of civil rights activism.

Trends in Civil Rights Organizing

In defining the strains of black protest I utilize portions of Michael Dawson's black

political ideology framework. In terms of this project I find his definitions of radical

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[7] "A report of the Riot in Cincinnati Ohio, The Week of June 11, 1967 by the Cincinnati Divisions of Police"
NACCD/E73 Johnson Presidential Library, 10-11.

egalitarians, disillusioned liberals or militants, and Black Nationalists particularly useful.

Dawson defines radical egalitarianism as an "optimistic" ideology typified by "a severe critique

of racism in American society, and an impassioned appeal for America to live up to the best of

its values." This type of ideological approach to civil rights organizing dominated the earliest

protest tactical approach in the Midwest, that of integration. These organizers supported a strong

central state, viewed capitalism as flawed but reformable, and believed that racism is a "vile

ideology that will disappear after vigorous debate and social action." Individuals sought out

alliances with like-minded activists regardless of race, and rejected the use of violence.[8]

In my case study cities this phase of activism is typified by those members of the

NAACP, Urban League and other organizations who agitated mainly through traditional political

and legislative means, as well as non-violent direct action. Each of these interracial groups

strove to force the public and private sectors to provide non-discriminatory access to all. These

individuals utilized persuasion as a way to coerce the power structure into meeting their needs.

This approach was best exemplified by the March for Jobs and Freedom in Cincinnati.

In 1963 local activists organized the Cincinnati March and Vote for Jobs and Freedom.

The organizations letterhead was emblazoned with red, white, and blue, featuring Uncle Sam

marching arm and arm with happy people. Their rhetoric was deeply steeped in dominant strains

of American ideology. At the top of their action plan they stated "No Known Communists or

separatists welcome." The organizers of this event included Al Bilik, President of the local

AFL-CIO; Reverend R. Isler Executive Secretary for the Cincinnati Council of Churches,

William Bowen, President of NAACP, Clyde Vinegar, Chairman of Cincinnati Chapter of

CORE, and William Berliner, Chairman of the Fellowship House. In total, 118 groups

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[8] Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003), 16-17.

participated, constituting a broad and biracial coalition of synagogues, churches, fraternities and sororities, and a number of other social, educational, and labor groups.[9]

The objectives of this march were quite straight forward. First the organization encouraged the city to establish a human relations committee, a fair housing ordinance, and a police advisory board. Second they demanded that African Americans must have proportional participation on all planning committees. The third category of their request covered the Cincinnati Police Department. They insisted on a completely integrated department and the abolishment of brutality and the use of police dogs. Finally the march sought to end all discrimination in employment and education.[10] These goals largely reflected a desire for black Cincinnatians to have full access to the rights of citizenship as well as the ability to have influence on the structures which affected their lives. However as this approach achieved fewer and fewer victories, activists began questioning the fundamental nature of racial inequality within the United States.

This next ideological approach is comprised of activists who Dawson terms "disillusioned liberals." He argues that these proto-Nationalists see America as "fundamentally racist; segregation is seen not as a goal, but as a stage which must be tactically planned for in the very long struggle for racial equality." Furthermore "Race is seen as *the* fundamental category for analyzing society and American is seen as fundamentally racist."[italics original] Thus these

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[9]"Supporting Organization of the March on Cincinnati;" "News Release: "ACLU Joins March in Cincinnati 9 October 1963;" "March on Cincinnati, September 10, 1963 tentative program" Mss 774 NAACP Collection, Box 5 Cincinnati Historical Society.   These groups were numerous as included the Cincinnati Herald, the Hillel Foundation at the University of Cincinnati, Jack and Jill, the Jewish War Veterans, the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee, the Negro American Labor Council, Cincinnati Labor Council (AFL-CIO), National Association of Social Workers, Printing Pressmen AFL-CIO Local 11, Xavier University Students, and both the YWCA West End and 9th and Walnut branches.

[10] "March on Cincinnati September 10, 1963 tentative program," Mss 774 NAACP, Box 5 Cincinnati Historical Society.

activists believed that white Americans had too much at stake or were too indifferent to racism to

be "reliable allies." Additionally, these individuals saw capitalism as a contributing and

fundamental part of racial inequality.   Proto-nationalists often looked to "circling the wagons"

in the black community to build enough economic and political capital to launch an effective

attack on the racist system. Despite the dissatisfaction with the state, "liberal, egalitarian,

democratic American values [were] still embraced to a significant degree."[11] This ideological

approach to organizing was championed by the Citizens Civic Committee for Civil Liberties

(4CL) in Omaha.

In June 1963 the Citizens Coordinating Committee for Civil Liberties (4CL) formed by

the Omaha Negro Ministers Associations was "born out of the realization for the need for united

action and along with the awareness that the existing structures have been ineffective and had

begun to exist without any appreciable number of citizens in support of their respective

movements." Using the ideologies of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), Martin Luther

King, and Gandhi, they set out to make changes in Omaha. In their five paragraph, 364 word

statement, they informed local blacks that "[we] have waited too long for the things which are

rightfully ours to be handed us on a 'piece-meal' basis." 4CL's issued a list of demands similar

to the persistent grievances of other organizations including fair employment, better housing, and

access to public accommodations. They also asked for equal police protection, distribution of

black teachers throughout the city, particularly in high schools, and a black head "OF OUR

CHOOSING" (emphasis original) on the Human Relations Board.

Initially the organization had outstanding success. They marched silently outside four

Safeway stores with placards reading "We Want Jobs Now." The company gave in allowing the

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[11]Dawson, *Black Visions*, 18, 21, 57.

leaders to make an agreement to add thirty-five jobs within forty-five days and an additional

thirty-five jobs within ninety days. S.S. Kresge Company, which would later become K-Mart,

hired eight black workers after a two-day demonstration by 4CL. The Hinky Dinky grocery

chain pledged to hire thirty more blacks in sixty days and at Schimmel's Indian Hills Inn workers

received a wage increase. Mayor James J. Dworak maintained a less than favorable opinion of

4CL: "As far as I am concerned the 4CL is non-existent. I haven't even heard of them. They are

not recognized by me or my office" effectively halting their protest efforts.[12]

The militancy in these groups coupled with a growing black consciousness paved the way

for a new ideological framework actively shifting the discourse on how African Americans

fundamentally understood the nature of racial discrimination. More importantly these groups

incubated feelings of Black Nationalism by inviting speakers to their communities who

championed this ideology. Dawson defines Black Nationalism as "support for African American

autonomy and various degrees of cultural, social, economic, and political separation from white

America." The most important element of Black Nationalist organizing was that it created a new

tactical paradigm for the black community. Federal Director of Investigations, M.C. Miskosky

noted that nationally organizations such as Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

(SNCC), Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) "by

their extensive proselytizing…made talk of violence or rebellion everyday fare in inner city

communities."[13] This progression of growing militancy incubated the urban uprisings.

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[12]Nick Kotz, "More Jobs in Omaha Firms for Negroes," *Des Moines Sun Register,* reprinted in *Omaha Star,* August 30, 1963. "4CL Schedules Meeting; Issues Purpose Statement," *Omaha Star,* June 21, 1963. "At Noon Friday 4CL Has No Contact with Dworak," *Omaha Star*, June 28, 1963.

[13] "Memorandum to David Ginsburg Executive Director and Victor H. Palmieri Deputy Executive Director from M.C. Miskovsky Director of Investigations Subject: Synopsis of Interim Report for Office of Investigations, 5 Dec. 1967" NACCD/E1 Johnson Presidential Library.

The rebellions were specific reactions to the changing tactics in the Black Freedom Movement. Sociologist Neil Smesler referred to these upheavals as a "wildcat strike" arguing that they were "a revolt of the ghetto rank and file against an established black leadership which, because of cooptation and other reasons, has failed to deliver the goods, and a form of direct action intended to communicate grievances and apply pressure on the white 'managers' of the ghetto."[14] In the following section I will describe the precipitating causes catapulting the black masses into a more violent form of protest based on their political disillusionment and marginal position as workers.

Political Disillusionment

Although both black working-class and middle-class individuals did not enjoy full access to American citizenship, the black working-class felt less politically efficacious due to their class position. Historian Kevin Gaines stated that "Black middle-class ideology cannot be isolated from dominant modes of knowledge and power relations structured by race and racism."[15] In essence black middle-class feelings of efficacy were established by white norms and these individuals held a great deal of confidence in the traditional political system due to their class position. In his fieldwork conducted in Newark six months after the 1967 uprising, sociologist Jeffrey Paige charted the relationship between these feelings of political efficacy and political trust. As indicated by the graph below high levels of trust and efficacy led to individuals who participated traditionally in the democratic system.

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[14] David Boesel *Cities Under Siege: An Anatomy of the Ghetto Riots, 1964-1968* (New York; Basic Books, 1971), 333.

[15]Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) xiv.

Trust		
	High	**Low**
Efficacy **High**	[Allegiant] Responsive/non-coercive, Democratic	[Dissident] Unresponsive/non-coercive, Unstable
Low	[Subordinate] Unresponsive/non-coercive, Traditional	[Alienated] Unresponsive/coercive, Totalitarian

Chart 1: Relationship of Trust and Efficacy to Political Orientation, Behavior of Regime, and Nature of Political System

Paige argues that both the "allegiant" and "subordinate" groups supported the existing political system and would be less likely to join any action "aimed at attacking them" such as an uprising. The alienated had "withdrawn from political life and would be likely to remain uninvolved during a riot." It is the dissident group, those with high feelings of efficacy and low levels of trust, who provided the critical mass for uprising participation. It is therefore important to locate where these feelings of inefficacy and distrust stemmed from based on one's perception of his or her place in the classed and racial hierarchy.

The belief in, or lack of, governmental trust influenced how people perceived appropriate measures to air grievances. Political theorist William Gamson distinguished three techniques which partisan groups used to influence authorities: persuasion, inducements, and constraints. Each of these methods directly tied to how individual actors saw themselves either within or outside of the formal political system. Persuasion involved individuals attempting to change the orientation of the authorities by presenting new facts and arguments. The employment of inducements provided individuals with power by adding some advantage to the authorities ranging from promised election support to outright bribery. Activists utilized negative repercussions to disadvantage the State. Such constraints ranged from political retaliation to physical violence.

Gamson argues that each of these techniques was associated with a particular level of trust in the authorities. Those who were extremely high on trust, who thought that even in the absence of influence the authorities will almost always act in their best interests, would be most likely to use persuasion. Those who felt neutral and believed that the chances of the authorities acting on their behalf were about even would be more likely to use inducements. Finally, groups which believed that there was little or no possibility that the authorities will act on their behalf had little to lose and relied on constraints."[16]

Individuals come to the decision to utilize tactics of persuasion, inducements, or constraints based on how responsive the government had been to their entreaties in prior situations. Therefore those in the black community who have received change based on persuasion or inducements are more likely to be in the traditional middle-class group, those that still have some political power to trade with the state. Those who were more willing to use constraints were politically the most powerless and disillusioned. More importantly as the black working class came to distrust the black middle class they were more encouraged to take up negative constraints to push forward their own agenda.

I argue that black working-class disillusionment prior to the urban rebellions stemmed from three intersecting concerns. The first was their political impotency, a function of both their race and class status. Second, was their dissatisfaction with tokenism, meaning they desired real political representation. Finally, many black working-class individuals felt that black middle-class leaders, who typically represented the only black voice to the establishment, did not accurately represent their interests.

Political Impotency

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[16] Jeffrey M. Paige, "Political Orientation and Riot Participation," *American Sociological Review* 36:5 (Oct. 1971): 812-813.

As previously discussed although African Americans technically had access to full participation in the democratic process, genuine change through that process was hard to come by, particularly for working-class African Americans. Black working-class Midwesterners were shut out of the system in many important ways. First was through the denial of entry in trade unions, often one of the most important entities to advocate for working-class people. This absence forced working-class African Americans to rely on formal politics and traditional protest strategies in order to make their grievances known.

African Americans' access to these official political mechanisms was limited by the State's use of gerrymandering and ineffective human relations commissions. When black citizens attempted to protest these conditions, either verbally or through non-violent direct action, they were often threatened, ignored or jailed.   In 1965 4CL leaders Reverends Rudolph McNair and Kelsey Jones attempted to speak in front of the Omaha City Council, but were denied the opportunity because they were not on the speakers' list. They then chose to make their presence known by singing the "National Anthem" and "We Shall Overcome" in which City Council promptly barred them from being in chambers. Similarly, the Cincinnati City Council barred all but Clyde Vinegar from addressing the group about better recreational facilities due to procedural considerations.[17] In the years preceding the urban uprisings, working-class African American protest became increasingly ineffective especially since those officially sanctioned "leaders" held menial or token positions.

The number of African Americans in actual positions of power was limited at best.   This paucity was exacerbated because black officials typically represented the upper echelon of the

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[17] "Was 'Sing-In' Disturbance? High Court Hears Argument," *Omaha World Herald*, May 4, 1965. "Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 12.

community. In keeping with the Midwestern mentality these few "leaders" provided the illusion

of equitable and actual decision making in the formal system. Additionally these individuals

held their positions of power by maintaining a vested interest in the current system and

remaining palatable to the establishment. Local militant activist Chaney Alexander in an editorial

letter to the *Cincinnati Enquirer* wrote "The Negro is beginning to see his real political

enemies…Cincinnati's Democratic bosses are determined to defeat any Negro for public office

who refuses to play the role of Uncle Tom for them."   State Senator Calvin Johnson, a Democrat

and the city's highest ranking black office holder, echoed Alexander's comments, "In the past,

the sole function of a Negro leader has been to serve the power structure as an informant."[18]

 In 1965, tired of middle-class leadership which did not represent their interests,

Cincinnati's working-class African Americans supported white AFL-CIO president Al Bilik in

his run for City Council. Although CORE was conducting sit-ins at the AFL-CIO office, over

trade union discrimination, the organization preferred Bilik over Myron Bush, a successful

African American lawyer who had distanced himself from the black community.[19] This token

representation was not limited to democratically elected positions but also to civil rights

organization leadership, which laid claim to being the "true" voice of the black community.

Many blacks felt that the leadership of certain organizations was woefully out of touch

with what the average African American needed. The Milwaukee chapter of CORE had its

charter revoked because of turmoil between local Chairman Cecil Brown and other members of

the organization. According to the Kerner investigators, Milwaukee CORE "was structured

along the lines of a social activist group which came into conflict with the national organization

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[18]Chaney Alexander, "Kiss of Death," *Cincinnati Enquirer* (Northern Kentucky edition) June 15, 1967. Gene Roberts, "Cincinnati Riots Laid to Isolation," *New York Times* June 18, 1967.

[19] "Second Trip Cincinnati-Team Interview Report" NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library.

policy of 'Black Power.'" In part this conflict was caused by Brown's interracial marriage to a white CORE staffer. [20]

The Kerner Commission also noted that the Cincinnati NAACP had "come to mean more as a 'status symbol' of middle-class aspirations then as a vehicle for effective protestation of grievances." One black informant continued this observation by stating that the president of the NAACP, Dr. Bruce Green was "about as welcome in the ghetto as the local police chief." In Omaha, community activist Dan Goodwin noted that local civil rights leaders were eager to protest in the 1963 March on Washington, but reluctant to participate in local actions.[21] Thus a disconnect remained between indigenous desires of the black community and what local "leaders" perceived. This led to extreme distrust for black middle-class leadership in the years leading up to the uprisings and which became fully solidified in the aftermath of the revolts.

Black Middle Class Disconnect

Many contemporary observers of the uprisings saw these events as only having racial overtones. Although undoubtedly these rebellions were informed by racial discrimination, the analytical category of class was equally important. For African Americans in the United States their collective interest was at times bifurcated along class lines. The collective stakes for solidarity among black working-class residents would be incredibly high if they had in fact been abandoned by middle-class blacks. An editorial from the *Chicago Defender* implies that in fact this had happened, "the Negro middle-class, which enjoys relative financial independence,

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[20] "Memorandum to M.C. Miskovsky from N.C. Rayford and H.L. Perry Subject: Organizations in the Negro Community Before, During, and After the Riot-Milwaukee 2 January 1968." NACCD/E2 Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

[21] "Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 37. Dan Goodwin of Omaha, interview by author, November 15, 2005. Hereafter referred to as Dan Goodwin Interview.

entertains a set of values and social concepts that are not identified with the fundamental

interests and aspirations of the black masses… Black power can do without black uncletoms

[sic]."[22] As black Midwesterners began to discover that traditional means of protest became

increasingly ineffective because of middle-class black leadership, an implicit and explicit change

of protest strategies occurred.   This change marked a gradual shift in consciousness, aligning

together in the prelude of the uprisings to create the context for the belief that violence was a

necessary and appropriate response to the lack of real political power.

In many urban centers traditional politics and political players had abandoned the

working class. These people then had to adopt working-class politics through violence. One

black slum-dweller stated that middle-class African Americans "have obtained a certain amount

of power and they don't want to rock the boat. They don't want to alienate the so-called white

liberal. They don't support us anyway." The Kerner report highlighted the class antagonisms on

a national level stating that the average rebel, "is extremely hostile to whites but his hostility is

more apt to be a product of social and economic class than of race; he is almost equally hostile

toward middle class Negroes." As Robert Vernon penned in his book, *Black Ghetto*, "Watts,

Harlem, Philadelphia, Rochester show that throwing a few scraps and bone of civil rites [sic] to

the Negro middle class does not solve the problems of class oppression."[23] These national

examples played out in a similar fashion in Cincinnati, Omaha, and Milwaukee.

Dr. Bruce Green of Cincinnati shows the difficulty of understanding even one's own social

position. Although Green became the subject of critique during the uprisings as a middle-class

sell-out, he himself expressed discontent with the middle class. He thought them as completely

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[22] "Black Middle Class," *Chicago Defender*, August 20, 1966.

[23] Stanley S. Scott, "Riots Not Over, Many Predict," *Chicago Defender*, September 13, 1966. Kerner Commission, 73-74. Robert Vernon, *The Black Ghetto* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969) 29-30.

inactive in Civil Rights issues and opined that, "the guy who is the middle class Negro really

hasn't thought too much about [discrimination in the building trades] …he doesn't care too much

about it." He also stated that his own activism actually hurt his practice. "Before I became

president I had one of the larger practices in town, composed of teachers—the intelligentsia…I

now have a welfare-type practice with few of the professional people coming to me because they

are embarrassed. They know I'm going to ask them, 'Do you keep up your membership?'"[24]

However Dr. Green failed to see that mere membership in the NAACP could no longer stave off

the tide of change in Cincinnati.

During a spring 1967 ABC television interview Dr. Green and others considered why

Cincinnati had yet to have an uprising. Green hypothesized it was because "the Negroes of

Cincinnati have adopted the attitudes from German heritage, they preferred a go-slow

approach."[25] Green's assertion reflects the two-pronged fallacy that black middle-class

leadership often held about the black masses. First, Dr. Green personified Malcolm X's stove

analogy, in that from his middle-class social position he felt that African Americans were

content. Second, Dr. Green mistakenly assumed that African Americans had adopted white

patterns of political behavior, ignoring the particular racial and class ideology black working-

class Cincinnatians held. Dr. Green's acknowledgment that black Cincinnatians adopted the

cultural attributes of the dominant, white majority is one that is explicitly tied to black working-

class feelings of political efficacy. Sociologist Harry Ransford polled black residents of Los

Angeles before and after the Watts uprisings shedding light on the relationship between class,

race, and political tactics.   Gathering information from the relatively middle-class and integrated

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[24] "Dr. Bruce Green Deposition" NACCD/Series 32, Johnson Presidential Library, 8.

[25] "Interview with Dr. Bruce Green, President, NAACP 1 November 1967 by Diane Phillips," NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 3.

area of Crenshaw as well as the predominately working-class communities of South Central and Watts, Ransford found that two intertwined ideological orientations; powerlessness and peripherality, influenced which tactics African American Angelenos used to agitate for equal rights.

Ransford defined the concept of powerlessness as the form of alienation dealing with an individual's expectations for control over his own destiny and the larger society. Peripherality referred to a condition of interracial marginality in which the minority individual is oriented toward the values of the dominant group and toward acceptance in this group. Ransford then divided his research participants in three categories of protest participation. The first he termed conservative civil rights activity, such as being a member of the NAACP but without a participatory role. Next, the militant civil rights activist, he considered those individuals who actively participated in non-violent direct action and other forms of inducement protest. Finally, he defined "violent" activists as those who participated in the uprisings, which he interpreted as a "spontaneous, direct aggression." Ransford found that conservative civil rights activists had low feelings of powerlessness (26%) and tended to be more peripheral. Conversely, uprising participants had strong feelings of low powerlessness (58%) and were less peripheral. Expectedly, militants occupied a space in between.[26] Therefore the level of powerlessness and peripherality, an indicator of class position, directly correlated with the specific tactics black Los Angeles residents chose to express their discontent with racial injustice.

Scholar Jack Bloom assesses the relationship between class politics and political strategies in the black community. "In the old system, accommodation became the dominant path

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[26]Ransford's final sample consisted of 85 respondents before and 312 after the rebellion. H. Edward Ransford "Isolation, Powerlessness, and Violence: A Study of Attitudes and Participation in the Watts Riots" *American Journal of Sociology* 73:5 (Mar., 1968): 581-591.

for black advancement. The prolonged period of white supremacy took its toll on blacks, who developed a sense of inferiority, the custom of acceding to white power, and a leadership that made its way by winning favors from whites." [27]   The irony is that part of the reason that African Americans began to have increasing feelings of black pride and nationalism stemmed from the victories that they achieved from the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore with the transformation of the black self and growth in black pride, a new moment came to pass in the Black Freedom Movement. In this moment, African Americans no longer relied on inducements, token leadership, and kowtowing to white norms as its dominant features.

Growing Black Pride

In July1963 Lerone Bennett reported in *Ebony* magazine that there was a "new 'Negro' mood." He described this new outlook on one level, expressed itself in a "go-for-broke" attitude and new militancy in the Southern struggles. On the other hand the new mood was also manifesting itself in "massive disaffection" and a growing "mood for blackness." Bennett continued "the dominant notes in the Here-Now-All mood are impatience with the slow pace of desegregation, frustration over continued deprivation and a healthy disdain for tokenism."[28] This growing black pride was the function of several factors including a new generation of youth born in the North, a growing discourse in Black Nationalism, and the aforementioned success of the Civil Rights Movement. These elements aligned to create a mindset where working-class African Americans began to think differently about themselves, their allies and their enemies.

New generation raised in the North

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[27] Jack M. Bloom *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 219.

[28] Lerone Bennett, "The Mood of the Negro," *Ebony* 13:9 (July 1963): 27-38.

In Cincinnati, African American resident Robert Washington sent his fifteen year old son out of town for the summer because of a general climate of racial unrest. He stated "The young ones can't take as much as the older ones…They're sick of being pushed around by police who break up street corner gatherings, who follow them and 'act antagonistic'…It's like you're not a human being."[29] Washington hit on the point that a new generation of black youths, born and raised in the North no longer held the temperate attitudes that their parents did. This Northern youthful lens through which African Americans viewed their predicament colored their approach to civil rights activism. An employee at the Community Action Commission in Cincinnati noticed that "Everywhere you go you hear [young people] say, "Man, somebody's going to be killed." To which the teenagers replied "Man, we're ready."

This more militant ideology was not only the function of young blacks understanding the world from their Northern perspective, but also the growing Black Nationalist discourse beginning to percolate through Midwestern cities. One young, black Milwaukeean named Victor stated that "Black power is something my father knew nothing about!" He then describes how his parents, transplanted from the South, engaged in day-labor and that his father felt that by moving to Milwaukee "he had given heaven to his family." Due to the relative comfort that Victor's father and men of his generation felt in the North they did not harbor the same feelings of dissatisfaction for the pace of the Civil Rights Movement. In concluding his thoughts Victor summarized "People like my daddy are not going to throw rocks."[30] For young Northern-born

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[29] Margaret Josten "Avondale Man Gives Version of 'Why of It'" *Cincinnati Enquirer* (Northern Kentucky edition) June 14, 1967.

[30] "Community Action Commission of the Cincinnati Area from Seven Hills" NACCD/Series 2, Johnson Presidential Library, 10. Helen Weber *Summer Mockery: Civil Arrest Study* (Shorewood, WI: Aestas Press: 1986), 43. Accessed at the Milwaukee Historical Society in the African American History manuscript Collection (MSS 1776.)

blacks the deprivation they felt was not relative to the Southern experience but rather to the standard of living and opportunity that whites were afforded in their own city.

Growing Discourse in Black Nationalism

Psychologists Nathan Caplan and Jeffrey Paige noted in their respective studies of uprising participants in Detroit and Newark, that rebels had strong feelings of racial pride and even racial superiority. Furthermore, Caplan noted that counterrioters ranked lowest on several measures of racial pride and that the uninvolved ranked in the middle, neither extremely high nor low. Additionally, 50% of the uprising participants and only 33% of the non-participants preferred the term "black" rather than "colored," 'Negro' or "Afro-American." Therefore those more likely to participate in the political action of an uprising had already internalized a positive black identity. Similarly, Caplan and Paige found that rebels strongly believed that all African Americans should study black history and African languages in high school.[31] This demonstrates that those who actively participated in the urban rebellions held a certain racial pride, which was often manifested in the targets sought out during the urban rebellions.

This growing discourse in Black Nationalism led African Americans to harbor severe distrust of those who were not black or did not serve Black Nationalist interests. Therefore to utilize traditional methods of protest was pointless, pushing them in the direction of a new political tactic. Additionally, for many African Americans in the Midwest their first encounters with speakers who were decidedly Black Nationalists came per the invitation of militant, proto-Nationalist civil rights groups. 4CL invited Malcolm X to speak in June 1964. There he delivered his "A Warning to White America" speech where he told the crowd of over four

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[31]Boesel, *Cities Under Siege*, 351.

hundred, "It's time to start swinging. The only thing that stops a man with a shotgun is another man with a shotgun." In Cincinnati, Tom Porter former chairman of CORE and founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), brought Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) to speak at Mt. Carmel Presbyterian church on April 29, 1967.[32] The militancy in these groups coupled with a growing black consciousness paved the way for a new ideological framework.

Emboldened by previous Civil Rights successes

The urban rebellions of the mid and late 1960s have been construed as a negative set-back in the struggle for Civil Rights. By positioning the urban rebellions as a detour in the Civil Rights Movement, scholars have ignored important functions that the urban rebellions actually served. I argue that the events were both a part of, and response to, the formal Civil Rights Movement. Sociologist David Boesel argued that "tactically, black coercive protest [uprisings] may be seen as a logical extension of some of the principles of the civil rights demonstrations— creating a crisis and using it as a means of negotiating with authorities; and its goal—full participation in American society—may be seen as an extension of the more narrowly conceived integrationist tendency in the black movement." Similarly, Jack Bloom argues that the small legal victories of the 1950s allowed African Americans to enter "the sixties with a sense of growing self-confidence and militancy." Bloom asserts that it was this feeling coupled with Northern indifference and reluctance to change that "that brought about the alienation that was manifested in black riots and in the ideology of black power."[33] Therefore the knowledge and

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[32] "4CL Explains Malcolm X," *Omaha World-Herald,* June 21, 1964. "Malcolm X Declares Anything Whites Do Blacks Can Do Better," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 1, 1964. "Negro Must Prepare to Defend Himself or Continue at the Mercy of Racist Mobs," *Omaha Star*, July 3, 1964. "Memorandum to David Ginsburg from M.C. Miskovsky Subject: Final Report of the Office of Investigations, 25 March 1968. Attachment Report of the office of investigations." NACCD/E1 Johnson Presidential Library, 61.

[33] Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*, 72. Boesel in *Cities Under Siege*, 332-333. Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement*, 220.

strength that came from winning important legal, political, and social victories in the South

reinvigorated Midwestern activists. However, in the heartland this renewed enthusiasm for non-

violent direct action met several roadblocks, including lack of a cohesive vision for strategy,

demands, and tactics.

Northern lens to view progress

In the months and years after the urban rebellions several scholars noted that in the

Northern metropolises the "new ghetto man" or "new urban blacks" could be found throughout.

As already noted many factors went into creating the psychological vantage point to which these

individuals understood their position in the Midwestern hierarchy prior to the uprisings. But

more importantly it affected the way in which these individuals defined progress. Scholar Jack

Bloom argued that rebels were "socialized in the North and were responding specifically to

Northern grievances, using Northern-engendered responses."[34] I argue that the Civil Rights

Movement and Black Power Movement were two distinct strategic periods within the Black

Freedom struggle because they featured two distinct generations of individuals who had been

conditioned and raised in various conditions impacting their worldview; the urban rebellions

became the crucible through which these distinctions transformed.

The grievances that Midwestern African Americans articulated were based on distinctly

Midwestern conditions. However these grievances alone were not sufficient to bring about

upheaval. The young men and women who grew up in the urban ghettos of the North and West

were much freer than those who had come before them. They had been socialized to believe

they were equal to whites. They were more inclined to perceive blackness as a positive attribute

and exhibited racial pride. As Bloom noted "this new generation of urban blacks was politically

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[34] Sears and McConahay, T.M. Tomlinson, and Nathan Caplan argued that these were "new urban blacks" or what Caplan called "the new ghetto man" Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement*, 201.

sophisticated and well informed. It felt capable of affecting policy." Therefore these feelings of

pride and efficacy pushed them forward to establish new agendas and protest methods. African

Americans in Midwestern cities set forth different measures for equality within their own local

communities. Social Theorist Gary T. Marx noted "the fact that the civil rights movement has

generally not worked within the framework of this subculture [working-class] is no doubt

relevant for the lack of involvement of some workingclass [sic] Negroes."[35] The Midwest

provided a space for African Americans to be working-class. Not the destitute peonage labor of

the South but a space where African Americans had some disposable income and pride which

stemmed from holding a job.

Concerned more with economic goals not social equality

That non-violent direct action began in the North much earlier than an established civil

rights movement in the South is often overlooked. Therefore many of the "hamburger" issues

that dominated the tactical strategy for the Southern movement in the early 1960s had already

been granted in the Midwest. By the time that non-violent direct action came to the attention of

the national media, African American Midwesterners had shifted their objectives from equal

access to public accommodations to measures of economic equality. Both sociologist H. Edward

Ransford and Gary Marx noted in their studies that "the civil rights movement is most relevant to

a rising middle class group of Negroes." This was because as William Julius Wilson noted "race

relations in America have moved from economic racial oppression to a form of class

subordination for the less privileged blacks." In their pivotal work *Black Power* Stokely

Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Charles Hamilton argued that it was a mistake to assume that "a

politically and economically secure group can collaborate with a politically and economically

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[35] Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement*, 203. Marx, *Protest and Prejudice*, 64.

insecure group… those groups accept the American system and want only-if at all-to make peripheral, marginal reforms in it."[36] Therefore by the time the movement came into full swing in the South, the objectives and goals in the Midwest looked very different.

To understand why certain, namely middle-class African Americans wanted to maintain the status quo, scholar Jack Bloom offers these considerations. First blacks have always been divided along class markers and those with a higher social rank were particularly vulnerable to any changes in the status quo. Bloom argues which was "all the more reason for their subjective insistence upon an exaggerated social distance separating them from poorer and (in their view) less cultured blacks." Bloom also stated that "While the demands of the civil rights movement were of benefit to all in the sense that they were a step toward the recognition of blacks as worthy of human dignity, it was primarily middle-class blacks, who were financially independent of whites, who led the assault and who were able to make use of its victories." Fourth, as the movement grew it drew in "broad layers of people' who began to influence its goals and tactics. He continued stating that "the fact that the black population was overwhelmingly lower and working-class in the 1960s meant that the black movement would inevitably have to champion their cause and to raise issues that would trouble middle class white America."[37] Thus when protest against racial and legal discrimination transformed into fundamentally shifting the American way of life, middle-class blacks and whites lost interest. Therefore the Black Freedom Movement needed to readjust its tactical frame to manifest the changing ideology of black

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[36] Ransford , "Isolation, Powerlessness, and Violence," 581-591. Marx, *Protest and Prejudice*, 224. Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Charles V. Hamilton *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992) 47, 61, 76.

[37] Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement*, 218-219.

participants and the growing reluctance of mainstream whites to participate in the new goals for equality.

Increased discourse and legitimacy of violence

One of the largest factors in the lead up to the urban rebellions was the increased discourse legitimizing violence. In Cincinnati, Stokely Carmichael addressed an audience of 800 stating "If we do not enjoy the benefits of this country, we will burn it down to the ground."[38] Although police investigators wanted to later charge him for inciting an uprising, Carmichael, the consummate orator, played to what he knew his audience wanted to hear; a violent, Black Nationalist rhetoric. However the possibility of violent protest was not only in the forefront of young African Americans' minds, but also the entire urban community.

As early as 1964, Mayor James J. Dworak speculated uprisings in Omaha were possible because the City Council "waved a red cape" in front of militant civil rights groups over the open housing issue. Dworak noted that disturbances had occurred in Rochester, New York, a community similar in size and racial composition to Omaha. Whitney Young, who headed the Omaha Urban League from 1950 until 1954, urged in a 1963 speech to the Omaha Chamber of Commerce that the city's power structure needed to "deal with" Reverends Kelsey Jones and R.E. McNair of 4CL. He felt that failure to do so would result in the coming to the forefront "of some waiting in the wings whose methods are more radical than those who are now calling attention to the ills and evils of discrimination currently hurting the entire community." By

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[38] Skolnick, *The Politics Of Protest*, 145. "Memorandum RE: Racial Disturbance, Cincinnati, Ohio June 1967" NACCD/Series 6 Johnson Presidential Library, 17.

December 1965, Norman L. Hahn of the Human Relations Board stated, "Omaha has a very explosive situation. I think any form of self-delusion is dangerous as hell."[39]

In a March 1966 article in the *Dundee-West Omaha Sun* local militant activist Ernie Chambers, remarked "a bomb is the only answer. Someone will have to blow up downtown Omaha to convince the white power structure that we mean business, that we are damn' sick of imprisonment in this stinking ghetto." When asked if a non-violent protest would be effective in Omaha, he replied "no, there is not enough non-violen[ce] left in Omaha Negroes to support such an effort." After a teenage boy was killed in police custody Chambers wrote a letter to the Department of Justice asking them to investigate the matter. "I hope it will not take a miniature Watts in Omaha to convince the Federal authorities that Omaha is a tinder box which is so volatile that a chance ray from the sun on a hot day could ignite it and produce a holocaust."[40] In both Cincinnati and Omaha, government officials, black leaders, and the community at large, felt that violence was not just plausible but imminent.

In an article entitled "The New Negro Mood," sociologist Roger Beardwood found that 43% of black respondents stated that blacks could not get what they wanted under the U.S. system. Furthermore 40% of respondents said that violence and rioting were necessary to achieve black objectives. Perhaps a greater precipitating factor was as the Cincinnati Human Relations Committee's report on the uprisings described, "the emergence of spokesmen in the Negro community who reject the normal discourse of petition for change." The report was quick

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[39] Woodson Howe, "Extremists Might Turn to Disorders," *Omaha World-Herald*, April 30, 1964. "No Harlem Wanted Here," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 29, 1964. "Those Waiting in the Wings Came," *Omaha Star,* July 8, 1966. Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen and the New Omaha,* 200.

[40] "We Demand Rights Now," *West Omaha-Dundee Sun*, March 3, 1966. "Letter from Ernest Chambers to the Department of Justice, 18 August 1967" NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

to note in the very next sentence that although these groups did not openly advocate for violence, the actively used "the fear generated by threat of violence." Finally, the report cited that there were "attempts to neutralize or eliminate leaders in the Negro community with less militant views."[41] This increased rhetoric of violence pushed the legitimacy of this tactic to the forefront of many African Americans consciousness, while those with more moderate protest tactics were becoming simultaneously less relevant and disregarded. Although the uprisings were not inevitable, the combination of a growing black consciousness, increased grievances, and feelings of inefficacy, caused African Americans, particularly the working-class to begin to consider alternative protest strategies. In many places by the mid 1960s violent protest became a reasonable weapon in the arsenal of reform.

The Curious Case of Milwaukee

Despite the nationally widespread belief that violence was an acceptable protest tactic, all uprisings were not equal. In the impressions sections of his investigation, a Kerner Commission researcher wrote that although there was a heightened racial climate in Milwaukee: "I had the impression that relations among the races there resemble those in other large cities five years ago…This impression may be present because of Father [James] Groppi. He is a white man leading a non-violent Negro protest. By comparison with other cities, this seems to be an anachronism." When Bernard Dobranski and John Boswell interviewed Frank Gibmle the first Assistant U.S. Attorney he noted "One problem that appears to be unique in Milwaukee is the

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[41] Roger Beardwood, "The New Negro Mood," in *The Negro and the City,* ed. Louis Banks, (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968), 37-53. "Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967 in D.C" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10 Cincinnati Historical Society, 15.

political immaturity of the Negroes." [42] Gimble did not mean this to be a slight on African

Americans, rather citing an example of the previous year's school board election, demonstrated

that African American protest in the city looked very different than it did in other urban locales.

In that election, all of the liberal candidates and the one black candidate were defeated

because the African American ward had the lowest voting turnout in the city. Worse yet, Gimble

felt that "There is no sign of a growing political maturity on the part of the Negro community….

The largest part of the Negro community are sympathetic to Father Groppi, but not willing to go

out in the street and march with him."[43] While in Cincinnati and Omaha black militants were

holding fundraisers with Black Power activists to build Black Nationalist institutions, in

Milwaukee blacks remained committed to a white clergyman, yet unwilling to march with him.

Although some scholars argue that Milwaukee was at the cutting edge of Black Power,

on the ground only the rhetoric, not the consciousness could be found. At the forefront of this

mischaracterization of the Black Power movement was the NAACP Youth Council's off-shoot

militant group, The Commandos. The group formed in 1947 found local and some national

notoriety for a variety of reasons. First, the paramilitary structure of their organization, including

providing ranks and titles to members based on their commitment to the organization. Second,

the group attracted attention because of their militancy, particularly in their sustained daily

marches in support of open housing. Finally as Charles King, a researcher for the Kerner

Commission observed: "The unique aspect about the Commandos is that whereas they

emphasize black power, they also emphasize integrated black power. Black power to them

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[42] "Memo to Staff from Henry B. Taliaferro Subj. Milwaukee trip 28-29 Aug 1967, 26 Sept 196" NACCD/E24 Johnson Presidential Library, 10.

[43] "Milwaukee, Wisconsin Team Interview Reports" NACCD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library.

means black or white people joining together to highlight the black man's problem."[44] Therefore the Milwaukee NAACP Youth Council functioned very differently than other self-identified Black Power groups in the United States who maintained a deeply nationalist, separatist, and radical perspective.

Despite their popularity, the Commandos were not the only activist organization in town. Both the NAACP and CORE had active chapters in Milwaukee, but the NAACP's activism was driven by the Commandos and CORE had been weakened due to "internal dissension and by the chapter's refusal to commit itself to militancy." Other local groups were also formed as militancy grew stronger in Milwaukee. Many of these were created by Reverend Lucius Walker, including the Organization of Organizations (OOO) to coordinate the activities of these militant groups. Other groups in existence prior to the disorder included the Milwaukee United School Integration Committee (MUSIC) under the leadership of State Representative Lloyd Barbee; Black Active and Determined (BAD), a student dominated group formed in 1967; and American Blacks Living Equal (ABLE) a relatively inactive protest group, formed in 1965 to protest police brutality and segregated housing. Many other small groups were present in the community, including a Friends of SNCC Chapter. Although not a dominant strain many of these groups sponsored African and black cultural programs before the uprising. However the elite guard of the Commandoes according to the Kerner Commission "remained the most influential."[45]

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[44] Interview with Father James Groppi by Charles King October 26, 1967 NACCD/E? Johnson Presidential Library, 3-4. Jules Modlinski, "Commandos: A Study of a Black Organization's Transformation from Militant Protest to Social Service" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1978.)

[45] Paid members of OOO as of Feb 1966, includednCentral City Improvement Organization, St. Martin's Priest Group, Christ Presbyterian Church, Northcott Neighborhood House Poverty Advisory Council, Marquette Faculty Association for Interracial Justice. Unpaid memberships included Citizens for Progress, Community Action Organization, COYO, Hillside Mothers' Club, NAACP Youth Council, Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, Laphan Park Organization, St. Boniface CYO, St. Boniface CFM, St. Boniface YCM, Sixth Ward Community Council, St. John's Missionary Baptist, Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist, Unity District. "Northcott Neighborhood House-Triple O Community Development Project Attachment: Re Membership" NACCD/E2 Johnson Presidential

Furthermore like other Northern cities at this time Commission observers noted that "There is some good Negro leadership, but community suffers from organizational competition, and consequently it has not been able to develop a strong coalition for the pursuit of common goals." One researcher noted that the terms "apathetic," "complacent," "disorganized," and "fragmented" were the words most frequently used to describe the protest climate in Milwaukee prior to the uprising. Furthermore he noted that "except for a Negro boycott of the schools to protest against intact bussing, there had been little to disturb the city's self-regarding slumber. New York, Chicago, Detroit, and other large cities had become accustomed to demonstrations and angry Negro demands." Moreover when Stokely Carmichael came to Milwaukee in 1966 black youths did not respond to him with "the enthusiasm that he had experienced in other cities; they did not seem to know what to make of him."[46]

This resilience to embrace a muscular form of Black Nationalism was also reflected in the allies that black activists chose to align themselves with. Dr. Larkey and his wife (who wore a Black Power button to the meeting with Kerner investigators) maintained "in Milwaukee there's still room [for white people in the Movement]—that if any kind of success can come of the efforts which they have been making, the room will still be there." Ultimately interviewer Tom Popp commented that the Larkeys were "'good' people, thinking, iconoclastic, straightforward types. But their involvement stems perhaps chiefly more from the satisfaction they get from 'being involved.'"

Library, 1-2. "Memorandum to M.C. Miskovsky from N.C. Rayford and H.L. Perry Subject: Organizations in the Negro Community Before, During, and After the Riot-Milwaukee 2 January 1968." NACCD/E2 Johnson Presidential Library, 3. "Memorandum to David Ginsburg from M.C. Miskovsky Subject: Final Report of the Office of Investigations, 25 March 1968." NACCD/E1 Johnson Presidential Library, 81.

[46]"Memorandum to Files: Re Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1 August 1967" NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library, 6. "Memo to Charles Nelson, Director Office of Program Operations from John Boswell Team Leader, Subj: Team Trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin 6 November 1967" NACCD/E51 Johnson Presidential Library 34, 37.

The interviewers offered a less than glowing assessment of Father Groppi, the white priest who served as the advisor for the Commandoes.   When the investigator reminded the priest that "many of his statements were more militant than black people utter" and questioned whether this caused conflict. Groppi retorted that he "did not consciously recognize this [that he acted and talked black], and he had no knowledge of when this transition took place, when he began improvising so strongly black that he began feeling black." The interviewer continued "Incidentally he stated that he felt the greatest compliment ever paid to him was when one of the white protesters against the march called him a 'white Nigger.'" He also stated that the only hope for white people is to understand black people's plight so deeply the he becomes in "essence a black man with a white skin."[47] The lack of cohesiveness of Milwaukee's movement, and their somewhat arrested development through the phases of the Black Freedom Movement to that of a genuine Black Nationalist ideology, prevented them from creating and articulating actual political demands in the aftermath of the 1967 rebellion.

Conclusion

The rebellions were specific reactions to the changing tactics and goals in the Black Freedom Movement. In the following chapter I will describe how these events fueled the shift from Civil Rights militancy infused with Black Nationalism to full on Black Power organizing. The Black Freedom Movement was comprised of several phases each responsive to a particular socio-political economy.   The early non-violent direct actions many of which began in the Midwest during the post World War II era by the mid-1960s had given way to a more militant,

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[47]"Milwaukee, Wisconsin Team Interview Reports," and "Milwaukee, Wisconsin Team Interview Reports-Revisit 10-31-67," NACCD/E51, Johnson Presidential Library, 5.

proto-Nationalist type of protest. However with time these marches, boycotts, and sit-ins were no longer viable protest options. The failure was not that activists no longer attempted to upend their lived conditions. The State no longer responded to protest; therefore more aggressive tactics were needed. These violent tactics first came about by more militant, Black Nationalist leaders coming forth, those that were willing to go to extreme actions to bring about change in their own communities. However like the traditional protest activities, these too lost their strength. Additionally, working-class blacks had to organize in their own interests. The uprisings became a reaction against the "system." Young African Americans, the majority of uprising participants, were able to express their grievances in an informal way against oppression and any symbols therein.

Black working-class people had already come to the conclusion that they had been not only systematically shut out due to their racial position but also due to their class position. The uprisings show the ways in which they fomented protest not only against an oppressive racial structure but also class structure. In the context of the urban Midwest, economic and race bias acted as co-conspirators. The discrimination that blacks felt in the North often manifested itself in more economic factors then out and out de facto segregation of the 1950s. However black middle-class leadership still oriented the nature of their own local struggles to mirror the Southern movement, lacking the vision of authentic protest for their own communities. The grievances demanded in the aftermath of the rebellions showed that blacks were not willing to completely jettison the American system. They demanded that the institutions that controlled their lives be controlled by people who looked and thought like them. This marks the core difference between the black working and middle class. The middle class typically wanted a world where they were included in a classed hierarchy, whereas working-class blacks had

already begun to articulate a Nationalist, proto-Black Power ideology that would create either parallel institutions run by working-class black people or altogether new institutions.

Through the use of violence as politics working-class African Americans, previously abandoned by the black middle class, had the opportunity to force the municipal government to be responsive to their needs. In the years immediately preceding the urban rebellions three factors directly contributed to this inadequacy making the Midwest particularly explosive. These factors included growing fissures between the black working and middle classes, growing militancy and proto-black Nationalist feelings, and finally the increasing failure of traditional Civil Rights protests. The aftermath of the rebellions marks an important transitional period in which African Americans unified by the uprisings, began to come together to codify what Black Power looked like in their communities. It is this ideology which begins to solidify in the rebels' minds, forever changing the strategic vision of the Black Freedom Movement. However the congealing of these factors in creating a new ideology was not enough to bring about actual change. Only in the fires of the urban rebellions could a new political order be forged.

Chapter 3: A 'Creative War': The Urban Rebellions As Political Protest

In a television interview on Milwaukee's *Crosstalk* program, civil rights activist and

State Assemblyman Lloyd Barbee shocked host J.G. Sykes with his provocative comments.

When questioned what he believed to be the next step in the Civil Rights Movement Barbee

responded:

> You talked about the creative war in Viet Nam, I suppose we're going to have a creative
> war here in Milwaukee…I feel the thing we witnessed this summer in the Inner Core, the
> thing the people call a riot—I don't think [it] has been read and interpreted to the degree
> that meaningful efforts are being made to solve the problems. Therefore, the
> demonstrations will become less non-violent.[1]

Thus Barbee, a person with formal political power, acknowledged that the protest African

Americans manifested through the urban uprisings was unsuccessful. This failure stemmed from

the municipal government co-opting the rebellion for their own political gains and failing to see

the uprising as authentic black protest. Barbee therefore asserted that African American

Milwaukeeans would have to be more aggressive, creative, and ultimately violent, in order to

have their grievances addressed. However where Milwaukee failed to bring meaningful change

to the black population, Cincinnati and Omaha's first uprisings were moderately effective. The

key difference to how these three cities' fared rests in how rebels mobilized the urban revolts as

a political tool.

The many theories scholars have developed to explain the urban uprisings always have an

underlying political rationale at its core. These can be divided into three main categories,

radical, liberal, and conservative. Radical theories such as a Marxist or internal colonialism

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[1] Transcript from *Cross Talk*, November 27, 1967. Milwaukee Series 44, Maier, Henry. Box 6, Folder 31, Barbee, Lloyd, 1967-71 University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Hereafter referred to as UWM Archives.

framework, argue that the rebellions were actual revolts against the superstructure and an attempt to overthrow the government. More liberal theories, best articulated by the Kerner Commission's findings, asserted that the uprisings were pointed, articulate grievances against the social and political economy of the United States. Finally, even the most conservative views of the rebellion, such as the notorious McCone Commission, showed that there were deeper political causes and consequence to the Watts uprising. Although then Governor Ronald Reagan considered the participants to be "lawbreakers and mad dogs" the Commission still acknowledged that Los Angeles' political, social, and economic environment "underlay the gathering anger which impelled the rioter." However unlike the radical and liberal approaches, the Commission and conservative theorists believed that "however powerful their grievances, the rioters had no legal or moral justification for the wounds they inflicted."[2] Thus despite the knowledge that the rebellions have always been read as political, the formal and informal political consequences, as well as the constitution of community political action have been overlooked.

Whereas I am indebted to the above theorists for locating the politics in protest, I approach this topic through a macro-micro approach. I argue that the political nature of the rebellions can be understood at both the broad political level (State v. community) as well as the personal level (individual political rationale.) I define political action as an individual or group of people desiring common goals and using specific mechanisms to coerce the power structure to acquiesce on such demands. Participants possessed a collective political understanding of oppression stemming from being at the bottom of a racial and class hierarchy. Additionally, a rebel's own perception of their place in the polity affected the nature of their participation. This

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[2] Robert Fikes, Jr., ed. *Racist and Sexist Quotations: Some of the Most Outrageous Things Ever Said*. (Saratoga, CA: R & E Publishers, 1992), 83. McCone Commission, 4.

chapter will discuss the macro level political nature of the urban uprisings whereas the subsequent two chapters will look at the political meanings of the rebellions for individuals. Finally, I distance myself from previous scholarship by looking at both the short and long term effects of the uprisings as political events which will fully be discussed in the final chapter and conclusion this work.

Political scientist Doug McAdam demonstrates how the urban rebellions of the 1960s could be read as a continuation of previous political jockeying and protest. He wrote that when traditional mechanisms for change are shut off "ordinary insurgents must bypass routine decision making channels" and thus use noninstitutional tactics. This shift occurred outside the established spheres of power, placing non-traditional political actors on parallel footing with the State. As I have previously demonstrated in urban America the black working class had been effectively shutout of electoral politics and non-violent direct action tactics were no longer effective. In order to coerce the government to address their grievances, the disenfranchised black working class needed to operate outside of these arenas of traditional power. In this particular historical moment, the new found arena was in the form of violent uprising, which McAdam describes as a "negative inducement." These negative inducements created an environment where the power structure and city could no longer function normally and thus the uprising became antithetical to the interests of the dominant class. These actions ultimately forced the elite to end the uprisings by either cooperation or suppression.[3]

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[3] Doug McAdam, "Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency," *American Sociological Review* 48:6 (Dec., 1983): 735-736.

Urban rebellions thus become political protests not only due to the consciousness that participants held, but also because the State responded as such.[4] As negative inducements, uprisings created a less than favorable environment for key stakeholders in the community. Businesses could not operate, deliveries could not be made, and the ghetto community temporarily shifted the pattern of control. Finally and perhaps most importantly in the context of heartland cities, the uprisings exposed that the smugness that white Midwesterners possessed in regards to their superior race dealings. This "tactical innovation" by blacks, in essence using a new violent approach to protest, forced the State to address the articulated grievances in order to bring back order and business as usual. However, uprisings could not indefinitely bring about the stunning type of change that the first occasions did because the State also adjusts. This "tactical adaptation" took away the power of uprisings. The give and take relationship between new strategies by black Americans and adjustments by the power structure are known as "tactical interaction."

In this chapter I use the key terms of tactical innovation, adaptation, and interaction to frame the macro level political discourse that took place during the urban rebellions. I begin this chapter by providing an in-depth description of the uprisings to demonstrate how these events began, escalated, and eventually tapered off. The rationale behind a narrative approach for detailing the violence is two-fold. First it allows a deeper "on the ground" understanding of rebellions. Second, I am able to highlight the commonalities and differences of the uprisings in each case study, so as to provide equal footing for subsequent chapters that analyze participation and efficacy. Beyond these factors, a narrative approach allows me to demonstrate how these

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[4] Meeting Notes from research team of Dr. Ralph Turner, Dr. Robert Shellow, and David Boesel 19 October 1967 NACCD/E38 Johnson Presidential Library, 3.

uprisings were a political process, including the tactical interaction between the masses, black leadership, and the white political class.

There are several similarities not only among the case study city uprisings but also with other rebellions throughout the United States. First, these events were racially motivated, participants often attacked white passerby and some whites made attempts to enter black communities with weapons. Overwhelmingly these events were racialized not interracial, and the majority of incidents consisted of property damage not personal injury. Second, although police brutality was the main trigger for the event, the rebellions were reactions to longstanding grievances in the black community. Third, the majority of properties damaged were strategic choices.   Rebels most often selected businesses whose owners disrespected African American customers or were symbolic of a racist, exploitative society.   Fourth, I discuss in the following chapters the decision whether or not to participate and the manner in which people partook was influenced by their age, socioeconomic status, gender, and confidence in the political system. Fifth and finally, participants or their agents presented grievances after the opening salvo, indicating that participants believed that uprisings presented an avenue for genuine change. In essence, participants and their supporters did not riot in vain.

After providing a brief description of each event, I then analyze specific actions in the uprisings as strategic political plays on each side. To do this I begin by looking at the political actions of uprising participants, particularly how they strategically targeted certain buildings and presented specifically framed grievances. Next I look at the power structure's response, or tactical adaptation, to disrupt the political nature of these uprisings. The political tools the State had at its disposal included the justice system to prevent additional uprisings (maximum fines,

kangaroo courts, city wide curfews); the co-optation of black leadership, and finally the most

powerful tool that they possessed, the mobilization of the National Guard.

The State's tactical innovation thus becomes the irony of violence as protest, ultimately a

rebellion becomes an act of diminishing political returns. After the first uprising the State began

to adjust and better respond to the uprisings and thus each subsequent rebellion received fewer

and fewer tangible gains. As sociologist Ted Gurr wrote "If political violence proves at least

partially effective in alleviating the initial deprivation, and not disastrously costly to the

participants in other terms, the process is reinforced."[5] Therefore the State had to become more

effective in their response to the uprisings to discourage people from rising up again.

Omaha's Rebellion (July 2, 1966-July 5, 1966)

Omaha's first uprising occurred over the Fourth of July weekend in 1966. Late Saturday

evening on July 2, a group of about 150 black youths, loitered in a parking lot owned by Safeway

Grocery and Skaggs Drugstore. At 12:49 a.m. on July 3, a neighborhood woman called the

police because the group of teenagers was lighting fireworks in the parking lot. Two policemen

driving in patrol cruiser #33 arrived at the scene to investigate, and the teenagers hurled cherry

bombs and rocks at the patrol car, breaking the rear window. Feeling threatened, the officers left

the scene to return later with reinforcements. Violence began at 1:00 a.m. as reports of police

brutality began to circulate among the crowd.[6]

The group began to disperse from the parking lot and poured onto the main business strip

of the Near North Side. Their pent up anger, frustration, and helplessness manifested in fires and

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[5] Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 170.

[6] "Safeway Rezone Request Held," *Omaha Star*, February 8, 1963. Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen*, 204; "Extra Police on Duty in Wake of Near Riot," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 4, 1966. "Violence Erupts Third Straight Night," *Omaha World-Herald,* July 5, 1966.

shattered glass along North Twenty-Fourth Street. Police gathered at a make-shift response post housed at a fire station located on Twenty-Second and Lake Streets. One hundred police and state troopers reported to the Safeway parking lot, and the youth began throwing rocks, bottles and stones in the direction of officers. Only minor injuries occurred save for one fifteen year old, Aaron Hall, who was shot in the leg by the police while fleeing the scene.[7] This general disorder continued throughout the weekend and crowds continued to threaten police entering the Near North Side.

At 12:30 a.m. on July 5, 100 police officers and state troopers moved to the Twenty-Fourth and Lake Street area to disperse yet another crowd that had gathered. Recognizing they were undermanned, the police immediately requested National Guard assistance. Under the command of Brigadier General William Bachman, the First battalion, 134th infantry, and the 867th Engineer Company, assembled at the armory at Sixty-Ninth and Mercy Streets.[8] These Nebraskan men, many not much older than the uprising participants, armed themselves with rifles, billy clubs and gas masks. Four additional National Guard companies, totaling five hundred men, remained on stand-by at the armory.

Bachman's forty-four troops left the armory at 1:10 a.m., arriving at Twenty-Fourth and Maple Streets at 1:40 a.m. The crowd teased the Guard with cat calls of "whitey" and encouraged them to "come and get us you white bitches." However there was no physical confrontation, because most of the youth had dispersed by then. For the participating youth, it

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[7] "Violence Erupts" *Omaha World-Herald,* July 5, 1966. "Guards Used After 3rd Night of Violence," *Omaha World-Herald*, July5, 1966; "4 Policemen and Unknown Number of Civilians Injured," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966.

[8] "Mob Tosses Bottles but Few Injured," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966. "Police Arrest 78 Adults, 44 Juveniles on North Side," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966; "HQ, Engineering Guards 1st to Get Call for Duty," *Omaha World-Herald,* July 5, 1966.

was one thing to taunt the police and another to face the National Guard with bayonets and drawn guns. Mayor Sorensen decided to keep the police and 128 Nebraskan National guardsmen on alert to break up any groups congregating on the corner of Twenty-Fourth and Lake until Thursday, July 7. Bringing in the National Guard seemed to help diffuse the violence, but the Urban League and NAACP, expressed their wish that the mayor would have consulted them prior to calling in the troops. An afternoon shower on Tuesday, July 5 quite literally dampened the rebels desire to take to the streets, effectively bringing the uprising to an end. But the rains could not wash away the deeper meaning of what happened.[9]

At the invitation of YMCA Director Sam Cornelius, Mayor A.V. Sorensen, Public Safety Director Francis Lynch, Coordinator of Public/Community Relations L.K. Smith, and one hundred young black men met at the North Side YMCA. This upset the NAACP who charged that Sorensen and Governor Morrison were listening too much to the youngsters and not enough to the established leadership in the black community. Moreover twelve moderate leaders were greatly incensed over information which was later published in the *Omaha Star*. The newspaper reported that while the older leaders were kept waiting for a scheduled meeting with Sorensen, the Mayor was in fact "hammering out recreation and job providing plans with a committee of the youngsters at a secret meeting in the Sheraton-Fontenelle Hotel."[10]

The young blacks aired grievances about police brutality, joblessness, and the lack of recreational activities, and the municipal leaders listened intently. The meeting was deemed a

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[9]"Violence Erupts," *Omaha World-Herald,* July 5, 1966. "Guard Finds Streets Quiet but Tense," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966. Larsen and Contrell, *Gate City*, 273. "Police Arrest 78 Adults, 44 Juveniles on North Side," *Omaha World-Herald,* July 5, 1966. "Flew Home to Help End Disturbances," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 6, 1966. Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen*, 205. "Officers Get Guard Help in Disorder," *Omaha World-Herald,* July 6, 1966.

[10]Larsen and Coltrell, *Gate City*, 272. "Labor Dept. Open North Omaha Office Today," *Omaha World-Herald,* July 9, 1966. "More Apps. Than Placement Orders," *Omaha Star,* July 15, 1966.

success and Sorensen was eager to meet again with the youth at anytime, day or night. The Mayor felt that there were two ways to deal with the rebellions. The first was "as some cities have done with tear gas and machine guns" which creates "an atmosphere of antagonism and hatred" or by dealing with the people involved. Additionally, he agreed that Omaha's civil rights problems could be solved "if every citizen, Negro and white, will accept his personal responsibility."[11] By the next day, the young leaders had developed a list of demands. They requested more educational training facilities, more recreational outlets, the immediate end to police brutality and abuses, more jobs, and the release of youths jailed in the disturbance.[12] Sorensen and the municipal government responded favorably to the demands instituting a number of recreational and job programs within the week.

Following the uprising the landscape of North Twenty-Fourth Street changed dramatically. Over the course of the weekend twenty businesses in the Near North Side reported broken windows, eleven of which involved burglaries. The following week the area of Twenty-Fourth and Lake looked like a ghost town due to the boarded up store windows. Before the rebellion, white people felt comfortable going to the Near North Side; now they avoided the area. The owner of a printing company lost 80% of his white clientele over the next month and planned to move out of the area. A Near North Side café lost 50% of its business. The Jazz at Allen's Showcase saw a 30% drop in attendance. Almost every business had to let go staff, and insurance rates skyrocketed, increasing between 40% and 60%, so that many owners needed federal insurance to supplement their policies. Other insurance companies said they were no longer able to write policies for the area, while some agents cancelled their clients' policies.

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[11]"We Demand Rights Now," *Dundee-West Omaha Sun*, March 3, 1966; "Police Arrest," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966. "Youth Tell Grievances," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966. "Mayor D____ ____ling of Riots; Calls for More Action, Less Meetings," *Omaha Star,* July 22, 1966. Title partially obscured on microfilm.

[12] "New demands after Tuesday Meeting," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 6, 1966.

Over the next year property values decreased between 20% and 40% and the landscape became

marred with metal grills on the windows of once lively storefronts. Skaggs management, in Salt

Lake City, decided to close their drugstore located on Twenty-Fourth and Lake Streets causing

twenty-five blacks to lose their jobs.[13]

Cincinnati's Rebellion (June 12, 1967-June 18, 1967)

By the summer of 1967 Cincinnati was in a heightened state of racial tension. In addition

to the long standing grievances of African Americans in the community, a number of incidents

augmented black Cincinnatians feeling of relative deprivation. On April 29, 1967 Stokely

Carmichael (Kwame Ture) spoke at a local church. Preparing for the worst, local law

enforcement officials arrived in riot gear and over policed the event. The first week in June also

brought the failed job fair, cancelled due to lack of industry interest.[14] These incidents reiterated

that African Americans had diminished employment opportunities and were subject to unfair

police practices. However the event that brought about the most ire and served as the catalyst for

Cincinnati's first uprising was the arrest of Peter Frakes.

Throughout 1966 Cincinnati was on edge due to a series of rape-murders of elderly white

women. Early in the spring of 1967, a thirty year old white secretary was murdered in the Price

Hill suburb. African American jazz musician, Posteal Laskey was arrested, charged, and

subsequently convicted of first degree murder. The jury recommended no mercy and asked for a

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[13] "Police Arrest," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966. "Discouraged North Side Business Man: Had Enough I Quit," *Omaha World-Herald*, August 2, 1966. "Board Fronts Show Sickness in Near North," *Omaha World-Herald*, April 30, 1967., Dahlstrom, *A. V. Sorensen*, 210.

[14] "Staff Paper-No. 7Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NAACD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library.

mandatory death penalty sentence, even though Laskey had not been charged with any of the other murders. The broader white public believed he was guilty of all of the crimes and thus the jury showed no leniency in his sentencing. In yet another example of inconsistency between the white and black justice system, later that same month a jury convicted white newspaperman for the murder of his mistress. Although the jury found him guilty, he was paroled. The African American community was incensed and actively protested Laskey's conviction.

One such activist was Peter Frakes, Laskey's cousin. On Saturday June 10, 1967, Frakes stood on the corner of Reading Road and Rockdale Avenue protesting his cousin's arrest with a sandwich board that read "Laskey Innocent, Cincinnati guilty." A crowd of about seventeen other blacks gathered and police dispersed the group only to have them return on Sunday evening. "Without benefit of advice" from a supervisor, a Cincinnati police officer arrested Frakes. Both local and federal authorities, aware of the tension in the black community, feared that any small incident could provoke a full-on violent uprising. The FBI felt that Frakes' arrest created "another martyr for the Negro community." Moderate black leadership, sensing that tensions were rising in the community in lieu of asking for a diminished police presence, actually asked for increased patrolling. This decision demonstrated yet again the disconnect between African Americans in leadership positions and the broader black masses. [15]

Black Cincinnatians' anger flared on Monday, June 12, when Frakes was convicted of loitering and disturbing the peace charges. Militant community leaders Leonard Ball and Clyde Vinegar convened a meeting on the evening of June 12 to discuss police brutality and strategies to protest it. By late afternoon local people began distributing "Soul Brother" signs to

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[15] "Summary Report, National Guard Assistance to Civil Authorities in Riot activities, Cincinnati, OH 13-18 June 1967 to Major General Erwin C. Hostetler 19 June 1967." NAACD/E21 Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2.

merchants.[16] This gesture does not necessarily prove that Cincinnati's militants pre-planned the

uprising rather it is indicative that the growth of black consciousness fed the desperation of black

Cincinnatians and that they were actively seeking out a new type of protest.

Before the meeting at around 5:45 p.m. small groups of African American teenagers

began preventing truck drivers from entering Avondale to make deliveries. They told the

scorned drivers that no deliveries would be made until the trucks were manned by black drivers.

Dr. Robert Reid recounted to Kerner Commission investigators that he went into the Lowmark

Drug Store on Burnett Avenue to inquire about the truck drivers being prevented from entering

Avondale.   Two officers had already arrived at the request of the owner. Dr. Reid walked in

when one of the officers was questioning the drug store owner, "What are these young nigger

punks doing?" When Reid asked the younger officer what he just said Sergeant Madgatt

answered quickly for him, "He said Negro." Reid convinced the youngsters to leave the drug

store and the police squad car began to follow the kids. As the youth left the store they told Reid

"Don't worry about it Doc, we'll take care of it," later that night during the disturbance the shop

had all of its windows broken.[17]

By 8 p.m. the audience at Vinegar and Ball's meeting at the Rockdale School lot had

grown to over 300 people. Cincinnati Police Department informers stated that the speeches were

"highly emotional and incendiary" and that Vinegar in particular delivered an "inspiring radical

speech." Non-violent civil rights activist Floyd Spencer then tried to counteract the militancy of

Vinegar's speech with a more "go-slow" approach in which the crowd shouted him down, threw

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[16]"Cincinnati Police Department, A Report on the Riot in Cincinnati, Ohio, The Week of June 11, 1967"
NACCD/E73, Johnson Presidential Library, 23.

[17] "Central Themes for Cincinnati" NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 6. "Memo to Charles Nelson from
Ira Simmons Interview with Dr. Robert Reid 9 Nov 1967" NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2. "FBI
Weekly Report-Cincinnati 16 June 1967, NACCD/E21" Johnson Presidential Library, 1.

him out of the meeting, and threatened him with his life. As the meeting finished there was excited activity in front of the Abraham Lincoln statue at around 9:40 p.m.[18]

Simultaneously as the youth left the Lincoln statue, a dispatcher received a call to Reading Road and Rockdale Avenue to investigate a fire started by a Molotov cocktail. Captain Joe Crawford aware of the turmoil beginning dispatched a Community Relations Section car with officers Sergeant Robert Johnson and Specialist Bobby Hill to evaluate the scene and one uniformed car for traffic control. Within minutes Johnson said the situation was under control and that no assistance was needed. Almost immediately he called back stating there were people throwing rocks at the cars from the school ground. At 9:52 p.m. a one alarm fire was reported at Sears and Roebuck on Reading Road and Lincoln Avenue. By 11:00 p.m. there was a total recall of all Cincinnati police officers. By 1 a.m. on Tuesday, June 13 violence had almost completely stopped and the group of about forty African Americans returned to their home.

When violence began anew on Tuesday evening, police were unable to contain the situation. After having a full day to prepare, Cincinnati Police changed their tactics by placing plastic helmeted police men at every intersection in Avondale. Fifty-eight slowly moving police cars also patrolled the area. The policemen were armed with yard-long maces and in some cases shotguns or rifles. At 6:30 p.m. police sealed off a five-square mile area, bounded by Victory Parkway, Washington Avenue, Blair Avenue, and Lexington Avenue. The Cincinnati Police Department in effect placed Avondale under martial law. However this tactical adaptation forced the rebels to again innovate and the violence that began in Avondale soon spread to other

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[18] "Memorandum to David Ginsburg from M.C. Miskovsky Subject: Final Report of the Office of Investigations, 25 March 1968" NACCD/E1, Johnson Presidential Library, 63. "Summary Report, National Guard Assistance to Civil Authorities in Riot Activities, Cincinnati, OH 13-18 June 1967. Sent to Major General Erwin C. Hostetler" NACCD/E21 Johnson Presidential Library, 2. "Memo to Charles Nelson from Ira Simmons Interview with Dr. Robert Reid 9 Nov 1967 NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 1." "Cincinnati Police Department, A Report on the Riot in Cincinnati, Ohio, The Week of June 11, 1967" NACCD/E73, Johnson Presidential Library, 17.

neighborhoods including Corryville, Evanston, Walnut Hills, Mount Auburn, Clifton, Norwood,

and the Laurel Homes area.   The situation remained out of control, so at 10:30 p.m. City

Manager William Wichman requested National Guard.[19]

On June 14, 1967 at 2:30 a.m. National Guard troops were deployed and patrolled the

region bounded by McMillan Avenue, Vine Street, Clinton Springs Street and Montgomery

Road. Initial troop commitments included roving patrols and protection of fire stations and

equipment. Both fire and police squads were integrated with military personnel. Roving patrols

on quarter ton trucks had three guardsmen and a police officer. One police officer and three

guardsmen were assigned to each police cruiser. Fire department escorts had one squad of eight

guardsmen mounted on a three-quarter ton truck, which accompanied fire trucks when they

responded to alarms. Finally four National Guardsmen were assigned to each of the six fire

houses in the affected area, which had been vacated for the personnel's safety.   The arrival of

the National Guard and this super-saturation of law enforcement practically eliminated violence

in the original disturbance area.[20]

On June 14 at 3:00 p.m. Mayor Walton Bachrach had an open council meeting which the

Cincinnati Enquirer stated "sounded more like a head-on collision as speaker after speaker

heaped abuse and criticism on the city and its history of relations with Negroes."   When Floyd

Spencer was about to speak, one youth John Poole (so identified by Police Lieutenant Thomas

Dixon) seized the microphone and asked for all those arrested to be released.   Then he and other

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[19] "City Acts to Avert New Violence; 24 Avondale Stores Damaged," *Cincinnati Post Times Star*, June 13, 1967. "Summary Report, National Guard Assistance to Civil Authorities in Riot activities, Cincinnati, OH 13-18 June 1967, Sent to Major General Erwin C. Hostetler on June 19, 1967." NACCD/E21 Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

[20] "FBI Weekly Report-Cincinnati June 23, 1967" NACCD/E21 Johnson Presidential Library, 1. 19 June 1967, "Memorandum to Major General Erwin C. Hostetler from Clyde E. Gutzwiller on Summary Report, National Guard Assistance to Civil Authorities in Riot Activities, Cincinnati, Ohio 13-18 June 1967." Ohio State Archives Series 1654: Box 50, 361. "Final Report Civil Disturbances Cincinnati, OH 12-18 June 1967 [to Major General Erwin C. Hosteleter from Clyde E. Gutzwiller, 1 August 1967." Ohio State Archives Series 1654: Box 50**.**

young blacks walked out. When Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth began to speak at the podium Clyde Vinegar burst into the room criticizing the police and National Guard presence outside the Council meeting. When Vinegar left, other African Americans walked out at a seemingly pre-arranged five o'clock time. As he departed he announced that his group would have another rally at Rockdale Avenue and Reading Road and that elected officials were invited to attend. The Council meeting ended in a stalemate and walk out because Black Power advocates resented the fact that the National Guard were in the corridors "seeing this as evidence of mistrust and another show of force."[21] The fact that two young activists interrupted established Civil Rights leaders demonstrated the waning respect for traditional leadership and that the rebels were not given the opportunity to present their grievances at the meeting. Despite the indications of a power shift within the black community City Council remained uninterested in hearing the opinions of young people. That evening a large crowd of African Americans wearing black t-shirts attended Vinegar's meeting, but no councilmen were present.

At 1:06 a.m., on June 15, policeman Thomas Dixon noted a number of "Soul Brother" signs affixed to cars parked on the streets near Winton Terrace, a predominantly black public housing complex, in the far northwestern sector of the city. The fact that in this community, nearly five miles from the original outbreak area, posted signs demonstrates two important elements of the rebellions. The first is that uprising participants changed tactics from Tuesday to Wednesday evening. Whereas Tuesday's activity was centrally located and participated in by crowds of people on foot, Wednesday's activity was characterized by small groups decentralized throughout the city. Second and more interestingly, is that African Americans in Winton Terrace

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[21] "Negroes' Anger Spills Forth in Council Hearing," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 14, 1967. "Community Action Commission from Victory Neighborhood Service" NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 6.

were aware that the rebellions would move outside of Avondale, demonstrating not only shared racial camaraderie but also some evidence of strategic planning by the rebels. [22]

By Saturday evening on June 17, the full force of the uprising had passed, and the State adjusted accordingly. On Sunday morning June 18, 1967 City Administration released the Ohio National Guard from duty. They were fully demobilized on June 19. In total the fire division responded to 338 reports of fire (122 false alarms) between June 12 and June 17. The estimated cost due to fire loss during the period was $1 million dollars. A Cincinnati Insurance Board Executive fixed the total insured loss at $2.63 million dollars, which included fire loss, glass breakage, theft, and auto damage."[23]

Milwaukee's Rebellion (July 30, 1967-August 4, 1967)

On Saturday night, July 29, 1967 the Milwaukee chapter of CORE sponsored a dance in Garfield Park. About 1,000 teenagers attended the dance, of which the majority was black. CORE director Cecil Brown asked two policemen who appeared at the dance to leave because they were disturbing the party-goers which their presence. As the dance ended, around 11 p.m., a fight started between two women. A crowd of 300 dance attendees were still present and when

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[22] "Cincinnati Police Department, A Report on the Riot in Cincinnati, Ohio, The Week of June 11, 1967" NACCD/E73, Johnson Presidential Library, 75-76, 83-85.

[23] "Summary Report, National Guard Assistance to Civil Authorities in Riot activities, Cincinnati, OH 13-18 June 1967, Sent to Major General Erwin C. Hostetler on June 19, 1967." NACCD/E21 Johnson Presidential Library, 5. "Memorandum to Major General Erwin C. Hostetler from Clyde E. Gutzwiller on Summary Report, National Guard Assistance to Civil Authorities in Riot Activities, Cincinnati, Ohio 13-18 June 1967" Ohio State Archives Series 1654: Box 50, 361. "FBI Weekly Report-Cincinnati 6-23-196" NACCD/E21 Johnson Presidential Library, 1. "Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10: Folder 5, Cincinnati Historical Society, 12.

the police arrived again they ordered everyone to disperse. As groups went home they moved down North Third Street and broke a small number of store windows.[24]

In the late evening hours of July 30, 1967 Sergeant Hubert Pschachler of the Milwaukee Police Department noted that crowds of several hundred blacks "had commenced a disturbance" in the black enclave. The uprising area in Milwaukee was bounded by West Walnut to West Locust primarily on and about the North Third Street area. In total the zone comprised a ten block business and residential area. The damage to the area was extensive including several fires and overturned cars, including one police vehicle. Additionally the Gimbels-Schusters department store, a multi-floor establishment on North Third and West Garfield Streets was set ablaze. In a FBI report, Inspector Kenneth Marple of the Milwaukee Police Department noted that a series of "apparently unrelated" disturbances had broken out along the black neighborhood on July 30, 1967. As time progressed these incidents increased in frequency and number of participants, with groups of fifteen to thirty travelling throughout the area.   Police created a blockade in the uprising area bordered on the north by West Capitol Drive, on the south by West Michigan Avenue, on the east by North Holton Street and on the west by North Twentieth Street. The disturbance increased in size when approximately 400 people left a different dance held at the recreation center on Fourth and Brown Streets in the blockaded area. Participants looted a number of stores that evening until about 4:30 a.m. when the rebels began to head home.[25]

During the late night hours on Sunday, July 30 small groups of blacks travelled down Third Street breaking windows at random, including those at the Black Muslim Mosque. At 1:26 a.m. Monday, July 31 the Police Chief called the Mayor and reported extensive window

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[24] "Reconnaissance Survey-Milwaukee" NACCD/E51, Johnson Presidential Library, 37.

[25] "Disturbance in Vicinity of North Third Street, Milwaukee WI, 1 Aug 1967) NACCD/E24 Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2.

breakage. At 2:00 a.m. that morning firebombing began. By 2:15 a.m. two policemen were shot. At 2:26 a.m. Chief Brier requested that the Mayor call out the National Guard. Mayor Maier responded to the rebels' "tactical innovations" by imposing a city-wide curfew at 2:35 a.m. and calling the governor's office on the recently established direct hotline to declare a state of emergency.[26]

By Monday afternoon July 31, an 840 square block area was sealed off by 750 local police, 250 State police, 950 National Guard. An additional 1,607 National Guardsmen were held in reserve. All roads in and out of Milwaukee were sealed off and the airport was closed. For the next twenty-six hours nobody was allowed in or out of the city. However at the roadblocks law enforcement officials allowed medical professionals, press, and emergency service providers to enter the city. Despite these measures, the second night of the disturbance resulted in one death (a black woman of heart attack), forty-one injuries including two by gunshot wounds, 121 arrests and ninety fires. As of midnight July 31, 1967, the National Guard had 2,357 men committed to the Inner Core area, either of active or reserve duty.

With the declaration of an official state of emergency all persons in the City of Milwaukee were required to disperse peacefully to their homes. All streets were closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. All bars, liquor stores, filling stations and petroleum supply points within the city were closed. The majority of shops, plants, stores and other business establishments were shut down completely. Anyone disobeying this edict would by guilty of a crime and subject to fine and/or imprisonment. The Mayor temporarily lifted the curfew from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. but only "outside of the inner perimeter disturbance area to allow citizens to conduct necessary shopping for personal needs." At 5:10 a.m. August 1, 1967 the

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[26] Henry W. Maier, *The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous*. (Madison: Madison Books, 1993), 65.

curfew was adjusted and between from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., residents could travel without restrictions.[27]

On Tuesday, August 1, the entire city police force was committed in the city and 4,084 National Guard were put in reserve. This massive show of force by National Guard and police effectively stifled the small uprising that occurred. Sniping and looting continued but at a diminished level. National Guard effectively dispersed 400 blacks and stopped six cars carrying armed whites from entering the rebellion areas. Seventy-seven fires were reported that night. On Wednesday August 2, black teenager, Clifford McKissick was shot and killed by police for attempting to firebomb a paint store. That evening only twenty-five fires were reported, and all were quickly contained.[28]

On Thursday, August 3, Mayor Maier again adjusted the curfew, lifting it at 5:30 a.m. to be reinstated at midnight. Armed police were put on rooftops and 760 National Guard were released from duty. Police arrested 121 individuals, mostly due to curfew violations. By Friday, August 4 the disturbance was over. In total, the uprising resulted in four deaths (three, including one police officer, from gunshot wound), over 100 injuries (including twelve police, six by gunfire) and 282 fires. In Milwaukee, destruction consisted primarily of window breaking and was widespread. Fire Chief James R. Moher stated that between July 30 and August 1 there were approximately twenty-one fires which the department considered as having been started by firebomb, but this was based on reports made to the department not on finding tangible evidence

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[27] "Memo to Staff from Henry B. Taliaferro Subj: Milwaukee trip 28-29 Aug 1967, 26 Sept 1967" NACCD/E24 Johnson Presidential Library, 6-7. "Disturbance in Vicinity of North Third Street, Milwaukee WI, 1 Aug 1967" NACCD/E24, 3-4. "Justice Department Weekly Summary Milwaukee August 4, 1967" NACCD/E33, Johnson Presidential Library, 1.

[28] "Justice Department Weekly Summary Milwaukee August 4, 1967" NACCD/E33, Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2.

or conducting an official investigation. Furthermore the Fire Chief stated that in actuality the

uprising only resulted in 75 fires, all of which were small. Maier said more than 1,500 arrested

and the city sustained a net loss of $570,000 attributed to physical damage.[29]

In lieu of an organic presentation of grievances by grassroots leadership, Mayor Maier

mandated top-down solutions to solve ghetto problems in consultation with handpicked advisors

from the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, a black, conservative, middle class

organization. Perhaps most disconcertingly, is that although working-class African Americans

comprised the main participants in the uprising, Maier insisted that his 39-point plan was "not

intended to help just one group, but to help all by making this a better city."[30]

Tactical Innovation as Politics

Urban historian Robert Fogelson astutely noted why white owned stores were frequently

targets of uprising participants: "Most whites and white institutions act at their worst in the

ghetto, and thus it is at their worst that most blacks perceive them."[31] Thus deep feelings of

resentment towards these business owners influenced decisions to target certain retail outlets.

Although certainly these owners were a part of the community in a broader sense of the word,

many militant blacks with a growing Black Nationalist consciousness saw them as outsiders, due

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[29] "Justice Department Weekly Summary Milwaukee August 4, 1967" NACCD/E33, Johnson Presidential Library,2. "Memo to Staff from Henry B. Taliaferro Subj Milwaukee trip 28-29 Aug 1967, 26 Sept 1967" NACCD/E24, Johnson. "Disturbance in Vicinity of North Third Street, Milwaukee WI 1 Aug 1967" NACCD/E24, Johnson Presidential Library, 6.

[30] Maier, *The Mayor Who*, 89.

[31] Robert M. Fogelson, *Violence As Protest: A Study of Riots and Ghettos* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), xv.

to their racial and class positions. This "othering" of white store owners demonstrates the

cognizance of the relative disparity between themselves and the merchant class.

In his master's thesis sociologist Daniel Joseph Monti, Jr. interviewed ghetto business

owners nationally to understand their "philosophy" of doing business. His findings confirmed

Fogelson's assertion. Of the sample pool, 35.8% of respondents agreed (20.5% strongly/15.3%

agreed slightly) of buying bargain goods at lower prices to sell them at a profit in the black

community. Additionally 60.7% of merchants agreed that blacks were "more apt to steal so have

to be watched especially closely" and that 82% agreed that "shops in Negro areas must be

especially burglar proof."[32] It is obvious that ghetto merchants had fairly negative opinions of

the communities that they served.

One of the root causes of these negative misconceptions, is white owner's isolation from

the black community. Sociologist Richard Berk found that only 24.9% of merchants lived in the

neighborhoods where they work. Of those merchants 54.5% of African Americans were most

likely to live in the neighborhood they owned stores in, compared to 14.2% of white merchants.

The median distance for ghetto merchants from their place of employment to their homes was

approximately ten miles. Another disparity between white and black merchants is in how they

saw their relationships in the community. 77.7% of black merchants had customers that they

would consider personal friends while "10% or less" of the white merchants felt this way.[33]

Thus this lack of genuine solidarity in tandem with inferior treatment of black inner city

residents often left certain establishments to be targeted repeatedly. In Cincinnati, rebels

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[32] Daniel Joseph Monti, Jr. "Collective Violence in Urban America, 1964-1969" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1973), 86, 88.

[33] Richard Alan Berk, "The *Role of Ghetto Merchants in Civil Disorders*" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1970), 55-56.

targeted Casuto's Food Store and the aforementioned Lo-Mark Drug Store multiple times in June

and July of 1967 and again in April 1968 following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King,

Jr. Youth pre-warned customers to leave certain stores in Cincinnati because they knew they

were going to burn them down. Alternatively, in Cincinnati fair white business owners were

provided with "soul brother" signs and escaped with no damage.[34] The locations that uprisings

participants vandalized often were strategic, and represented their feelings of economic and

racial marginalization. [35]

Another popular target during the uprisings was agents or items of the state. African

Americans expressed their dissatisfaction with police brutality and discriminatory treatment by

vandalizing post offices and police cars. In Milwaukee, police put large tape "Xs" on their rear

windshields, because uprisings participants specifically targeted cruisers to throw rocks at.

Rebels also targeted the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority administrative building in

the Millvale Public Housing project. There participants moved the office records to the middle

of the courtyard and started a bonfire. In the 1969 Omaha uprising participants set fire to the

United States post office, but established guards outside of community institutions such as the

Mothers for Adequate Welfare and the *Omaha Star* to protect them from accidental damage.[36]

The uprisings were not simply about destroying vestiges of oppression in the black

community, many people looted to obtain goods that they did not have. This reflects a class

consciousness that the majority of African Americans, and thus the majority of uprising

participants had a lower quality of life than their middle class black or white American

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[34] "Staff Paper-No. 7 Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NAACD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library**,** 57.

[35] "FBI Weekly Report-Cincinnati, 14 June 1967" NACCD/E21, Johnson Presidential Library, 1.

[36]"Riot in Millvale Reaches Threshold Of West Hills Area," *Western Hills Press*, June 15, 1967; "Panthers Defend Black Business," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 26, 1969.

counterparts, and wanted to have the same goods others possessed. The stores that were frequently looted often sold a wide range of consumer goods. The two types of stores rebels most frequently targeted sold either necessities that people needed but could not afford, such as diapers and groceries; or stores that sold items that they lusted after, but could not buy, such as new televisions. Thus grocery stores, furniture retailers, jewelers, and liquor stores became popular targets during the uprisings.[37]

Although participants actions spoke loudly of their dissatisfaction with the oppressive state that they lived in, what they explicitly articulated provides insight to how they wanted this discrepancy remedied. Fogelson provides incredible insight to the overwhelming sentiment of many participants in the 1960s uprisings. He argues that these activists desired to "alert America, not overturn it, to denounce its practices, not renounce its principles…they wanted a change in norms, not in values."[38] For many participants this change in norms meant that all Americans would have access to quality educational, labor, and recreational resources. The specific grievances and demands that uprising representatives made in the aftermath of the violent conflagrations, demonstrate a righting of the system, not a complete overhaul.

The manner in which negotiations took place in each community and the ultimate efficacy is a testament to the municipal political climate at the time. In Omaha A.V. Sorensen was willing to work with the youth which was reflective of his long term commitment not only to the African American community but also young people in general.[39] His willingness to meet with teenage

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[37] "City Acts to Avert New Violence; 24 Avondale Stores Damaged," *Cincinnati Post Times Star,* June 13, 1967.

[38] Fogelson, *Violence as Protest*, 12.

[39] Prior to becoming mayor A.V. Sorensen helped build the Gene Eppley Boys' Club in North Omaha in 1962 with a personal donation of $25,000. Many black citizens felt the establishment of the organization on the Near North Side was merely a campaign ploy. Sorensen responded that those comments hurt him deeply and that he could have

rebels in lieu of the established black leadership demonstrates that the relevant leadership, those who authentically could "speak" for the black community had changed. Alternatively Cincinnati consistently tried to play both sides of the leadership by hearing the demands of "grassroots" organizers but favoring traditional leadership because of their "go-slow" approach. Finally, as was typical with Milwaukee, Mayor Maier met with only established conservative leadership, even though more militant grassroots organizations continually petitioned him to be heard.

The articulated grievances and demands provide an important lens for understanding the community nature of the uprisings. These points simultaneously demonstrate a tri-level community political approach. First, it shows the common grievances of black America, particularly in the Midwest. Next, the grievances highlighted the issues most salient in each local community. Finally, by comparing the grievances made by grassroots organizations in Cincinnati and Omaha in comparison to the mandated "fixes" in Milwaukee, I am able to demonstrate how removed traditional black middle class leadership was from the concerns of the black working-class community. Furthermore the specifics of the grievances reflect a growing Black Power or proto-Black Nationalist ideology that had been largely absent in previous rights struggles. Thus the uprisings provided an important bridge between formal Civil Rights struggles and Black Power organizing. African Americans in fusing the goals of the Civil Rights Movement with burgeoning ideas of self-determination and community control, demonstrate that the rebellions represent a community in transition.

Omaha

been elected without the black vote. Proving his devotion to the Boys' Club, during his time in office from 1965 until 1969, Sorensen donated his mayoral salary of $17,500 to the Near North Side organization. As a testament to the importance of this organization throughout all of the disturbances the Omaha Boys' Club was never damaged. Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen*, 119-127.

In Omaha, the municipal government's response to the demands of the young rebels could be divided into three categories: police relations, recreational activities, and job training. Although the programs created helped to ameliorate immediate conditions they remained ineffective in altering long-term discrimination patterns. The city department of Parks, Recreation and Public Property and the Omaha Public Schools joined together to create a Police Athletic League. It was offered at the inner-city, predominately African American elementary and junior high schools of Horace Mann, Conestoga, Mason, and Indian Hills. Through this venue youth intermingled with the police in a competitive, but non-threatening manner. St. Louis Cardinal pitcher and Omaha native, Bob Gibson, helped in the baseball league. Operation Summertime also sponsored basketball clinics in the Near North Side in July for junior high and older boys. Bob Boozer, another local Omahan, professional basketball player and two-time all American instructed the young men.[40]

In total, Operation Summertime sponsored five additional new programs, including dances every night except Mondays and Wednesdays at the Elks Hall, and basketball clinics at the Near North YMCA with an outdoor basketball league to follow. A teenage hire out service also operated out of the Y; and a teen lounge and an information center located at the North Christ Child Center. In addition to these programs the city opened a teen center on the Near North Side located at the Blackburn building at 4514 North Twenty-Fourth Street. After the Blackburn center re-opened on July 9, it attracted an average of 524 patrons per night. The Boys' Club extended its hours until 10:30 p.m. and now remained open six days a week.[41]

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[40]"Basketball Clinics Start Monday," *Omaha Star,* July 15, 1966.

[41]"Announce 5 New Summertime Youth Projects," *Omaha Star,* July 22, 1966. "City Opening New Teenage Center on the North Side." *Omaha World-Herald*, July 9, 1966. "Basketball Clinics Start Monday," *Omaha Star,* July 15, 1966.

Mayor Sorensen appointed a fifty member "blue-ribbon" committee who offered both short and long-term fixes to improve recreation problems. The panel recommended that within two months there should be an increase in playground equipment and a better recruitment drive for the Boys' Club. Finally the committee suggested that by the end of 1971 the Near North Side should have one major park and twenty smaller recreational areas. The total renovation would cost six million dollars. Other suggestions included more "vest-pocket" playgrounds in vacant lots, converting the Safeway parking lot for community use, and increasing the frequency in which playmobiles visited the area. In addition to these solutions the committee also solicited community input including expanding the operational hours of the Boys' Club, developing Adams Park into an area with picnic spaces, and re-opening recreation facilities in the federal housing projects.[42]

The city also opened a play lot with a $500 grant secured by African American newspaper reporter Charles Washington and Human Relations Board chairman Norman Hahn from an "unnamed industry." Created by the newly founded People's Recreational Council, the park was located at Twenty-Eighth and Grant Streets and featured a slide, teeter-totters, swings, and merry-go-rounds. Charles M. Christiansen, Director of Parks and Recreation and Public Property, requested that the 1967 budget be $2,070,468, an increase of $139,796. His request included $293,148 for recreation compared to the $31,530 allocated in 1966 and $222,942 for other needs compared to the $38,444 available in 1966. These funds created a second summer

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[42]Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen*, 210. Woodson Howe, "21 at Initial Hearing on Near North Side," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 19, 1966. "Mayor D___ ___ling of Riots," *Omaha Star,* 22 July 1966.

day camp at Fontenelle Forest. The Hummel Day Camp filled to capacity with 2,500 campers an hour after applications were accepted.[43]

The final recreational solutions also addressed a second grievance that of employment. The city of Omaha hired five Near North side teens to inform other teenagers about activities occurring between 4:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. A.V. Sorensen also created the Mayor's Patrol, a group comprised of young black men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-nine who maintained order in the Safeway parking lot. However the group's name is somewhat misleading in that North Omaha business men paid their salaries.   Student municipal workers cleaned the Kountze Park area, and later an outdoor league sponsored games on the basketball courts.[44]

Although the projects in Omaha were innovative they were limited in the reach. This was largely because the initiatives provided temporary fixes to more systemic problems. For instance the downtown job training center opened at the Paxton Hotel was a mixed success. Hundreds of young African Americans came to be trained in the skills that had partially shut them out of the job market.   However the presence of so many young black males and females frightened area shoppers and led to complaints from the business community. Within the year, the site was shut-down due to pressure from major retailers. The Labor Department of Nebraska also established a North Omaha satellite office which was open seven days a week. Unfortunately this

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[43]"Announce 5 New Summertime Youth Projects," *Omaha Star,* July 22, 1966. "Recreation is Forgotten," *Omaha World-Herald* July 27, 1966.

[44] Dalstrom , *A.V. Sorensen*, 206. "City Must Keep Commitment, Says Cornelius," *Omaha Star,* July 8, 1966. "July 4 Disturbances Leaders Sum It Up," *North Omaha Sun*, July 14, 1966. "City Signs 200 Negro Applicants," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 8, 1966.

employment measure was not as effective as it should have been due to reluctance from the business community.[45]

Cincinnati

Despite the shortcomings of such initiatives, young Omahans were able to force the local government to create changes that affected their own lives. In Cincinnati beyond just the youth advocating on their own behalf, the creation and presentation of grievances became a collective community effort. In the Kerner Commission staff paper on the city the authors summarized the uprising by stating:

> The general picture which emerges out of the events of the week in the Negro community is of a process of rebellion—in which violence used by youth, tacitly supported by many adults—became a substitute for, as well as complementing, the more traditional forms of protest. While the use of violence was not controlled in a formal sense, the coherence and reciprocity involved in actions taken by different Negro leadership segments, and the hinging of actions on white response, gives the picture of a community in movement for collective goals.[46]

This approach thus brought widespread change to the Cincinnati community, but more importantly it allowed black Cincinnatians to develop a coherent set of objectives in how they envisioned their community.

On the morning of June 13 a meeting was held at the Cincinnati Human Relation Committee offices where a group of twenty-five clergymen and civil rights leaders, including grassroots organizers Clyde Vinegar, Bailey Tuner, Donald Spencer, and Peter Frakes attended. Reverend Harold Hunt, the group's spokesperson, presented a list of eleven grievances. Robert Weaver, President of the Evanston Business and Professional Association, said to the Council, "The time for empty promises is gone." Other members present but who made little contributions

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[45]"Job Corps Center to Expand," *Omaha Star*, July 8, 1966.Larsen and Coltrell, *Gate City*, 255, 274. "More Apps. Than Placement Orders," *Omaha Star*, July 15, 1966.

[46] "Staff Paper-No. 7Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NAACD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 46-47

included moderate civil rights leader Dr. Bruce Green who voiced no comments and Reverend

Richard Isler the local head of the Council of Churches, who later resigned. Reverend Harold L.

Hunt incensed that City Council placed the grievances presented on the back burner, assessed

that "Those who are called leaders and who are negotiating with City Hall are not in the

community with the man on the street and have lost contact with him." Despite the obvious

mass dissatisfaction with middle-class leadership, black leaders still believed that they

represented working-class black interests and would try to avert further violence. But they

needed "assurance from the City and from Police that they would do something about the things

that are bothering our people."[47]

In many ways Dr. Bruce Green became the fall guy and token example for black middle

class collaboration with the State. Dr. Green, the head of the Cincinnati branch of the NAACP,

received numerous threatening phone calls stating that if he spoke at the City Council meeting

that he should fear for the safety of his wife and children. Perhaps most tellingly of the

difference in status between Green and his constituency is that the doctor's maid first made him

aware of danger when she heard footsteps at the door.   Consequently Green went home and

vice-president of the NAACP Charles Collins made a statement on behalf of the organization.

This tension between grassroots and formal leadership occurred in shifts. In Cincinnati during

the day adult leadership in civil rights organizations would try to negotiate with white

authorities, while city authorities would issue threats against would-be rebels. However at night

[47]Cincinnati Police Department Riot Report, NACCD/E73 42-43. "Negroes Give Council List of Demands," *Cincinnati Post Times Star* June 13, 1967. "Community Leaders Invited to Meeting," *Cincinnati Post Times Star*, 14 June 1967. "FBI Weekly Report-Cincinnati 6-16-1967" NACCD/E21, Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

the "16 year old soldiers" exercised their own form of politics with the older men "staying in the background."[48] In the end it was the young men's grievances which the city tried to address.

The rebellions as political action is best exemplified in Cincinnati. Black community representatives made a total of three sets of demands, the longest of which was put forth by H. Rap Brown when he visited the community. The first set of demands articulated specific grievances that members of the black community endured but also prescriptives to ameliorate specific events that occurred during the uprisings. Of the eleven points for discussion, five dealt with police and community relations. Of the remaining grievances, four addressed economic concerns including employment for black youth, permanent employment for those unemployed, for lending institutions to lend money to blacks to buy currently white owned business, and for black truck drivers to drive the trucks in the community.[49]

Drafters of the document issued a series of demands entitled "short term goals." These consisted of items that local government could change immediately. This included the release of all prisoners, and that there be no juvenile records for those who participated in the uprising. Of particular interest in the second set of demands was the reference to the creators of the document as a "negotiating team." This self-defining as a legitimate agent shows that the rebels felt that they had a legitimate claim to make demands of the government and wielded real political power. The initiatives met the needs of working-class black Cincinnatians including "placing of a Negro in the City Manager's Office, who is acceptable to the Negro community, including the grassroots people." Additional demands included the passing of a local ordinance that would require a minimum of thirty days notice before any person could be evicted from a rented

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[48] "Interview with Dr. Bruce Green by Diane Phillips on 1 November 1967" NACCD/E43, Johnson Presidential Library, 5. "Staff Paper-No. 7Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NAACD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 46.

[49] "Cincinnati Police Department Riot Report" NACCD/E73, Johnson Presidential Library, Attachment #16.

dwelling. Thus the creators of this document not only saw themselves as representative of the black community in their usage of the term "negotiating team" but also by securing economic rights that Civil Rights struggles often overlooked.

Like Milwaukee and Omaha, the Cincinnati negotiating team requested the upgrading of black city employees and withdrawal of all city contracts with discriminatory unions. The team specifically demanded that all "delivery trucks in Negro communities [should have by] tomorrow…black drivers or <u>no drivers</u> at all (emphasis original)." This specific request demonstrates that the initial youth who blockaded deliverymen from entering Avondale, actually helped shape the demands by including the issues most important to them. The final demand and perhaps the biggest testament to black Cincinnatians feelings of alienation asked that "the City Manager make periodic tours in the Negro community, visit homes, and be exposed to the concrete elements present in the ghetto communities."[50] This assertion acknowledged that not only was the city manager out of touch with the lives and experiences of black people but also that the so-called representatives, did not adequately convey the struggle of the community.

Finally, it is important to discuss H. Rap Brown's (Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin) demands on behalf of black Cincinnati. Whereas the first and second rounds of grievances presented to the City Council reflect indigenous concerns by local people, Brown's contributions are obviously written by an outsider. In it he echoes similar broad themes that were not only relevant in Cincinnati but throughout the United States. Brown's grievances reflected his growing Black Nationalist framework desiring to "stock all libraries in black communities with history of black people" and that "any white proposal or white representative objected to by black representatives must be rejected automatically." Thus although rhetorically important these did not reflect the

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[50] "Cincinnati Police Department Riot Report" NACCD/E73, Johnson Presidential Library, Attachment #30.

specific needs of Cincinnati's black community. Brown was able to swoop down on Cincinnati,

from a speaking engagement he was attending in Dayton, Ohio to advance his assertion that

"SNCC had declared war" on America. Thus his submission of grievances reflected some of the

issues in Cincinnati but overwhelmingly he utilized the rebellion by as a political tool to push

forth own agenda. H. Rap Brown is but one example of an individual who although not an

uprising participant, mobilized the rebellion as a symbolic weapon.   No person was more

successful in turning a disturbance into his own political implement than Milwaukee's Mayor

Henry Maier.

Milwaukee

In Milwaukee a unified grassroots group called "Common View" met at the office of the

Organization of Organizations (OOO) and issued a five-point statement calling the uprising a

"reaction to the indifference projected by the white power structure." On August 7, 1967 they

submitted a list of recommendations to the Mayor. These aims influenced several spheres of

black Milwaukee life including housing, employment, education, police-community relations,

the court system, and recreation. The Common View group in the release of their document

spoke of their disappointment in the government stating "the white power structure continues to

ignore the need for meaningful communication with the black community. The structure also

refuses to recognize the long time, deep-rooted circumstances and inherent consequences of not

establishing plans and programs to resolve the situation."

The demands that Common View asked for represented the struggles that the black

community mounted against the State for years.   Under housing they demanded the inclusion of

black citizen involvement in city development and for unconditional support of fair housing

legislation. More tellingly of the grassroots initiatives that Common View advocated for, they

asked that one third of the representation to the Milwaukee Housing Authority (MHA) and tenant selection committee be made up of actual MHA tenants. Furthermore, they promoted better enforcement of sanitation codes, and the ability for tenants to hold their rent in escrow until conditions were improved in public housing. Their objectives for better employment also reflected a more working-class, every person focus. Common View sought out greater enforcement of nondiscrimination clauses in city contracts and better job training programs. Similarly, their educational demands reflected the desire for greater community control including more African Americans in administrative positions and for the Mayor to mediate the current dispute over integrated education.

In the realm of justice and law enforcement, Common View's demands reflected the concerns of a group of people who were constantly harassed by the police. This included the appointment of a black commanding officer for the predominantly African American 5th district. Additionally they asked that the Police Department reopen negotiations for Law Enforcement Assistance (LEA) grants to develop police-community relation programs. As with the housing concerns, Common View demanded representation on major boards including a joint citizen police advisory grievance system and an African American appointee to fill the next vacancy on the Fire and Police Commission. Their most forceful demand in this area was to "immediately suspend, without pay, all policemen involved in any questionable fatal shootings until the case is investigated and resolved." This appeal directly addressed the fact that the police officer who shot and killed Floyd McKissick was placed on administrative leave with pay. Common View also requested a black judge, a bail bond system which was less "excessive and punitive," and greater public defender rights. Finally, as with Cincinnati and Omaha, Common View requested an expansion of recreational facilities.

Previously, Maier depoliticized the uprising by refusing to meet with the rebels, thus

ignoring their role as political agents. Maier from the beginning doubted the authenticity of the

uprising, claiming that race relations were so sound in Milwaukee that black militants "had to hit

us," in an attempt to "embarrass him politically because of Milwaukee's interracial success."

Still members of the Mayor's inner circle willingly met with black activists. Julius Modlinski, a

social worker at Marquette University invited Paul Moynihan, the chair and Calvin Beckett,

executive secretary, both of the Milwaukee Committee for Human Relations to meet with a civil

rights coalition which included Father Groppi, Triple O representatives, and 150 local people. A

"Mr. Jesse" questioned the Mayor's absence, stating that "If the Mayor isn't coming, I'm going."

When Moynihan informed the group that the Mayor would not be attending, the chairman

adjourned the meeting.   Twenty participants left the venue chanting "We ain't gonna march no

more—we're gonna burn this town down."[51] By adjourning their meeting and rearticulating their

belief in violence as protest, the attendees gained back some of their political agency.

Reading Politics Through the State's Actions

Part of the reason Mayor Maier remained unwilling to attend the meeting Modinlinski

arranged was because he had already created his own committee of alleged leaders. After

consulting with prominent African American clergyman, Reverend Earl Parchia, Maier felt that a

biracial committee comprised of individuals appointed by the middle-class Interdenominatial

Ministerial Alliance constituted the best approach. Parchia exposed his commitment to the old

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[51] "Memo to Staff from Henry B. Taliaferro Subj Milwaukee trip 28-29 Aug 1967, written on 26 Sept 1967" NACCD/E24, Johnson Presidential Library, 9. Maier, *The Mayor Who*, 70-73. "Common View demands with Mayor's response" NACCD/E51, Johnson Presidential Library.

way by stating "[a Biracial Commission] was a worthwhile idea, since the current problem seemed to be emanating from leaderless persons who could not be reached by anyone, but who are enjoying the publicity and attention they were receiving."[52] Despite the previous existence of an independent group of concerned citizens, Maier called a two and a half hour meeting with the "so-called grass roots Inner Core residents."

At this meeting Maier exerted his control over the attendees by forcing the invited guests to show identification to two police detectives stationed at the entrance of the City Hall meeting room. Although the Mayor's office refused to provide a list of the attendees, the group was made up of middle class black representatives, including real estate operators, bar owners, barbers, and union officials. Since the meeting was closed to the press, what transpired can only be ascertained by invitees' comments following the meeting. A mayoral staff member disclosed that an informal show of hands to endorse the formation of a bi-racial committee appointed by the Greater Milwaukee Conference on Religion and Race, resulted in forty-four yeas and three nays.

John Jackson, a barber, left before the conclusion of the meeting. Frustrated with Maier's circular talking, Jackson told the press "He calls a group of core businessmen and he talks about the tax structure of the city and the city is burning down around his ears…[Maier spoke on] nothing germane to the riot, nothing germane to civil rights even. I think he's got pretty many of the people snowed because most of the people don't know the mayor as he really is—a con artist." When Maier saw Jackson talking with reporters Maier pointed at him and said "there's one of my dissenters. I only had three dissenters." Jackson a member of the Community

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[52] Maier, *The Mayor Who*, 74.

Relations-Social Development commission criticized the mayor for only appointing "middle class Negroes to boards and commissions."

Although he was the only person to be called out individually by the Mayor, Jackson was not the only dissenter. Ray Alexander, community relations director for the Northtown Planning and Development Council, did not even attend because "it is the usual approach of the Mayor to pick the people he will condescend to talk to…this does not appear to be a sincere effort on the part of the Mayor to meet with people of the community." Marsha Jarreau best summed up the experience when she said that the meeting was a "vague nothing" and did not consider the persons attending to be grassroots representatives, "I don't really come in contact with people who really have the problems—the kids tossing the gas bombs."[53]

Maier's apparent cluelessness in choosing of his advisory board was not unintentional. The Mayor had long been advocating for greater county, state, and federal support of the urban city. The uprising provided the rhetorical and political tool he needed to make further entreaties to these entities who could grant his wishes. Maier's co-optation of the uprising as a political tactic was reflected in the solutions that the committee submitted, known as the 39-point plan or "Milwaukee's Marshall Plan." The thirty-nine points constituted broad sweeping hopes, lacking focus, tangible action plans or the specificity of indigenously created demands. Of the thirty-nine points only six could be directly influenced by the Mayor. Even these proposals were nebulous: "The Mayor initiates ways and means to increase Negro employment opportunities." Additionally, four of the six mayoral initiatives included Maier asking the federal government for assistance. Milwaukee's mayor co-opted the uprisings, specific black working-class political protests, to advocate for his own pet projects.

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[53] "60 Inner City Residents, Maier Meet." *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 5, 1967.

According to the 39-point plan the responsibility to solve Milwaukee's specific urban problems, needed to be borne by a host of co-collaborators. These ranged from the local to the national. The Biracial Council was explicitly named to address two initiatives as were Milwaukee legislators (1), County government (3), City government (7), municipalities (2), Milwaukee's Common Council (2), and the Wisconsin state government (12). These suggested measures were toothless at their best and intentionally vague and optimistic at their worst. Point Twenty-Five asked that "the relevant parties revise FHA [Federal Housing Authority] and other home financing programs to favor and encourage low- and middle-income housing in all municipalities of metropolitan areas." Point nineteen demanded that "The nation step up federal programs to develop and improve open space and beautification projects in urban areas." The solutions that Maier and his council came up with demonstrate how out of touch decision makers were with the black community and how unwilling they were to address their actual problems. Furthermore, the approach Maier and the appointed council took would not provide immediate amelioration of ghetto problems. Such solutions would have to be mandated from on high and could be vetoed any number of times along the way. Moreover commiserate with the Midwestern mentality; the local government could remain smug due to its seemingly pro-active initiatives.

On Thursday August 3, Mayor Maier took out an ad in the *New York Times* entitled "A Statement of Concern about the Crisis in Our Cities." Thus in the midst of the largest uprising Milwaukee had seen and a mobilization of over 4,000 Wisconsin National Guard, Maier felt it vital to address a national audience. In the advertisement he restated his position that the "fight for [federal] resources must be won" to help central cities prevent the "formation of urban wastelands." The *Times* ad cost $2,218 ($15,000 in 2011) and although paid for by concerned

civic groups, the national press spot showcased Maier's commitment to becoming a first-class

Mayor, in the vein of Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago or Mayor John Lindsey of New York

City, and not in addressing the legitimate concerns of the citizens of Milwaukee. Furthermore, it

demonstrates how the uprisings themselves could not only be political tools for the rebels but

also for the municipal entities whom the revolts were a protest against.

In a series of television interviews "regular" black people noted that the biracial council

were not the best spokespeople for the black community. An unidentified man in his late

twenties, wearing a hat and sunglasses stated "they don't really know the common man, his

grievances, that is out in the street." An older black gentleman with a slight southern accent

stated that he felt that the Mayor's commission would fall short because "to better the condition

of the young folk…it seems like they wanted their own representative, a better representative."

One can especially see this indifference to bettering the condition of young African Americans

by not taking up the grievances that were most meaningful to them. When compared to the

demands indigenous leaders made in Omaha and Cincinnati, Milwaukee's 39 points did not

mention the issues most salient to black youth including the release of prisoners involved in the

uprising, the end to police brutality, and action steps for local leaders to focus on the specific

demands of the black community.[54]

Tactical Adaptation as Politics

The ways in which the State operated during the uprisings demonstrate that their

approach reflected a conscious decision to shut down not only the physical uprising but also

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[54] Maier, *The Mayor Who*, 74, 82-83, 87.

potential ideological uprisings. The first strategic political tool at the cities' behest was

incarceration. The second strategic political tool that the State had at its disposal was curfews

and the creation of riot zones. Finally the state responded to the tactical innovation of the

rebellions by employing the most potent response it had, the mobilization of the National Guard.

I do not wish to portray the actions that the State took as an overreaction; rather I acknowledge

these were simultaneously strategic and pragmatic. At this time, both locally and nationally,

communities were rife with rumors. In Cincinnati alone, "reliable sources" informed FBI agents

and National Guard leadership that a truckload of dynamite was going to be arriving from out of

town to destroy power stations and that gold T-shirt wearing Chicagoans came to agitate.[55] Thus

the State's adaptations had to be effective not only in stopping the uprising, but also to

psychologically deter participants from protesting in this manner again.

   The use of incarceration, although often temporary, served the State in two main ways.

First, it cleared the street of potential rebels. Second, incarceration discouraged others to

participate. By labeling those picked up as criminals and not protestors, the city was able to

relay important information to the black community on what was the responsible way to

participate in the polity. Although local government saw the grievances made by negotiating

teams as valid, they carefully noted that uprising participation was aberrant, and not an

appropriate way to address local problems.   A.V. Sorensen, one of the more progressive mayors

in dealing with the uprisings applauded the "literally hundreds of residents" that did not

participate and "continue[d] this fine expression of responsibility."[56]   By congratulating

"responsible" leadership this created fissures within the black community. Whereas black

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[55] "Final Report Civil Disturbances Cincinnati, OH 12-18 June 1967 [to Major General Erwin C. Hosteleter from Clyde E. Gutzwiller, 1 August 1967." Ohio State Archives Series 1654: Box 50. "Memorandum from Police sergeant Robert G. Johnson, Subj: confidential intelligence" Ohio State Archives Series 1654: Box 50.

[56] "Police Arrest," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966.

working-class protest was an effective political tool, it was looked down upon by the black

middle class as irresponsible. By deeming participants as "criminal," "marginalized," and

"reckless" black community members were discouraged from participating not only for

pragmatic reasons but also for psychological justifications. Individuals did not wish to be

arrested, fined, and serve jail time. In class consciousness terms they did not want to be seen as

low brow or criminal.

Additionally, the punishments for participating in the uprising were often more punitive

then they would have been under normal circumstances. On June 14, 1967 in the midst of the

uprising, Municipal Judge William H. Mathews warned that anyone convicted of a "riot-

connected offense" would get the maximum sentence. He made this announcement after

handing down $50 fines plus costs and thirty day workhouse terms to each of twenty-three

individuals who were convicted on loitering charges in the disturbance area. He defended these

harsh sentences by arguing that "Cincinnati is practically in a state of siege." On June 15 he gave

twelve participants year long sentences and $500 fines for violating the State Riot act. The

enforcement of the loitering law and rioting act was capricious, utilized as a catch-all to arrest

those suspects for whom little evidence was available.[57]

Another way that the State was able to tactically adapt was by criminalizing all members

of the black community through the establishment of riot zones and curfews. Therefore even

those not illegally engaging in the uprisings, residents could be arrested and arraigned on riot-

connected charges, just for being outdoors in their own neighborhood. Although explicitly

municipal government applauded the hundred of responsible citizens, such punitive arrests

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[57]"Chapter II/I Pattern of Violence and Damage" NACCD/E37, Johnson Public Library, 16. "Field Community
Tension Data Report-Cincinnati, OH 6-30-1967" NACCD/E32, Johnson Presidential Library, 1. Gene Roberts,
"Cincinnati Riots Spread to Prison," *New York Times* June 16, 1967.

tacitly sent a message of black criminality to the broader white community. Mayor Maier had

one of the most extensive riot curfews, remaining in effect for all twenty-four hours and lasting

two days. He only relented and lifted the curfew after the business community complained that

the inability of workers to get to their jobs cut down on profit and productivity.   Maier thought

the curfew was valuable for two reasons. First, police could contain the disturbances more easily

by focusing their attention on the uprising area. Therefore, instead of deciphering who was

criminally participating and who was coming home from work or the store, Milwaukee police

could round up everyone. It was then the responsibility of the court to decide if the person

would be arraigned on loitering or more serious charges.

 Secondly, Maier felt that the curfew had important psychological implications. When

the suburbs (which were all white because of residential red-lining) voluntarily implemented

their own curfews, Maier opined "there was a common identity in the metropolitan area…I hope

the experience could bolster efforts to achieve a greater metropolitan sharing of the poverty

burden in Milwaukee." Maier again used this rebellion suppression tactic as a way to push

forward his political aims. However, the police and National Guard mobilized in the black Inner

Core neighborhood. Therefore breaking curfew was not as punitive in the suburbs as it was for

black residents. Despite its small population, in total 1,700 people were arrested in Milwaukee

during the uprising, compared to 200 and 450 in Omaha and Cincinnati, respectively. Of the

1,700 people arrested during the uprising, only 193 were arrested for non-loitering offenses.[58]

The city of Milwaukee's ability to pick up such a large number of people was due to the

institution of a city-wide curfew, which made it a crime to be outside of your house for any

reason. The curfew, in addition to criminalizing African Americans who tried to get food or

other emergency necessities for their family, also served the important purpose of preventing

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[58] Maier, *The Mayor Who*, 70. "Conviction Count-Milwaukee" NACCD/E2, Johnson Presidential Library.

people from talking with one another to discuss the political meaning of these events. As one young woman noted "if we could have had some role in the community now, even after curfew hours, to mix and see what the man on the street feels and be able to relay it back to the city and the power structure."[59] Therefore, Mayor Maier's effectively depoliticized the events for African Americans and thus was able to frame the uprising for his own purposes.

No discussion of the urban rebellions, and the potential tools available to the state, would be complete without a discussion of the use of force in the community. In Milwaukee, Kerner Commission officials noted that several Inner Core residents remarked that "the only people in Milwaukee who rioted were the police. In Cincinnati, Police Chief Jacob Schott demonstrated the omnipresence of unpunished violence utilized against the black community. In response to the community's fourth grievance of police brutality and panic during the uprising, he stated that "for the police not to have used force could be likened to giving a carpenter a hammer and instructing him to build a house but not to use the hammer."[60] Schott acknowledged that one of the most effective tools the State had to suppress uprisings was the threat of physical harm with relative impunity.

In the anger stemming from the urban uprisings, police violence temporarily lost its threat. Many inner city residents faced this type of force on a daily basis and in a moment of rage and impulse, police violence was less than efficacious. In the case of Omaha youth participants taunted the police. In Cincinnati, a policeman allegedly used the butt of his riot gun to hit a young man who was trying to encourage a crowd to go home. Some jeered the officer for thinking himself tough for having a "big gun," stating that they had faced bigger guns in

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[59] WTMJ-TV outtakes, July 31, 1967 Accessed at the UWM Archive.

[60] "Cincinnati Police Department Riot Report" NACCD/E73, Johnson Presidential Library, 153, 155.

Vietnam.[61] Thus many municipal leaders tactically adapted by deploying the National Guard as the ultimate culmination of their power. When the police no longer physically intimidated participants the State called out the National Guard, converting black neighborhoods into militarized zones. The mobilization of the National Guard into black communities returned these areas into an occupied territory shifting the power dynamic of control back to the State. While the uprisings represented a temporary shift giving blacks control of black communities, the calling out of the National Guard reinstituted the status quo.

Conclusion

Traditionally the uprisings have been interpreted as careless violence without order or intention. I argue that in fact these events signified a tactical innovation for black working-class urban dwellers whose traditional forms of protest had gone unnoticed by municipal authorities. However these uprisings were not one-sided affairs. The State reacted to these tactical adaptations by innovating their own approaches, not only to stop the violence but also to respond in a politically savvy manner. The nature of the uprisings is thus read not only through rebels' actions but also the State's. Rebels demonstrated their political concerns by targeting certain entities and presenting specific grievances. The State exhibited their political influence by employing the judicial system, co-opting black middle-class leadership and the mobilization of the National Guard. Although the events represented politically overt protest within the municipal community, the uprisings also featured deeply held political overtones for individuals. In the next chapter I will go from the macro-level of the city to the micro-level of the individual

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[61] "Recount of Riots, 13 July 1967" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 7, Cincinnati Historical Society.

to determine the way uprising participation was directly related to one's understanding of their

personal place within racial, class, and gender hierarchies.

Chapter 4: Beyond the Rabble, Class Factors in Uprising Participation

New York Times reporter Gene Roberts observed that in the midst of Cincinnati's urban

uprising, just a few blocks north a curious thing was taking place. In lieu of joining the fray,

African Americans in North Avondale chatted outside watering their lawns sipping iced tea on

their porches. Roberts noted that: "Through it all, Negro homeowners in the area were as aloof

to the violence as were the whites in Indian Hill, one of the city's wealthier suburbs."   North

Avondale, an integrated neighborhood was populated by Cincinnati's black elite. Of the forty-

one black families that resided in the area, ten were school teachers, seven business executives or

entrepreneurs, six engineers, five professors, five health care specialists, and seven

miscellaneous professionals. In contrast, blacks living in Avondale proper were generally poor,

vulnerable to long periods of unemployment, and actively participating in the rebellion.[1]   By

pinpointing race as the only contributing factor, scholars can lose the nuance within the

uprisings. Class position within the black community was an equally salient determinant.

Many working-class African Americans felt that the middle class dominated Civil Rights

Movement had left them behind.   Working-class blacks needed to act in their own interests to

achieve social, economic, and political equality. This chapter demonstrates the many ways in

which municipal residents took part in uprisings. This participation was dominated by, but not

limited to, working-class African Americans. Both the black middle class and white working-

class contributed to these events. Ultimately, each of these groups' actions during the uprisings

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[1]Gary P. Kocolowski, "The History of North Avondale: A Study of the Effects of Urbanization upon an Urban Locality" (master's thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1971), 260.

was determined by the intersection of their race and class positions, interfacing with their perceived efficacy within the formal political system. By discussing the many ways, both legal and illegal, that individuals participated in the uprisings; I highlight the centrality of class within these events.

In this chapter I discuss uprising participation both at the group and personal levels. To analyze collective action I investigate participation in the Midwest focusing on socioeconomic and racial groups to identify trends in uprising involvement. At the personal level I look at individual arrest records in each of the case study cities to determine the motivations which compelled the rebels to take part in the urban rebellions. Consequently, in utilizing this dual approach I have uncovered the following general trends in Midwestern uprising participation. First, black working-class individuals were the most likely to participate criminally in the urban uprisings. Arrest records demonstrate that police arraigned the majority of these participants on property or public safety violations such as looting, receiving stolen goods, curfew, and loitering. Second, black middle-class individuals were more likely to participate as "counterrioters" and offer legal and financial support to those arrested. Finally, white working-class participants typically engaged offensively, threatening or physically attacking members of the black community. This white working-class participation foreshadows central assertions in the final chapter that the uprisings led to a retrenchment of white ethnic identities and conservative backlash politics.

Hallmarks of Working-Class Politics

Violent working-class insurrection peppers American history. Historian Paul Gilje wrote: "Rioting has been an important part of American history. Not only has there been an ever present level of some popular disorder, but violence has been instrumental in compelling political change and has reflected major social developments." Such examples include: the 1863 Draft Riot, a protest against a "rich man's war, a poor man's fight" following the National Conscription Act and the Amalgamated Association members and their wives engaging in a prolonged gun battle in 1892 when Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Carnegie's right hand man, hired 300 armed Pinkerton agents to protect scab replacement workers arriving by boat on the Monongahela River. Other labor riots occurred in 1919 when over 400,000 steel workers protested their conditions and the 1934 cotton and textile riots. Labor historian Robert Hunter wrote five years before the 1919 strikes that: "Riots, insurrections, machine-breaking, incendiarism, pillage and even murder were then more truly expressive of the attitude of certain section of the brutalized poor toward the society which had disinherited them than most of us today realize."[2] Class violence has been ever present in the struggle for equality in American history. It is in the context of this continuity that I investigate the commonalities within African American violent protest.

This bloody history serves as the progenitor for the urban uprisings. Although scholars of the 1960s revolts often made the connection between social position and violence as protest, none have placed these disturbances in the broader context of working-class protest behavior. The extensive literature on crowd violence as politics largely concerns itself with Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the United States in the revolutionary era. Historians included bread riots, peasant revolts, and coup d' etats as the objects of their analysis, but the

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[2]Robert Hunter, *Violence and the Labor Movement* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1914), 126.

modern day mob comparisons end with the labor protests in the inter-war era.[3] Despite the

prevalence and significance of working-class rebellion in U.S. history, scholars have not utilized

a labor violence analytical framework on the urban rebellions.

To demonstrate class consciousness' centrality to the urban uprisings I have developed

five characteristics of working-class politics derived from classical mob violence theory. The

first characteristic of black urban rebellions as working-class activism, and perhaps the most

obvious, is that the participants in the disturbance indentify as a working class.   Second is that a

democratic system is present in the city but the participants of the uprising feel impotent in

traditional political, economic, and social realms. The third and fourth considerations are that the

group believes that some tangible gain will come from political violence and that their collective

interest hangs in the balance. Finally, participants aim their aggressions towards perceived

outsiders. In that I have discussed the role of political impotency and belief in tangible gain in

previous chapters, I only briefly revisit these hallmarks. In this chapter I focus primarily on the

ways in which class manifested itself in the uprisings by focusing on individuals' participation

patterns and targets, highlighting how these events were primarily working-class insurrections.

Working-class Participation

The majority of individuals that participated criminally in the urban rebellions were

working-class African Americans.   In her review essay on urban rebellions, historian Heather

Ann Thompson astutely observed: "In short, poor African Americans rioted in the late 1960s

because of the severe limitations of the American response to poverty, political exclusion, and

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[3]Paul A. Gilje *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 177. Gerald Leinwand, *Riots* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), 106. Nelson Lichtenstein, Susan Strasser, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds. *Who Built America: Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society, 1877 to the Present*. (New York: Worth Publishers, 2000), 112-113.

racism in the postwar period."[4]   As I argue in previous chapters, this confluence of factors led

working-class African Americans to participate in widespread violent upheaval. In addition to

identifying the underlying considerations which made violent rebellion more appealing to

working-class African Americans, the demographic inquiries demonstrate that arrestees were

typically comprised of working-class individuals. The Kerner Commission described the

"average" uprising participant as better educated than the typical inner-city black resident and

likely "working in a menial or low status job as an unskilled laborer" facing frequent bouts of

unemployment. This section will look more closely at the demographic profiles of participants

in the urban uprisings in each case study city. In addition to understanding demographically who

these individuals were it is also important to note how they saw their own activism. By

uncovering the sentiments surrounding their participation I am able determine the significance of

African American working-class insurrections in the 1960s.

Throughout the case study cities a general participation pattern emerges. The majority of

participants were black males, approximately twenty years old, employed at unskilled or semi-

skilled jobs, and resided in the uprising city. The ones who I have record of participating, those

who were arrested, largely fit this profile. In the 1966 Omaha uprising police arrested 122

individuals, all but six of which were male. Charges for those arrested ranged from disturbing

the peace to disobeying a police officer, including unlawful assembly, malicious destruction of

property, fireworks violations, and vagrancy. A number of charges were dropped due to the

belief that many of the accused may have simply been in the area of the disturbance while not

actually violating the law. Of the adults arrested during the revolts, twenty-four of the seventy-

eight were unemployed. In Milwaukee police arrested 1,740 people, largely because of the

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[4]Heather Ann Thompson, "Understanding Rioting in Postwar Urban America," *Journal of Urban History* 26:3
(Mar., 2000): 399.

twenty-four hour citywide curfew that Mayor Maier imposed. Apart from curfew violations, the second largest number of offenses consisted of disorderly conduct, carrying a concealed weapon, and looting. Of the 235 individuals arrested on non-curfew charges, 221 furnished Milwaukee addresses making that over 94% of the total arrested population were residents. The nine who provided non-Milwaukee addressed lived in the immediate region including Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; and Mequon, Wisconsin. The remaining five arrestees did not furnish addresses. Clint Reynolds of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission reported that in total there were 404 riot connected arrests including 276 adults and 128 juveniles.[5] Even with such a rich source base as arrest records has limitations in illuminating the true nature of rebellion participation.

Uprisings by definition are spontaneous, unorganized, and short-lived. Due to the very nature of these rebellions, official records such as arrest blotters can be inconsistent. Thus the formal record is only able to provide a partial picture of participation. During the uprisings the primary prerogative of police officers and the National Guard was civil control. The most effective way to achieve this was by civil authorities clearing the streets of all people. Although these individuals were booked, charges against them were typically dropped. This was due in large part to the sheer number of court cases that would need to be heard, taxing both the District Attorney and Public Defender's offices. Finally, the majority of riot-related arrests were necessarily dropped due to lack of evidence for such nebulous charges as "loitering." For example, two Job Corps participants, Jerry T. and Kenneth K. from the Clam Lake Job Corps

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[5] "Police Arrest," *Omaha World-Herald* July 5, 1966. Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen*, 206 "Police Arrest," *Omaha World-Herald,* July 5, 1966. *"Justice Department Weekly Summary* Milwaukee August 4, 1967" NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library. "Disturbance in Vicinity of North Third Street, Milwaukee WI, August 1, 1967" NACCD/E24 Johnson Presidential Library, 6. "Conviction Count-Milwaukee" NACCD/E2 Johnson Presidential Library "Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967 in D.C.," Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10, 12.

Center were arrested in Cincinnati while standing in front of their hotel watching the disturbance. They were charged with unlawful assembly and curfew violation, but then later released.[6] Arrest and court records provide information on those who actively broke the law or disobeyed police orders, but not the scores of people who were not apprehended.

Despite their shortcomings, these records provide the most complete information on the economic, residential, and demographic profile of an individual demonstrator. I have utilized these resources to codify participation for Cincinnati and Milwaukee's arrestees. Original arrest records from Cincinnati and a pair of major studies from Milwaukee provide more insight.   To capture the type of activity that Omaha participants engaged in I rely primarily on newspaper reports and anecdotal evidence. Finally, in the interest of protecting the identities of those arrested, I have refrained from including their full names.

A government report compiled by the Kerner Commission provided one of the most comprehensive demographic profiles of those arrested during the uprisings in Cincinnati. The report noted that 276 adults were arrested (68.3%) and 128 juveniles arrested (31.7%). The majority (84.7%, n=342) of the arrestees were black and a significant percent (15.3%, n=62) were white.   Additionally the majority of the arrested were men (93.4%, n=376 male) with a small percentage of females apprehended (6.4%, n=26). Police apprehended the majority of individuals over the duration of the first day of the insurrection, June 14 (48.3%). Furthermore

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[6] William R. Morgan and Terry Nichols "The Causes of Racial Disorders: A Grievance-Level Explanation" *American Sociological Review* 38: 5 (Oct., 1973):612. Skura, "The Impact of Collective Racial Violence on Neighborhood Mobilization," 80. Gregg Lee Carter "Explaining the Severity of the 1960's Black Rioting: A City Level Investigation of Curvilinear and Structural Breaks Hypotheses" (PhD diss. Columbia University, 1983), 59. "Arrests of Poverty Program Enrollees in Recent Civil Disturbances 26 Oct 1967" NACCD/E37 Johnson Presidential Library, 1.

54.2% of those apprehended were arrested in their own neighborhood.[7] In Cincinnati, the

prototypical uprising participant was a young, black male resident of Avondale.

In his troublesomely titled book *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels*, historian E. J.

Hobsbawn noted that uprisings participants are "young and single or unattached, if only because

it is much harder for a man to revolt against the apparatus of power once he has family

responsibilities." In Cincinnati, 77% of arrestees fell into the age range of twelve to twenty-five

(n=214). Juvenile arrestees, those between the ages of twelve and seventeen comprised 17.7%

(n=64); 33% (n=119) of arrestees were between the ages of eighteen and twenty; and finally

26.3% (n=95) were between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five. Additionally only 20% of

arrestees were married. [8] As demonstrated by these numbers, Hobsbawn's observation of

participants in earlier incidents of collective violence holds true. The majority of participants

were young and unattached; having the freedom to participate in these insurrections.

The Cincinnati arrestees' employment demonstrates the particular vulnerability of the

working-class. Given that such a large percentage of the arrestees were juveniles nearly one-

quarter (23.5%) were students. Of the remaining arrestees 45% were employed and 20% were

currently unemployed. An additional 11% of arrestees did not disclose their employment status.

By analyzing race in conjunction with employment status the discrimination within Cincinnati's

industries emerges. Of the black males arrested 129 held jobs (57%), nine were students (4%),

and eighty-eight (39%) were unemployed, with one reporting no information. Of the white males

arrested twenty-eight (64%) were employed, three were students (7%), twelve were unemployed

(27%) and one individual provided no information. Although the white participants felt

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[7]"Arrests Made During Riot-Cincinnati" NACCD/E37 Johnson Presidential Library, 5.

[8] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels*, 19. "Arrests Made During Riot-Cincinnati" NACCD/E37, 5.

aggrieved enough to participate in the uprisings, their percentage of employment was much higher than African American participants. Correspondingly, black females arrestees were evenly distributed between employed (n=13) and unemployed (n=14). By digging deeper into these statistics we can see the types of jobs these individuals held.

The majority of the unemployed were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, with the employed most likely working as unskilled laborers. The jobs most frequently held by African American arrestees included laborers, janitors, construction workers, porters, cooks, and stockers. The most notable employment pattern for the African Americans arrestees is that seven men were employed as truck drivers. That truck drivers participated in considerable numbers is politically significant. The opening incident which began the rebellion occurred when a group of black teenagers prevented a white delivery man from completing his route. Furthermore, a central demand put forth by the participants in the aftermath of the rebellion was that deliveries in the black community should be completed by black delivery men. These truck drivers' arrests highlight how one's occupation directly influenced participation and demands made in the aftermath of such events. In Cincinnati, whereas the majority of participants both black and white held working-class jobs, the white arrestees had more skilled, stable, and prestigious blue collar positions. White arrestees typically labored in skilled blue-collar jobs such as electricians, plumbers, mechanics, machinists, and painters. This occupational disparity between black and white workers demonstrates the impact of racial discrimination within the trade crafts. More importantly it demonstrates that although working-class whites were better off than working-class blacks, they still held their own grievances, which will be discussed later in the chapter. [9]

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[9]"Arrests Made During Riot-Cincinnati" NACCD/E37 Johnson Presidential Library, 5. "CAC Report by Legal Aid Society," NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 16.

The failure of municipal and federal employment programs coupled with working-class

vulnerability is demonstrated in the statistics of arrested youth program participants. Throughout

the United States 291,000 youth were enrolled in the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) projects

in rebellion areas.   This federally funded program started in 1964, provided job training and

opportunities to economically disadvantaged young people. Nationally, approximately sixty-five

NYC employees were arrested during the disturbances; taken at face value this is a very

unimpressive figure.   In Cincinnati, seventeen Youth Corps workers were arrested, resulting in

nearly 25% of the Youth Corps national arrestees worked in the Cincinnati project. The

Cincinnati Enquirer speculated that this high percentage of poverty workers arrested could be

due to a community rumor that "outsiders were imported by neighborhood poverty program

workers who fear they will lose out in cutbacks made by the last Congress." This belief that the

cities with racial violence received "the biggest cuts of the Federal pie" is challenged when the

actual arrest records of the NYC employees are analyzed. The Cincinnati NYC enrollees were

arrested for disorderly conduct, malicious entry, possession of burglary tools, and drunk and

disorderly conduct. By looking at the individual actions that these men partook in it is apparent

that it stemmed from the intersection of their race and class status. Their arrests were related to

obtaining items they normally could not afford, not an overtly seditious act. Moreover

individuals who were enrolled in such programs often remained unemployed. One Milwaukee

arrestee noted, "I was hitting that Youth Opportunity thing every day. Me and my buddy, we hit

that place five or six times a day…They'd send us over on the [predominately white] south side

for a job, and they guy would say, 'We're all filled up' and here this white comes in and the next

thing you know he's working, you know."[10] For many working-class African Americans the

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[10] "Memorandum to Stephen Kurzman from George Trask Subject: Government Employees Arrested During Riots 22 Nov 1967" NACCD/E37 Johnson Presidential Library, 1. Margaret Josten "Did Outsiders Set 'Hour of Agony'

combination of being young, black, and working-class limited their options for finding employment in cities with deeply entrenched racist labor practices. Those actively participating in employment opportunity programs felt this economic marginalization and relative deprivation more acutely.

Understanding that the majority of participants held jobs, oftentimes in federally sponsored programs, is essential for combating misconceptions that participants came largely from the lumpenproletariat. Such "riff-raff" theories have loomed over many discussions of the urban rebellions. This pseudotheory, as historian James Upton calls it, had two central assertions. The first is that only a small percentage of African Americans participated. This allegation was frequently put forth by municipal leaders. When a journalist asked Milwaukee's Mayor Henry Maier if he had learned anything from the uprisings he said "we learned that 99.8 percent of the non-white population of our city did not desire to be participants in the disturbances…This significant fact indicated that the vast majority of our Negro population wants to join hands with the white citizens to work for constructive programs that will improve our city." Similarly Omaha's Mayor A.V. Sorensen acknowledged the "literally hundreds of residents" that did not participate and "continue[d] this fine expression of responsibility."[11] By looking at only the number of arrestees, municipal leaders such as Maier and Sorensen lost sight of the other ways that the black community tactically supported the uprisings through non-criminal support roles or by simply not divulging participants' identities. Additionally by focusing on only the small

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Fires?" Cincinnati Enquirer June 14, 1967. "Arrests of Poverty Program Enrollees in Recent Civil Disturbances 26 Oct 1967" NACCD/E37 Johnson Presidential Library, 1. Karl H. Flaming "Who 'Riots' and Why?" Black and White Perspectives in Milwaukee" (Milwaukee: Urban League, 1968), 29.

[11] James W. Button, *Black Violence: Political Impact of the 1960s Riots.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 174-16. "Milwaukee Mayor Maier's remarks to the service station awards luncheon of the beautification committee 12 noon the Miller Inn, 4000 W. State St. Monday Aug 7, 1967" Series 44, Maier manuscript collection Box 148. UWM archives. "Police Arrest," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966.

number of participants they could again champion a slow, steady, and interracial approach to addressing inequities in black life.

The second tenet of the "riff raff" theory is that those blacks that did participate were typically from the underclass. William Julius Wilson defined the underclass as "a massive population at the very bottom of the social ladder plagued by poor education and low-paying jobs."[12] Additionally, many conservative analysts indentified the underclass as those plagued with behavioral deficiencies such as substance abuse and criminal deviance.[13] Those in the underclass were seen as indigent, persistently unemployed and often criminal elements of the black community.   I prefer economist Michael Zweig's assertion that the underclass "are ruined workers, pushed out of the economy or to its lower reaches."[14] This is particularly the case in the Midwest where black workers were most at risk for unemployment in a declining economy. Because of the increased vulnerability of the black working-class, the uprisings served as class based political protests, not wanton criminality perpetrated by an immoral, deviant population.

In Cincinnati there were very few arrests that fit these perceived traits of the underclass such as substance abuse and innate criminality. Of the nearly three hundred people arrested in the city, only five persons were booked on charges associated with narcotic traffic. Of these five persons, four were apprehended in a drug store and charged with trespassing and one had in his possession thirty-one grains of codeine in several bottles of Cosanyl and Robutissin-AC. The information regarding previous arrest is more indicative of the susceptibly of the working-class to arrests. Of the 298 adults arrested, 126 had previous records, the majority of which were

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[12] Wilson, *Declining Significance of Race*, ix.

[13] Lawrence M. Mead, *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*.(New York, NY: The Free Press, 1986): 22. Ken Auletta, *The Underclass.* (New York: Random House, 1982): xvi.

[14] Zweig, *Working-class Majority*, 91.

black males. In total 106 black men had previous run-ins with the law, including twenty-five

with juvenile records, fifty-six with adult charges, and twenty-four with both. Of the white

males arrested, thirteen had previous arrest records, including three with juvenile records, six

adult records, and four with both. Finally of the black women charged, eight had previous

records including two with juvenile charges and six with adult charges.[15]   Although these

statistics may seem to support the riff raff theory in actuality they demonstrate the high visibility

of the working class to law enforcement. Often times these individuals due to their social,

political, and economic vulnerability were disproportionally represented in the justice system,

particularly if they were black. These individuals were more likely to be arrested and convicted.

The subsequent punishment, be it jail time or a fine, further impoverished them due to lost or

garnished wages. When these individuals were released they often had difficulty finding gainful

employment, contributing to their feelings of marginalization and the desire to organize in their

own interests.

These feelings of working-class marginalization are evident in the responses of surveyed

uprising participants in Milwaukee. In 1967 the Urban League sponsored a report "Who 'Riots'

and Why?: Black and White Perspectives in Milwaukee." Lead researcher, Dr. Karl L. Flaming a

social scientist, conducted 119 interviews with the 186 people who were arrested for

misdemeanors or felonies in connection with the civil disorder, excluding those arrested for

curfew violation or violation of other city ordinances. Flaming ascertained that many black

arrestees felt relative deprivation because they did not receive equal pay for equal work, and that

"black arrestees were more critical than the black control group." 36% of black arrestees were

picked up on the charges of damaging property, looting, robbery, and/or obstructing justice;

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[15]"CAC Report by Legal Aid Society" NACCD/E36 Johnson Presidential Library, 16.

whereas only 17% of whites were arrested for these infractions. Most telling of the vulnerability of all working-class people both black and white, was that 35% of blacks and 20% of whites were not told their charges.[16] The arrested individuals felt discontent over the employment opportunities provided for them, and many chose to rectify this material disadvantage through looting. Additionally, white and black working-class individuals were again vulnerable to the legal system in that the majority did not receive due process.

In sum urban rebellion participants were typically African American workers who resided in the city they were arrested in. Their identification as working-class African Americans caused them to respond and participate in these events in specific ways. As Maurice McCracken, a grassroots political activist in Cincinnati, noted: "[the uprisings have] only been possible because of the seedbed of overcrowding, poverty and disillusionment which have been sown through the years… usually sparked by what appears to be a very trivial grievance, but they flare up out of a background of dehumanization, degradation and cruelty.[17] Working-class individuals chose to participate in the urban rebellions as a consequence of this dehumanization. This rejoinder is represented, intertwined, and respondent to the second, third, and fourth hallmarks of violence as working-class politics. Both the properties targeted for destruction and human casualties are representative of these sentiments.

Politically Impotent

The interwoven relationship between political impotency, organizing in one's interests, and tangible gain all contributed to specific patterns of urban rebellion participation. I argue that

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[16] Flaming "Who Riots?," ix, 15.

[17]"Draft of speech by McCrackin n.d." Mss 917 Maurice McCrackin Box 51 Cincinnati Historical Society, 2.

violence as working-class politics is a more salient subject to study in the Midwest than the south

or Northeast because class differences are more pronounced.   Labor organization discrimination

and deindustrialization made black workers particularly susceptible. This vulnerability was

present not only in the formal political sphere but also in the social structure of the black

community as discussed in Chapter Two.

The inefficacy of the black working-class led simultaneously to feelings of steadfast

determination as well as shame. As the Cincinnati Human Relations Committee noted "the

under educated white can find jobs, generally excellent ones, while the undereducated Negro

generally cannot. The Negro must be able to enter the greater population mass of the blue collar

worker. He must be able to earn a living and support a family, and preserve some measure of

dignity." Additionally, after conducting an employment survey in the West End area of

Cincinnati, the Project Field Supervisor Richard W. Lewis acknowledged that "this high rate of

unemployment of males in their prime provides a bedrock of continued personal and family

distress, and social unrest in the Negro community."[18] These feelings of shame and helplessness

were augmented by the Midwestern mentality, in that African Americans were blamed for their

own inability to get ahead.

The unique conditions of the Midwest "bootstrap" mentality augmented African

Americans feelings of impotency, deprivation, and shame. One black Cincinnati woman, Martha

Fox explained her aggravation "All my family is educated and well-liked, but they never get the

jobs they are equipped for. Don't tell me that isn't frustrating."[19] Cleveland Marshall, who

worked for the post office in Omaha, told a *Sun* newspaper reporter that blacks' biggest problem

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[18] "Untitled recount of riots 7-13-67" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box **7** *Folder 10 Cincinnati Historical Society,* 3. "Reconnaissance Survey Field Report" NACCD/Series 10 Johnson Presidential Library, 8.

[19] "The Grassy Side" *Cincinnati Enquirer* July 2, 1967.

is "in industry as well as government. They don't want to recognize Negroes with dignity."

Other indignities, as the Kerner Commission staff analysis assessed "Within the Negro

community itself, a stable characteristic was the stream of white workers and proprietors who

drove into the Negro area in the morning to staff the businesses and factories and then return to

their homes in the suburbs or in other parts of Cincinnati in the evening."[20] In the post-war

economy African Americans had been conditioned to believe that equal status and dignity would

come through industrial opportunities. But the mechanization and deindustrialization of major

industries in the Midwest left blacks underemployed or unemployed. Simultaneously, blacks

lived in communities where whites came in primarily to work, controlling prices with little

opportunity for redress for African American consumers. These daily realities demonstrated that

working-class African Americans faced specific challenges due to the intersection of their racial

and class identities.

Historian Ted Gurr stated that "the potential [for collective violence] would be greatest in

a nation whose citizens felt sharply deprived with respect to their most deeply valued goals, had

individually and collectively exhausted the constructive means open to them to attain those

goals, and lacked any nonviolent opportunity to act on their anger." Working-class African

Americans felt frustration and shame about their place within racial and economic hierarchies.

In Milwaukee, 88% of arrested participants felt that the growth of job opportunities for black

Milwaukeeans was moving too slowly, compared to 61% of the control group.[21] When black

working-class individuals chose to act violently to protest these conditions, the perceived

offending parties often became prime targets. Understanding these feelings of subjugation and

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[20] "Blacks Miss Black Power Point, Too." *West Omaha-Dundee Sun* 14 March 1968. "Staff Paper No. 7," NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 25.

[21] Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, 92. Flaming, *Who Riots?*, 28.

indignity offers a glimpse into why the urban rebellions were such important events not only in mobilizing political power but also in upending typical patterns of power, prestige, and honor within the black community.

Blacks felt that they had to organize in their own interests because even when government entities acknowledged the grievances of the black community, they tended to be unresponsive believing that African Americans feelings were unjustified.   In the aftermath of Cincinnati's first uprising the mayor's office wrote in their summary report to the Kerner Commission that "the emotions of the Negro Community were influenced to an unknown degree by many beliefs. The administration does not believe that many of these have a basis in fact, yet the following opinions were held by a substantive number of Negroes." After dismissing outright the complaints that black Cincinnatians held the authors outlined fourteen assertions that influenced "the emotions of the Negro Community." These included "#1 Civil rights legislation did provided expected tangible improvement for the mass of negroes;" "#6 There is a white power structure which is not responsive to Negro problems;" "#7 Traditional Negro leadership is not representative of the Negro community;" "#10 Business in Negro areas provided inferior products and services;" finally and most importantly "#14 A strong feeling that the entire social, economic, and political structure is geared to keeping Negroes second class citizens."[22] Municipal officials had a very precise understanding of the frustrations of the black community. Yet they felt no onus to be respondent to these frustrations or for that matter even believe that they were legitimate because black working-class Cincinnatians were a politically impotent populace.   Political observers in the other case study cities made similar observations.

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[22]"Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967 in D.C." Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10, Cincinnati Historical Society, 16.

In the aftermath of Omaha's 1966 rebellion the Nebraskan Governor's Commission on

Human Rights accused the municipal government of not taking previous black protest seriously.

The Commission stated in an open letter that they found it "distressing" that local and state

leadership had long "ignored or denied to responsible Negro and civil rights organizations the

request for action that is now being provided after the irresponsible acts of a number of desperate

people."[23] In summary, Pete Lakers, the chairman of the commission, stated that:

> We can only conclude that Omaha and Nebraska are following the patterns that have
> been established in other cities and states: those persons in responsible positions will only
> listen to irresponsible leadership and that social reform is only possible through the use of
> violence. We deplore that such a conclusion must be reached and request all elected
> officials to bring about necessary reform so that irresponsibility and violence are not the
> proper tools for needed change.[24]

Following the insurrection a few people realized the direct correlation between violent uprising

and previous, ineffective protest. By addressing the need for improved attentiveness by local

elected officials the Nebraskan Governor's Commission on Human Rights attested to the lack of

legitimate political recourse most African Americans had to remedy their grievances. Omaha

community activist Bertha Calloway best articulated this sentiment: "It is too bad the ridiculous

had to happen before the obvious was made known."[25]

Though the racial basis for the rebellions was obvious, many missed the more subtle class

discord lying just under the surface. In the aftermath of the 1966 Omaha rebellion Homer C.

Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Human Relations Board, when referring to the uprising and its

participants that "We should recognize that their actions were a bypass of recognized social

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[23] "Rights Unit Criticizes City," *North Omaha Star* July 28, 1966.

[24] "Negro Need was Ignored," *Omaha World-Herald* July 25, 1966.

[25] Woodson Howe, "21 at Initial Hearing on Near North Side," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 19, 1966.

order…we should tell them that their actions are not in the standards proscribed by society. But we expect middle class standards from them and now we must find the means to set these standards."[26] For Floyd to prevent future uprisings it was imperative to bring all African Americans up to a middle-class standard both in wealth benchmarks and behavioral norms. However in supporting middle-class led movements, many African Americans had yet to meet these standards.   Black working-class individuals had learned that they had to organize in their own interests.

Organizing in the Collective Interest for Tangible Gain

African Americans countered their feelings of impotency by engaging in actions which allowed them to take control of their communities. The third and fourth characteristics, collective interest and tangible gain, are difficult to quantify but qualitative analysis of quotes taken from the action zones are rather telling. Evidence of the collective interest was seen, as previously discussed, in that although many people did not participate in criminal activities, many came to observe and provide aid. Historian Gustave Le Bon in his account of the French Revolution noted that, "When the crowd changes into a mob, its individual members lose their identity… as a part of a mob, however, he becomes conscious of the power he shares with others" This collective interest cannot be simply defined in racial terms. As one researcher observed, uprisings participants in Newark and Detroit found that rebellion participants were

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[26] "Leadership Sums Up Attitudes of Youth," *North Omaha Sun* July 14, 1966.

"more likely to agree that rich Negroes are just as bad as white people."[27] For black Americans the collective interest was often drawn along class lines.

Rebellion participants not only realized that their actions represented their own class interests but also in the efficaciousness of violent protest. Historian E.J. Hobsbawm declared that "The class mob did not merely riot as a protest, but because it expected to achieve something by its riot." The participant's acknowledgement of his or her own individual political power is key to understanding the changing consciousness of young African Americans. In what Doug McAdam termed "cognitive liberation" in his political process model, this is the realization that an individual can change his or her own conditions. [28] A twenty-something unidentified man told Cincinnati television cameras that:

> We're not afraid of your force because it has always been there the only thing that you have with the National Guard is just a little more force…We're here to tell your people today that we are tired. We're sick and tired of you people taking all the goodies and leaving us none. Ever since we've been in this country we've been in a trick bag. About this procedure thing, about this law and order. We're not concerned about the law and order anymore because you make the law and your keep the order. What we're concerned about is getting someplace in this country for black people. And either we are all going to have peace or ain't nobody going to have no peace. We don't mind dying because we have been dying ever since we've been in this country. And for the first time in our lives we are alive. And we see ourselves as black people on the move.[29]

African American's cognitive liberation released these feelings of organizing in their own class interests for real and meaningful change.

Many black Americans took stock of their position within society and felt that they could affect change in their own communities. As one uprising participant stated in Cincinnati, "I

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[27]Willard A. Heaps, *Rebellions, U.S.A.:1765-1960.* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), 5-6. Jeffrey Mayford Paige "Collective Violence and the Culture of Subordination: A Study of Participants in the July 1967 riots in Newark, NJ and Detroit, MI." (PhD., diss: University of Michigan, 1968), 43.

[28] Hobsbawm, *Social Bandits and Primitive Rebels,* 110-113. Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Political Insurgency*. 48.

[29] MI-96-118 WLWT News Footage: 1967 Race Riots Aftermath video, Cincinnati Historical Society, 19:09.

might as well die at Reading and Rockdale as in Vietnam." Similarly, in Milwaukee, Earnest

[sic] D., a twenty-two year old foundry worker, making $3.50 an hour remarked, "We was trying

to show that the poor man wants just as much as the rich man if not more. That's why we did

that last night…It's going to take some years and some people are going to have to die. I'm not

afraid to die, not for my equal rights."[30] Black working-class individuals understood their

vulnerability in the political, economic, and social structure of the United States.   Thus for

many, dying for the needs of your community had far more legitimacy than dying for one's

country.

This sense of self was not just limited to a black identity, but also tied to a working-class

identity, as Earnest D's quote indicates. In previous chapters I describe how the rebellions were

brought on by discrimination in the Midwest as well as the disconnect between middle-class and

working-class blacks' understanding of their position in American society. During the uprisings

these opposing viewpoints between working-class and middle-class African Americans were

again made apparent. Kerner Commission investigators noted that "Middle-class people tended

to be less involved. Many apparently felt confused and ashamed, believing that the riot

threatened them and their position more than it threatened whites."[31] These differing opinions

on the role of race, class, and privilege in American society became manifest in the meanings

that violent protest carried for middle-class individuals.

Many who comprised traditional African American leadership were eager to demonstrate that

the uprisings were begun by just a "few bad apples." In Omaha fourteen ministers from the

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[30] Lyle Kohler, *Cincinnati's Black Peoples: A Chronology and Bibliography, 1787-1982*. Prepared originally for the Cincinnati Arts Consortium through the Center for Neighborhood and Community Studies, University of Cincinnati. June, 1986. William B Hale "It's The Poor vs. Rich, Rioter Says," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* July 31, 1967.

[31] "Black Middle Class," *Chicago Defender*, August 20, 1966. "Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 60.

Baptist Ministerial Alliance, Cleaves Temple Christian Methodist Episcopalian Church, and the

Christ Temple Church released the following statement: "We deplore the recent acts of

vandalism and looting and we feel further that the acts are unfounded . . . such uprisings only

lead to the total destruction of our community."   Floyd McKissick publically shamed those who

made such comments retorting that "some so-called Negro leaders even have the audacity to join

The Man by calling a liberation struggle, a riot---his brothers hoodlums and criminals—and

damning his brothers who seek to overthrow the yoke of oppression."[32] These derisive

"underclass" demonstrated how some middle-class individuals demonized working-class blacks

in an attempt to separate themselves and assert the legitimacy of their own power within the

community.

General sentiments held by many in the black middle class played into scholarly

interpretations of the riff-raff theory which articulated that violent protest behavior was deviant.

The black middle class perpetuated this theory in their acknowledging "a certain legitimacy for

existing social institutions leading them to suggest that blacks must be made more middle class,"

just as Homer Floyd mistakenly opined.[33] For many black middle-class commentators, those

who participated in the urban rebellions did not have legitimate claim to engaging in violent

protest because the existing mechanisms for addressing grievances were sufficient. In essence

by distancing themselves from working-class blacks, middle-class blacks were able to exercise

racial privilege cum class privilege.

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[32] "Fourteen Ministers Issue Appeal," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 5, 1966. "Text of Speech Presented by Floyd B. McKissick-National Director to the National Conference on Black Power 7-21-1967" NACCD/E3 Johnson Presidential Library.

[33] William Melvin King. "Ghetto Riots and the Employment of Blacks: An Answer to the Search for Black Political Power?" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1974), 136.

Still this fissure between black middle-class and black working-class individuals was not insurmountable. Middle-class individuals held mixed interpretations of the events and often expressed racial solidarity. Joe Hall, Executive Director of the Cincinnati Urban League stated "I think the demonstrations [uprisings] had a place and served a real purpose, but in the end people had to sit down and talk through what were the issues and what can we do about this concern."[34] Mildred Brown, editor of the *Omaha Star* also acknowledged both viewpoints and towed a moderate line on the uprisings:

> We cannot commend the methods they [the participants] used to draw attention to the fact that they were frustrated and despaired because they could not feel or see any appreciable betterment of their lot. Likewise, we cannot commend those who have failed over the past three years to listen to the traditional methods of calling attention to the fact that in Omaha there is discrimination in housing, education, employment, and health and welfare services. . . We think that less attention should be paid to the methods they used in calling attention to their plight and more to finding some solutions to the causes which brought their actions about.[35]

The majority of the black middle class who had previously engaged in civil rights struggles provided assistance to working-class arrestees by offering legal aid or bail money. Despite this mutual assistance, black working-class individuals acted in their own interest because they believed that tangible gain would come from such action.

Both Cincinnati and Omaha experienced multiple uprisings and Milwaukee sustained a four-month long daily march for open housing, demonstrating that residents realized the power that they possessed in affecting change. In addition to creating sentiments of political and social potency on a grand scale, African Americans' specific actions during the revolts allowed them to upend typical relationships of power. Arsonists and looters often attacked stores which charged

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[34]MI-95-44 *Glorifying the Lion*-Cincinnati Historical Society.

[35]"Those Waiting in the Wings Came," *Omaha Star*, July 8, 1966.

exorbitant goods for inferior products. Loiterers verbally challenged police; while those manning roadblocks prevented outsiders from gaining entrance into their communities. By investigating the specific actions individuals took during the rebellions I outline the ways in which the black working-class organized in their own interest for tangible gains.

Outsider Targets

The urban rebellions were not random violence. Although some collateral damage occurred, by and large the businesses that were looted and set on fire were chose strategically. The final characteristic of violence as working-class politics is that offensive uprising actions were frequently directed at outsiders. This is evident in the 1960s conflicts because black owned businesses and schools were rarely targets, but merchants who were deemed unfair and exploitative frequently sustained damage. The Kerner Commission in their analysis of the 1967 uprisings found that the majority of arson targets were white-owned businesses known for price gouging in the black community. Hobsbawm also noted the open hostility "primitive rebels" had towards foreigners or non-townsmen in nineteenth century European conflicts. Consequently during the urban rebellions many white passerby, residents, and media personnel were also often targeted. But to again reiterate, contrary to popular memories of the events the majority of individuals were charged with disorderly conduct or loitering and not violent crimes.[36] For those who chose to participate in the rebellions outside of these minor infractions their actions illustrate the strategy and intention behind certain actions, including how these deeds illustrated how black working-class individuals participated in their own interest.

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[36] Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence," 10. *Kerner Commission*, 73.Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 110.*:* "Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967 in D.C. Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10

Property damage

White store owners symbolically served as one of the most visible example of African Americans' political impotency, diminished class status, and lack of control in their own neighborhoods. Floyd McKissick codified this strained relationship at the 1967 Black Power conference in Washington, D.C. "White landlords, white storekeepers, white corporate managers and a white, Anglo-Saxon Wall Street, conspire to key the Black Man in his place." He continued "Although slavery as a recognized legal institution has been abolished, economic slavery, economic exploitation, has not. Black People in this country have never been allowed to share in the economic riches of America." For African Americans, especially those who identified as working-class, key financial and consumer institutions served as powerful daily reminders of their diminished status in American society as well as the lack of real control that they had in their own lives. An Office of Economic Opportunity representative stated before the Consumer Subcommittee of the House Government Operations Committee on October 12, 1967

> There is increasing evidence that suggests that discontent and disorders in cities across the country are in no small part consumer revolt against a system that has for years permitted the unscrupulous to take advantage of those least able to pay. A system that has, at the same time, deprived the poor of any real choice in the quality of goods they can buy, the prices they pay or the method of financing or source of credit available to them.[37]

In addition to overcharging for inferior goods the relationship many entrepreneurs had in the black community also made them unpopular.

In his dissertation "The Role of Ghetto Retail Merchants in Civil Disorders" sociologist Richard Alan Berk surveyed the attitudes of both black and white store owners in fifteen cities

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[37]"Text of Speech Presented by Floyd B. McKissick-National Director to the National Conference on Black Power 7-21-1967" NACCD/E3 Johnson Presidential Library, 2, 4 "Statement of OEO before Consumer Subcommittee of House Govt Operations Committee, 10-12-67" NACCD/E3 Johnson Presidential Library, 1. "Preliminary Draft by Jason I Newman on Consumer Protection for Low-Income Groups 11-13-67" NACCD/Series 7 Johnson Presidential Library.

including Cincinnati and Milwaukee but not Omaha. Over 76% of the interviewed merchants had clientele who were over 50% black, while 25% of the merchants had clientele that are 94% or more black. The merchants although perceived as outsiders by rebels, did see themselves as part of the community, with 65% donating to local charities and 32% often offering advice on personal problems. Yet only 24.9% of merchants lived in the neighborhoods where they worked. The approximate median commute from their homes to their shops was ten miles.

Black merchants had a better relationship with the community but were still perceived as others. African American shop owners were more likely to live in the neighborhood in which they worked. Furthermore 77.7% of black merchants considered their customers personal friends while "10% or less" of the white merchants felt this way. Despite this affinity for their clients, Berk noted that a significant majority of black ghetto dwellers, between 60-70%, felt that there was "not much difference" between the treatment they received from white and black merchants, regarding being treated with dignity or overcharged for goods.[38] The attitudes of these retail merchants demonstrate the fluidity in which uprising participants negotiated the intersection between race and class loyalties. Although most blacks felt that black and white merchants treated them about the same (which most people believed was subpar) very few black stores were looted or set on fire.

In addition to assessing the general attitudes of business owners in the black community Berk also investigated why certain stores were targeted while others remained unharmed. He put forth four hypotheses. The first was that participants chose targets due to the desirability of

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[38]Berk, *The Role of Ghetto Merchants*, 48, 53-56, 190. In Cincinnati they conducted interviews along Reading Rd., Burnet Ave and Forest; Montgomery Ave & Hewitt, McMillan & Gilbert, Peebles Corners; Madison & Abelsel and the West End Area. In Milwaukee the interview area was North Third Street between Brown and Winter, Teutonia Ave. between Cany & Hadley, Fond du Lac Ave between North and Northwest.

merchandise. The second hypothesis was that certain stores were looted because of retaliation.

Third was that looters selected certain stores for their symbolic value. His final hypothesis was

that targets for arson and looting were based on a definition of property. The better awareness a

particular merchant had of the plight of African Americans the less likely he or she was to be

targeted. In essence, if merchants showed compassion and understanding of the hardships

African Americans faced, their stores were often spared. Berk concluded that there was good

support that certain establishments were targeted because of the desirability of goods as well as

symbolic reasons. Finally he found limited support that certain shops were hit intentionally as

retaliation.   Berk concluded that "there seems to be some symbolic attack against whites in

general...Rather than being of one mind, the participants of civil disorders seem to define the

opportunity to vandalize ghetto stores as a kind of Rorschach on to which they can impose their

own special needs." Thus individuals chose which stores they hit based on their class position

and personal feelings of political efficacy. One protestor using the alias Johnny Davis, explained

why he took part in the violence "I was mad. I wanted to show them I got a right to everything

they got." When asked about the real damage this type of action inflicts upon the black

community he retorted "Baby, this is war…For 300 years we have been asking the white man for

what's rightfully ours. Now it's time to stop asking and start taking."[39]

By looking at the stores hit as well as the items that arrested looters were in possession of

Berk's findings come to life in the case study cities. In Cincinnati a variety of stores suffered

from broken windows including Casuto Fruit Market (3455 Burnett Avenue), Torf's Drug Store

(3468 Burnett Avenue), Herschel's Meat Market (3470 Burnett Avenue); Robert's Furniture

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[39]Berk, *The Role of Ghetto Merchants*, 179-180, 183. Peggy A. Murrell, "Rioter Glibly Explains Hatred," *Milwaukee Journal* August 8, 1967.

Store (3478 Burnet Avenue); Rudolph's Jewelers (3482 Burnet Avenue); Great Atlantic &

Pacific Tea Co. (3520 Burnet Avenue); and Salvation Army Thrift Store (404 Rockdale

Avenue). These stores, all located along the central business corridor, stood as reminders that

African Americans did not control the principal consumer outlets in their neighborhood.

Additionally both the State Liquor Store (3512 Reading Road) and Moore's Jewelry Store (797

E. McMillan Street) were vandalized and burglarized. Looking back at Berk's findings these

stores possessed highly desirable goods; jewelry could be re-sold for profit while liquor could be

used for consumption and as an accelerant. In the Omaha 1969 uprising, seventeen out of the

twenty stores burned to the ground were white owned businesses including the post office.[40]

Whether a participant chose to actively engage in the uprising because of class-based grievances,

race-based grievances, or a combination therein, the stores they targeted reflected their needs.

One of the most interesting incidents of symbolic vandalism occurred when the Price Hill

Police Department was called out at 3am. The force arrived at the administration building of the

Millvale Public Housing project operated by the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority

(CMHA). There they found that a number of black teenagers broke into the CMHA offices,

threw three typewriters to the floor, removed office records and furniture to the courtyard and

then destroyed it all in a gigantic bonfire.[41] This is perhaps the best example of symbolic

property violence as well as contesting property ownership. Black Cincinnatians long suffered

overpriced, substandard housing. Furthermore for those who secured public housing assistance

they were often treated paternally by agency officials. By burning records and vandalizing the

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[40]"17 of 20 Torch Targets White-Owned Businesses," *Omaha World Herald* June 29, 1969. "Partial Mail Delivery Resumed," *Omaha World-Herald* June 27, 1969.

[41]Although Price Hill was a suburb on the city, because Cincinnati officers were occupied with the ongoing insurrection, the suburban police responded to the call in the adjacent neighborhood of South Cumminsville. "Riot in Millvale Reaches Threshold Of West Hills Area," *Western Hills Press*, June 15, 1967.

office black working-class residents were able to reassert control over their communities and lives.

Assault

Although physical assault did not comprise the majority of the arrested crimes it did still occasionally happen. As Hobsbawm noted this type of aggressive personal violence was very much interrupted through perceptions of who did and did not belong in the community. In Cincinnati on the first day of the uprising many of the victims of physical violence were white media representatives. Often times other individuals were targeted because they were passerby in black neighborhoods. David B. driving on Forest Avenue near Vine Street in Cincinnati had a brick smashed through his windshield. Driver Kenneth P. was injured on Burnet Avenue as was Dr. Robert B. while driving his automobile down Reading Road near Forest Avenue in response to an emergency call. Earl J. was injured while driving along Reading Road and Ridgeway Avenue. Even an African American man, Charles M. was stopped and beaten on Twenty-First Street and Walnut Ave. The man speculated that he was targeted because he had a large antenna on his car and figured that the rebels assumed he was a police officer.[42]

As Charles M.'s assault demonstrates, agents of the state particularly police officers and firefighters were easily identifiable and symbolic targets. On the first night of the insurrection in Cincinnati five police officers and five firemen were injured. In Omaha firefighters attempting to extinguish fires found themselves dodging projectiles. As one fireman observed "We know

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[42] John Hambricj of WCPO-TV jumped in his news car at Reading and Rockdale as projectiles were being hurled at him. Jack Fogarty of WCPO was struck by rock at Burnet and Forest Ave. Dale Huffman a WLW-T photographer was jumped while waiting in his car at Rockdale and Reading. *Cincinnati Enquirer* reporter Thomas Dickman was also jumped at Reading and Burnett and had his watch stolen. Dennis Gulino WSAI newsman threw car window at Burnet Ave Dennis Gulino WSAI newsman threw car window at Burnet Ave Robert Weston UPI reporter injured on Burnet "City Acts to Avert New Violence; 24 Avondale Stores Damaged," *Post Times Star* (Cincinnati, OH) June 13, 1967. "Police, Firemen Among Casualties in Rioting," *Post Times Star* (Cincinnati, OH) June 14, 1967.

they don't have any use for us down there. We're just more white trash." Other targets of vandalism in Cincinnati included a transit bus, a symbol of the city, which had all of its windows broken out when abandoned at Wilson Street and Rockdale Avenue. Furthermore seventy-seven police vehicles were damaged.[43] By targeting specific symbols of State and their agents, particularly the police department, uprising participants demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the treatment they typically received from these entities.

Although Milwaukee lacked much of the Black Nationalist sentiment that Omaha and Cincinnati possessed, it did hold the dubious distinction of experiencing the most gun violence during the uprising. Alderperson Vel Phillips recounted that police "had to scare people off with gunshot, and there were gunshots back." On the first night of the disturbances in Milwaukee, there were two fatalities, fifty-six injuries including six police hit by sniper fire, six officers hit with thrown objects, and three civilians injured by gunfire. By midnight on August 6, Milwaukee had four reported deaths and ninety-six people had been injured.[44]

The participants' choice of targets for looting, arson, and physical violence demonstrate that the urban rebellions were working-class activism. These actions reflected black working-class individuals' frustrations with the pace of civil rights gains, their political and consumer impotency, as well as reallocation of property demonstrated in the goods they took. White passerby stood as stand-ins for a racist American society, allowing some African American participants to take out their anger and frustrations on unsuspecting bystanders. By setting fire

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[43] Robert Hoig, "Firemen Bitter: 'Near North Considers Us White Trash' *Omaha World Herald* June 27, 1969. "Cincinnati Police Department Riot report" NACCD/E73 Johnson Presidential Library, 134.

[44] "Vel Phillips Unable to Quiet Rioters," *Milwaukee Sentinel* 1 August 1967. "Justice Department Weekly Summary Milwaukee August 4, 1967" NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library. "Memo To Director from SAIC Barton-Milwaukee Subj Civil Disturbance- Milwaukee 9 Aug 1967" NACCD/E24 Johnson Presidential Library, 2. "Disturbance in Vicinity of North Third Street, Milwaukee WI, 1 Aug 1967" NACCD/E24 Johnson Presidential Library, 4-5.

to grocery stores and other exploitative retailers, rebels upended the power dynamic between consumer and owner. Although undeniably the majority of participants acting criminally during the urban rebellions were working-class individuals, these were total community events. In the next section I look at the ways middle-class black and working-class whites participated in the uprisings, demonstrating that these insurrections had significant meanings beyond the black ghetto dwellers of the nation.

Outlier Participants

The black working class comprised the main group of participants in the urban rebellions. Consequently the central activities of these events are interpreted as working-class behavior. However there are two important outlier groups that also participated in the urban rebellions: the black middle class, particularly traditional civil rights leadership, and members of the white working class. Although these two groups' actions did not parallel the dominant patterns of black working-class participation, the ways in which they chose to partake in the urban rebellions was informed by their race and class positions.

Black middle-class participation

The black middle class performed in the uprisings in very specific positions based on their perceived political efficacy. The most typical roles that the black middle class played during the revolts were as a "counterrioter," those individuals who encouraged the rebels to return to their homes. The black middle class also mobilized community resources to support those affected by the uprising. One of the most important roles that the black middle class played during the urban rebellions was as public spokespersons. By providing a moderate voice during an

especially tense time they were able to counterbalance the rhetoric of those who had participated

violently, tempering the overt violence of the rebellions.   In my analysis of arrest records in the

case study cities very few middle-class African Americans were arrested. Of those arrested

police were often unaware or indifferent to the arrestees' status and political intentions, seeing

their race and not their class, drawing consternation from the arrestees.

On June 12, 1967, Cincinnati police officers arrested Lathan Johnson for loitering. Johnson

was the Executive Director of the Neighborhood Organization for the Federation of Settlements,

a nationally known private welfare agency. The organization was well respected and received

OEO funding as a delegate agency of the Cincinnati Community Action Program. Johnson

appealed his conviction on the grounds that he was attempting to prevent further violence and

was freed on $1,000 bond.   During Cincinnati's July uprising police arrested George Darden, an

attorney with the Legal Service program on disorderly conduct charges. Specifically, he

interfered with a police officer who was arranging to tow away a vehicle in connection with an

offense of 'malicious destruction of property.' On July 19, 1967 Darden was given a

continuance.[45]

Outside of these two incidents, none of the traditional leadership and very few middle-class

individuals were arrested. In part this was because Robert Black, chairman of the Cincinnati

Human Relations Commission (CHRC), provided a list of persons who should be authorized to

enter the "riot area" to City Manager William Wichman, who then distributed it to Cincinnati

police. This list included Clyde Vinegar, Dr. Robert Reid, Dr. Bruce H. Green, Robert Weaver,

Reverend Harold L. Hunt, Nathan Allen, Tom Porter, Marilyn Matthews, Guard Harvey, Lathan

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[45] "Arrests of Poverty Program Participants in Recent Civil Disturbances 26 Oct 1967" NACCD/E37 Johnson
Presidential Library, 1.

Johnson, Pete Frakes, Tecumseh X. Graham, Reverend Otis Moss, Jr., John Collins, William

Mason, and Charles Holmond.[46] Although traditional leadership's ability to convince those

participating in the uprising to return to their homes was questionable, the fact remains that the

traditional black middle class was still able to leverage the limited power that they had within the

municipal government.

Due to the twenty-four hour citywide curfew in Milwaukee many more middle-class

individuals were arrested, even if not for an outright criminal infraction. In Karl Flaming's study

of rebellion arrestees one of his research assistants spoke with a "Mrs. M." who was arrested

with her husband. The couple owned a real estate business on North Third Avenue, and grossed

over $20,000 annually. When "Mr. M." heard that the police were closing down Third Street he

asked his wife to come pick him up from work on Sunday afternoon, July 30. The Milwaukee

Police department asked the woman to leave and she informed them that she was waiting for her

husband. When he finally came out of the building the officers informed the man that he was not

moving fast enough to which he replied, "I didn't do anything wrong. Go get the ones that are."

This remark led to his arrest. In the interview notes researcher Joan wrote: "When Mrs. M. saw

her husband being taken to the wagons she thought, 'I must get the car keys from him.'" When

she opened the police car door five policemen "'snatched her up,' called her a bitch, handcuffed

her, threw her into the wagon." While on the way to the police station the officers joked "What

shall we charge her with?" in court when Mrs. M. told her story the judge jumped down from the

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[46] *"CHRC Rebellion-Riots 1967"* Letter to William Wichman from Robert Black 6-13-67" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10 Cincinnati Historical Society.

bench, wagged his finger in her face and called her a liar, stating that "because of people like her there was so much trouble in the city."[47]

This anecdote serves as an excellent illustration of the overlapping class and racial identities that many middle-class African Americans faced. On one hand Mr. M clearly did not identify with those violently participating in the uprisings stating "get the ones that are" distinguishing himself from the criminal participants and expressing disapproval of their activities. The police officers, however, saw Mr. and Mrs. M. as African Americans who did not respect police authority, evidenced by their talking back to the officers and resisting arrest. Finally, the judge who presided over Mrs. M.'s case blamed "people like her," categorizing her not as part of the black elite who had different goals and concerns but just another "rioting Negro." The saliency of class and racial identities for many middle-class African Americans was fluid and dependent on the situation. Whereas members of the black middle class could exercise some amount of class privilege towards working-class African American, they still resided in a deeply racist society where they faced discrimination. Complicating the interplay of race and class further was that during the urban rebellions many middle-class African Americans faced harassment not only from the police but oftentimes from uprisings participants.

As noted above, those who were perceived as outsiders often incurred the wrath of roving groups of rebels. For the black community this "otherness" could be determined on account of race, class, or political persuasion. Both Cincinnati city council member Myron Bush and Milwaukee alderperson Vel Phillips experienced violence during the uprising. In Cincinnati, Kerner Commission reporters noted that "some of the damage inflicted by rioters appeared to be

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[47]Weber, *Summer Mockery*, 19-20.

unreasoning and non-discriminating as evidenced by a report of Negro Councilman." Myron Bush reported to the Kerner investigators that as he and his wife drove down Gilbert Avenue during the uprising someone broke his station wagon's rear window with a rock or possibly, as he speculated, a bullet. What may have seen as unusual for those unfamiliar with Cincinnati, those within the community felt that Bush, a successful African American lawyer, had distanced himself from the black community, solidifying his outsider position and making him a legitimate target. [48]

The threat of violence towards elected officials demonstrates that although African Americans had some political representation, they felt disillusioned and dissatisfied with these individuals. As the only black alderperson, Vel Phillips frequently criticized Harold Brier for his excessive policing of the black community; however when the Milwaukee Police Chief telephoned her to help calm the masses, she agreed. As she rode through the city for nearly three hours, rebels stoned her car. During the uprisings she also received threatening phone calls from white supremacists.[49] Although the actual threat of physical violence remained a real possibility for some in middle-class leadership, for one Kerner Commission investigator demurring to such pressure was unconscionable.

Traditional civil rights leaders' actions could be interpreted in a variety of ways. Diane Phillips, a Kerner Commission student researcher remarked: "I don't think that it is necessary for me to say much about Dr. Green as a Negro leader. The fact that he went home Tuesday night and had to be convinced by a white man [Mr. Hobson of the Committee of 28] to leave his home is an indication of something." Dr. Green told Phillips during their interview that

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[48] "Second Trip Cincinnati-Team Interview Report" NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 2, 83.

[49] "Vel Phillips Unable to Quiet Rioters," *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 1, 1967.

unnamed militants threatened to harm him and his family if he spoke in front of City Council

during the open forum. She continued: "Dr. Green has been threatened before—by whites. The

question one must raise is why he bowed to the threats from Negroes, when he hadn't to the ones

from whites. I think it is fair to say that Dr. Green is not 'in touch' with the 'folk' of the ghetto."

Phillips felt that Dr. Green shirked from his responsibilities to the black community at the height

of their need. I offer an alternative interpretation of Green's actions. Instead of cowardly hiding,

Dr. Green stepped aside to let those actively participating in the uprising express their

grievances. Phillips further noted that "he expressed bitterness to me about the fact the NAACP

is being called and 'Uncle Tom' organization."[50] Despite racial solidarity and Dr. Green's

previous activism, the more militant working-class African Americans saw him as not

representing their own interests and thus threatened him, collectively working for their own

interests. Green recognizing that a new age of African American protest was upon Cincinnati,

relinquished control.

The distrust many working-class African Americans had of middle-class blacks and

traditional civil rights leadership was born in the years before the uprisings, nursed during these

events, and grew afterwards. The Commission concluded that in Cincinnati "while no attacks or

threats against middle-class or conservatives Negroes have been reported since the riot, it is

significant that two Negroes asked that they be excused from jury duty on cases involving riot

arrestees." Specifically one middle-class woman feared retaliation if she provided a guilty

verdict against any riot participant. She defended her decision: "it has taken me twenty years to

pay for my home and I don't want it firebombed." The Commission felt that "the possibility of

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[50] "Interview with Dr. Bruce Green, President, NAACP 1 November 1967 by Diane Phillips" NACCD/E43 Johnson
Presidential Library, 8.

violence being directed against [middle-class blacks] by poorer Negroes, seems to be acting as a consideration for propertied Negroes in defining their allegiances on community issues."[51] In this scenario, like the experience of Mr. and Mrs. M., the female homeowner identified more readily with her class position then the common race she shared with uprising participants. Her interpretation of the events indicates that race was not the only factor that participants used to select targets for vandalism, but also class.

   This dissertation does not seek to make middle-class blacks out to be the enemy. As observers in Cincinnati noted the "Negroes in the middle class have been confused and ashamed. [They] feel [the] riot threatened them and their position more than it threatened whites." Due to the comparatively small distinctions within the socioeconomic structure in the black community, a seemingly insignificant misfortune could be all that was necessary to lose the markers of middle-class status. In Milwaukee, similar tensions between working-class African Americans and middle-class blacks existed. Mayor Maier invited several businessmen to speak with him about the uprising but "the vast majority of them told the Mayor's Office that they wanted to meet with the Mayor but are fearful of what might happen to their homes and their families while they were gone." Maier told the entrepreneurs he understood and appreciated that they have abided by the curfew. Furthermore, in Milwaukee skilled laborers who were arrested during the uprisings lost their position. Charlie J. lost his job of eight years after his employer found out he had violated the curfew. Clarence F., who already worked sixty hours a week, felt that his arrest "will keep him from getting a good job."[52] Thus two of the significant markers of black middle-class status, homeownership and stable, high prestige labor, was directly jeopardized in the

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[51]"Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 79.

[52]"Central Themes for Cincinnati ," NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library, 12. "Dr. Karl Flaming interview notes," Milwaukee Series 44, Maier. Box 148, Folder 4, UWM archives

actions of the rebellion. Despite the reluctance of some in, or aspiring to the middle class, the

majority of middle-class African Americans, especially those with previous civil rights

organizing experience, helped to tow the line between more radical and mainline visions of

progress.

As the staff authors reported to the Kerner Commission: "[In Cincinnati] the uniting of the

militants (and the riot itself) has also had the consequence of making traditional organizations

and leadership more demanding."[53] Traditional middle-class leadership was able to provide

balance to the violent, aggressive, and militant rhetoric of the rebellions and hammer home a

more mainline, integrationist approach for African American equal rights. Cincinnati civil rights

activist Reverend Tecumseh X. Graham remarked:

> We had to knock them in the head to get their attention. After we got their attention we
> talked about what needed to be done. I emphasize that, because a lot of us so called middle
> class intellectuals disagree with the revolution, as I like to refer to it, and the way it was
> brought about. As I tried to explain to them [middle class leadership and municipal
> government] if the revolutionaries had not taken the time and the courage to go down and
> throw a few bricks, although I disagree with that approach, it had to be done to get the
> attention or at least go downtown and march which was my particular belief in doing we
> would have not gotten the few things we did. [54]

Although the grievances articulated by the participants reflected the concerns and aspirations of

working-class African Americans, in the actual implementation and establishment of solutions

traditional leadership often brokered the peace.[55]

Black middle-class leadership also dedicated their time and money to supporting those

who participated criminally in the uprisings. In a leaflet dated June 22, 1967 the Cincinnati

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[53]"Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 79.

[54]MI-95-44 *Glorifying the Lion* documentary accessed at Cincinnati Historical Society.

[55]"Announce 5 New Summertime Youth Projects," *Omaha Star,* July 22, 1966.

Defense Fund solicited money to raise bail for "many of our people who are still in jail from our recent rebellion against the status quo in Cincinnati. Many of these persons have been booked on sham charges…We need your support and we are sure you need ours." The Avondale Community Council allowed the fund to use their offices as headquarters and was endorsed by the chairman of the organization, Bailey Turner. In addition several other prominent civil rights leaders signed onto the letter including, Reverend Otis Moss who served as vice-chairman and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth who served as secretary of the organization. The NAACP and Reverend Harold Hunt both accepted donations. Other members who supported the Defense Fund included Dr. Robert Reid, Dr. Bruce Green, William Bowen and William Mallory, the latter two who serve as representatives in the Ohio State Legislature.[56]

After the 1969 uprising Omaha community members established the Vivian Strong Memorial Fund. Their announcement in the *Omaha Star* proclaimed: "Our money will not restore Vivian to life, nor will it bring the murderer to justice but it will show our great concern and help the family."[57] People wishing to make donations could do so at Greater Omaha Community Action (GOCA), the Spencer Street Barber Shop, Omaha Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), Urban League, the LEAP Program, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center. Although the money gathered here assisted Vivian's family and not those who participated in the uprising, it sent an important message of solidarity. In demonstrating their frustration that Officer Loder, who killed Strong would not be convicted; middle-class leadership was able to transcend class differences and share in the working-class' feelings of impotency.

[56]"Memorandum RE: Racial Disturbance, Cincinnati, Ohio June, 1967 21 Jul 1967" NACCD/E32 Johnson Presidential Library, 9. "Letter from Bailey W. Turner to friends 6-22-67" Mss 917 Maurice McCrackin manuscript collection, Box 51 Cincinnati Historical Society.

[57]"Vivian Strong Memorial Fund Started," *Omaha Star*, July 3, 1969.

More often than not black middle-class leadership participated in more subtle ways, typically encouraging participants to leave the area out of concern for the young people's lives. In 1969 over sixty community volunteers, twenty of whom were clergy, patrolled Omaha's Near North Side in small groups riding in six separate cars. Others were in touch with the home base at 2802 North Twenty-Fourth Street via walkie-talkie. They walked the streets instructing the protestors to "cool it." Members included Sam Cornelius, Emmett J. Dennis of OIC, Jack West of the Concentrated Employment Program, Hallie Smith of Omaha's Park and Recreation department, Father Jack McCaslin, and Kenneth Shearer, Carney Roundtree, and Michael Adams of GOCA walked along North Twenty-Fourth Street trying to ease tensions. Often they laid out their case simply, telling people: "The police have guns and they can kill you. How about going home?" In Milwaukee several clergymen, including Father Groppi also attempted to quell the disturbance.[58]

Just as the black working class performed in the uprising in ways that were representative of their class position and needs, so too did the black middle class. These individuals operated within the revolts in ways that reflected both their feelings of political efficacy as well as their racial and class position. Because of the privileged positions that they already held in the community they were able to advance a moderate, more palatable viewpoint and help broker the peace between militant factions and the municipal government based on the earlier alliances they had made. However, as I also assert this is not just a story of African Americans in the rebellions white working-class individuals also participated in the rebellions in ways that made sense to them based on their race and class.

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[58]"20 Clergymen, Others Spend Night Trying to Ease Tension," *Omaha World-Herald,* March 6, 1968. "Several Negroes Try to East the Tensions," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 27, 1969. Stuart From, "They Worked to Cool," *Dundee-West Omaha Sun*, July 2, 1969. "Disturbance in Vicinity of North Third Street, Milwaukee WI, 1 Aug 1967" NACCD/E24 Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

White working class participation

Although the deindustrialization and mechanization of the Midwest disproportionally affected African Americans, working-class whites also suffered in these cutbacks. This economic hardship coupled with feelings of unfairness due to blacks underserved entitlement left many working-class whites feeling threatened. In Milwaukee only 17% of black rebellion arrestees felt that growth of job opportunities for African Americans was moving too fast, compared to only 7% of the control group. Conversely, 67% of white arrestees agreed that "in the North, Negro groups are generally asking too much" compared to 58% of the white male control group. 71% of Milwaukee blacks felt that increased job opportunities was the solution to preventing uprisings compared to only 29% of whites who consistently stressed this point.[59] Those whites who participated in the urban rebellions were more inclined to feel slighted by the advances African Americans were trying to agitate for. The combination of their racial and class position led some working-class whites to participate in the urban rebellions.

Whereas scholars have typically remembered these events as expressions of black angst, a significant minority of participants were white. These events could have devolved into the interracial conflicts seen in the 1919 Red Summer and domestically in World War II, but due to "a strong police response to the potential use of weapons by whites prevented the outbreak of a true racial riot."[60] White individuals' participation was not characterized by property violence or loitering offenses as many black arrestees committed, but more interpersonal violence or weapon charges. By looking at the demographic profiles, charges, and opinions of these white arrestees, I provide an alternative framework for understanding changing race relations in the Black

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[59]Flaming, "Who Riots?," 28, 39,56.

[60]"Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 77.

Freedom Movement. By understanding the significance of the urban rebellions for white Midwesterners, I am able to identify the tension many working-class whites felt throughout this era, and the subsequent rise of neoconservative political ideology.

In 1969, social scientist Robert Hill published his nationwide study of uprising participation. His sample consisted of 7,901 arrest blotters for persons arrested in thirty-seven civil disorders from 1964-1967 (excluding Los Angeles and Detroit.) Since the Kerner Commission provided the majority of the arrest information, twenty-six of the samples were from 1967, 46% of the total arrestees were from the 1964 and 1966 uprisings, including Omaha. However the 1967 data does not include Milwaukee due to the police department's refusal to release specific arrest information. Hill concluded that only 5% of black males arrested were accused of weapons charges, compared to 15% of white males. Additionally, Hill observed that "white males are disproportionately more often arrested for shooting firearms than are black males." Hill noted that "although white males account for only 11% of the total male riot arrestees, they comprise 40% of the persons arrested for shooting or sniping." Undoubtedly many whites felt threatened for their safety, just as many African Americans did, but beyond carrying weapons for self-protection many white uprising arrestees were apprehended many miles from their own homes in the immediate area of the rebellion.

Contrary to popularly held myths, white citizens were more likely to be "outside agitators." While only 3% of black male arrestees lived outside of the uprising city, "almost four times as many (11%) of the white male arrestees resided outside the city experiencing the riot at the time of their arrests." Additionally only 2% of black male arrestees lived in the state of the rebellion but not in the uprising city; whereas 9% of the white male arrestees lived elsewhere in

the state but outside of the rebellion city.[61] These findings are significant because they

demonstrate that many working-class whites intentionally chose to aggressively participate in the

urban rebellions leaving their own neighborhoods and seeking out criminal activities in the black

ghetto. Furthermore, this also demonstrates patterns of discrimination within Midwestern cities.

Whereas the majority of blacks were clustered into residentially segregated areas, many white

Midwesterners resided in the suburbs or outside of the central city, therefore consciously

choosing to act in a criminal manner during the uprising; unlike many black arrestees charged for

loitering in their own neighborhoods.

In Cincinnati, arrest records show that forty-four white males were charged, comprising

nearly 15% of the arrested. In Milwaukee nearly 38% (n=483) of the adults arrested were whites

as were 30% (n=86) of juveniles. These seemingly high numbers are due in part to the citywide

curfew which caught a number of citizens in its dragnet. As with African American participants,

the ways in which white men (no white women are recorded as arrested) acted in the urban

uprisings were a function of their perceived social position. A significant faction of white

participants came from outside of the black community intent on causing damage to African

Americans under the aegis of "protecting their community." Investigators in Milwaukee found

that 42% of whites arrested in the July 1967 uprisings were carrying a concealed weapon.

Furthermore unlike the majority of black participants, the overwhelming amount of white

participants in Milwaukee were between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine years old. The

arrested urban core whites in Milwaukee lived outside of the black enclave.[62] That the majority

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[61]Robert B. Hill and Robert M. Fogelson, "A Study of Arrest Patterns in the 1960s Riots," unpublished paper for the Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University (Dec. 1969), 43-45, 68-69.

[62]"Graph of Number of Offenses-Milwaukee Urban League" NACCD/E37 Johnson Presidential Library, 3, 15, 39.

of whites arrested were older and carrying weapons show how these individuals saw themselves in the context of the municipal power structure.

The after-arrest interviews provide telling information on the intent of these white vigilantes' participation. In recounting their uprising experiences many of the black participants used the occasion to inquire about jobs or training opportunities. The majority of white arrestees used the opportunity to express their racially based anxieties. Eldred A. stated that he was present during one of Father Groppi's opening housing marches. The interviewer noted that "his attitude toward Negroes is tainted by this incident- he said the way they behaved and the language he used turned him against them." Another white participant echoed these sentiments stating that he had "no use for Fr. Groppi."[63] William B. on the other hand felt that he was illegally arrested because his gun was disassembled in a case "and he merely wanted to protect himself in his apartment—because he could hear the yelling outside his window." However, he did not explain why he was on the streets when he was arrested. Many other white participants expressed concerns about protecting themselves and their family during the uprisings. This general sentiment of arming oneself for an all-out race war was not limited to those arrested during the uprising.

In the aftermath of these events, the fear of continued racial violence, African American criminality, and the "death" of cities were used as important rhetorical tools by the white majority to shift the political regimes in these communities. In Omaha, B.D. Super, the manager of the Hansen's Sporting Goods store stated that, "I've never had such a week in the gun business." He reported handgun sales at more than three times the volume in the same period the

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[63]"Flaming interview notes" Milwaukee Mss Ez- Milwaukee Urban League, Box 22, Folder 24, UWM archives.

year before. J.C. Penney also showed a 25% increase in the sale of rifles and handguns. Police

registration records in Omaha showed that four times as many owners registered pistols in the

two weeks after the 1968 uprisings than had in a comparable period before March 4. The

average daily registration before March 4 was thirteen; on March 4 the day after the insurrections

it hit a high of fifty registrations in one day. Additionally, in Milwaukee after the Detroit uprising

gun sales greatly increased, with the majority of sales to white people. As Clarence Casanova,

owner of Casanova's Sporting Goods Firm noted "We haven't sold a thing to Negroes in the last

eight or ten days." Arrestee Eldred A. also noted that he was concerned about "the possible riots

this summer, [saying] many of his friends are buying guns to be ready if any rioters come in their

neighborhoods." White individuals who participated in the uprising and purchased weapons felt

uneasy about their position in society as both men and workers. Contrary to what Hobsbawn

argued, these men participated in the uprisings not because they had nothing to lose, but because

they had something to protect, namely their families and white privilege. The majority of white

participants in Milwaukee held jobs but felt that blacks threatened these jobs whereas 50% of

black arrestees did not have a full time job.[64] Therefore the tension between perception and

reality stemming from the Midwestern mentality directly had an influence on how white citizens

chose to participate.

One of the most interesting ways in which whites demonstrated their frustration with

their lower economic status took place in Cincinnati. Many groups organized to protect their

communities in case African Americans entered their neighborhoods but an interracial

confrontation never occurred. Additionally, some whites from the suburbs and Kentucky came

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[64]"Sales of Firearms Curtailed Swiftly," *Milwaukee Sentinel* August 1, 1967 "Gun Dealers Report Sales On Increase," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 8, 1968. "Dangerous Folly," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 18, 1968. "Flaming interview notes" Milwaukee Mss Ez- Milwaukee Urban League, Box 22, Folder 24, UWM archives.

in and set fires to buildings in the black area. One incident of note occurred in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, where white southern Appalachian migrants resided. In this section of Cincinnati, an OEO funded center called HUB provided employment information and referrals for displaced workers, and was frequented by unemployed African Americans. During the uprisings anti-black feelings grew in the neighborhood indicated by a large group of whites throwing projectiles at the HUB building. Out of concern for the safety of the staff, HUB closed all day Thursday and Friday.[65] By targeting the HUB center, which could have also provided employment opportunity for them, white Cincinnatians expressed their anger that blacks received undeserved advantages because of their race, augmenting extant feelings of unearned African American entitlement.

However it is important not only to interpret the actions of many whites who actively participated in the rebellions but also how the uprisings served as an important touchstone to white municipal citizens in understanding the changing urban community. In Omaha during the 1969 uprisings 911 transcripts provide in-the-moment insight to the powerful resentments many whites were cultivating towards black participants, the police, and local city government. As one female Near North side resident told the operator: "We've lived down here. They don't own nothing, never did own nothing….Why do people who are not of this mess have to tolerate it?[66]

After enduring this harassment and fear twice before, white businesses owners were enraged during the 1969 uprising. When a store owner requested that the Fire Department send rigs to put out the fire in his store, the dispatcher replied that they could not go in.

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[65]"Staff Paper No. 7 Cincinnati: Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67 Johnson Presidential Library, 92. "Community Action Commission Report form Memorial Community Center " NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 4.

[66]Omaha 911 Transcripts, 13. Author received 911 transcript photocopies from the 1969 uprising from Donald Nichol (retired firefighter) in October 2005.

Male: So all a man can do is sit there and have his place burn down, is that it?

Operator: I guess. . .

Male: That's the protection I get from the City of Omaha.

Operator: No, that's. . .

Male: I mean, where in hell is the Police Department to take these guns away from these people, and mow them down and drive the trucks right through, huh? You have your business burn to the ground and the people you pay to protect they don't protect you. So what's the hell the use of paying taxes, huh?

Operator: Well, I pay them, too. And I don't know what to say.[67]

Many white Midwesterners' interpretations of the uprisings, and for that matter the black experience, came from detached observations not contextual understanding. They saw that African Americans were destroying property in the streets and looting stores but did not comprehend that black participants sought out the same status markers that white property owners were trying to protect. In many ways these violent insurrections severed the tenuous ties between black and white Midwesterners, exacerbating long-held prejudices. One such frustrated white Milwaukeean wrote to Mayor Maier:

> We think it's high time we put our foot down and put a stop to this constant fight for more rights. So we are going to put a stop to this lawlessness on our own. This sooner [sic] the whites will riot for equal rights and for putting a stop to N.A.A.C.P. and putting the niggers back in they'er [sic] places all the whites will unite and whipe [sic] out the niggers before this gos [sic] any farther. We are tired of the negroes getting what they want "FOR NOTHING" and the white men working they'er [sic] fingers to the bone for what we need." Signed The Whites.[68]

In the aftermath of the urban rebellions many white Midwesterners jettisoned previous attempts at a "slow and steady" allocation of rights to African Americans. These insurrections caused

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[67]Omaha 911 Transcripts, 17.

[68]"Memo from Bert dated Feb 2, 1968 typed written letter" Milwaukee Series 44, Maier. Box 3, Folder 21 UWM archives.

white urban dwellers to turn their focus inward, and begin to more aggressively agitate for the reinstatement of white privilege.

Conclusion

The ways that individuals participated in the urban rebellions was a function of their race and class position. For black working-class people they sought to end the disenfranchisement, marginalization, and lack of equal access they faced from both the black middle class and white establishment. For the black middle class they were torn between the privileges being middle class afforded them and a deepening understanding of racial solidarity. Although they often did not participate criminally in the events, those in the black bourgeoisie offered assistance in many different ways during the course of the rebellions. This participation included acting as a "counterrioter," securing bail money, and serving as intermediary between the masses and city government. Finally, African Americans were not the only people affected by and participating in these events. Many white working-class men took part in the rebellions, attempting to protect their white privilege. Additionally, many white property owners suffered damages in these events helping to break apart a certain Midwestern liberal détente which existed prior to these events. The one commonality in the aftermath of the uprisings was that no person, black or white, middle or working-class was left unaffected. I will discuss how these events changed the political, social, and economic climate in Chapter 6. Before, I am able to discuss the long lasting implications of these events, I must first add one final analytical category to interpreting these events, that of gender.

Chapter 5: Beyond the Rabble, Gender Factors in Uprising Participation

On Tuesday night, June 24, 1969, Omaha police officer James Loder and his black partner, James W. Smith, responded to a break-in at 1701 North Twenty-First Street in the city's black enclave. There they caught a teenage boy coming out of an apartment and arrested him. A small group of youngsters attending a record party nearby gathered in the area and scattered when they saw the officers arrive. As the children ran from the policemen, Loder raised his service revolver, leveled the weapon and fired a single shot, hitting fourteen-year-old Vivian Strong at the base of her skull. Doctors pronounced the child dead on arrival. An eyewitness, Lenford Vaughan, who stood behind Loder when the officer shot, described the incident: "He raised his arm, aimed and shot. He just fired one shot and Vivian fell. The cop didn't yell 'halt' or nothing. He just stood there and shot." Loder later testified in court that "If I had known it was a female I would never have shot."

As news of the girl's death circulated throughout the community, two hundred people gathered outside the Logan-Fontenelle Homes, the public housing development where Strong resided. The first reports of vandalism occurred as the crowd moved from the housing project to the E-Zee Liquor Store around 11:45 p.m. The next night one thousand people gathered on a baseball field adjacent to the Logan-Fontenelle homes. Community activists passed out leaflets which inquired "How many black children have to be murdered by cops before something is done?" On the street during the uprising participants taunted police officers, stating to "Come and get us, you white bitches." By the end of the week, twenty businesses had been damaged or destroyed and twenty others vandalized.

In recalling the events of this rebellion, Frank Peak remembered: "one lady in particular, an older lady. She was just smilin'. She'd got some new clothes out of there, and it was a real neat thing to see her so happy." Peak, a former member of Omaha's Black Panther Party (BPP) did not join the organization until he reached his "breaking point," the murder of Vivian Strong.[1] This brief anecdote provides more complex questions regarding the uprisings, beyond racial and socio-economic considerations. Peak's happiness at seeing a woman gathering new clothes, Loder's guilt in shooting a female, and participants challenging police officers using emasculating epithets reveal the relationship between gender and the urban rebellions.

The urban revolts must be placed in dialogue with class, gender, and racial analysis in order to understand the full impact such events had not only for the black populace but also America as a whole, providing a critical lens for understanding the Black Freedom Movement. To demonstrate this I interrogate the ways in which contemporary investigators documented, modern scholars interpreted, and protestors/participants embodied highly gendered ideas. By fully investigating and unpacking such prevalent notions, I am able to unveil lingering assumptions about race, masculinity, gender, and class.

This chapter will examine the role of women in urban insurrections, as well the ways in which the intersection of race, class, and gender influenced participation in the uprisings. I identify several manifestations of gender in the urban rebellions. The first is that both men and women tended to act in accordance to traditional gender norms. Second, I demonstrate that

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[1] "Negro Girl Killed by a Police Bullet at Housing Project," *Omaha World-Herald*, 25 June 1969 Buildings Are Burned As Violence Erupts," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 29, 1969. An "After Action Report" filed by the National Guard stated that 3,000 people gathered near the scene of Vivian's death and listened to two hours of speeches. "After Action Report (AAR)-#7/69," August 12, 1969, Nebraska Historical Society, Governor Norbert Tiemann: Box 104, Folder Adjutant General 1970, 93. "Ten Blocks on No. 24th Hit Hardest," *Omaha World-Herald*, 26 June 1969. "North Side Violence Continues a 3rd Night," *Omaha World-Herald*, 27 June 1969. Edward Poindexter had tried to recruit Peak for years but he refused until his "breaking point." Frank Peak, interview by Alonzo N. Smith, February 27, 1982. Nebraska Black Oral History Project, Nebraska Historical Society, Lincoln, NE.

females were present during these events and acting against the intersection of multiple

oppressions including race, class, and gender. However because women were viewed as

apolitical, their engagement has long been downplayed by scholars. Finally, by interpreting

criminal and non-criminal participation through the lens of gender I am able to demonstrate that

the uprisings were a collective community action, extending beyond illicit acts.

I structure this chapter by first discussing previous scholarly works which look at the

intersection between the gender and political protest both within the Black Freedom Movement

and beyond, to define working terms such as masculine and feminine gender roles. Next, I

describe the historical moment preceding the uprisings. In particular I investigate the growing

concern on the "declining" status of black males and how this interfaced with discussions in

previous chapters on class and political ideology. I then outline the ways in which gender

manifested itself in the urban rebellions. Finally, I conclude this chapter by looking at the

broader implications of such an interpretation, including uncovering the collective community

nature of the uprisings.

Gender and Protest

Sociologist Judith Lorber argued "when gender is a major component of structured

inequality, the devalued genders have less power, prestige, and economic rewards than the

valued genders"[2] Furthermore historian Marilynn Johnson asserts that racial ideologies are

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[2] Judith Lorber, "The Social Construction of Gender," in *Reconstructing Gender: A Multicultural Anthology* ed. Estelle Disch (New York: McGaw-Hill, 2008), 114, 117.

"closely linked with notions of manhood and womanhood.[3] Gender roles and relations are not created in a vacuum; rather they are respondent to racial, classed, and regional considerations which factor into the devaluation of an individual's status. Therefore to create generic definitions of masculinity and femininity based on hegemonic norms, obscures the full scope of the gendered, classed, and racialized experience within the urban rebellions. To arrive at my working definitions for masculinity, femininity and gender roles I rely on both scholarly texts and historical precedent.

A different set of values and norms exists for white men and black men, as well as for black women and white women. These elements are exacerbated by class differences. In the 1960s many white women had not yet entered the workplace. However due to the combination of racial and economic discrimination most black women were forced to labor outside their homes. Furthermore, the black middle class often criticized these working women for not properly raising their children who were subsequently "out in the streets." For black men, gender norms also formed at the intersection of race, class, gender, and region, as well as generation. For many older, Southern-born men being too powerful (physically, economically, politically, or socially) could lead to severe, even fatal consequences. A younger, Northern-bred generation felt they could exercise their masculinity more comfortably, and attempted to exert control and power over their lives. Despite the limits to black masculinity, this identity was one that black men employed and benefited from. Thus by perceiving themselves as superior to black women and utilizing masculine rhetoric, black men were able to exercise some control over their own communities, notwithstanding the limits placed on them by race and class discrimination. Therefore these preconceived racialized notions of masculinity and femininity,

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[3]Marilynn S. Johnson, "Gender, Race, and Rumors: Reexamining the 1943 Race Riots," *Gender & History* 10:2 (August 1998): 252.

pervaded scholarly and popular thought on the uprisings as well as influenced the ways in which individuals chose to participate within the uprisings.

Men's Violent Protest

Unsurprisingly, in that the urban rebellions are one of the most understudied facets of the Black Freedom Movement, a full historical treatment of the gender dynamics within the uprisings has not been explored. Typically, those who do engage the topic of gender within the rebellions are interested only in female participation. Therefore we know more about women as gendered participants than we do about the gendered participation of men. It is vital not only to look at dominant forms of gendered participation but to utilize black masculinity as a lens to understand the urban rebellions.[4]

I employ scholar Anthony Lemelle's broad reaching definition of masculinity as a set of "socially constructed characteristics that society expects for the male sex" as a starting point. Historian Steve Estes describes this "masculinism" as the "the notion that men are more powerful than women, that they should have control over their own lives and authority over others." Ultimately, I define mainstream American masculinity as asserting one's manhood through physical prowess, the subordination of women, providing for one's family, and exercising control over their own and others' lives Through understanding the structurally caused impediments to black masculinity prior to the uprisings, I am able to demonstrate how the urban rebellions shifted dominant norms in black males' behaviors, thus making these events partially exercises in black masculinity. The racial hierarchy of the United States prevented black men from fully benefiting from the rewards of manhood. Due to racial discrimination,

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[4] Sarah E. Stone Watt "Women of Watts: Picturing the STRONGBLACKWOMAN in the 1965 Watts Uprising" (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2007). John Bohstedt, "Gender, Household, and Community Politics: Women in English Riots, 1790-1810" *Past and Present* 120 (Aug.1988): 88-122.

African American men were often under or unemployed and thus struggled to provide materially for their families. This same racial prejudice prevented black men from engaging with other men including employers, politicians, and authority figures, as equals. Additionally, due to the mainstream devaluation of black womanhood, African American men struggled to protect black women from verbal, physical, and sexual assault.

By ascribing to masculine rhetoric, men created a gendered hierarchy in which women and those deemed "less manly" were at the bottom and thus disadvantaged. More destructive to the black community was as Lemelle noted, was the production of "masculinist deployments [which] produced a desire to emulate hegemonic masculinity even when such strategic and tactical deployments were outside the interests of black masculinity."[5] Therefore in an attempt to assert themselves as men, practitioners often did so at the expense of the black community. These impediments to fully participating in a broader "manhood" along with concessions to hegemonic masculinity were augmented by black males' class position.

Although middle-class African Americans often faced the same discrimination that their working-class brethren did, they also experienced a greater sense of personal autonomy and privilege by way of relative prestige in traditional power structures. The same can be said for the ways in which class position conspired to further "emasculate" working-class black men. As already noted, if an African American man was fortunate enough to have a job it typically did not provide enough income to allow his wife to work solely at home. Additionally, black working-class men, doubly disadvantaged because of their class and race, struggled to have meaningful control over their own lives through the formal political process.

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[5] Anthony J. Lemelle, Jr. *Black Masculinity and Sexual Politics*, (New York: Routledge Press, 2010,) 3, 7-8, 32-33.

Despite the limits of black masculinity due to a structurally oppressive system, African American men still attempted to harness masculine rhetoric to remedy the sense of powerlessness in their lives. Therefore in many tactical strategies of the Black Freedom Movement race privilege came via gender privilege. Historian Gerald Horne noted that "the only gender role models [black men] could emulate were those that involved the subordination of women." Therefore regardless if one's approach to the Black Freedom struggle came via traditional non-violent direct action or Black Nationalism, asserting one's manhood and the protection of black womanhood was at its center. The rebellions are no exception.

Horne argues that the success of the uprisings brought about a hyper-muscular, misogynist Black Nationalism. He concludes that: "the patriarchal, though comprehensible, complaint emerging from slavery that black men could not protect their families and 'their' black women apparently enkindled a major twentieth-century insurrection."[6] In addition to expressing a more directly confrontational tactic, African Americans began considering violent protest as a viable option, deeply influenced by the intersection of their gender and class positions.

The feeling of violence as a legitimate tactic was often determined by class position. In *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement*, historian Lance Hill argues that many working-class blacks felt that "the nonviolent movement did not rest on male supremacy, physical power, and aggression…[reflecting] a growing disillusionment of working-class blacks with the pacifistic, legalistic, and legislative strategies proffered by national organizations." Hill also contends that many black Americans, particularly men, refused to participate in non-violent direct action organizations because it "reproduced the same degrading

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[6] Horne, *Fire This Time*, 10, 12, 55, 207.

rituals of domination and submission that suffused the master/slave relationship."[7] Therefore the

use of a violent protest tactic in the Midwest is partially a function of African Americans'

perception of themselves as men and workers.

The urban rebellions were very much a response by the working class to their frustration

with the pace of the Civil Rights Movement and its middle-class leadership. Horne observed

that, "Watts 1965 convinced many blacks that the way to receive attention, particularly when

much of the leadership worshipped non-violence and appeared to be middle class, was through

various physical means."[8] For this younger generation of Northern-raised black men, the Black

Freedom struggle was intimately tied into their ability to assert their manliness. In the aftermath

of the first Cincinnati rebellion the Victory Neighborhood Service organization noted:

> Black power activists want freedom and manhood for the Negro, opportunities to set
> policy and run things in the ghetto. They distrust the present institutions and
> establishments to even provide equal opportunity and justice. There is a distrust of
> persons over thirty and of the Negro middle class.[9]

Therefore the urban rebellions in the Midwest demonstrated not only a desire for economic and

social equality but that these objectives could only be achieved through African Americans

realization of their full manhood. The uprisings provided alternative tactics for those looking to

engage in more violent forms of protest more in line with their gender and class positions.

Women's Violent Protest

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[7]Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.) 3, 28.

[8]Horne, *Fire This Time*, 207, 185.

[9] "Community Action Commission from Victory Neighborhood Service" NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 4.

In recent years there have been a number of works that investigate women's presence, activism, and contributions within the Civil Rights Movement. These are vital not only in excavating women's activism but also in identifying the ways in which gender influenced tactics, strategies, and interpersonal relationships within the movement. This scholarship informs my own conceptual framework in analyzing the urban rebellions.   First, despite their frequent absence in the historical record women were integral actors in all aspects of the Black Freedom Movement, including the uprisings. Second, although women were active participants, their contributions were often confined to the spheres of influence that they typically inhabited. Finally popularly held stereotypes of women often provided females with the ability to perform unique roles within the uprisings. The scholar who most contributed to my theoretical framework is Patricia Hill Collins' who asserts that "race, class, gender, and sexuality [are] intersecting versus competing frameworks."[10] In essence these hierarchical categories act as multipliers to one's oppression. Thus understanding these intersectionalities is essential to unpack the ways in which gender, class, and race interact in determining one's experiences within the rebellions.

To investigate how women participated in the urban uprisings I again borrow from sociologist Judith Lorber in establishing the dimensions of women's activism. Echoing Lemelle's assertions, Lorber notes that "gender is a process of creating distinguishable social

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[10]Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith eds. *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004). Steve Estes *I Am a Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon eds. *Woman and the Civil Rights Movement*, 1954-1965 (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2009). Belinda Robnett *How Long? How Long? African American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001). Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods, eds. *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.) Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 10.

statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities." These statuses are ranked unequally

and reified in extant social structures. Second, any actions "that directly challenge the legal and

customary rules governing African American women's subordination constitutes part of the

struggle for institutional transformation." Women's participation, whether explicitly articulated

or not, was an act of resistance to the normative subordinate structures placed upon them.

Finally, women's activism can be determined by women crafting "black female spheres of

influence that resist oppressive structures by undermining them."[11] Within the revolts the

manner in which women participated was often defined by areas in their life which they were

directly responsible.

It is useful to also look at the ways that women's violent protest has taken shape

historically. Within a broad temporal and geographical range, women's violent participation

emerges in similar patterns as the 1960s urban rebellions. Charles Tilly observed that women

protested violently in ways that were advantageous to them. Female participants were more

likely to obtain goods and advocate for benefits which directly affected their lives, such as bread.

Therefore in nineteenth century France as well as urban America in the 1960s, women were

more likely to engage in personal political action rather than grieve within the formal political

sphere due to their limited franchise there.

Historians Martha Wilkinson and Dominic Capeci's *Layered Violence* demonstrates these

central elements of women's participation in collective action. In their demographic analysis of

participants of the 1943 Detroit race riot they noted that women's looting showed them

"manifesting assertive behavior, but in a form culturally accepted for females." Women's

perceived civility led to a certain invisibility within violent collective action. As Irish historian

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[11] Lorber, "The Social Construction of Gender,"114. Patricia Hill Collins *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 204.

Tara Keenan-Thompson noted "Women could transgress boundaries and commit security breaches with relative impunity."[12] Thus notions of female propriety influenced how women's actions were perceived as much as an individual's positionality influenced how she would participate.

Wilkinson and Capeci illustrate the ways in which gender, class and race aligned to affect women's participation in the Detroit race riot of 1943.   Because of preconceived notions of female propriety, white women's participation was largely ignored during the first days of the uprising.[13] Of the black females arrested, 69% worked outside of the home and despite the wartime boom nearly 30% remained unemployed.   Black women often had to work outside of their homes because discriminatory pay scales and menial positions often meant black men, if present, could not support their families on one income.   As could be expected by their status as working-class heads of household the majority of black women in the Detroit 1943 race riot were most frequently picked up for looting.

Women participated in collective violent action not as African Americans *or* women *or* workers; but as black working-class women. Thus the sum of their experience reflected how they chose to participate. Women's activism tended to take place in ways that would override the triple oppression of their experience and in domains that were easy for them to transgress, or where they had already established a strong hold. These broad ranging interpretations of men's and women's participation determined how scholars understand masculinity, femininity, and violent protest today. However during the 1960s a very heated conversation was taking place on

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[12]Dominic J. Capeci, Jr. and Martha Wilkerson *Layered Violence: The Detroit Rioters of 1943* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2009) ,55. Tera Keenan-Thompson I*rish Women and Street Politics 1956-1973: 'This Could Be Contagious'* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), 46.

[13] Capeci and Wilkerson, *Layered Violence*, 69.

traditional gender roles and their effect on the black community, greatly influencing perceptions of the uprisings.

The Crisis of Black Masculinity

The United States government published two important reports nearly simultaneously with the first wave of uprisings. The first was Daniel Patrick Monyihan's infamous *Case for National Action: The Negro Family* in 1965. The second was an addendum to the *1964 National Report on Women* chaired by Dorothy Height.   Both of these reports focused on the atypical structure of black families, in which the authors felt that the "reversal roles of husband and wife" led to the emasculation of the black male in the home and ghetto community.[14] However this contemporary gender analysis of the black community itself was contaminated with lingering assumptions on race and class, ignoring the systematic problems which contributed to the perceived emasculation of the black male

In a chapter entitled the "Tangle of Pathology" the Moynihan charged that the black American family was not only a cause for "national action" but also partially to blame for the rebellion. He suggested that the rebellions represented black males' response to the matriarchal structure of the black family "too out of line with the rest of the American society, [which] seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male."[15] In his assessment the source of problems within the black community, including the urban rebellions, was not discrimination nor political impotency, nor lack of jobs or red-lining, rather the non-traditional role of black women.

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[14] Moynihan Report, 54-57.

[15] Thomas J. Foley, "Racial Unrest Tied to Negro Family Failure," *Los Angeles Times,* August 14, 1965. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Seepage of the Moynihan Report," *Los Angeles Times*, August 19, 1965.

Similarly in her addendum to the 1964 *Report on Women*, Dorothy Height asserted that in part black women were to blame for black men's insecurity. "When she [a college educated black woman] earns more than her husband, his resulting insecurity and jealousy may dissolve the family and thus continue the matriarchal family pattern." Similarly, Height showed her class bias stating that "The children of many Negro mothers who must work are not cared for properly during their mothers' working hours." This sentiment was echoed during the rebellions. One black Cincinnati woman remarked: "The mother here can't control their kids. They just sit and watch. It's stupid. This may not sound like a Christian [thing to say]. But if one or two would get sniped—I mean shooting to kill—this would stop."[16] For many Americans, black working mothers were not only responsible for the dissolution of two-parent homes but were also to blame for wild children in the streets.

More disconcertingly, given her own impressive political activism, Height completely depoliticized black women by ignoring their own issues and grievances. "If the Negro woman has a major underlying concern, it is the status of the Negro man and his position in the community and his need for feeling himself an important person, free and able to make his contribution in the whole society in order that he may strengthen his home." She continued, "Thus, the progress of the Negro woman—her personal advancement and that of the whole family—is inextricably bound to the improvement of opportunities for the Negro male."[17] Therefore in clubwoman Dorothy Height's opinion, black women's objective during the apex of

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[16] President's Committee on the Status of Women "The Presidential Report on American Women," (D.C.: GPO, 1963), 30-31, 37. Hereafter referred to as "Report on American Women." Although the majority of the report dealt with poor black women, the majority of the board was made up of middle-class black women including Cenoria D. Johnson of the National Urban League; Maude Gadsen of the Beauty Owners Association, Gerri Major of Johnson Publications, and Inabel Lindsay of Howard University. "Riot Here Loses Some of Its Force, Credit Goes to Ohio Guardsmen," Post Times Star (Cincinnati, OH) June 15, 1967.

[17] "Report on American Women," 30, 35.

the Civil Rights Movement was not to overcome their own triple oppression as working black women, but rather to ensure that "their" men felt manly enough. Therefore when contemporary observers and modern scholars reexamine gender in the uprisings it is interpreted through the lens of depoliticized women positively supporting black men.

Whitney Young also argued that "both as a husband and as a father the Negro male is made to feel inadequate." However in lieu of wholesale blaming black women he attested that discrimination and poverty combined to create a negative effect in the black community.   Young felt that this inadequacy stemmed from relative income deprivation "in a society that measures a man by the size of his paycheck, [the black man] doesn't stand very tall in a comparison with his white counterpart. To this situation he may react with withdrawal, bitterness toward society, aggression both within the family and racial group, self-hatred, or crime."[18] Both Height and Young honed in on one of the key factors of black masculinity.   To fully live as a man, one required economic independence, political clout, and social capital. For African American men in the Midwest this solvency was severely limited by the region's declining economy, labor discrimination, and political impotency.

Thus even in the contemporary moment of the urban rebellions, the intersection of race, class, region, and gender put African Americans in a tenuous position. When African American men attempted to assert their masculinity through physical prowess, the subordination of women, and control of their own lives they were limited because of the constraints placed on them due to the structural implications of race and class. Black women were also disadvantaged due to the lens of masculinity through which these events were read. Instead of looking at the structural elements that prevented black men from obtaining equal status in the workplace and political

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[18] Moniyhan report, 175.

realms, they focused on how black women, employed out of necessity, emasculated black men. Furthermore middle-class advisors writing on black working women reiterated that black women in the workforce not only made black men weaker but also raised a cohort of motherless children. It is in this context that the urban rebellions occurred.

Black Masculinity in the Rebellions

In a speech given to the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) delegation, President Floyd McKissick announced: "The year 1966 shall be remembered as the year we left our imposed status as Negroes and became Black men."[19] As a growing Black Nationalist rhetoric began to filter through the community, it became evident that African Americans felt that their forced inferior status due to their race and class was also an affront to their manhood. Black men struggled to meet many of the principal markers of being manly: mobilizing political power; providing for one's family through gainful employment; protecting black women from verbal and physical abuse; and controlling their own communities. Thus the uprisings for both participants and observers became in part an exercise to reassert black masculinity. Before I am able to identify these masculine actions within the rebellions it is important to establish how black ghetto life, not black women, often emasculated its residents.

During the mid-1960s there was a growing concern on how best to deal with the perceived weak position of African American males. Community leaders and "experts" advocated for male-directed discipline in the black ghettos. Ideas ranged from using male instead of female social workers to deliver welfare checks to the lowering of military requirements to "get more

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[19] Paul Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow Publishing, 1996), 315. Howard Sitkoff *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang Publishing, 1998), 215.

Negro youths out of the ghetto and into the Army."[20] However the impediments to achieving

full black masculinity were more complex and deeply rooted in the discriminatory structures of

the urban Midwest. Thus the same concerns grieved during the rebellions and discussed in

previous chapters demonstrate the challenges black men faced in fully expressing their

masculinity, namely police interaction, formal politics, and employment concerns.

In 1967 Ernie Chambers wrote a letter to Omaha's safety director L.K. Smith, describing an

incident that took place on January 18. That evening African American police officer Marvin

McClarty stopped by the Spencer Street barbershop after his shift to chat with the proprietors,

Chambers and Dan Goodwin about a race related issue. The owners were vocal, if unofficial

leaders in the Near North Side, and the Spencer Street barbershop served as a meeting point for

black men to discuss civil rights issues. Cruiser Car #86 stopped in front of the shop and

Sergeant Brock—despite being of a lower rank than McClarty-- alighted his car and verbally

reprimanded the officer for "being out of his district." Chambers wrote that the "whole spectacle

was insulting to Officer McClarty and insulting, in the extreme, to us."[21]

Chambers was concerned that McClarty had little respect within the police force—respect

that he deserved both as an officer and a man. Chambers argued that not only was this an affront

to McClarty but also offensive to black men throughout the community, writing "we [the black

community] see a man—who is one of the few links the Omaha Police Division has with the

Ghetto—one of the few Officers we can respect—treated in this uncivilized manner."[22] In

Chambers' opinion McClarty lacked control of his own life and the respect he deserved, because

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[20] Moynihan 54-57.

[21] Typewritten report presented to the Police Community-Relations Office in North Omaha by Daniel M. Goodwin, February 28, 1969. Author obtained a copy from Mr. Goodwin in November 2005.

[22]"Clipping from Omaha World Herald 9-14-67" NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2.

he was reprimanded by an officer whom he out ranked. Chambers was concerned with the symbolism that it held for the black community. If one of the police department's own could be disrespected with impunity what chance did civilian black men have?

In Cincinnati, in addition to the arbitrariness of stop and frisk procedures inflicted on black men, they also lacked control over their own medical records and privacy. In 1966 the police department was desperate to find a suspect for the rape-murders which Posteal Laskey would later be convicted of. In order to "narrow" their list of suspects, police violated black men's privacy in obtaining the hospital records of 10,000 African American males within the area with type O blood. They then used this information to check against the public records of sexual crimes committed. Any black man, who had had blood drawn at the hospital, could now be investigated as a potential sexual assault suspect, demonstrating the absence of power black men exerted in their own lives. African Americans were so disgusted by this treatment and the violation of their constitutional rights that the Assistant United States Attorney feared that this investigation could produce an "explosive situation."[23]

In Milwaukee black male teenagers were also often subject to the arbitrariness of state agents. In the summer of 1967 the Memorial Community Center sponsored a dance, and when the event concluded organizers provided the girls with rides home and instructed the boys to walk home. On the way back, the male teens were stopped and forced to line up against the wall by firefighters, not police, for investigation.[24] Because of their gender, the black teenage boys were allowed to see themselves home while the girls received escorts. For the young men, their class status ensured that they did not have their own vehicles to drive, therefore they walked.

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[23] "Justice Department Cincinnati Weekly Summary 7-15-1966" NACCD/E32 Johnson Presidential Library, 1.

[24] "Community Action Commission Report form Memorial Community Center" NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 3.

Finally, their race made them susceptible to unnecessary searches even by those without authority to do so. For these Milwaukee teenagers their race, class, and gender positioned them to be subjected to unnecessary stop and search procedures.

Beyond maintaining control over black men's lives, interactions with police officers also challenged African American men's masculinity in that they were often times unable to protect black women. One situation which best demonstrates the manly imperative of protecting black women occurred in May 1962. Cincinnati Patrolman John A. Virgin, who was also the handler of police dog Ted, was driving in his cruiser when he saw two women fighting. According to Virgin, Gwendolyn Barnes ran at the officer with a half-opened pocketknife. While trying to defend himself he severely cut his hand and then backed himself up against a wall and drew his weapon for protection.[25] Although Sergeant George McNair head of the Canine Corps Tactical unit credited the police dogs from preventing a riot, the African American witnesses told a different account.

The NAACP took eighteen statements from victims and observers at the scene. In these statements it became obvious that women were often the victims of police brutality and that the men who came to their defense were subject to attacks and arrests. One witness stated "I saw an officer pounding and beating a girl…cursing and kicking her with his gun drawn." Several eyewitness attested that the women were not fighting but merely arguing, and that Patrolman Virgin hit Barnes first which was when she attempted to defend herself with a knife. Virgin retreated calling the gathering crowd "black sons of bitches." Another uninvolved witness stated 'I am the mother of nine children. I was bitten on the abdomen by the dog before I knew what

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[25] "Riot Averted: Police Begin Probe of 'Cop' Dogs Biting," *Cincinnati Enquirer* May 15, 1962.

had happened." When backup arrived, instead of speaking with the crowd to calm them they released more police dogs to control the group.[26] Thus in this situation black men were unable to prevent these women from being attacked by police dogs, undercutting their masculine imperative to protect "powerless" black women.

Finally, in all three case study communities black men were treated as children by city government and black middle-class leadership. In Milwaukee, this was particularly pronounced. Lucius Walker executive director of the Northcott Neighborhood House stated "Mayor Maier has been issuing calculated insults. He advises rather than listens to the Negro community." Fred Bronson of the NAACP Youth Council said "Mayor Maier has displayed a paternalistic attitude in which he feels he can determine for the black community who its leaders are."[27] Thus prior to the rebellions African Americans had limited opportunities to fully exercise their masculinity particularly in exerting control over their lives and protecting the women of their community. Additionally, as noted before African American men also had limited control over their lives at the workplace, at City Hall, or in public accommodations. The rebellions offered the opportunity for black men to regain control over their lives, even if only temporarily.

To read the role of gender and masculinity back into the rebellions we must look at the manifestations of "manly" behaviors during the uprisings. These types of behaviors can be broken down into three categories. The first is the control of the neighborhood in which black men were able to shift the normative power structure. Second, both white and black participants, sought to protect "their" women and "their" institutions. Finally, uprisings participants

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[26] "Police Dog Incident 1962" Document: Flyer: Mississippi Comes to Cincinnati, Join the NAACP Today." Mss 774 NAACP, Box 5 Cincinnati Historical Society. "Police Dog Incident 1962" Document: Central Ave. Police Dog Incident-May 13, 1963 testimony "Mss 774 NAACP, Box 5 Cincinnati Historical Society, 1.

[27] "Milwaukee Team Interview Reports" NACCD/E51, Johnson Presidential Library, 4.

emasculated their opponents and using masculinist rhetoric to encourage others and to augment

solidarity through "brotherhood."

Taking back control

For a brief period, in many places just a matter of hours, black inner city residents took

control of their own neighborhoods by not allowing outsiders entrance, protecting vital

community institutions, preventing firefighters and police officers from performing their duties,

and targeting stores which exploited the black community. In 1967 Cincinnati one of the first

actions prior to the uprisings taking place was that black youth refused to let white delivery men

into the city. Additionally, in the aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in

April 1968, Cincinnati black leaders asked that all white people including police officers, mail

carriers, and milkmen stay out of the black community so that Avondale residents could mourn.

In the case of Omaha 1969 Black Panther Party members guarded the buildings for the *Omaha*

Star newspaper, Greater Omaha Community Action (GOCA), and Mothers for Adequate

Welfare. This was not so much for fear of African Americans burning down these institutions

but rather concern for protecting against "accidental" damage as suffered by the NAACP Youth

Council Freedom House in Milwaukee.[28]

More importantly these events allowed African American men to temporarily suspend

normal power dynamics. Instead of police terrorizing black individuals, first responders found

themselves as targets. Additionally, in photographs of the Cincinnati and Milwaukee uprisings

African Americans are physically and verbally challenging police officers, unafraid of deadly

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[28] "Memorandum to David Ginsburg from M.C. Miskovsky Subject: Final Report of the Office of Investigations, 25 March 1968. " NACCD/E1 Johnson Presidential Library, 83. "Panthers Defend Black Business," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 26, 1969.

force. This is particularly notable in the arrest record notes from the Cincinnati Police Department.   Of the some 450 records nearly forty African American men were arrested for using obscenities and challenging police authority. Only one white man was arrested for such charges—a man who repeatedly yelled "nigger" at black passerby, and became incensed when police asked him to leave screaming "you won't treat the fucking niggers like this." Furthermore the most frequent complaint by police in their arrest reports was that African Americans laughed at, claimed "you're only stopping me because I'm colored;" or used derogatory language such as "you simple motherfucker" in dealing with the police, eschewing typical patterns of deference and passivity.[29]

Prior to the uprisings blacks could not enter certain communities or establishments without being scrutinized.   During the uprisings, African American participants targeted white passerby, using physical violence to intimidate them and prevent them from returning. These incidents of physical violence during the rebellions were relatively small.   More often than not the victims were white newspaper reporters or vehicular traffic, where victims sustained minor injuries such as cuts or bruises. By physically intimidating outsiders who ventured in to the neighborhood, African Americans were able to take control of their communities.

Another method by which black men took control of their lives was through looting stores, particularly for the goods they often lusted after but could not afford due to economic deprivation or exorbitant prices. In Cincinnati, these stores included Green's Department Store, McDebitt's Men's Shop, Woolworth's, Schiff Shoe Store, Guenther's department store, and a watch repair store. The goods that men looted could be interpreted as implements of their embodiment of traditional gender roles. Arrest records note that their contraband often included

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[29] Cincinnati Arrest Record (M42110) NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library.

liquor, electronics, cigarettes, suits, watches, and prophylactics. Rebels could employ the looted items as props demonstrating their manliness through wealth, good-looks, and sexual prowess. This stood in stark contrast to the items that women looted which were typically groceries, consumer goods, and household items.[30]

In the burning of certain buildings black residents also punished those who had previously mistreated them. One of the targets in Cincinnati was the offices of the Millvale Public Housing facility, a symbol of housing discrimination within the community. Kerner Commission investigators noted that in Cincinnati discriminatory industries were frequently hit and that "soul brother signs [were] heeded."[31] In Omaha the Reed's Ice Company and Skaggs Drugstore which practiced discriminatory hiring practices were also burned. The targets of physical abuse, looting, and arson reflected the black men's desire to reassert their manhood in terms of those who had politically or economically deprived them as well as take the goods they felt would also serve as appropriate trophies for their manhood.

Finally, one of the most important ways working-class men were able to take over their lives during the rebellions was through direct negotiations with municipal government. Prior to the rebellions black middle-class leadership served as an ineffective intermediary between the masses and City Hall. Through uprisings, working-class African Americans were able to directly communicate with those who had previously held power in their lives. In Cincinnati, for example incensed rebels walked out of a City Council forum for not being treated as equals. This affront was triggered by Mayor Bachrach mobilizing the National Guard in the building.

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[30] "Community Action Commission from Victory Neighborhood Service" NACCD/Series 2 Johnson Presidential Library, 9-10. Cincinnati Arrest records NACCD/E43 Johnson Presidential Library.

[31] "Damage done by city" NACCD/Series 42 Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

Thus by leaving the meeting in protest black men took control over their lives, no longer groveling at the feet of the government.

Protecting Black Women

In addition to inverting the typical patterns of power in their communities, working-class African American men also acted in gender normative ways through the protection of "their" women. Nationally, nearly every city had examples of black men protecting black women from bodily harm or harassment, be it actual or rumored. Most notably are the cases reported in Harlem 1943, Chicago 1965, Los Angeles (Watts) 1965, and the aforementioned Omaha 1969.[32] In each of these examples, the principal catalyst was a police attack, either real or rumored, on black women. In the aftermath of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination an already tense black community exploded into violent rebellion when rumors that a police officer killed a black woman began to circulate. Although an African American woman was shot and killed, it was merely a tragic accident, not police brutality. Her husband, a caretaker for a jewelry store fought for control of his shotgun against young men who wished to loot the store when it went off, killing his wife. The existing feelings of police disrespect and lack of control became augmented when African American men failed to protect black women from these dangers.[33]

In an interesting twist that spoke to the particularly tense race relations in Milwaukee and Cincinnati, armed white men also entered black communities in an attempt to protect white women and engage in open combat with black males. In total Milwaukee arrest records show thirty-eight counts of carrying a concealed weapon during the uprising. Although information on

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[32]Greenberg, *Or Does It Explode?*, 211. "Angry Crowd Gathers After Fatal Crash," *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1965. Horne, *Fire This Time*, 54-55. "Negro Girl Killed by a Police Bullet at Housing Project," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 25, 1969.

[33]"Guard Sent to Cincinnati After 2 Die," *New York Times* April 9, 1968.

the racial background of these individuals is unavailable, after arrest interviews begin to provide some information of the men arrested on such charges.   As indicated in Dr. Karl Flaming's research notes, the majority of the white interviewees described their involvement in the uprisings as their masculine prerogative to protect their families. Roger L. who the researcher described as a "young, white, husband and father" was "concerned that possible riots next summer would mean bloodshed all over the city and he intend[ed] to get a gun when he's twenty-one to protect himself and family." But white male's armed involvement in the urban uprisings was not limited to self-defense.[34]

During the June 1967 disturbance in Cincinnati, police arrested thirty-two individuals on weapons' charges. Of this number, over half of the charged (n=17) were white males. Moreover records show that many of the arrested were on the offensive against African Americans. The confiscated weapons ranged from tire irons, knives, and handguns to a bazooka. John F., a U.S. Army soldier, was arrested in the Avondale disturbance area with a .22 caliber rifle.   Willie R. an employed twenty year old mechanic was arrested for firing his weapon into a crowd of loitering blacks. Three young men, Finely H., Jessie W., and Jon A., were arrested for throwing bottles from their automobiles at black loiterers. Within the car police found three tire irons, two knives (one homemade), and a gun. By using their physical prowess to intimidate and exert control over others, both black and white males were able to assert their masculinity during the uprisings.

Beyond the use of physical strength in the uprisings, men often encouraged other males to participate in the uprisings on the imperative of acting manly. In Cincinnati Errol E. was arrested for encouraging uprisings participants by shouting "go, boys, go!" Another important

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[34] "Flaming interview notes" Milwaukee Mss Ez- Milwaukee Urban League Box 22, Folder 24, UWM archives.

element of rallying individuals on their shared racial and gender identities was through the use of

the term "soul brother." In each of the case study cities, black business owners expressed their

racial and gender solidarity with active participants in the streets by posting signs which read

"Black Business" or "Soul Brother." On Tuesday evening, June 13, in the Cincinnati 1967

uprising, several African American car owners paraded through Avondale with signs reading

"Black Power Will Win-Soul Brother No. 1."[35]   In their makeshift caravan individuals were

able to identify as black men, unabashed in their communities and proudly encouraged others

that it was "ok" to be a proud, black male. This acknowledgement of their own black

masculinity also included sharing solidarity through protecting black women/communities and

taking control of their lives through upending typical patterns of power within the ghetto

community.

This display of black male pride was not limited to non-verbal demonstrations but also

communicated through the written word. A flyer distributed in an unspecified city read "I'm

Too PROUD to BEG FOR MY FREEDOM! I'm Not Afraid to FIGHT FOR IT! BLACK MEN

ARE YOU READY?" (emphasis original) The creators of this handbill highlighted the gendered

imperative of the urban rebellion. By writing "pride," "freedom," "fight for it!" and "black men

are you ready?" in capital letters they expressed that the rebellions were an armed struggle in

which black men needed to prepare themselves. Additionally, this document demonstrates that

earlier civil rights efforts were perceived as "begging" and that in order to receive their full rights

black men must be proud and physically fight. Accompanying the rallying message was an

illustration instructing potential participants on how to make a Molotov cocktail culminating in

step #4 "Light rag—throw bottle at WHITEY!" The final exhortation reads "White 'Citizens'

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[35] Cincinnati Police Department report NACCD/E73 Johnson Presidential Library, 52-54, 56, 65, 69, 72.

Are Arming Themselves BLACK MEN Prepare to Defend Yourselves!" (emphasis original)[36]

The rhetoric used in the flyer demonstrated the intersection of race, class, gender, and tactical

adaptation for many black men. Thus the objectives of the urban rebellions were couched in

language which demanded respect and full rights for black men.

It is this rhetorical usage of words that helped reflect the important transformative power

that the rebellions held, which I will discuss in the final chapter. There is a limit to the

employment of a masculine rhetoric and pride in being a "soul brother" to explain the urban

rebellions. Dick Gregory in his tongue-in-cheek "Gregory Report on Civil Disorders" opined on

why African Americans participated in the rebellions:

> White folks are not going to burn this country to the ground. The average white
> man cannot possibly be as bitter as the average black man. The white man has a
> better job and cannot afford to go to jail. He has much more to lose by
> participating in civil disobedience or open rebellion in the streets.[37]

While Gregory acknowledged the racial and economic dimensions of the uprisings, he ignored

that black women had many of the same grievances as black men and these injustices were often

heightened by the intersection of their race, class, and gender. Therefore in order to truly

understand the complexities and nuances of the urban rebellions, we must also unpack women's

gendered behavior during these events

Black Femininity in the Urban Rebellions

Although male rebels' actions were undeniably informed by traditional gender roles, the

rebellions should not be interpreted solely as exercises in masculinity. Women were present and

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[36] "Flyer of unknown origin" NACCD/E35 Johnson Presidential Library.

[37] Dick Gregory, "The Gregory Report on Civil Disorders," in *Riots*, ed.Gerald Leinwand, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970), 68-76.

fully engaged in the rebellions, although the centrality of their contributions have often been downplayed. In Cincinnati one observer noted that "All ages were active in scenes of violence. In a number of locations where windows were being broken and looting was taking place, women carrying babies could be seen watching the activity." Women, however, were not confined to spectator and cheerleader roles they also actively participated in the rebellion. In social scientist Jonathan Slesinger's study of Milwaukeeans' opinions of the urban rebellions he found that 43% of the black female North End residents and 33% of the black male North End residents believed that "Negroes [had] more to gain by resorting to violence than in the Civil Rights movement."[38]   Black Milwaukee women felt it more necessary to engage in violent conflict then the men did, demonstrating their feelings of impotency due to their positions within a racial, gendered, and classed hierarchy. Arrest records definitively demonstrate that the majority of those arrested in the uprising were men. Whereas the use of arrest records can provide detailed demographic information on participation, these documents cannot capture those who illicitly participated but were not apprehended or those who contributed in non criminal ways.

In the Kerner Commission's survey of Detroit, they found that 38.6% of self-reported rebellion participants were female though they comprised only 10.7% of those arrested. The *New York Times* estimated that only 20% of the total uprising participants were apprehended in Cincinnati, which included a high number of females which evaded arrest. Although neither the Commission nor the *New York Times* explained this discrepancy, the problem lays in how these entities defined participation. The Kerner Commission considered a "rioter" anyone who actively participated in looting, arson, or other criminal activities. By discounting the

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[38]"Ohio Guardsmen Called in As Race Riot Flares Anew," Cincinnati Enquirer June 14, 1967. Flaming, *Who Riots?,* 39.

participation of those who specifically went into the rebellion zone to observe and encourage active participants, contemporary rebellion researchers effectively interpreted the rebellions through a masculine lens.[39]

I challenge this definition of participation. Rather than limiting our understanding of uprisings to illegal participation, scholars must more carefully outline the spectrum of activities that female urban dwellers partook in. I argue that although often erased from the official accounts women were central to the uprisings. Within these events black females played important roles as defenders, cheerleaders, beneficiaries, and often catalysts; all the product of the intersection of their racial, gender, and class discrimination. The ways that black women participated in the urban uprisings reflect their personal experiences with overlapping discriminations. Because women were a numerical minority in the uprising it is not as easy to identify and define gender performativity. Thus I look at the ways race, class, gender, and sexuality reflected a triple axis of oppression shaping the activism of poor black women. It is through the rebellions I am able to tease out the "multiple consciousness" of working-class women's politics and activism.[40]

Women's participation often adhered to traditional gender roles: powerless victims, family protectors, helpmates, and household consumers. As discussed above, police violence against "defenseless" females often served as the immediate catalyst for revolts. Women not only defended themselves during these events, but defended their families as well. Women's non-criminal support roles ranged from distracting police so males could avoid arrest to providing food and shelter. In Milwaukee, two out of the three women arrested were protecting

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[39] "Excerpts From a Study to Determine the Characteristics of Negro Rioters," *New York Times* July 28, 1968. *Kerner Commission*, 1, 74, 331.

[40] Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), xvii.

their husbands from civil authorities. Women charged with looting often did so in the company of their spouses. One woman created a diversion for young looters by lifting her skirt and calling out to the police "come and get this" allowing the men to evade arrest. In Cincinnati, the number of African Americans visiting hospitals after the first day of the uprising dropped significantly, with both government documents and individuals hypothesizing that black nurses in Avondale operated an underground triage. These individual contributions demonstrate the uprisings were not the purview of young black males but rather involved the mobilization of entire communities.[41]

By analyzing over 450 arrest records from the June 1967 Cincinnati uprising, I uncovered a distinct pattern of women's participation, providing insight to females' criminal activities during the rebellion. Women tended to be present in the uprising area, when bodily violence and arrest were least possible; typically after the main thrust of activity. In Cincinnati, during the first two days of the uprising and the height of violent action, no women were arrested. At 2:30am on Wednesday, June 14, the Ohio National Guard moved in and restored some order to the area. Correspondingly, police arrested nineteen females that day. Arrest records also indicate that men's criminal uprising participation tended to be between 9 p.m. and 2 a.m.; whereas women tended to be arrested between 2 a.m. and 7 a.m. when there was a diminished police presence, and thus a smaller chance of arrest.[42]

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[41] "Guard Sent to Cincinnati After 2 Die," *New York Times* April 9, 1968. "Policeman Enters A Plea of Innocent in Shooting of Girl," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 26, 1969. Weber, *Summer Mockery*, 48. "Interview with Dr. Bruce Green by Diane Phillips on 1 November 1967" NACCD/E43, Johnson Presidential Library, 5. "Staff Paper-No. 7Analysis of Cincinnati Disturbance" NACCD/E67, Johnson Presidential Library, 46.

[42] "Cincinnati Arrest Records" NACCD/E43Johnson Presidential Library. "Final Report Civil Disturbances Cincinnati, OH 12-18 June 1967 [to Major General Erwin C. Hosteleter from Clyde E. Gutzwiller] 1 August 1967." Ohio State Archives Series 1654: Box 50**.**

Although rare, women did engage in physical violence during the uprisings. A group of young black males snatched white University of Cincinnati graduate student Noel Wright from his car while he was driving through the Avondale neighborhood. They proceeded to beat the man when one of the youth took out a knife and stabbed him. Simultaneously their female companions physically assaulted the dying man's wife. In Omaha 1968, black public school girls went to the black Catholic school Sacred Heart with a largely middle-class population to challenge the female students there to a fight. [43] Despite the seemingly atypical nature of black women's violent participation they still conformed somewhat to gender norms by only physical assaulting women victims.

Women's criminal participation tended not to be violent but rather involved the taking and receipt of stolen goods. Women often looted stores with predatory pricing, taking household items they were unable to afford. The most telling statistic of this triple oppression, at the intersection of race, class, and gender, is that 30% (n=8) of the Cincinnati women arrested were housewives. Additionally, all of these women were charged with looting stores, ranging from grocers to clothiers to furniture outlets. These women's spouses provided enough income to prevent them from seeking outside employment however this income did not afford the opportunity to purchase high-end consumer goods, such as televisions and vacuum cleaners.

When women participated in the urban rebellions outside of the above traditional gender roles as victims, helpmates, and consumers, police often singled them out for more extensive punishment, using their own perceptions of gender propriety to interpret black female's actions. When an officer asked a group of teenagers including two young women to disperse, the females instead "paraded down Main Street in a loud and boisterous manner, using foul and lewd

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[43]"Guard Sent to Cincinnati After 2 Die," *New York Times* April 9, 1968.

language." The young women were charged with juvenile delinquency, while their male companions were allowed to go free. In another example, police arrested a woman outside of a vandalized store and charged her with public drunkenness and prostitution, even though her three male companions were charged with looting. This woman's transgression of traditional gender norms by being publically intoxicated caused her to be arrested on harsher charges than her associates. The intersection of women's race, class, and gender often conspired to disadvantage black women. In Milwaukee, Mary W. received jail time because two of the young men with who she was arrested "were smart and in college [the judge] let them go. But because I had a record, he put me in jail." Therefore the extant beliefs of female propriety along with the intersection of multiple oppressions influenced the ways in which women's actions were interpreted, which had both immediate and long term implications.[44]

In the aftermath of the rebellions, scholars often depoliticized and reconstructed female arrestees' participation so that these women appeared to be more feminine and adherent to traditional gender norms. Dr. Karl Flaming, who conducted a major opinion study of the arrestees of the Milwaukee rebellions, interview notes reflect this. In his study, the interviewers prominently mention the "feminine" qualities of the interviewee and the ways in which she upheld traditional gender roles. Of the seven female interviewees, all but one was described in the research notes as "attractive." One research assistant went so far to describe Willie T. as "a very attractive young negro wife and mother. She was dressed beautifully but the house she lived in was terrible," showing that although the interviewee lived in an impoverished environment she still took care to meet certain domestic standards, such as motherhood and physical attractiveness.

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[44] Weber, *Summer Mockery*. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-War America*. (New York: Random House, 2003). Cincinnati Arrest Records, NACCD/E43, Johnson Presidential Library.

Unlike the males that they interviewed, the female research assistants refused to include the political rationales for female participation. In nearly all of the seventy-seven male surveys, the men's frustration with the slow pace of Civil Rights and lack of job opportunities were emphasized, legitimating their criminal participation. However the research team sought to justify that the women arrested during the uprisings as merely accidental actors, in the wrong place at the wrong time. In all of the research notes, the interviewers added that female arrestees showed remorse, and excelled at their proscribed gender roles as "attractive young negro mother[s] with lots of young children."[45] Researchers thus portrayed the women not as conscious political actors reacting against their position in a raced, classed, and gendered hierarchy but rather apolitical women who knew their proper place in society.

Despite the centrality of women's participation in these events, municipal officials and researchers ignored the political overtones of female rebels' actions. Thus the only tangible gains women received from the uprisings were the goods they took for themselves. City governments met only with young men to hear the grievances of the black community. Concessions made by these governments frequently included recreational leagues, camping excursions and trade schools, which were only offered for boys and young men. In 1966 Omaha, municipal officials did successfully receive a grant from JobCorps to start a women's training facility at the Paxton Hotel downtown. However, white shoppers stopped visiting the commercial district because of fear of the young black men who often came to call on the female job trainees. With sales dropping at major outlets, the center closed down after a year. The intersection of multiple oppression left black women's needs unaddressed even though the rationale for participating in the rebellions reflected the same desperation as the young black men who received recreational and industrial opportunities, demonstrating Judith Lorber's assertion that devalued genders

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[45] Flaming Research Notes, Milwaukee Urban League, Box 22, Folder 24, UWM archives.

received fewer economic rewards.[46]   Women significantly contributed to the efficacy of the

uprisings through non-criminal participation, active encouragement of other participants, as well

as both criminal and non-criminal participation of their own.

Conclusion

The ways in which people participated in the rebellions was not only a function of their

class and racial position but also their gender. The sum of these identities influenced not only

the ways individuals responded to the uprisings, but also how scholars and the public

remembered the events. By investigating the ways in which women participated in the uprisings

as gendered beings changes our understandings of the events from being solely the purview of

angry black men to incidents which enjoyed broad community support. Additionally,

understanding the ways in which black men were impeded from expressing their full masculinity

provides deeper insight into the social, economic, and political limitations for African Americans

in the Midwest. Despite the important rhetorical and symbolic value these events had in

usurping typical patterns of gendered control and power in the black neighborhoods, the long-

term effect on the municipal community is a more complex story.

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[46] "Job Corps Center to Expand," *Omaha Star*, July 8, 1966. Larsen and Cottrell, *Gate City,* 255. Lorber, "The Social Construction of Gender," 117.

Chapter 6: The Changing Same: Urban Communities and Rebellion Aftermath

In the aftermath of the urban rebellions the physical landscapes of Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Omaha drastically changed. But within the political, labor, and social realms, the stalwart Midwestern mentality remained largely intact. Media outlets, Kerner Commission investigators, and municipal residents captured this "changing same" in the months following the revolts. News cameras recorded one such example in a Milwaukee City Council meeting on August 16, 1967. The only black representative, Alderperson Vel Phillips pleaded with the remaining white City Council members to acknowledge the actual causes of the uprising and not just set up yet another fact-finding commission, which she derided as "poppycock." She continued: "if we did our responsibility we wouldn't have even had a riot," standing to emphasize her point, "you do not need to go through a great deal of length to figure out why, unless you do not want to face why…We are in a position to do something about it, we don't need a study to do what's right." The other members remained unmoved by her entreaties. One alderman, apparently dismayed at Phillips' accusations, attempted to walk out of the meeting saying "we try to help, we try to do what's right." Incensed, Phillips responded "then why don't you vote for fair housing?" and then mocked him by repeating his own words: "we're trying to help you."[1] Although the rebellions shocked many well meaning Midwesterners, who believed that their cities and states possessed stellar race relations, meaningful changes to the grievances articulated by African Americans received only piecemeal solutions.

Whereas formal mechanism for redress remained ineffective and perfunctory, the racial consciousness of both black and white Midwesterners drastically began to shift. In September,

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[1] WTMJ-TV outtakes July 31, 1967 Tape #32 UWM archives.

Lathan Johnson led Kerner Commission investigators on a tour of Cincinnati. Researchers went to the Avondale Community Center to speak with fifteen young "militants." The young men refused to shake hands with the investigators and donned dashikis and "amulets around their necks" so as "to deny any identification with the white man's conventions." These young men were all college graduates and many had advanced degrees. The Kerner investigators also encountered a group of three men shooting craps. The men asked the Commission representatives if they could help them find jobs. Two of the men had been fired because of their participation in the uprising; the other lost his job at the conclusion of a summer employment program. All members of the group were married and one remarked he had to stay away from home in order to avoid the welfare caseworker.[2] In the aftermath of the uprisings, many working-class African Americans remained disproportionally disenfranchised, while those with education and some labor autonomy were able to take a more ideologically nationalist stance.

As in the urban rebellions themselves, individuals' responses to the aftermath of these events were largely influenced by their racial and class positions. For some, things changed after the insurrections; for others much remained the same. African American politicians remained politically impotent. Working-class blacks remained economically vulnerable, but many in the black middle class had the ability to espouse a more vibrant cultural and racial nationalism, at-times detached from the practical needs of the community. The effect of the urban rebellions lingered long after the National Guard departed each city. Although these events were deeply personal, the community consequences were most evident in the years following, particularly in the re-shaping of legal, social, and economic structures. This restructuring brought some

[2] "Memo from Henry B. Taliaferro, Jr. to Staff Re: Cincinnati Trip 30 August 1967, September 9, 1967." NACCD/E21 Johnson Presidential Library, 3-4.

tangible black victories but also led to shifts in municipal political tactics as well as a

reinforcement of white Midwestern identity. It is important to note that the concessions won in

the urban rebellions were not panaceas. They frequently represented a liberal patch to treat the

symptoms of racial oppression, not a cure for the systemic disease itself. Like the pro-active,

pre-rebellion initiatives, the post-uprising fixes were just as misguided and ineffectual. Despite

the questionable long-term value of the urban rebellions as an effective protest tactic, these

events still held lasting political significance for both sides.

This chapter addresses the changing landscape, municipal policy, and attitudes in

Midwestern cities following the urban rebellions. At the national level, as sociologist Jack

Bloom noted, the uprisings shifted the "geographical and political focus of the black movement"

to address the economic, political, and social issues facing black urbanites.[3] Just as important,

these events affected the ways white citizens and the municipal government interacted with

African Americans. In the first section of this chapter I outline the changes that occurred in the

case study cities including physical damage, financial costs, and adjudication of those arrested.

Next, I analyze the tangible gains African Americans won in the aftermath of the rebellions

including employment and recreation programs. Additionally, I look at how municipal structures

"tactically adapted" to better repress urban protest. This repression occurred through increased

defense expenditures and the maintenance of a Midwestern identity predicated on superior race

relations with African Americans. Finally I explore the intangibles, namely the changing

consciousness and relationship between African Americans and whites in the urban Midwest.

The Wages of Rebellions

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[3] Bloom, Class, *Race, and the Civil Rights Movement*, 200.

Although the uprisings played a central role in shaping the consciousness of African Americans, these events caused real economic and physical damage to black neighborhoods in Midwestern cities.   The cost to city governments alone for additional staff, clean up, and insurance claims was staggering. An official of the Cincinnati Insurance Board estimated that fire and vandalism claims at two million dollars. Other officials tacked on an additional million dollars due to the "loss of profits, payroll, and National Guard expenses."   Omaha City Finance Director Edwin J. Hewitt, stated that $40,000 would be needed just to pay the overtime of Omaha Police officers for the 1969 disturbance. Additionally the Omaha Fire Department estimated that the cost due to fire loss was close to $925,000. Comparatively, the city's recreation budget for the 1966 was only $500,000. Milwaukee had a net damage cost of $570,000 which represented the amount of money lost in the city's economy which would never be recovered. This figure did not include insurance claims or overtime pay for first responders. City Hall advised that the actual property cost would amount to $200,000 and calculated over one million dollars in police and National Guard overtime expenditures.[4] In addition to these significant financial losses, the reluctance of many local merchants to re-open drastically altered the physical landscape and economic solvency in these black communities.

Undoubtedly, prior to the urban rebellions black neighborhoods suffered from economic decline and vacancy, however these events exacerbated the situation.   Omaha provides the starkest example. Following the June 1969 uprising police patrolmen David Heese observed that the Near North Side "look[ed] like a bombed out area." The City Council, after processing the list of condemned buildings, estimated that the rubble would not be cleaned up before

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[4]"FBI Weekly Report-Cincinnati 6-23-1967" NACCD/E21, Johnson Presidential Library, 1. "Pay for Riot Cost $40,000," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 3, 1969. OFD Report, 4. "Memo To Director from SAIC Barton-Milwaukee Subj Civil Disturbance- Milwaukee 9 Aug 1967" NACCD/E24, Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

September. As late as August 9, the Fire Department estimated that eight of the twelve severely

damaged buildings had not been cleaned up. These buildings remained boarded up as owners

waited for insurance payments or for "soul brother" signs to be taken down. One owner best

captured the anger many merchants felt, announcing that he refused to clean up, leaving the

rubble as "a monument to what the rioters did to him." Those business owners that remained

continued to be wary. After the 1968 uprising, Marvin Belzer of Belzer's Market located on

North Twenty-Fourth Street stated that in having a business in the area, "you don't make a

fortune and it's not worth losing your life." Police offered Mr. Belzer an escort to see his

business, but he refused telling the officers he was "afraid to go down there." In 1964, along

North Twenty-Fourth Street, from the 1500 block to the 2400 block, there were a total of sixteen

vacant storefronts. By 1970 along this same business corridor there were seventy-two buildings

that were either vacant or no longer listed.[5]

Small business owners were not the only entrepreneurs who remained leery of operating

in Omaha's African American enclave; larger chains also took precautionary measures. Safeway

Stores, Inc., a grocery chain, decided to install an eleven-foot high chain link fence topped with

one foot of barbed wire to enclose the store's parking lot. Safeway originally tried to fence-in the

lot in 1966. The community protested the proposed change. Civil rights activist Reverend

General Woods best articulated this apprehension: "Negroes hate chains, whether they are

around a black man's legs on a Georgia chain gang or around a white man's supermarket in

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[5] But Blazes, Unrest Seem Less Intense," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 29, 1969. "Affidavit Station WCPO/TV at 11pm on June 19" NACCD/Series 3, Johnson Presidential Library. "City May Clean Up the Rubble," *Omaha World-Herald*, August 9, 1969. "17 of 20 Torch Targets White-Owned Business," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 29, 1969. "Owners of Looted Stores Not Sure They Will Re-Open," *Omaha World-Herald*, April 29, 1968. *Omaha City Directory* (Kansas City, MO: R.L. Polk & Co., 1965), 75-77.

Omaha."[6] But by 1968 public dislike could not change the corporation's plan. Thus in very real ways the urban rebellions changed the landscape of the urban areas. When retailers shut down, they limited the already inadequate options for employment and retail. Those stores that did remain used excessive security measures, making black enclaves look like less of a neighborhood and more of a maximum security prison.

The most important cost of the urban rebellions did not concern property but the impact arrest had on individual's lives. For those arrested their punishment often affected their lives long after the rebellions ended. In Cincinnati police made 278 arrests. One hundred twenty of those arrested were convicted, with two acquitted, eight dismissed, and thirty-six held for the grand jury. Many blacks lost jobs either as a result of having been arrested or because the firms which employed them closed after the turmoil.[7] On July 20, 1967, forty-seven individuals convicted under the Cincinnati Riot Act were denied requests for new trials at a special hearing, even though a judge had previously given these individuals a stay for their workhouse sentences. Similarly, in Milwaukee many individuals did not receive appropriate due process. Of the 315 charges, that were not curfew or city ordinance violations, seventy individuals had their final deposition at the arraignment. By fall, of the 570 curfew violation citations, twenty-three were pending, thirteen were released outright, and 535 convicted. Overwhelming those who were convicted faced jail and/or fines (n=441); ninety-two received a suspended sentence, and two

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[6]"Safeway's Fence is Up; Gates Will Close Lot," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 24, 1968. In 1967 the city leased the lot from Safeway for $10 a year, allowing the police department to have jurisdiction over the lot to prevent the infringement on property rights. "2 Borrowed Copters Returned to Guard," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 9, 1968. "Mayor Says Store Fence Only Answer," *Omaha World-Herald* , July 22, 1968; "We Demand Rights Now," *Dundee-West Omaha Sun*, March 3, 1966.

[7]" Reconnaissance Survey Field Report" NACCD/E44, Johnson Presidential Library, 101.

were placed on probation.[8] In both Cincinnati and Milwaukee not only did those involved with the urban rebellions get the maximum amount of time, they frequently did not receive due process.

The possible suspension of appropriate legal procedure was so disconcerting to the Cincinnati Bar Association (CBA) that they arranged a formal meeting with the Human Relations Council to address the matter. In particular the board was concerned that municipal judges suspended the Release on Own Recognizance (ROR) program during the urban rebellions, which they felt was unjustified.   The CBA Executive Board remained divided on whether to pursue an investigation to determine if "equal justice [was] being meted out" to white and black arrestees during the rebellion. The Board informed Clint Reynolds "off the record," that they would only take action in investigating double standards if "an official body, i.e., City Council or CHRC, or a person of substance such as the City Manager, asks the Bar Association to make such an investigation."[9] The Cincinnati Bar Association suspected unfair adjudication between black and white uprising participants, would only investigate this matter if pressured from a municipal organization. Aware of the toothlessness of Midwestern civil rights commissions, the Cincinnati Bar Association remained certain that no such request would be forthcoming.

Changing Municipal Structure

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[8]"Chapter II/I Pattern of Violence and Damage" NACCD/E37, Johnson Presidential Library, 6. "Conviction Count-Milwaukee" NACCD/E2, Johnson Presidential Library.

[9]"Memo Re: Meeting of Executive Committee of the Bar Association June 21, 1967. Submitted by S. Arthur Speigel" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 7 Cincinnati Historical Society.

In the aftermath of the urban revolts, participants and civil rights organizations made formal demands of the municipal government, outlining their grievances. It is in this area that African Americans received the most positive tangible gains of the urban rebellions. These gains took many forms including employment, recreation, and housing. However it is important to note that these adjustments were temporary fixes to long standing, widespread problems. Although these initiatives did bring some positive changes to the black community, these programs were soon extinguished.

With the majority of rebels working-class individuals, susceptible to long periods of unemployment or underemployment, it follows that one of the consistent grievances articulated by participants and thus one of the most frequent demands concerned increased employment and training opportunities. Although many of these opportunities were advocated by city government, they often fell to private industry to implement and activate such programs. These programs had limited effectiveness for a variety of reasons including: industry reluctance, summer-only employment opportunities, and closed-shop labor sites. Yet again in the aftermath of the urban rebellions, local government attempted to make good on the protest of black Americans but endemic discrimination remained, limiting the amount of genuine change that could take place.

Teens

During the urban uprisings rebels demanded improvements in employment, recreation, and police-community relations. The approach of both Cincinnati and Omaha in providing teenagers with jobs simultaneously attempted to address these multiple grievances. Many social activists felt that youth employment programs were necessary not only to prevent uprisings the following summer but also "to give black youth actual job experience, to inculcate a sense of

responsibility and accomplishment, and to give them a feeling of self-worth." The Cincinnati recreational department received a $140,000 grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to hire 150 young people to build a "recreational youth corps." In Omaha, the Mayor's office hired five neighborhood youths to inform other teenagers about nighttime activities. Student municipal workers cleaned the Kountze Park area, and later an outdoor league sponsored games on the basketball courts.[10] These initiatives served a dual purpose to create solutions for many of the principal catalysts of the revolts.

The jobs that local government and industry established provided youth opportunities to obtain practical skills training and earn competitive wages. Sam Cornelius, who also served as chairman of United Community Service project (UCS), oversaw Operation Sunshine, a job training organization which enabled several youth to receive jobs at the South Omaha Sewage Treatment Plant. Thirteen others worked for the Omaha Public Schools. On average the teenagers' wages ranged between $1.07 and $1.42 an hour. Most of the social service and recreational agencies serving the Near North Side were involved, including integrated religious congregations, grassroots organizations, and in-kind donations from local media. Apart from tacit approval from city government, the State of Nebraska, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, many civil rights groups, civic and labor organizations remained largely uninvolved in the planning and implementation of the program. The Cincinnati Community Action Commission funded several programs through a grant paying the salaries of 400 teenagers employed in the Recreation Commission, Park Board, the Board of Health, and general city service. Project

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[10]"Letter to Unknown Man from Cincinnati Youth Council NAACP (Herb Smith and Bruce Green) 11-28-67" Mss 774 NAACP, Box 54 Cincinnati Historical Society, 2. "Memorandum RE: Racial Disturbance, Cincinnati, Ohio June, 1967 21 Jul 1967" NACCD/E32 Johnson Presidential Library, 10. "City Must Keep Commitment, Says Cornelius," *Omaha Star,* July 8, 1966.

Uptight, a program operated by the Citizens Committee on Youth, employed an additional 200 youth that summer.[11]

Despite the positive impact such employment programs had in the individuals' lives who received such jobs, these initiatives were unable to employ everyone who was under or unemployed. The West End Special Services Project received approximately 1,500 applications but could not place the applicants because "industry won't open their doors." In Omaha, many of the youth employed during the summer found that their positions were no longer available once the school year began. As the Kerner Commission investigators observed in Cincinnati "When this period has terminated, the youth will be forced to wander into other anti-social areas of endeavor. Overall, employment seems to be decreasing rather than increasing."[12] The institution of seasonal teenage employment programs in Cincinnati and Omaha demonstrates the limits of municipal solutions in the aftermath of the uprisings.   Although these programs provided many young African Americans the opportunity to earn decent wages and gain experience, at best these positions lasted until the end of summer, at which point African American teenagers went back to being unemployed. More cynically, one could interpret these as stop-gaps to neutralize the immediate threat of additional uprisings by taking young potential rebels off the streets.

In Milwaukee, job programs remained ineffective for different reasons. Mayor Maier started the Youth Opportunity Board (YOB) to create employment opportunities. The program was limited in its efficacy because as one Kerner Commission memorandum documented: "One major drawback of this seemed to be its tripartite leadership. The three executives do not seem

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[11] Disturbances Leaders Sum It Up," *North Omaha Sun*, July 14, 1966. Milton D. Lewis, "Federal Summer Program Evaluation" NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

[12] Niathan Allen "Field Community Tension Factors Report, Cincinnati, OH: July 24, 1967." NACCD/E21, Johnson Presidential Library, 1.

to be congenial bedfellows—politically or otherwise." Additionally, though the Board took out full page newspaper advertisements, as well as radio and TV spots, they were unable to mobilize sufficient community support. Initially, YOB only located 700 jobs for youth. In late July, they initiated a final push to find additional positions.   Members of the board contacted 5,000 businesses to have at least 250 employers commit to hiring an extra ten individuals in the month of August or contribute $1,000 to support community service jobs.   By early August this intensive effort only netted $2,500 and thirty-five jobs.   As Kerner investigators acknowledged, "considering that there are some 90,000 Negroes in Milwaukee, this is not much."[13] Like in Omaha and Cincinnati, other existing organizations had limited success in sustaining employment opportunities for teenagers past the summer. The Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) which employed 1,100 youth cut 450 jobs in September. Despite the limits of summer employment for teenagers, long-standing discriminatory practices became even more glaring in adult programming.

Adults

Like teenage summer employment programs, city government relied heavily on industry support and cooperation for adult programs. However whereas teenagers' jobs were created anew for young blacks (in that these jobs had not existed previously), adult African Americans had to find positions in existing markets which were often hostile to black workers. In Cincinnati, the Chamber of Commerce and local black community collaborated to establish an Opportunities Industrial Center (OIC) program. Captains of industry followed the lead of local government by establishing Jobs for Cincinnati, Inc. which expanded employment opportunities for blacks normally not meeting industry requirements.   Kerner Commission investigator

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[13]"Memorandum to VP From Larry Countrymen Subj: Visit to Chicago August 21-23 and Milwaukee, Aug 21-25" NACCD/E35 Johnson Presidential Library, 3.

Niathan Allen noted that "activities of the Avondale businessmen and Jobs for Cincinnati have delayed the rebellion for the present time, but they must be willing to sacrifice more for bettering the black lot in the city or more bloodshed will be inevitable." The City of Cincinnati also hired African Americans in sixty-four new positions at Cincinnati General Hospital, University of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati public school system. Inside City Hall, blacks were added to the personnel department technical staff, the management staff of the Convention-Exposition Center and the City Manager's staff. The fact that the majority of new employment opportunities created by Cincinnati were white-collar positions was not the only shortcoming of these initiatives. In the Jobs for Cincinnati project, industry representatives interviewed over a 1,000 applicants. The outcome of such extensive process resulted in only ninety-three individuals being hired between July 4 and August 9. Additionally trade discrimination still existed on a large scale. Legislators passed a new state law requiring contractors to hire outside of hiring hall agreements. The Human Relations Committee provided a list of referral sources of building contractors that recruited and hired African-Americans. Still these initiatives remained ineffective evidenced by Ramsey Clark suing the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) in Cincinnati because of their 700 journeymen, none were black.[14]

In Omaha, government and community officials encouraged all unemployed blacks to register with Sam Cornelius so, as Mayor A.V. Sorensen stated, that the city can "use our energies to put the man and the job together." Phillip C. Sorensen, Lieutenant Governor, headed a six man committee to set up a state employment office to take inventory of human resources. Like Cincinnati, the city hired over 200 blacks in municipal jobs. Additionally, Mayor Sorensen

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[14]"Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967 in D.C." Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10 Cincinnati Historical Society, 18. "FBI Follow-up on The Cincinnati, OH 8/25/67" NACCD/E32, Johnson Presidential Library. "Memorandum RE: Racial Disturbance, Cincinnati, Ohio June, 1967 21 Jul 1967" NACCD/E32, Johnson Presidential Library, 10. "Schottelkotte News Noon Report 7-26-67" NACCD/E44, Johnson Presidential Library.

convinced the federal Office of Economic Opportunity to double the yearly Job Corps Allocation in Omaha. He then used this money to establish programs to offer job skills to the "average negro John Doe." The Paxton Hotel was opened as the downtown site of the over eighty-five job training centers throughout the city. Unfortunately these job measures were not as effective as they could have been. Only one out of every three applicants was placed in a position.[15]

Recreation

Another central demand that arose out of the urban rebellions was additional recreation programs. Both public and private entities coordinated to meet these needs. In Cincinnati the Avondale planning committee, headed by Clyde Vinegar and Donald Spencer, negotiated with the Recreational Department for two additional swimming pools, two baseball diamonds, two recreational centers, two playgrounds, and two parks to be completed by summer 1968. Other proposed programs included "Operation Cool Summer" which provided immediate summer recreation for youth in the impoverished neighborhoods. The coordinators ran concurrent events in local districts so that teenagers would not have to travel from neighborhood to neighborhood for recreational opportunities. On June 23, 1967, Operation Cool Summer was made into a permanent umbrella organization with nearly 100 sponsors from over twenty tax-supported agencies for the purpose of bolstering Cincinnati's recreational resources. These groups included the Urban League, Greater Cincinnati Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood

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[15]"July 4 Disturbances Leaders Sum It Up," *North Omaha Sun*, July 14, 1966. "City Signs 200 Negro Applicants," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 8, 1966.Dalstrom, *A.V. Sorensen*, 211.Woodson Howe, "Rec. Groups Hears Needs," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 21, 1966. "Job Crops Center to Expand," *Omaha Star*, July 8, 1966. Larsen and Coltrell, *Gate City*, 255. 724 "Job Corps Center to Expand," *Omaha Star,* July 8, 1966 "More Apps. Than Placement Orders," *Omaha Star*, July 15, 1966. Mayor A.V. Sorensen and Lieutenant Governor Phillip C. Sorensen are of no relation.

Centers, the Cincinnati Recreation Commission, and the Greater Cincinnati Teen Council

Advisory Board.[16]

Cincinnati's Operation Up-Tight, employed Citizens Committee on Youth (CCY) staff,

utilizing a budget of $49,500. These "street counselors'" responsibilities included referring

youth to recreational programs and to defuse emergency, possibly riotous, situations. Initial

plans scheduled the program to be terminated on September 30, in the hopes that any immediate

threat of rebellion would be extinguished by this date. To address the concerns for recreational

space the city also purchased land for a new park in Avondale and three tot lots in predominantly

African American areas.[17] Although these programs helped to address the recreational needs of

the black community they also served a dual purpose of providing employment opportunities for

black teenagers to, in effect, police their own community from any potential uprisings.

As with Cincinnati, Omaha's recreational programming served a dual purpose, in that it

simultaneously addressed recreation problems and creating better youth-police relations. One

dramatic initiative funded by both the city and private organizations was a camping program held

at the YMCA camp in Columbus, Nebraska, located eighty-two miles northeast of Omaha. In

each cabin eight Near North Side teens and two police officers enjoyed what the outdoors and

positive interactions had to offer. Beat cops and youth fished, rode horses, and watched movies

together for eight weeks. This helped the youth see the police in roles other than authoritarian

[16]"Avondale Community Council, Annual Report 1967" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 2, Cincinnati Historical Society, 2. "CHRC Board Meeting Minutes April 20, 1967" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 7 Cincinnati Historical Society. "Memorandum RE: Racial Disturbance, Cincinnati, Ohio June, 1967 21 Jul 1967" NACCD/E32, Johnson Presidential Library, 11.

[17]"Status of CCY programs" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr, Collection, Box 10, Cincinnati Historical Society. Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10. "Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967 in D.C." Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10, Cincinnati Historical Society, 18. "Document Affidavit Station WCPO/TV at 6pm on June 2" NACCD/Series 41, Johnson Presidential Library.

figures, and gave the police eyes and ears in the community. Many participants described this experience as one of the best in their lives. The bond created in Columbus facilitated officers in performing their duties on the street and gave teenagers an adult they could trust. These excursions were not a complete success however. Although A.V. Sorensen believed strongly in this program, the police department held a different perspective. This top-down initiative did not impress Police Chief Richard R. Anderson. Officers who went on the trips often came back to find that their beats had been reassigned. In addition to police brass aversion to this unique and short-lived program, some members of the force perceived the initiative as "cuddling criminals" instead of the "community policing" it was intended to be.[18]

Police-Community Relations

The final grievance that uprising participants expressed during the urban rebellions was police brutality. The Cincinnati Police Division increased its efforts through its Community Relations section to achieve a better understanding of the police function in the African American community. This included instituting a broader training program to achieve a varied and selective response to disorders. Thus in a disturbance in lieu of only employing force, the department would also utilized human relations counselors. In cooperation with Xavier University, the Police Division developed a program of human and community relations, with funding provided by the U.S. Department of Justice. All supervisory officers participated in three days of study under this program. Additionally, police administration resolved to address citizens' complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible. To facilitate this newfound

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[18] Marvin McClarty of Omaha, interview by author, November 15, 2005. Hereafter referred to as Marvin McClarty interview.

commitment a special city service center was set up in the Avondale area. A mere twenty-eight

days later the City Manager closed the site because he felt that it was not being used. The city

looked on it as a failed experiment and did not open any other neighborhood offices. Whereas

other cities attempted to better police-community relations Cincinnati had no special

mobilization plans to use African American officers, supervisors or command personnel.[19]

The Milwaukee Police Department simultaneously attempted to address the problem of

unemployment and the perception of police as the enemy. Police Chief Harold Brier

recommended focused recruitment efforts in the black community because he has "been told

over and over that unemployment is so rampant." He felt therefore this would be a natural place

to ramp up the police department's recruitment efforts. Additionally he opined "I cannot think

of any other action which would more directly meet the claims of bigotry and brutality. [How]

could the Negro community, for example, claim that Negro officers were bigoted and, therefore,

brutal?'[20] Brier's sarcastic engagement with legitimate grievances of the black community

demonstrates that many of the solutions individuals in power created served their own interest

but did not address the complaints of black community. This less than authentic approach to take

on community concerns could lead to fatal results.

On February 4, 1969, the police department under executive authority signed a contract

with the University of Nebraska at Omaha for the services of Dr. John K. Brillhart for

"sensitivity training programs" at the cost of $3,746.25. During the course of these lessons,

fifteen officers spent five, two-hour sessions with Dr. Brillhart and then attended an additional

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[19]"Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967 in D.C." Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10, Cincinnati Historical Society, 19. "Cincinnati Questionnaire" NACCD/Series 42, Johnson Presidential Library. 10, 13-14, 16-18, 30-31, 42-43.

[20] "Response to Chairman of Community Relations Committee from Brier n.d." Milwaukee Series 44, Maier. Box 140 UWM Archives.

forty hours of in-service training.[21] Though progressive, these sensitivity training programs

could not stop the tide of diminishing positive police interactions within the Near North

community, particularly with officers who the community acknowledged to be racist.

On Tuesday night, February 25, 1969, police cruiser #104 sped down the road in front of

Horace Mann Junior High, at 11:05 p.m. Outside, a charter bus dropped off students coming

home from a skating party. Officer John Loder, leapt from his squad car, pointed a pistol at the

charter and threatened the children without reason. Although activist and father, Dan Goodwin

brought this incident to the attention of the police department, no disciplinary action was taken.

Loder had previously attended Brillhart's sensitivity training.[22] Unfortunately, the February

incident would not be the last in which the officer would be involved.   Four months and one day

later, he shot and killed fourteen-year old Vivian Strong, throwing Omaha into violent chaos.

Loder was not the only Omaha police officer who attended the post-rebellion police initiatives to

be involved in a fatal incident.

Perhaps the starkest example of the failure of innovative, proactive programming

occurred in March of 1968. When American Party presidential candidate Governor George

Wallace spoke in Omaha, tempers rose. After what many considered a police-induced riot broke

out at the Civic Auditorium where the candidate spoke, African American youth carried this

violence into the streets. Shortly after 10:00 p.m. the first reports of groups gathering near

Twenty-Fourth and Lake Streets began. As the disturbance grew, James Abbot, a twenty-three

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[21]1969-1970 City Council Budget Ledger. Municipal Records, City of Omaha. Located at the Douglas County
Courthouse, 1819 Farnam Street. Mick Road, "Adviser to Urge Deeper Training," *Dundee West-Omaha Sun*, July
2, 1969.

[22] Typewritten report presented to the Police Community-Relations Office in North Omaha by Daniel M. Goodwin,
February 28, 1969. Author obtained a copy from Mr. Goodwin in November 2005. "Policeman Will Face
Manslaughter Charge," *Omaha World-Herald,* June 26, 1969; "Adviser to Urge Deeper Training," *Dundee-West
Omaha Sun*, July 2, 1969.

year old off-duty police officer, checked in with Central Station to see if any help was needed.

Shortly thereafter he received a radio call to report to the Crosstown Loan and Pawn shop.

Owners Jack and John Belmont requested that somebody guard their store after a group of

youths had broken the front store windows and attempted to tear off the security bars.

While Officer Abbott sat inside with his riot gun protecting the store, African American

teenager Howard Stevenson crawled through a broken window and started to open a sliding glass

door granting others access to the shop. The police officer shouted "stop" and then shot. Abbott

fired from a distance of thirty-three feet and the blast nearly tore Stevenson in half. The police

chief stated that he would "discuss with Officer Abbot the violation of our policy regarding

police equipment." Although it was illegal for Abbott to be in possession of a riot gun while off

duty, authorities never arraigned him on this or murder charges. Douglas County Attorney

Donald L. Knowles explained: "We feel the shooting was tragic but justifiable." The

heartbreaking irony of the entire situation is that these young men's paths had crossed before.

Both Stevenson and Abbott participated in the city's youth-police camping experience in

Columbus, two years prior.[23]

These tragic incidents provide the best examples of how well-meaning initiatives did

little to alleviate the systemic woes of racism and power within the municipal community.

Although these officers had received sensitivity training, they both perceived the Near North

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[23]"Disorder Reported After Wallace Rally," *Omaha World-Herald* 5 March 1968; "Window-Breaking Started Vandalism Near 24th, Lake," *Omaha World-Herald*, 5 March 1968. "Why Policeman had Shotgun Explained," *Omaha World-Herald*, 7 March 1968. Interview conducted by author with Fr. Jack McCaslin November 13, 2005. Here after referred to as McCaslin interview. "Fire Bombs are Thrown, Six Arrested," *Omaha World-Herald*, 6 March 1968. Jack Todd, "Omaha, 1968-The Watched Pot Begins to Boil," *Daily Nebraskan*, reprinted in the *Omaha Star,* 11 April 1968. Mayor Vows Laws to Rule, Without Ifs," *Omaha World-Herald*, 29 April 1968. "Was Week-end Rebellion Triggered by 'Appropriate' Police Action?" *Omaha Star,* Clippings File Douglas County Historical Society. "2 Say Police Used Excessive Force," *Omaha World-Herald*, 30 April 1968; "Police Weigh Handbill Case," *Omaha World-Herald*, 24 April 1968. "Looters on N. 24th Cause Heavy Damage," *Omaha World-Herald*, 28 April 1968.

Side as an area of the city where they could terrorize with impunity. Loder threatened unarmed school children and off-duty Abbott collected his police-issued riot gun before protecting a civilian location. Although the police department did not explicitly sanction these officers' actions, both were exonerated from any wrong doing implying administration's tacit approval. These events foreshadow the general trend to policing the black community in the post-rebellion era. Simultaneously as programs were being developed and attended to allay claims of police brutality, city government was mobilizing to create and endorse a more forceful, armed police presence in black urban neighborhoods.

Increased Expenditures for Policing

Political scientist David Colby noted in his dissertation that "generally speaking in cities that experienced rioting increased expenditures [occurred] in areas assumed to be of concern to those demanding control and punishment of rioters and to a much lesser extent in areas assumed to be of concern to those rioting." As money flowed to meet the demands of the rebels, it also moved to arm the police department in the event of another uprising. The Wednesday following the 1966 disturbance, the Omaha Police Department ordered 250 white fiberglass helmets at four dollars each, increasing their stock to 350. These new helmets could withstand thrown projectiles, protecting the wearer. Additionally, police ordered 200 military gas masks to replace 108 World War II canister-style masks. The government of Cincinnati did not heed the call for new supplies after the 1967 uprising, so during the 1968 uprising the police division had to request 300 steel helmets, 300 armor body fragmentation protectors (flak jackets) and 300 gas masks from the National Guard. In Milwaukee, investigator Sam Dennis described the behavior

of the police in the Inner Core as "being continually provocative." He stated that officers carried riot helmets "in the rear of squad cars, very visible; and everyone knows they are carrying rifles and shot guns."[24] These equipment purchases (rentals in Cincinnati) allowed police to adopt new tactics in containing the uprisings which were more restrained, effective, and played better in the media. However buried under a thin veneer of increased professionalism and better crowd-control, the equipment expenditures and conspicuous display sent an unambiguous message to the black community; law enforcement can and will use violent force to suppress protest.

The Nebraska National Guard also prepared for the inevitable. In an effort to test their riot control reflexes, 264 guardsmen trained in a sixteen-hour exercise. Major changes had been implemented since 1966, and the group was now using techniques learned at the Army Military Police Headquarters at Camp Gordon in Georgia. The changes implemented increased the number of guardsmen available and provided tighter control over fire power. The new rules also allowed guardsmen to carry live ammunition and added 175 snipers in the event of sniper activity during the insurrections. National Guard Colonel George Talmadge anticipated criticism of the level of force implied in these changes by noting "Our job isn't to hurt people. Our job is to dissuade them, to restore order." However the increased show of force did little to persuade the black community. Similarly, Cincinnati took actions which demonstrated that they would aggressively meet uprising protest with armed force. Cincinnati firefighters now had the authority to carry firearms while on duty. One of the most telling indications of the Cincinnati Police Department's commitment to control, instead of preventive, measures is in the time

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[24] "Susan Welch, "The Impact of Urban Riots on Urban Expenditures," *American Journal of Political Science*, 19:4 (Nov., 1975.): 757. "Police Ordering Helmets, Mask," *Omaha World-Herald* , July 6, 1966. "To the Governor, ONG or Military Authorities From Mayor Ruehlmann 4-8-1968 6:30 pm" State Archives Series 1654: Adjutant General Ohio National Guard After Action Reports 1965-1974 Box 50, Ohio State Archives. "After math in Milwaukee: Report of phone conversation with Sam Dennis, Community Relations Service, DOF, by Bruce Thomas, Friday, Jan 12, 1968" NACCD/E37, Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

allotment for various facets of police training. In the 480 hours recruits spent in training they received thirteen hours on human/community relations issues and twelve on riot prevention and control.[25]

The Omaha Police honed their riot control tactics through national conferences. In 1968 Police Chief Richard Anderson and twenty-five other police chiefs from around the nation attended a conference held in Warrenton, Virginia. At this meeting sponsored by the Justice Department and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, attendees learned new police strategies for riot prevention and control. At the local level Mayor A.V. Sorensen and other Omaha officials met with Governor Norbert Tiemann and state representatives to discuss preparation for future disturbances. Tiemann and Sorensen decided that in the event of an uprising, the police department would be in charge until the situation was declared a "dire emergency." If that occurred a newly created state law, LB 74, would come into effect, giving the Governor responsibility to put local authorities under state control. Cincinnati City Manager William Wichman recommended that City Council adopt proposed riot control legislation. The ordinances proposed by Councilmen Gordon Rich and Thomas Lukes made it illegal to incite others to riot, to interfere with firefighters, and that battery of fire personnel would carry the same penalty as assaulting a police officer. In addition, they recommended a $500 penalty for violating these ordinances and that the fine for assault and battery against first responders be

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[25] Al Darr, "State Guard Test Reaction to Riots," *Omaha World-Herald*, April 2, 1968. "Schottelkotte News Noon Report 7-27-67" NACCD/Series 41, Johnson Presidential Library. "Cincinnati Questionnaire," NACCD/Series 22, Johnson Presidential Library.

increased to $1000.[26] By creating these laws, municipal governments had broad, legal

mechanisms to capture a greater number of rebels in a punitive dragnet.

In Omaha, Major General Lyle A. Welch, the state adjunct general, Major John H. Ayers,

head of the State Patrol, and Police Inspector Monroe Coleman all visited similarly sized cities to

look at their riot controls. From their experiences in Columbus, Ohio; Trenton, New Jersey;

Baltimore, Maryland; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; the men pressured City Council to pass a new

ordinance which limited the number of people allowed to gather on public streets. The provision

also allowed the Mayor to suspend airport operations in the event of an uprising and stop traffic

in and out of the city. He could also halt the movement of trains and boats into, within, or from

the city and prohibit the sale of alcohol. The Mayor was also granted the ability to restrict or

completely prohibit the sale of flammable liquids and carrying weapons. Mayor Sorensen

enacted the provision to "preserve the health, safety, and property of the citizens of this

community" during an uprising.[27] Although Sorensen and other mayors did not indicate this

explicitly, many were impressed with the efficacy with which Mayor Henry Maier shutdown the

urban rebellions in Milwaukee. As such the new city ordinance provisions enabling the Mayor

to shut down the city, reflect the adoption of tactics the State utilized in Milwaukee's 1967

uprising.

As with Omaha, Cincinnati adopted many of Milwaukee's control mechanisms. In April

1968 following the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, black Cincinnatians once

again violently protested in the streets. The After Action Report (AAR) of the Ohio National

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[26] "Two Will Attend Riot Conference," *Omaha World-Herald*, January 27, 1968. "City Reviews Riot Control," *Omaha World-Herald*, January 4, 1968. "3 Riot Ordinances Up For City Council Study," *Post & Times Star* (Cincinnati), October 4, 1967.

[27] "3 To Study Riot Controls," *Omaha World-Herald*, February 16, 1968. David Tisehendorf, "Mayor Asks Riot Power," *Omaha World-Herald*, April 19, 1968.

Guard demonstrates how the State responded. The police "promptly deployed over 450 men who were on the alert. They entered the area and attempted to quiet the disturbance….Mayor Eugene Ruehlman promptly declared a state of riot, read the Riot Act, and evoked a 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew on the city. All establishments serving alcoholic beverages or selling them in bulk were ordered closed, as were gasoline stations in the area. These four prompt actions greatly assisted in restoring law and order."[28] The actions taken by law enforcement in Cincinnati demonstrates, that Mayor Maier's excessive show of force to crush Milwaukee's insurrection became the standard operating procedure for cities throughout the United States.

The adjustments made by law and order in Omaha and Cincinnati made any future participation in an uprising more punitive and potentially deadly. Cities became more skilled in using force, indicting rebels, and placing the entire municipality on lockdown. It follows that after the first rebellions the city conceded to insurgents' demands because local government was unprepared and thus lost the opening salvo.   In the years that followed the municipal power structure made certain that in subsequent uprisings they would decidedly be the victor.

Political

Both rebels and local government interpreted the urban uprisings as political. In the aftermath of the revolts, municipal political mechanisms changed accordingly. In addition to local government kitting itself for future uprisings through equipment expenditures and training, the political apparatus of the city had also changed. In the days following the revolts municipal

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[28]*Folder 1968 2-14: "Cincinnati 1968"* Disposition Form by Robert H. Canterbury 4-29-68 Subj: Review of After Action Report for Civil Disturbances at Cincinnati, OH 8-12 April 1968" State Archives Series 1654: Adjutant General Ohio National Guard After Action Reports 1965-1974 Box 50, Ohio State Archives, 4.

government appeared eager to find solutions and attempt to at least consider the opinions and grievances of working class African Americans. However as the days turned to weeks, not only did local government return to its insincere approach in dealing with protest, they also became more deeply committed to not conceding anything to black interest groups.

Kerner investigator Sam Denis noted that: "the City of Milwaukee is 'calm' at the present time. The inner core still has the same ghetto problems…the meeting with Mayor Maier was only a psychological moral victory, in that the Negro community got the Mayor to come to the inner core." Due to the complete disenfranchisement of the black working class, just having the Mayor come to their community felt like a major accomplishment, although in fact conditions were just as wretched as they had always been. Furthermore the Commission noted that Mayor Maier was "in the spotlight at this time, nationally and locally, and not about to risk losing his voter support in negotiating with the Negro community."[29] Maier was unwilling to listen to the aims of the black population in hope of looking tough on crime, pandering to his white constituency, and prolonging his national relevance. Similarly, other city governments attempted to delegitimize municipal rights' organization in an attempt to cater to the majority white population.

In Cincinnati, Kerner Commission investigators met with the Community Action Committee (CAC) program officer John E. Hansen, CAC executive director Halloway C. Sells, and Lathan Johnson, assistant executive director of the Greater Cincinnati Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers. The men stated that Cincinnati was a deeply conservative place which provided "token" support for the community action programs arising

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[29]Sam Dennis "Field Community Tension Factors Report Milwaukee, Wisconsin August 21, 1967." NACCD/E33, Johnson Presidential Library. "Memorandum to George Roberts from Sam Dennis Subject Daily Activity Report-Milwaukee, Wisconsin—Aug. 1, '67" NACCD/E33 Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

after the urban rebellions. Furthermore the men stated that they have felt they have had to "swim

upstream" from the beginning and that the uprisings have only made their jobs more difficult

because of white disapproval. In an interview with the Kerner Commission Clint Reynolds

expressed that the uprising had been a "watershed" moment in the history of the Cincinnati

Human Relations Commission (CHRC), one that "exploded the myth [and] revealed exactly

where the Commission stood." Reynolds acknowledged that the CHRC had been set up as a

"buffer between the City Administration and the Negro… [and that] the city was willing to let

the Human Relations Commission absorb substantial amounts of blame when anything went

wrong."[30] Yet again those in formal leadership positions were unable to affect genuine change.

Similarly, many working class individuals continued to be ignored by local government.

    The Avondale Community Council (ACC) arranged a meeting inviting city representatives

to Zion Baptist Church to state their grievances. Television crews arrived at the location "in

anticipation of hearing the city fathers' replies," but the scheduled meeting arrived and not a

single member of the local government had showed up. Only later did meeting attendees learn

that Mayor Walton Bachrach sent a taped response to television station WCPO-TV to address the

community's grievances. As Don Dunkle the news director of WLW-T observed "Those people

who were waiting for the City Council's replies weren't watching television…White people

presumably were, and perhaps the Mayor was directing his answers to them."[31] So although the

violence of the rebellions in some instances brought immediate attention and availability by

municipal entities, after the fires died down, and sometimes before, local politicians were back to

only paying lip service to black demands and concerns.

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[30]"Memo from Henry B. Taliaferro, Jr. to Staff Re: Cincinnati Trip 30 August 1967, September 9, 1967."
NACCD/E21, Johnson Presidential Library, 2-3. "Team Interview Report 6 Nov. 1967 Interview with Clint
Reynolds, Acting Exec Director of the Cincinnati HRC, Part I" NACCD/E43, Johnson Presidential Library, 4.

[31]"WCPO/TV News Noon Report 7-28-67" NACCD/Series 41, Johnson Presidential Library, 5.

Moreover local government was more concerned with towing the line for the majority white population than actually bringing about meaningful change. The Cincinnati City Council expressed "gratitude to the police, firemen, and National Guard for their work in restoring order." The Kerner Commission also reported that the body "indicated that they would not respond to threats or intimidation; directed all who have grievances to seek redress through legal means; [and] indicated that they would not interfere in any way with any matter before the courts."[32] Thus in their statements to the press the City Council aligned themselves and their interests with the white populace depicting the rebels as criminals who did not utilize the appropriate avenues for change within the community, delegitimizing their protest. It was this re-framing of the urban rebellions which most significantly demonstrated how municipal government and local media attempted to re-assert central tenets of the Midwestern mentality. As local government in conjunction with state and federal assistance, implemented programs to appease the demands of the rebels, they simultaneously changed political, legal, and economic structures to produce a more forceful counterattack in the event of new uprisings. With the exception of the ghetto business owners and white arrestees, the majority of white Americans, isolated from the black community, did not see first-hand how these events unfolded. Thus the media and other spin agents played an important role in how these events were understood, disseminated, and interpreted.

Preparing a Stronger Riot Response

Typical of the Midwestern approach to the race question, both Cincinnati and Milwaukee commissioned studies to understand the extant and validity of central grievances within the

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[32]"FBI Weekly Report-Cincinnati 6-30-1967" NACCD/E21, Johnson Presidential Library, 2.

rebellions. The city of Cincinnati received a $90,000 Commerce Department grant to determine

the extent of hard-core unemployment and industry entry requirements. The city enlisted blacks

to conduct the interviews while an interracial task force of prominent citizens created permanent

programs to alleviate hard-core unemployment. In Milwaukee in addition to the Urban League

report directed by Dr. Karl Flaming, Mayor Maier made plans to appoint "a blue-ribbon

investigative committee to investigate and make recommendations on incident."[33]   These post-

rebellion reports expressed the same conclusion as earlier reports, life for African Americans was

hard and the institutions, individuals, and mechanisms charged in helping them were ineffective.

One of the uprising studies which could have provided an authentic account of the average

rebels' perspective was conducted by former Executive Director of the Cincinnati Human

Relations Commission David McPheeters.   McPheeters asked a number of provocative

questions which he felt best assessed the root causes of the uprisings. Sample questionnaire

prompts included:

> Q9 "In your opinion, how likely is it that World War III will break out *in the next two years*?" [emphasis original]
>
> Q10 "Which one of the following definitions of "Black Power" comes closest to your opinion of what the term really means?"
>   1. Black solidarity in a hold way against "whitey."
>   2. The Negro's recognition and united, forceful assertion of his own basic sense of dignity, integrity and worth.
>   3. Black controlled communities separated, both culturally and economically, from the white community.
>   4. The concentration of Negro social, economic, and cultural energies in every Negro community for purposes of using these energies in any manner necessary to control organizations, programs or government.
>
> Q31 "What is your closest attitude about what you think of the average Cincinnati policeman thinks of you and your neighborhood?"

[33]"Confidential document outlining the City of Cincinnati to the President' Commission on Civil Disorder Oct. 12, 1967 in D.C." Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10, Cincinnati Historical Society. "Manual of procedure in Civil Emergencies July 28, 1966." Milwaukee Series 44, Maier. Box 139, UWM Archives.

1. He is proud to know and serve us
2. He is conscientious about his job,
3. He's ok (neutral);
4. He indifferent;
5. He's a discourteous smart-aleck;
6. He's an armed legal criminal;
7. Don't know.

Q34 "Do you feel that most Negroes in Cincinnati who hold public office or who occupy tax supported jobs are generally "Uncle Toms?" if yes why.[34]

However local government was less than pleased with the results. Robert Black opined: "In all honesty, I must say that the report falls far short of expectations. It does not fulfill the original description or the detailed plan, because it is not an objective study in depth of the social, economic, political and psychological factors causing the disturbance, or the effects of the disturbance; nor does it discuss the comparable modes of responding to disturbances in other communities. It is more a personal, subjective statement of the writer about his view of the Cincinnati scene; its redeeming feature is that, in this sense, it is 'true.'"[35] Whereas the other researchers asked questions regarding the socioeconomic status of participants and general community opinions of the events, McPheeters' keen understanding of the climate in the black community evidenced by the questions he asked, demonstrates that a deeper consciousness shift was taking place. Although evidence indicates that McPheeters' study was never completed, he attempted to arrive at authentic feelings of black disenfranchisement, distrust, and dissatisfaction in Cincinnati. Alternatively, other studies in Cincinnati and Milwaukee focused more on understanding, who the rebels were, how best to defend against them and how the community

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[34]"Survey Questionnaire" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 7 Cincinnati Historical Society, 3-4, 16, 31.

[35]Robert Black, "Statement About McPheeters Report 10-26-67" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 10 Cincinnati Historical Society, 1.

read these events. Municipal government encouraged this emphasis to ensure they continued to curry political clout from the events while keeping their Midwestern delusion intact.

The Midwestern identity was maintained through the proliferation of media imagery during and after the uprisings. In a simulmatics study funded by the Kerner Commission of television, radio, and print media covering the uprising, the researchers ascertained the relationship between media portrayal and public opinion of the revolts. Their analysis showed that the majority of broadcast scenes showed a "dominant, positive emphasis on control of the riot and on activities" (53.8% of all scenes broadcast). In comparison actual scenes of mob action comprised only 4.8% of the total broadcast scenes. Furthermore segments featuring moderate leadership aired three times more frequently then segments highlighting militant spokespeople. Those who conducted the analysis noted that "We think that, in many crucial respects, they [the media] have failed to provide complex and accurate coverage of racial disorder in our society." This failure included an "exaggeration of both mood and event." The researchers continued that they felt media fundamentally failed to "analyse [sic] and report adequately, on a day to day basis, on race relations in America. By and large, the communications media have simply failed to communicate the nature and extent of our problems and the paths to a resolution of them"[36] Local broadcasters framed the discussion and interpretation of the rebellions in cities by focusing on how effectively the State managed the chaos and allowed "moderate" black leaders to frame the events.

Newspaper coverage was not much better, in how reporters presented and delegitimized these events. The study noted that "newspapers tended to characterize and portray last summer's riots as national rather than local phenomenon and problems, especially when rioting was taking

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[36] Sol Chaneles, "News Media Study: Special Preliminary Report of Finding for Selected Cities" NACCD/Series 12, Johnson Presidential Library, 2-3, 14, 17. Hereafter referred to Simulmatics media study.

place in the newspaper's hometown." In their analysis the study showed that a significant number of news articles that appeared in a local newspaper while the city experienced an uprising did not originate locally, with over 40% being contributed from wire services. More devastatingly "most newspaper editors appear to have given a large amount of headline attention to riots occurring in other cities during the time they were having trouble in their own cities." Newspaper editors thus were able to portray racial tension as a problem that occurred in other cities, not their own.

Researchers noted that newspaper editors emphasized certain topics more frequently in their print coverage. They most frequently covered legislation and official planning. Secondly, newspaper coverage tended to focus on leadership and personality figures. The topic that received the least attention were expressions of black grievances[37] Thus the newspapers' coverage tended to be more impersonal, focused on control and those in perceived leadership positions, followed by generalities of the black experience. By focusing on local blacks' articulation of grievances print media sources would simultaneously indict the local municipal community while humanizing the rebels. Such actions would legitimate violence as protest, affirming its utility to participants.

In Omaha and Milwaukee, local officials and media collaborated to frame these events in the best strategic light. Following the disturbances in 1966, the Omaha Police Department and the local broadcast community created a series of guidelines to cover racial disturbances. They agreed that the Public Safety Director would hold periodic briefing for broadcast news directors during an uprising. These briefings would be "off the record" and alerted the media to possible trouble providing background information. In return for this insider's knowledge, broadcasters

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[37]Simulmatics media study, 18.

refrained from news bulletining, confining their coverage to regularly scheduled newscasts. In collaboration, the media and Omaha police established the "news code 30" protocol which ensured a thirty minute broadcast moratorium after a violent uprising began. During this time newscasters could only collect news stories not broadcast them, preventing the recruitment of others into the action. Additionally during broadcast presentations the term "riot will be avoided unless the facts are indisputable" and charges of police brutality by the rebels "should not be aired indiscriminately." The measures allowed local government and law enforcement officials to control rumors, contain the violence, and frame the events in a way that was most advantageous to them.[38]

In Milwaukee, the Mayor's office compiled an inventory of public relations representatives working for them. In the event of an uprising, the office would assign each official to an out of town news reporter at a one-to-one ratio. Additionally, one public relations employee would also be "feeding lines instantly as they become available to the two Negro radio stations." The Mayor's office compiled a number of stock documents for immediate distribution in the event of an urban revolt. One of these documents included a "background PR piece detailing what [Milwaukee has] done to avoid another riot since the last one broke out. It should be readily in print for our PR people to distribute to out-of-town press." The media staff also recommended to Mayor Maier: "If you ever have to leave your own office for a press conference, open that conference with: 'I want to thank you ladies and gentlemen of the press for this press conference. It is the first time I have been out of my office in ___hours, days, etc."[39]

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[38] "Guidelines for Covering Civil Disturbances, Omaha Nebraska p. 1-3; Omaha, Nebraska" NACCD/Series 11, Johnson Presidential Library, 1-2.

[39] "Memo to Mayor from Jim [Last name not provided] July 26, 1968" Milwaukee Series 44, Maier, Box 160 UWM Archives.

The initiatives that media staff undertook enabled them to immediately frame the meaning of the uprisings and highlight the pro-active (but obviously ineffective) race relations solutions they had created. This strategy allowed the Milwaukee government to remain smug and take pride in their superior race relations as the majority of these documents were catered to out of town reporters not the local community, maintaining the proactive delusion of the Midwestern mentality.

Changing Consciousness of Whites

The collaborating media's direct control of dissemination allowed the majority of white Midwesterners to justify their development of negative feelings towards blacks.   Skewed media coverage provided whites with a unique perspective on the events, since many lived far from the actual uprising action.   Although the Commission found that the revolts "were less destructive, less widespread, and less violent than we originally thought they were." The simulmatics study demonstrated that the average American received a very different interpretation. They remarked "television coverage tended to give the impression that the riots were confrontations between Negroes and whites rather than response by Negroes to underlying slum problems."[40]   For many white Americans the urban uprisings became remembered and interpreted as overt attacks on white people, not property violence. This provided legitimatization for whites to use violence against African Americans because they felt that not only white privilege but white people were under attack.

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[40] Simulmatics media study, 3, 15.

On the national scene the urban rebellions sparked the growth of a number of white

vigilante groups. The Kerner Commission documented this trend in their reports. In 1967 the

Minutemen, a Philadelphia white vigilante organization distributed flyers which read "The

Niggers cry 'Black Power' and 'Get Whitey' and threaten to burn America to the ground. We

tell you these Niggers are not kidding, they intend to do just that. The American people must be

prepared to physically oppose them anytime we can." Additionally several Minutemen drove

cars pasted with bumper stickers that read "NIGGERS BEWARE. IF YOU DON'T STOP THIS

YEAR YOU WILL DIE. [all caps original]" A single sheet flyer entitled "Has the Riot Opened

Your Eyes?" circulated throughout Detroit following the uprising. The circular announced an

August 22, 1967 meeting sponsored by the General Douglas MacArthur Post #375, American

Legion, United War Veterans for Defense of the U.S. Constitution, Breakthrough, Citizens

Committee for the Civil Defense, Detroit Police and Firemen Association for Public Safety,

Chalderon Committee for Preservation of Liberty. The organizers scheduled the meeting to

discuss the growing violent threat of African Americans. At the bottom of the document they

informed the public that "persons suspected of being Communist of Black Power sympathizers

will not be admitted."[41]

Vigilante groups also began to crop up in the case study cities. Kerner investigators

noted that since the uprising there had been "a proliferation of local 'white patriot'

organizations" in Milwaukee. White vigilantes established these organizations for a number of

reasons. Some organized to directly oppose the open-housing marches of Father Groppi. Others

such as the John Birch Society offshoot, TACT (Truth About Civil Turmoil), wanted to wipe out

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[41]"Final Report of the Office of Investigations, 25 March 1968." NACCD/E1, Johnson Presidential Library, 12.
"Has The Riot Opened Your Eyes?" NACCD/E14, Johnson Presidential Library.

all Civil Rights organizing, characterizing it as a "communist conspiracy." Additionally the

White Rangers in Milwaukee urged other white citizens to arm themselves against African

Americans. "In response, [blacks] have resorted to arming and there are many inner-city

residents have expressed the fear of KKK-type raids against Negros by local white organizations.

The result is an increase in the kinds of tensions and frictions which set the stage for violent

outbursts." [42] This heightened possibility of interracial violence was particularly evident in

Cincinnati and Milwaukee.

After the uprisings in Milwaukee the NAACP Young Commandos began vigorously

protesting the open housing issue, the group marched daily into segregated South Milwaukee

from August 28 until at least December 12.   Instead of ignoring the protest, white Southsiders

began mobilize. On September 14, 4,000 whites gathered to counterprotest the open housing

marches, and attacked African Americans driving in their cars. The CRS representative requested

that the Assistant U.S. Attorney contact local public officials regarding the inability (or

unwillingness) of local law enforcement people to contain the mobs that have been gathering in

South Milwaukee. Sensing that interracial violence was imminent on August 31, Mayor Maier

issued a proclamation banning protests for one month and also declaring a state of emergency in

the city.[43]

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[42]"Memorandum to David Ginsburg from M.C. Miskovsky Subject: Final Report of the Office of Investigations, 25 March 1968. Attachment Report of the office of investigations." NACCD/E1, Johnson Presidential Library, 60.

[43]"Draft Memorandum to James Madison from Sam Dennis Subject Milwaukee, Wisc. Addendum Report dated August 30, 1967 Activity Report for Milwaukee 30 Aug 1967" NACCD/E33, Johnson Presidential Library, 2. "Memorandum to George L. Roberts from Sam Dennis Subject September 13, Field Day Activity Report for Milwaukee, Wisconsin 14 Sep1967" NACCD/E33, Johnson Presidential Library, 1. "Memorandum to James A. Madison from Sam Dennis ATTN: Larry Hoffheimer Subject Field Day Activity Report-Milwaukee, Wisconsin-August 31, 1967. 31Aug 1967" NACCD/E33, Johnson Presidential Library, 1. "FBI Memorandum from J. Edgar Hoover to Mr. Milan Miskovsky 14 Dec. 67, Subject: Selected Racial Developments and Disturbances" NACCD/E1, Johnson Presidential Library. "Aftermath" NACCD/Series 42, Johnson Presidential Library.

In the aftermath of the uprisings a number of groups organized in preparation for possible violence. Perhaps one of the strangest groups was the Deacons for Defense, which was unaffiliated with the Southern chapters. The group organized by African American male teenagers, protected demonstrators during the open housing marches and Christmas boycott. However the NAACP Youth Council rejected their offer of protection. In turn the Deacons offered their services to the Milwaukee Citizens Civic Voice (MCCV), a white group opposed to open housing, as protectors of their demonstrators. In the final investigative report of Milwaukee, Kerner investigators noted that "rumors that Milwaukee is on the verge of a 'civil war' have been widespread. As in other cities, whites are reported arming and increasingly talk of violence. White racist groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of White People the Ku Klux Klan, and the White Power Rangers, have increased in membership and have threatened advocated of open housing with violence."[44]

In Cincinnati staff investigators succinctly observed that the "situation in Cincinnati worse, not better. Fear and bitterness in Negro community. Belief of some that next riot in Cincinnati would be more highly organized. Could possibly be a true race riot with poor Southern Appalachian whites fighting with young Negroes in same area." The interview team noted that those close to the Southern Appalachian community noted that further tensions could "spark a race war between the poor whites and the Negroes." Jockeying for resources contributed to the potential race war, however in Cincinnati it was not just the working class whites that were

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[44] "Memorandum to M.C. Miskovsky from N.C. Rayford and H.L. Perry Subject: Organizations in the Negro Community Before, During, and After the Riot-Milwaukee 2 January 1968." NACCD/E2, Johnson Presidential Library, 3. "Final Report of the Office of Investigations, 25 March 1968. Attachment Report of the office of investigations" NACCD/E1, Johnson Presidential Library, 84.

willing to engage violently. The Cincinnati researchers noted that "Whites [are] astounded at the anger and bitterness from Negroes [that] even white elites are buying guns."[45]

In Omaha whites were also willing to arm themselves and defend their communities, often encouraged by amplified rumors provided by 911 operators. A man at 1620 North Twenty-Fourth Street, reported that "just the whole building blowed [sic] up over here now. The whole building just blowed up." When the dispatcher asked for confirmation, he said: "Everything going to burn up round here, if somebody don't help at all. If there is any way that we could be some help, to keep the guys away, I'm willing to do it. I got protection." The dispatcher responded "That's right. We appreciate that, but it's the others that are causing the trouble— they are throwing brickbats and shooting at Police now." The operator reporting that "they" were shooting at the police was an example of the type of rumor dissemination common to urban revolts. Transcript records clearly show there was no earlier indication of police being fired upon. Nonetheless, the rumors persisted. One female called to tell the dispatch operator that "they" had machine guns posted on the buildings. Police officials sought to dispel the rumors, but on the very next call, even though the Police Chief had just told the operator that the reports of machine guns were false, the dispatcher repeated the rumor. He advised the caller that help was not coming because "*they* had machine guns and rocks and bricks."[46] The media portrayal of African Americans, along with the fear that black protest would take away white privilege, caused many white Americans to begin to arm themselves. Ultimately, if the uprisings caused white Midwesterners to consider more violent protest tactics, for African Americans Midwesterners these events caused them to become more organized.

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[45] "Central Themes for Cincinnati" NACCD/E43, Johnson Presidential Library, 12.

[46] Omaha 911 Transcript 6,8 20.

Changing Consciousness of Blacks

Just as the urban rebellions had a major effect on how whites saw blacks, so too did these events influence how African Americans saw themselves. M.C. Miskosky wrote in his final assessment of the urban rebellions that "since the riots, the intercity contact between locally based militant organizations have increased with a consequent sharing of programs and an increasing homogeneity of militant rhetoric." He continued: "Within some cities previously competing organizations have drawn together, at least in the immediate response to the riot. In some cases this cooperation has been formalized by the establishment of umbrella-type organizations; however, there seems to be diversity and disunity." Prior to the urban rebellions local civil rights groups competed for influence within the community. After the revolts not only was their more cooperation locally, but at the regional level many black interest groups began working together. More importantly at the national level the "new Negro mood" that helped shift African American's opinions on militancy became crystallized. ACC president Bailey W. Turner asserted in his 1967 annual report, "there has developed within the community a strong sense of "Selfhood." Turner defined this sentiment as "a strong feeling that each person is really 'Somebody'...[There] is also a feeling that a community is a 'Somebody'…that it can and must master its ship and determine its destiny."[47] In the immediate aftermath of the urban rebellions these two assessments codified the change in black consciousness: increased unity and sense of importance.

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[47]"Memorandum to David Ginsburg from M.C. Miskovsky Subject: Final Report of the Office of Investigations, 25 March 1968. Attachment Report of the office of investigations." NACCD/E1, Johnson Presidential Library, 59. "Avondale Community Council, Annual Report 1967" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 2

This sense of importance caused a "domino-like" effect; influencing how other disenfranchised people approached protest. One example occurred during a prison uprising in Cincinnati. The workhouse, located in the city, had been built in the 1860s and closed at the turn of the century. The facility was reopened during the Prohibition era, without the benefit of updating, and had been in use since. Fifty long-term prisoners incited the trouble around 3 p.m. on June 15, 1967; approximately twenty minutes before twelve convicted uprising participants entered the area. As with the large-scale uprising that was taking place outside of the workhouse walls, negotiations took place between the rebels and representatives in power. The inmates demanded cold beverages with their meals, improved bedding, additional showers (the workhouse only had one for prisoners), recreation programs, and better meals. Police Chief Jacob Schott and George Studt, the workhouse superintendent responded favorably to these demands and the incarcerated men received the items.[48]

The successful mobilization of power in earlier uprisings gave African American political clout and a position of strength from which to bargain from. After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. the ACC announced that a "Black Monday" would be declared out of respect to his memory. They demanded that all white personnel, even if conducting official businesses, keep out of the Avondale-Walnut Hills area. They also requested that all African Americans call-in sick to work and wear black clothing or black armbands in deference to the slain leader. Many business and public utilities, including the police department complied.

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[48] "Guardsmen Quell Riot At Workhouse," *Post Times Star* (Cincinnati), June 16, 1967.

Finally, the organization also established a temporary black police force to protect and maintain order in the community.[49]

Post-rebellion, in addition to this position of strength from which to bargain, many African Americans had a renewed, greater sense of racial solidarity. Kerner investigators noted that in Cincinnati: "Leadership and organization have become more militant, more unified, and in many instances more revolutionary. The old patterns of jealousy have seemingly been attenuated by the new pattern of solidarity and cooperation against the common enemy." The reporters continued "Black Power, stressing community development, race pride, self respect, has become major social force in Cincinnati." Reverend Hunt of Cincinnati even indicated that some of the previously extant intra-racial class conflict had diminished. The Commission investigators' noted that in Hunt's perspective, middle-class African Americans have become more involved. They summarized from Hunt's testimony that "even the middle-class Negro, no matter how educated he is… [knows] that the system operated against him just as it operates against the low man on the totem pole."[50] This renewed emphasis on race solidarity brought about new protest groups, umbrella organizations, and new tactical adaptations.

New black institutions and organizations

The urban rebellions became public symbols codifying Black Nationalist consciousness. Inspired, the black community began to lay a cohesive infrastructure for Black Power organizing, not only locally but also regionally. In the last weekend of September in 1967 CORE sponsored a North Central Region Action Council meeting. Approximately thirty people

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[49] "Disposition Form by Robert H. Canterbury 4-29-68 Subj: Review of After Action Report for Civil Disturbances at Cincinnati, OH 8-12 April 1968" State Archives Series 1654: Adjutant General Ohio National Guard After Action Reports 1965-1974 Box 50, 362, Ohio State Archives, .3-4.

[50] "Staff Paper No. 7" NACCD/E67, Johnson Presidential Library, 77. "Reverend Hunt interview," NACCD/E43, Johnson Presidential Library, 3.

from all over the Midwest including Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri; East St. Louis, Illinois; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Des Moines, Iowa attended the event. Delegates selected Columbus, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Detroit, Michigan; St. Louis, Missouri; and Lincoln, Nebraska as possible locations for the 1968 convention, demonstrating their continued commitment to thinking regionally about African Americans' problems. Additionally CORE established a central communication line for the Midwest region in Chicago, which would allow activists to collectively discuss local issues. The 1967 workshop topics included the role of black women, fundraising, and regional considerations.

Robert Lucas of Chicago CORE led the "Strengthening the Region" session. This gathering was specifically geared to look at the ways black activists could approach their protest regionally. In this session attendees specifically referred to the uprisings as "rebellions" and that violent protest would better advance the black cause. Furthermore as an FBI infiltrator present at the meeting wrote: "It was believed that such rebellions, as in Detroit and Newark, served to unify black people and the feeling was predominant that without such violence on the part of the Negro, the Negro could not escape 'whitey's' trap." Furthermore, attendees expected that urban explosions would continue throughout the United States. In particular, attendees watched "Milwaukee, Wisconsin closely, hoping that this will be the site of the next such so-called rebellion." Session goers referred to Father Groppi, as a "hindrance" and that Milwaukee blacks were "generally about ten years behind the times. " According to the account "CORE reportedly has 'people' in Milwaukee, who are trying to infiltrate Father Groppi's group, in an effort to

remove him from leadership and bring the blacks there out of their 'dream.'"[51] Thus militant

CORE activists, although they knew that Milwaukee had experienced a rebellion in August, felt

that these events were ineffective and lacked a nascent nationalist ideology which could have

supported black people into creating their own (separatist) Black Power organizations.

In Cincinnati inspired by the immediate efficacy of the urban rebellions the Citizens

Action and Better Business Practices Committee a subcommittee of the Avondale Community

Council (ACC) moved into action. Chaired by Alfred Beasley, the organization protested Bob

Miller's delicatessen who in turned agreed to buy from black driver-salesmen in the area. Their

protest of the Forest Avenue Pony Keg forced the owners to drive the prices of vegetables down,

resolving consumer complaints. Additionally, the Committee terminated "operations at 809

Glenwood" for possible drugs and prostitution. Their pickets brought about the hiring of blacks

at both Central Trust bank branches to which they would be trained for a managerial position.

The ACC also instituted a citywide price and quality survey of Kroger's, A&P, and Albers

supermarket resulting in a customer' strike against the Kroger and A&P stores in the area.

According to the group's meeting notes "Both stores met the demands of the Avondale

Community Council. The Customer Strike can be termed successful." Finally, due to continued

pressure from the ACC, the Kroger store on Forest Avenue appointed African American Robert

Stargel manager, satisfying the council's condition following the June 1967 rebellions. The

Avondale Community Council engagement centered on the grievances expressed during the

rebellions including employing black truck drivers and that grocery stores in the black

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[51]"FBI Dispatch about North Central Regional Action Council 4 Oct 1967 Chicago 100-11329" NACCD/E15, Johnson Presidential Library, .3-4.

community "either clean up or close up" immediately.[52] Thus formal organizations not only took

up the causes articulated in the grievances but did not rely on civil government, taking a militant,

confrontational stance.

During an interview conducted over twenty years after his initial recruitment into the

Black Panther Party, Peak was asked what the party offered him that other organizations had not.

He replied: a "sense of belonging, sense of being, sense of being a person, a human being." In

the wake of the urban rebellion the Omaha Black Panther Party (BPP) gave many

disenfranchised young people that feeling of "somebody-ness" and a radical, organized outlet to

bring about change in their lives. Eddie Eugene Bolden born in Columbus, Ohio and raised in

East St. Louis, Illinois came to Omaha in 1966 seeking employment. The twenty-four year old,

increasingly appalled at the "actions by politicians and police in the black community and by the

whole system," decided to take action. By 1968 he had learned of the Panthers and attended

several meetings in California. Impressed by his interest, the National Black Panther Party

appointed Bolden to begin a branch in Omaha. By July 23, 1968 the Omaha chapter consisted of

twenty-five members including seven females.[53]

Following the 1969 rebellion the Black Panthers founded the Vivian Strong Liberation

School, which instructed local youth about anti-capitalism. Located at 2616 Parker Street, classes

were held from 5:30 p.m. until 8 p.m., Monday through Friday. These sessions included

discussions and a hot meal for all students. At the school Mondo we Langa (formerly David

Rice) taught that "The symbol of a black man holding a gun is not only in reference to the

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[52]"Avondale Community Council, Annual Report 1967" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 2, Cincinnati Historical Society. "Avondale Community Council, News Release 2-6-68" Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 2 Cincinnati Historical Society. "2nd Demands Cincinnati" NACCD/E73, Johnson Presidential Library.

[53]"Panthers Seeking," *West Omaha-Dundee Sun,* May 20, 1969. Black Panther Party, aka Black Panther Party for Self-Defense Omaha, Nebraska, 12 November 1968,Omaha FBI File 157-403-163. Obtained through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

revolutionary struggle, but to the survival of poor people." Thus attendees of the school learned

the power of violence for racial and class revolutionary change, as well as gendered language.

The Omaha chapter also provided adult education programs. Local authorities deemed the Vivian

Strong Liberation School so threatening that its leaders were federally subpoenaed. When called

to testify before the grand jury Edward Poindexter, Bolden, and Rice, all Omaha Panthers, pled

the fifth.[54]

 From the beginning, the national Black Panther headquarters did not like how the

Midwestern chapters operated, so Kansas City, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; and Omaha,

Nebraska often supported one another through "Midwest solidarity." The difference in

viewpoints came down to a point which Frank Peak described in an interview: "Well, in the way

people viewed things, I mean people here were Midwest people with Midwest ideas, ah, you just

couldn't approach them the same way as you approach people out of the West Coast." Also

during this time there was an East versus West rivalry, and the Midwestern chapters were often

ignored. "Numerous Midwestern Chapters were having a great deal of difficulty getting

coverage in the paper—getting our articles printed, etc. . .So there was a lot of dissatisfaction

among the Midwestern chapter about its relationship with national headquarters." [55] Thus the

Midwestern political economy also affected how local chapters interacted with national

organizations.

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[54]Frank Peak interview. Tom Giitter, "Inside the "Liberation School'," *West Omaha-Dundee Sun,* December 18, 1969. In e-mail correspondence over thirty years later, Giitter mused, "I remember eating a bowl of chili with the kids at the Vivian Strong Memorial Liberation School while I was there – it was great chili." Tom Giitter, e-mail message to author, December 16, 2005.

[55]Frank Peak interview; David Rice, interview by Alonzo N. Smith, September 23, 1982. Nebraska Black Oral History Project, Nebraska Historical Society, Lincoln, NE. Hereafter referred to as David Rice interview.

In the aftermath of the rebellions each city built organizations that reflected the articulated concerns of the community in new forms. In an FBI obtained tape recording, Bolden offered the normal Panther rhetoric and reiterated the Black Panther Party's commitment to the ten-point party platform. There he expressed his opinion on urban revolts:

> And we say black people, black people in this country, don't sit around and say nothing is going to happen because it's happening. And, we say don't sit down and let our spontaneous riots happen in the streets. For we get shot up, corralled, unorganized. We got to organize. We must organize and we must respect the kind of fashion that it is the man being the gun who's dangerous.[56]

It was not just formal organizations that changed in the urban rebellions but also the way African Americans saw protest in general. For these organizations they believed offensive violence as a useful one-time strategy to gain the attention of the community. After the warning flare had been fired, normal negotiations and heightened direct action would resume. However, in the months following the uprising violent rhetoric continued to flourish often times in newly inappropriate places. Many of the established leadership, both militant and traditional, felt that these forms of violent protest only hurt the broader African American cause.

Violent rhetoric and activity

Lincoln O. Lynch, CORE Associate Director told a SNCC rally in Chicago on August 8, 1967 that "If America doesn't come around we're gonna burn it down. If there isn't a place in America for the Negro, then there won't be any America." This allegorical usage of violence increasingly became a fixture in Black Nationalist/Black Power organizing speeches in the months following the 1967 uprisings. Director of Investigations M.C. Miskosky noted that in America the uprisings and "the commentary thereon by leading militants further legitimatized

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[56]Black Panther Party, aka Black Panther Party for Self-Defense Omaha Nebraska, 12 November 1968, Omaha FBI File 157-403-163. Obtained through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

the principle that the present structure of society and the present channels for the redress of

grievance do not work for blacks." This continued, and in some cases heightened, violent rhetoric

caused individuals to use property violence to protest their conditions in new found places.

Miskosky characterized this as "the idea of violence as an acceptable tool of social expression in

the minds of the ghetto population." This expression post-1967 became rhetorically

sophisticated, advocates were "no longer tossing around vague, isolated ideas; they have refined

their message into a complete "system" with the strong appeal to the disadvantaged. Further

they are promising action programs to substantiate their philosophy."[57] The most receptive

audience for this kind of provocative speech was urban teenagers, the foot soldiers of the urban

rebellions.

Dr. Ralph Turner said of the Cambridge, Massachusetts uprising that the "high schools in

the ghettos have become an important testing center and training ground for confrontation and

racial conflict. Especially, where the youth are the shock troops of the civil disorder." In the fall

following the urban disturbances, the confrontation moved from ghetto streets to high school

hallways. These events though still involved some property damage, transformed into interracial

physical conflicts. In 1968 in the wake of George Wallace's inflammatory speech and the

murder of Howard Stevenson, many black Omahans again took to the street. As night became

day the disturbances did not end, rather they continued at the predominately African-American

schools in Omaha. That next morning, one thousand students walked out of Horace Mann Junior

High School. By March 8, over 3,500 of the 5,700 total student population at Central, Tech, and

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[57]"Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) Report" NACCD/E3, Johnson Presidential Library. "Memorandum to David Ginsburg Executive Director and Victor H. Palmieri Deputy Executive Director from M.C. Miskovsky Director of Investigations Subject: Synopsis of Interim Report for Office of Investigations, 5 Dec. 1967." NACCD/Series 1, Johnson Presidential Library.

North High Schools were absent. White parents and moderate black parents, fearing violence, kept their children home. [58] Those that remained in school wreaked havoc there.

On March 6 the chaos initiated as a Molotov cocktail exploded in North High School. Trouble at Horace Mann began at 10:04 a.m. as the bell rang for students to go to third hour. One-half of the one thousand students stayed outside of class after the bell rang. The students went from classroom to classroom saying "Third Hour-Riot." Ernie Chambers, who since the 1966 disturbance increasingly became a spokesperson for the disaffected youth, stood on the front lines trying to calm the Mann Junior High students that the media was going to make them out to be hoodlums. Later that day when he, Dan Goodwin, and Marvin McClarty went to Tech High School, the young students awaited Chambers arrival expecting to receive his approval. But Chambers condemned their actions by saying, "Why did you destroy the library? The one place you need!" Officers remained at the schools until March 25, to prevent additional problems.[59]

After Wallace came to Omaha, friends of different races had a difficult time maintaining their relationships. A series of interviews with students at North High School revealed the new level of race tensions. LaWanda Mitchell, a senior and seventeen-year old honors student, observed that "since Tuesday, if Negroes were seen with whites, they were called Uncle Toms."

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[58] "Notes from Conference with Dr. Turner—David Boesel, Bettsy Jamison and Lock Holmes attending n.d." NACCD/E38, Johnson Presidential Library, 5. "*Omaha World-Herald* Centennial Series: Summer of 1966 was 'Long, Hot' as the Riots Reached Omaha," *Omaha World Herald*, June 16, 1985; "Official Says 3,500 Miss Class Friday," *Omaha World-Herald,* March 3, 1968. "Only Third of Students Present at North High," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 8, 1968.

[59] "School Day Runs a Bit Smoother," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 7, 1968. "Chambers Quiets Milling Pupils," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 9, 1968. Marvin McClarty interview. "School Guard is Called Off at 4 Sites," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 25, 1968. The schools on the Near North Side were plagued with many problems including high teacher turn-over rates. On average North High School had a seventeen percent turnover, Central High School, fourteen percent, Tech High School thirty-one percent, Tech Junior High forty-four percent, and Horace Mann Junior High School forty-seven percent. In 1968 half of the teachers were new to Mann. The percentage of blacks at the four main junior and high schools that served the Near North Side were as follows: North High School seventeen percent, Central High School, eighteen percent, Tech High School, sixty-two percent, and Horace Mann Junior High School, ninety-seven percent. "Only Third of Students Present at North High," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 8, 1968.

Leonard Starnes, a seventeen-year old senior and Red Cross Chapter president, speculated that "the Negro kids might have walked out to prove Black Power and the white kids in retaliating, were trying to show White Power." These interracial tensions tricked out into the streets. Shortly after 2:30 p.m. on March 7, forty white youths marched towards thirty black youths near Thirty-Sixth and Boyd Streets. Before the police arrived to disperse them, a fifteen-year-old white girl brandishing a shotgun ran toward the group of black students. She was apprehended by the police and returned to the care of her family.[60] These biracial conflagrations continued throughout the school year and were not limited to Omaha.,

In Cincinnati on October 11, 1967 a large fight broke out at Hughes High School, whose population was evenly divided between black and white students. The skirmish began as a dispute between a black and a white female student in the bathroom of the school. As the FBI reported students exchanged "sarcastic comments" between the races; and then a general interracial melee commenced. The assault of several white students by a group of African American students resulted in the arrest of six blacks. When school let out for the day 150 students peacefully remained, mostly black, singing freedom songs. Other students less committed to non-violence left the group and assaulted a white school bus driver, in addition to breaking windows at a nearby business establishments. After the large fight at Hughes, Captain James Klein of the Cincinnati Police Department (District 5) stated that the next day between 40% and 50% of students were absent from class. Police were stationed inside the school to

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[60]"North High Students: Prejudice is Showing," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 8, 1968. "Only Third of Students Present at North High," *Omaha World-Herald*, March 8, 1968.

prevent any further incidents, although one black juvenile was arrested for assaulting a white youth.[61]

Student activism at Omaha's Central High School began in the fall of 1968. Black students made six demands of the administration. First was to remove from the library Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* because of its racist themes. Second was to permit more black representatives on the student council. Third was to lower the qualifications for senior class officers. Fourth was to have Central involved in more civil rights activities. Fifth was to add more African American history to the curriculum. Finally, the student protestors wanted an assembly of all Central High Students to hear Ernest Chambers speak. Central administrators began to accommodate some of these requests by incorporating African American history when possible, including three special lectures on African American history. The administration also made tentative plans to teach African American history after school the next semester. Finally they scheduled a meeting on discrimination at the YMCA. Two days after these plans had been made, more problems began to occur at Central High School. Twenty students accused the administration of "over-supervision" and discouraging black students from eating in the North or predominately white cafeteria.[62]

In a two hour meeting in Principal Gaylord Moeller's office, Ernest Chambers and Reverend Emmett T. Streeters talked about the issues that Central High School students had identified. In total, there were now thirteen problems that students wished addressed including that African-American history be part of the required history curriculum taught by a "qualified

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[61]"Selected Racial Development and Disturbances Reports 10-12-67; 10-13-67" NACCD/Series 1, Johnson Presidential Library.

[62]Larry Parrot, "Negro Students Ask 6 Changes at Central," *Omaha World-Herald*, December 14, 1968. "Reconciliation Tried at Central High School," *Omaha World-Herald*, December 16, 1968.

black teacher." This demand was especially important after students complained that a black student received a lower grade because he reported on a topic in African-American history. Other demands included the outlawing of racially degrading signs including cartoon caricatures. All blacks who still disagreed fundamentally with the administration would be invited to transfer.[63]

Militancy increased at Central in December after two black students were suspended following a dispute with a teacher in study hall. Fights broke out frequently in the hall, and thus, all ninety-four teachers were required to stand in the hall during passing period. Despite some improvements, participants on both sides of the fight were still aggravated. One teacher who wished to remain anonymous observed: "Take [for example] Afro-American history. A few weeks ago students were demanding it. Now we have it and they won't attend class." The teacher neglected to mention that the class was a non-credit course which met once a week at 4 p.m. Assistant Principal William Pierson was convinced that outsiders were responsible: "If we did not have outside influences we would not have a race problem. . .I think most of the tension here is among black students themselves. Between militants and non-militants." Moeller agreed, stating that the racial unrest at Central was because "black student leaders were at the behest of black militants in the city."[64]

One such group that school administration thought was "at the behest" of black militants was BANTU. Blacks Achieving Nationalism Through Unity (BANTU) started at Tech High School in April 1969. The group met each Friday at 7:30 p.m. at the Black Panther Party headquarters on 3120 North Twenty-Fourth Street. Gary House, Robert Cecil, and Robert

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[63]"Central High Negroes List Thirteen Problems," *Omaha World-Herald*, December 17, 1968.

[64]"Central's Racial Problem May Be Easing," *Omaha World-Herald* February 16, 1969.

Griffo, all Tech High School students, and Lew Davis from Central High School comprised the main cohort of officers. The students petitioned Superintendent Owen A. Knutzen to meet with them, to which he promptly rejected the request. Instead, he submitted a letter to the BANTU officers stating "Parents of students, the School-Community Advisory Committee, the NAACP, the Urban League, and all residents of the affected community should have an opportunity to reflect, analyze and react to these demands." A total of twenty-three points, "these demands" stressed the improvement of Omaha's school system ranging from the seemingly small "serve soul food cooked by black cooks and force all black students to attend" to more serious charges of removing "all Toms and white racist faculty members" in order to liberate Tech from the "racist board of Education." The students also declared that Malcolm X's birthday should be a national holiday.[65]

Denied the opportunity of a formal meeting to verbally address their needs, BANTU continued with many of their stated objectives. One-third of Tech students did not attend classes so as to honor of Malcolm X's birthday in May 1969. That day over 400 Tech students were absent from school, far greater than the average rate of ten percent. Both black and white students played hooky but Tech High School principal, Carl Palmquist, suspected that white students were absent because of fear of racially based reprisals. Assistant principal Pierson stated that at Central High School 240 students were absent from the normal attendance of 2,000. At North High School, Principal Harold Reeves stated that absenteeism was at ten percent compared to the usual five to seven percent of the 2,200 students. Other Omaha Public schools

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[65]Black Panther Party Omaha Division, 12 June 1969, Omaha FBI File 157-403-539. Obtained through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). "Student Club Is Organized by Panthers," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 5, 1969. "No Meeting is Scheduled with BANTU," *Omaha World-Herald* May 14, 1969.

showed less absenteeism. Clarence Barbee, principal of Horace Mann, stated that the day was normal and uneventful.[66]

Similarly in Cincinnati following the Hughes disturbance in October students formed a Black Student Union. The members presented their demands to the superintendent. Of primary importance to the group was to have the Black Student Union, comprised of black representatives from Withrow, Aiken, Hughes, and Courter Tech, be officially sanctioned by the School Board. The central objective of the union was to make known the wants and needs; academically, socially and culturally of the Afro-American students." Additionally, like high school students in Omaha, the Black Student Union representatives in Cincinnati wanted Black History to be included in the present curriculum of each school by the beginning of the September 1968 school year. They demanded further that the course should be required by all students and should be taught by black teachers "not necessarily the one who have (in the eyes of the administration) an education degree." The students were also concerned by the security police presence or "so-called Teacher's Aide." They demanded that these individuals be removed immediately and in their place "an active program be instituted which emphasizes parental guidance." Their final demands reflected both cultural pride and the desire for black autonomy. They requested the recognition of black holidays and "no restrictions on the wearing of clothing that denotes cultural pride." They wanted to rid the schools of prejudiced teachers, hire more black high school principals, and involve concerned parents in policy making.[67]

Reporter Lynne Woodman described the meeting with Dr. Miller as a "disaster." Superintendent Paul Miller was anything but accommodating to the young rebels. In his official

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[66]"Absenteeism Takes Jump for 'X' day," *Omaha World-Herald,* May 19, 1969.

[67]"What Parents Can do to Help" Mss 917 Maurice McCrackin Box 51, Cincinnati Historical Society, 3.

statement he wrote: "Hughes High School has become a symbol of the problems which threaten

the very future of our city and of our country. Wednesday's disturbances…are but a portend of

what can happen on a larger scale if we fail to act firmly in dealing with these problems."   He

continued that those students who act disruptively will be "dealt with accordingly." He

concluded his statement by saying "Let me emphasize again, 95% of school personnel time will

not be used to serve 5% of the children and youth. The school system shall be governed by law

and order, not by the whims of harassment of people. Children and youth shall not be used as

pawns in an adult game. Just because adults have not evolved same methods of dealing with

difficult problems, this is no reason to deny children and youth the chance to solve these

problems." Again Miller exposed the bootstrapper Midwest ideology. He felt that if the students

worked hard then they could avoid the problems that the urban uprisings were a response for.

Yet again, Miller's smugness overlooked that Hughes High School had no college prep program;

and that one of its feeder schools Samuel Ach was the only junior high school in Cincinnati

which is a "work-oriented junior high" neglecting to see that young African Americans had their

own grievances which they wished to articulate.[68]

Conclusion

The urban revolts remain pivotal events in altering the physical landscape of black

enclaves, shifting the goals of the Black Freedom Movement, and altering black consciousness.

The rebellions did not solely affect the African American population; local city governments and

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[68]"Agenda of the 4 C's meeting May 2, 1968 at Church of Our Savior, 7:30 PM" Cincinnati Historical Society. Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 2 "Statement issued by Supt. Of Scoots Paul A. Miller. 10-13-67" and "The Samuel Ach Situation: Preliminary View," Mss 901 Robert L. Black, Jr. Collection, Box 11 Cincinnati Historical Society.

white citizens also underwent changes in the aftermath of the uprisings. Municipal governments frequently used the disturbances as a political tool. For white urban Midwesterners the uprisings positioned African Americans as dangerous, violent criminals. Accordingly, police personnel grew exponentially and considerable resources were spent on riot-training and equipment. Individual white citizens also sought out protection from the growing "militancy" of black Americans by joining white "patriot" organizations or vigilante groups. These uprisings, originally construed as a tactic for increased black political power, subsequently led to a retrenchment of white political power and social supremacy, ultimately giving rise to the New Right.

Although the grievances expressed during the uprisings brought about some immediate change, the Midwestern mentality that believed in a gradual approach brought about only temporary solutions. This coupled with a general consensus that African Americans had to take individual responsibility to better themselves ensured that long-standing systemic inequalities remained, and only became exacerbated in the subsequent decades. Still in the wake of this considerable backlash African Americans found new ways to unite and oppose racial discrimination. The influence and the relevance of the urban rebellions did not remain in the black enclaves but extended to the strategic plans of other marginalized people outside of the 1960s.

Conclusion

A riot is at bottom the language of the unheard. It is the desperate, suicidal cry of one who is so fed up with the powerlessness of his cave existence that he asserts that he would rather be dead than ignored.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.[1]

Until recently, scholars analyzed the Black Freedom Movement in neat, isolated categories. Non-violent direct action, in the manner of King, ended with the Watts uprising; militant armed self-defense gained popularity with the Black Panther Party in 1966, and the urban rebellions were terrifying, aberrant episodes. The tangled relationship between traditional Civil Rights protests, violence, and freedom, seldom acknowledged. *Prairie Fires* asserts the centrality of the 1960s urban rebellions in the black liberation struggle. These revolts transformed black consciousness as well as the strategic vision of African American protest movements. Moreover, these events altered relationships. Forged in the rebellions' fires, the State now engaged protest through calculated new methods; a tenuous liberal détente between whites and African Americans ended; and most importantly, blacks saw themselves in a powerful new light. Beyond the historically transformative nature of these events, the revolts provide an important framework for interpreting and analyzing the significance of gender, class, region, and protest in the making of black America.

Unfortunately, black America's dissatisfaction and disillusionment did not end in the 1960s. In many areas African American residents faced similar or worse impediments than they

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[1]Robert H. Brisbane, *Black Activism: Racial Revolution in the United States, 1954-1970* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1974), 159.

did in 1966. In 1991 a survey of black Cincinnatians found that 82.7% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the city's efforts to reduce poverty; 70% were dissatisfied with the amount of recreational activities available to youth; 82% were dissatisfied with the number of black elected officials; and finally 83% were dissatisfied with the level of black community involvement in decision making.[2] In 2011, researchers utilized census data to determine that Milwaukee held the unlaudable distinction of being the most segregated city in America, with 90% of African Americans residing in North Milwaukee, formerly the Inner Core.[3] After numerous incidents of police brutality, in March 2012 ACLU-Nebraska requested that the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice conduct a federal review of police practices in Omaha.[4] The concerns and articulated grievances which led to violent revolt in the continue on today.

Though the quality of life for African Americans in Milwaukee and Omaha remain abysmal neither city has yet experienced an uprising since the 1960s. Cincinnati however cannot be included on this list. On April 7, 2001 police shot nineteen-year old Timothy Thomas. Thomas' death marked the fifteenth African American killed by Cincinnati police since 1995. Although police homicide is rarely condonable, this case was particularly specious. Thomas, not carrying a weapon, forced officers to give chase after evading arrest for an old traffic violation. Officer Stephen Roach cornered Thomas in an alley when his service weapon "just went off." The uprising commenced when a protestor hurled a rock at the District 1 police station.

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[2] Urban Program Advisory Committee, "Race: Survey of Black Cincinnatians sponsored by Urban Program Advisory Committee [1991]" Mss 993 William Mallory Papers Box 27 Folder 21: Cincinnati Historical Society, 8, 13, 15.

[3] "Milwaukee Earns Dubious Distinction of Most Segregated City in America," *Chicago Tribune*, April 1, 2011.

[4] "Civil Rights and Community Organizations Request DOJ to Investigate Omaha Police." ACLU Nebraska Press Release, March 13, 2012.

Violence occurred throughout the Over-The-Rhine, Avondale, and Walnut Hills neighborhoods for the next seven days. On September 26, a jury passed down a "not guilty" verdict on all charges related to Timothy Thomas' death. Some local blacks broke windows in the area and set several dumpster fires prompting the city manager to call called a metropolitan-wide curfew. Though this defensive action effectively halted the revolt, the anger in Cincinnati remained palpable.[5]

Violent protest in the new millennium has not been restricted to Cincinnati, or for that matter the United States. Insurrections continue to be a direct line of communication for the most downtrodden and disenfranchised to the power structure that benefits from ignoring them. Recently large scale revolts have taken place in Australia (2004), France (2005), and Greece (2008). Like the 1960s rebellions, police homicide of an ethnic minority teenager triggered the violent response to widespread social, economic, and political woes. The one event which best demonstrates the relevance for understanding both the short term and long term implications of violent uprising occurred in London. On August 4, 2011, a Scotland Yard marksman shot and killed Mark Duggan. After a peaceful protest on August 7, violence began in the area after police charged with dispersing the crowd allegedly punched a sixteen year old girl. As rumors of brutality began to circulate, clashes between the protestors and police ensued, spilling out on to the main business thoroughfare. The uprising continued for five days, moving into working class areas of the city such as Hackney, Brixton, Chingford, Peckham, Enfield, Croydon, Ealing and East Ham.

The London School of Economics (LSE) and *The Guardian* newspaper recently conducted a widespread survey, similar in aim and scope to the National Advisory Commission

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[5] Dan Horn "Cincinnati: 2001 Year of Unrest," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 30, 2001.

on Civil Disorders. Their preliminary findings bear an eerie resemblance to the 1968 Kerner

Commission final report.   Rebels primarily constituted poor, young, black males. Of the 270

people interviewed, 85% said policing was an "important" or "very important" factor in why the

uprisings happened. Law enforcement concerns remained second only to poverty with 86% of

participants citing class as a central cause of the rebellions. Furthermore, 80% claimed that

government policy was an "important" or "very important" factor, while 79% said the same of

unemployment. The rebels' unsolicited statements to the investigators are more illuminating.

One activist stated: "It was war and for the first time we was in control, like we had the police

scared, like there was no more us being scared of the police." Similar to females in the United

States revolts, English girls and women also performed in the rebellions at the intersection of

their race, class, and gender oppression. As in America, official records driven by arrest data

grossly underestimate the extent of female participation.   Additionally, many English women

stole items most valued in their lives, including diapers, baby food, and hair weaves. Much like

the 1960s American urban rebellions, the 2011 English revolts represent the racially and

economically marginalized rising up against the people, institutions, and symbols oppressing

them.[6]

The precipitating factors for the 1960s American urban rebellions were complex and

often intertwined. Clearly many blacks felt embittered following the Civil Rights Act of 1964

and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These laws transformed the South but had limited impact in

the Midwest. Black Midwesterners combated simultaneously held feelings of relative

deprivation and rising expectations, undergirding the angst which gave way to the rebellions. A

promise of a better life influenced blacks' decision to migrate to the urban Midwest. Yet upon

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[6] Paul Lewis, "Reading the Riots," *The Guardian (London)*, September 5, 2011.

their arrival that promise remained unfulfilled, leaving them disenchanted. High wage, stable employment dwindled due to deindustrialization and mechanization in the heartland. Moreover, trade unions and industry systematically shut out African American from the best employment opportunities. Economic marginalization in tandem with racial discrimination, contributed to an inferior standard of living for many African Americans. This inadequacy manifested itself not only in comparison to white Midwesterners but also their Northeastern brethren. African Americans resided in substandard housing, learned in outdated classrooms, played in unequipped parks, and suffered abuse at the hands of municipal police. These deficiencies alone were despicable. Black Midwesterners lack of opportunity for genuine redress, however, made their situation untenable.

African Americans' political, social, and economic impotency stemmed from many sources. They held few elected or appointed positions because of their small proportion of the total municipal population and intentional political redistricting. The few black elected officials in office struggled against racism to affect meaningful change. If municipal governments chose to address any race related issues, they funneled these matters to ineffectual human relations commissions. Such commissions, often unwilling or too unwieldy to be effective, remained committed only to identifying known problems, not finding solutions. A particular form of white paternalism constituted the final contributing factor to African Americans impotency. The Midwestern mentality, particular to the region was defined by two convictions. White Midwesterners thought themselves better than white Southerners because of the region's lack of de jure segregation. Simultaneously white Midwesterners remained blind to the real legal, political, and economic barriers which prevented African Americans from achieving equal status.

This ideology coupled with the three aforementioned factors, created a distinct regional political economy challenging a homogenous portrait of the North.

Rebels looted stores, disobeyed police orders, and committed arson in the revolt not only in opposition to a white racist system, but also due to their class and ideological marginalization within the African American community. The urban rebellions represent a critical, separate stage in the Black Freedom Movement that amplified long standing concerns about class, tactics, and militancy in the community. Working-class blacks, doubly disadvantaged in the polity, viewed violent protest as an attractive, necessary, and viable option. Their disillusionment with middle-class leadership, a growing sense of black pride, and dissatisfaction with the pace of traditional Civil Rights protest, led them to forgo direct action for a more aggressive protest tactic.

Many contemporary and modern observers wish to portray the urban rebellions as wanton, asocial violence. In actuality, the rebels, local, state, and federal governments interpreted and responded to the uprisings as political events. The interplay between the two parties was similar to a chess game, with each side strategizing and counterattacking to come out victorious. As such rebels typically targeted agents or symbols of the State, looted exploitative merchants, and presented specific demands of the municipal government. The rebellions however were acts of diminishing political returns. The State responded in punitive, often permanently damaging ways. By enforcing curfews, cordoning off entire neighborhoods, and mobilizing the National Guard, the State converted black enclaves into occupied territories. Most importantly, in collaborating with local media the State framed the urban rebellions as "criminal," "deviant," and "aberrant," marshalling public support for increased police expenditures.

Although the urban rebellions played out in the public realm, these were deeply personal events. Rebels engaged in this protest based on their position in socioeconomic, racial, and gendered hierarchies. Working-class African Americans tended to participate in the rebellions in actions marked "criminal" by the State. Furthermore, the overwhelming number of infractions incurred consisted of non-violent property crimes. Undoubtedly, the majority of participants in the urban rebellions identified as working-class African Americans, however the participation of two outlier groups highlight the complexity of race and class in the uprisings. The black middle class typically acted as "counterrioters," offered legal and financial support to those arrested, and tempered the overt violent rhetoric advancing a moderate, more palatable viewpoint to help broker the peace Deindustrialization and mechanization disproportionally affected African Americans, but working-class whites also suffered in these cutbacks. This economic hardship, intensified by feelings of African Americans' underserved entitlement, left many working-class whites feeling threatened. White citizens engaged offensively, threatening or physically attacking members of the black community. In understanding the ways the black middle class and white working class contributed to the revolts, the relevance of these incidents for the entire urban community is highlighted.

Though critically unexamined, gender has been central to the discussion of the rebellions from the beginning. Gender, however, cannot be distilled to "lady rebels." Prior to the rebellions African American males had limited opportunities to fully exercise their masculinity, particularly in exerting control over their lives and protecting the women of their community. The rebellions offered the opportunity for black men to regain control over their lives, even if only temporarily. The revolts should also not be interpreted solely as exercises in masculinity. Women were present and fully engaged in the rebellions, performing important roles as defender, cheerleader,

beneficiary, and catalyst. More than any other group, poor black women's uprising activism represented an assault upon the triple axis of oppression which shaped their lives. Despite the centrality of women's engagement in the urban rebellions, commentators with preconceived notions of black female propriety have all but ignored their contributions. When black women's participation is acknowledged, scholars and contemporary observers depoliticized their actions to adhere appropriate gendered behavior.

Despite the deeply personal factors motivating individuals to participate, these events possessed a collective transformative power. In the most immediate sense, many cities experienced a changed landscape marred by boarded up buildings, security gates on storefronts, and overgrown lots. The recreational, employment, and police-community programs implemented fell short because they represented temporary treatments to systemic community ills. The intangible changes better codified the significance of these events in the re-making of urban communities. Whites began to see African Americans as dangerous criminals looking for handouts. Consequently, vigilante groups and a reassertion of white ethic identities blossomed in many Midwestern cities. African Americans emboldened by the uprisings, created new protest organizations embodying black pride and a renewed commitment to Black Nationalism. Moreover, nationwide other marginalized groups begin to view violence as a justified and legitimate protest tactic, demonstrated by skirmishes in high schools, armed occupation of state agencies, and prison revolts.

The rebellions regardless of their era or location constitute a complex beast; part mirror, part springboard, part dirge. Violent revolts reflect society's socioeconomic, racial, and gendered disparities in the most profound way. Insurrections launch articulate action and foment revolution. Uprisings also intone the closing of this very avenue for change, as the State

becomes more savvy in monopolizing violence. This study investigated these reactions, born of

an oppressive Midwestern mentality, intra-racial class conflict, and deprivation. Such incidents

became powerful responses altering activism, communities, and consciousness in the 1960s.   In

essence this is what violence as protest, be it in the case study cities or elsewhere, symbolizes; a

taking back of power, an assertion of self, the ultimate cry for autonomy and justice.

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Appendix A: Maps
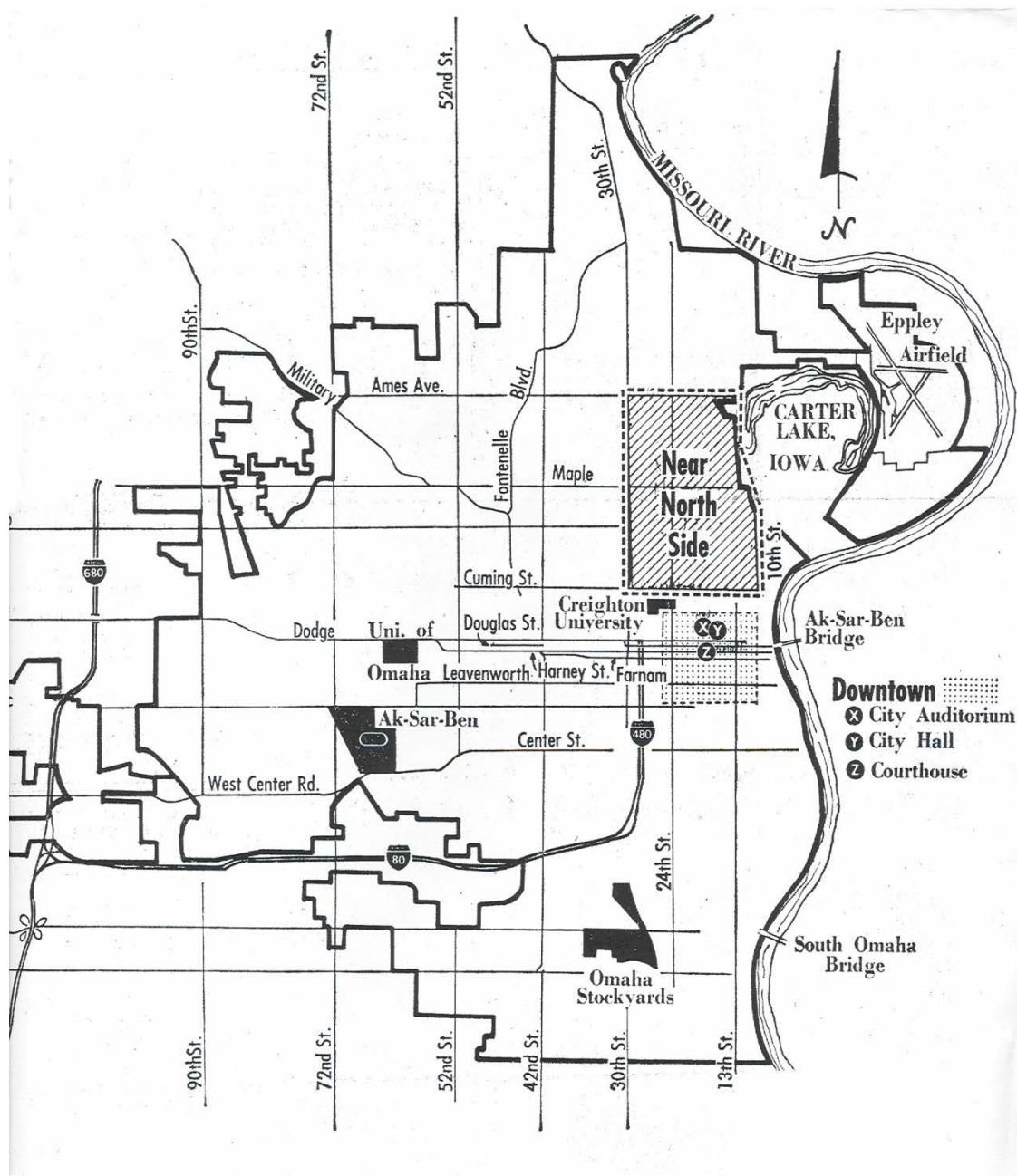
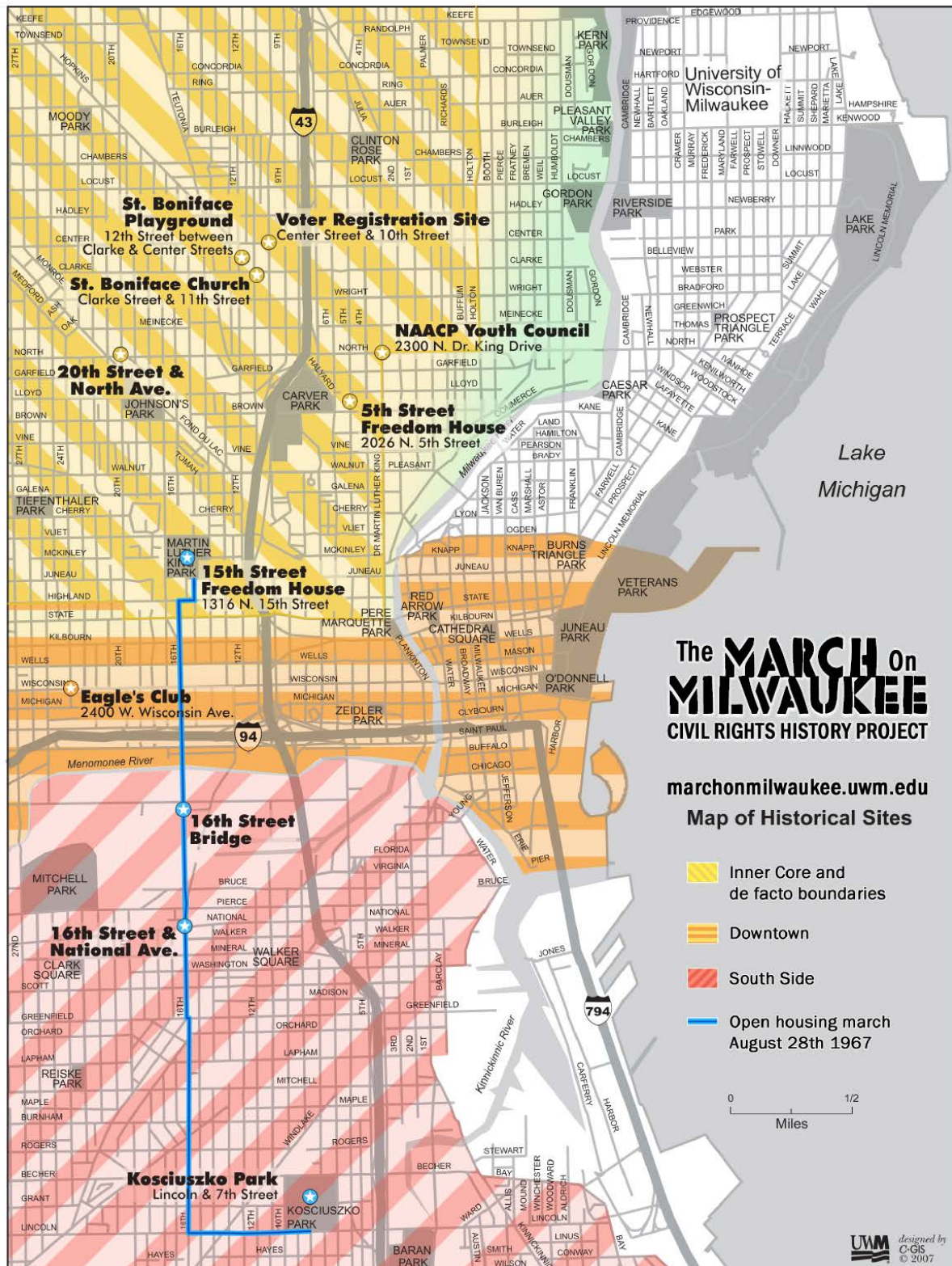Originally published in the *Omaha World-Herald*
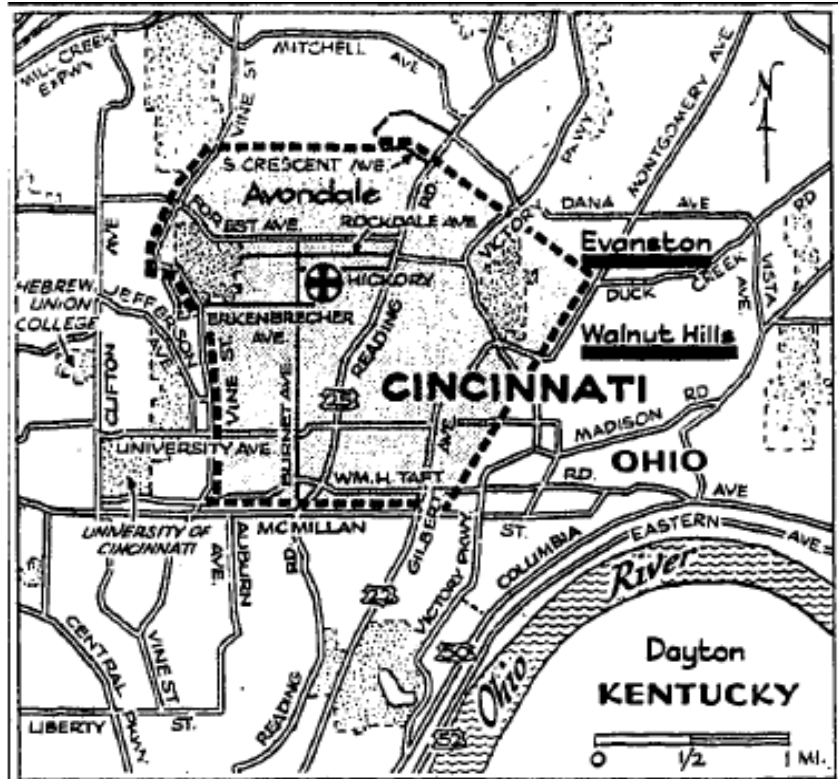
NEGRO RIOT: Violence in Avondale (cross) spreads into Walnut Hills and Evanston. Tension high in shaded area.

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