THE MEANINGS OF BLACK POWER: A COMPARISON OF WHITE AND BLACK INTERPRETATIONS OF A POLITICAL SLOGAN*

JOEL D. ABERBACH AND JACK L. WALKER

The University of Michigan

I. INTRODUCTION

Angry protests against racial discrimination were a prominent part of American public life during the 1960's. The decade opened with the sit-ins and freedom rides, continued through Birmingham, Selma, and the March on Washington, and closed with protests in hundreds of American cities, often punctuated by rioting and violence. During this troubled decade the rhetoric of protest became increasingly demanding, blanket charges of pervasive white racism and hostility were more common, and some blacks began to actively discourage whites from participating either in protest demonstrations or civil rights organizations. Nothing better symbolized the changing mood and style of black protest in America than recent changes in the movement's dominant symbols. Demonstrators who once shouted "freedom" as their rallying cry now were shouting "black power"—a much more provocative, challenging slogan.

The larger and more diverse a political movement's constituency, the more vague and imprecise its unifying symbols and rallying cries are likely to be. A slogan like black power has no sharply defined meaning; it may excite many different emotions and may motivate individuals to express their loyalty or take action for almost contradictory reasons. As soon as Adam Clayton Powell and Stokely Carmichael began to use the phrase in 1966 it set off an acrimonious debate among black leaders over its true meaning. Initially it was a blunt and threatening battle cry meant to symbolize a break with the past tactics of the civil rights movement. As Stokely Carmichael put it in one of his early speeches:

The only way we gonna stop the white men from whippin' us is to take over...

We've been saying freedom for six years and we ain't got nothing'. What we gonna start saying now is black power, . . . from now on when they ask you what you want, you know to tell them: black power, black power, black power!"[1]

Speeches of this kind not only were a challenge to the white community; they also were attacks on the currently established black civil rights leaders, especially those who had employed more accommodating appeals or had used conventional political and legal channels to carry on their struggle. Carmichael's speeches brought a swift, negative response from Roy Wilkins:

No matter how endlessly they try to explain it, the term black power means anti-white power. . . . It has to mean going it alone. It has to mean separatism. Now separatism . . . offers a disadvantaged minority little except a chance to shrivel and die. . . . It is a reverse Mississippi, a reverse Hitler, a reverse Ku Klux Klan. . . . We of the NAACP will have none of this. We have fought it too long.[2]

Although not so adamant and uncompromising as Wilkins, Martin Luther King expressed the doubts of many moderate leaders when he said:

It's absolutely necessary for the Negro to gain power, but the term "black power" is unfortunate because it tends to give the impression of black nationalism. . . . We must never seek power exclusively for the Negro, but the sharing of power with the white people. Any other course is exchanging one form of tyranny for another. Black supremacy would be equally evil as white supremacy. My problem with SNCC is not their militancy. I think you can be militantly nonviolent. It's what I see as a pattern of violence emerging and their use of the cry "black power," which whether they mean it or not, falls on the ear as racism in reverse.[3]

This disagreement over the implications of the black power slogan was caused partly by a clash

[1] William J. Brink and Louis Harris, *Black and White* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), p. 50.

[2] *New York Times*, July 6, 1966, p. 14.

[3] *Ibid*, July 6, 1966, p. 15, and July 9, 1966, p. 8.

of personalities and ambitions, but it was also the result of fundamental differences over the proper role of a black minority in a society dominated by white men. Should the ultimate goal be complete assimilation and the development of an essentially "color blind" society, or should blacks strive to build a cohesive, autonomous community, unified along racial lines, which would be in a stronger position to demand concessions and basic social changes from the whites? For American Negroes, who bear the brutal legacy of slavery and are cut off from their African heritage, this is a terribly difficult choice. As James Baldwin said when he compared himself with the lonely, poverty-stricken African students he met in Paris: "The African . . . has endured privation, injustice, medieval cruelty; but the African has not yet endured the utter alienation of himself from his people and his past. His mother did not sing 'Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,' and he has not, all his life long, ached for acceptance in a culture which pronounced straight hair and white skin the only acceptable beauty."[4] The slogan black power raises all the agonizing dilemmas of personal and national identity which have plagued black Americans since the end of slavery; the current dispute over its meaning is echoed in the speeches of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey.

Those, like Harold Cruse,[5] interested in a comprehensive social theory to guide black development in the United States are not particularly impressed with the term black power because:

it is open to just as many diverse and conflicting interpretations [as the former abstractions Justice and Liberation]. While it tries to give more clarity to what forms Freedom will assume in America as the end-product of a new program, the Black Power dialogue does not close the conceptual gap between shadow and substance any more than it plots a course for the program dynamic.[6]

Cruse hopes for the development of a synthetic political ideology in the classic sense

which brings together economic, cultural and political factors; black power, at this point in time, is a label for a series of ideas which fall far short of this goal.

Whatever interpretation may be given it, black power is a provocative slogan which causes excitement and elicits strong responses from people. Even though, as Charles Hamilton says, "in this highly charged atmosphere it is virtually impossible to come up with a single definition satisfactory to all,"[7] the definition an individual selects may tell us a great deal about how he defines himself politically in a society torn by racial strife. His definition is a way for him to bring together his views on leaders and events in the environment. If he agrees with Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, he sees black power as "a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community."[8] He may also see it as a call for anything from "premeditated acts of violence to destroy the political and economic institutions of this country" to "the use of pressure-group tactics in the accepted tradition of the American political process."[9]

We know that community leaders have strong reactions to the black power slogan, but little is known of its impact on ordinary citizens, both black and white. As we shall demonstrate, for the white citizen the slogan usually provokes images of black domination or contemporary unrest which he cannot understand or tolerate. For the black citizen, it is more likely to raise subtle issues of tactics and emphasis in the racial struggle. In this essay we will examine how blacks and whites in a large urban center define black power, why they define it as they do, and whether their view of the slogan is part of a coherent set of interpretations and evaluations, a racial ideology, which they used to define the role of blacks as political and social actors in our society.

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[4] James Baldwin *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), p. 122.

[5] Cruse, for example, in his provocative series of essays, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow, 1967), p. 557, says that "the radical wing of the Negro movement in America sorely needs a social theory based on the living ingredients of Afro-American history. Without such a theory all talk of Black Power is meaningless."

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 545.

[7] Charles Hamilton, "An Advocate of Black Power Defines It," *New York Times Magazine*, April 14, 1968, pp. 22–23, 79–83, reprinted in full in Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede, eds., *The Rhetoric of Black Power* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 178–194. This statement is found on p. 179.

[8] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 44.

[9] Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 179. For a view of the concept from a broader perspective see, Locksley Edmondson, "The Internationalization of Black Power: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," *Mawazo* (December, 1968), pp. 16–30.

II. THE DATA

Our analysis is based on data gathered in a survey of Detroit, Michigan, completed in the fall of 1967. A total of 855 respondents were interviewed (394 whites and 461 blacks). In all cases whites were interviewed by whites, blacks by blacks. The total N came from a community random sample of 539 (344 whites and 195 blacks) and a special random supplement of 316 (50 whites and 266 blacks) drawn from the areas where rioting took place in July, 1967.[10] Since there are few meaningful differences between the distributions or the relationships of interest in the random and riot-supplement samples, we have employed the total N in the analysis so that a larger number of cases are available when controls are instituted.

III. A PROFILE OF COMMUNITY OPINION

Since there is such confusion and uncertainty over the meaning of black power among the writers, spokesmen and political leaders of both races, we might wonder if the slogan has had any impact at all on average citizens. The first questions we must ask are simply: do our respondents recognize the term, have they formed an elaborate reaction to it, and if so, what meaning do they give it?

Because of the lack of consensus among community leaders about the precise meaning of black power or even agreement on a common framework for discussing the slogan, we were reluctant to use a close-ended question to capture our respondents' interpretations of the term. In order to avoid the danger of biasing responses or eliciting a random choice we used a simple, open-ended question: "What do the words 'black power' mean to you?" This has the advantage of permitting people to speak with a minimum of clues, but it also has disadvantages which we recognized. Respondents may not have given the term a great deal of thought and their answers may be unreliable indicators of their opinion (or lack of opinion). Use of the vernacular at times inhibited interpretation of the answers.[11] It was sometimes difficult to judge whether a respondent was sympathetic or unsympathetic to black power as he interpreted it. For example, a small number of Negro respondents (N = 3) could only define black power as "rebellion." We can guess their feelings about this word from the context of the interview, but this carries us a step away from their answers.

[10] Riot areas were defined by a location map of fires considered riot-related by the Detroit Fire Department.

[11] See our discussion below of "nothing" as a response.

Fortunately, the answers were generally quite comprehensible and when we asked the same open-ended question of a subsample of the original respondents one year later (1968) we received answers consistent with their first response from a majority of the people.[12] In addition, in 1968 we supplemented the question on the meaning of black power with a close-ended item: "Do you approve or disapprove of 'black power'?" This provided a means of checking the criteria we developed in 1967 from the open-ended question for deciding whether respondents had a favorable or unfavorable view of the black power slogan. The correlation between our scoring as favorable or unfavorable of the 1968 respondents' interpretations of black power on the open-ended question and their own assessment, on the close-ended question, of their position was (Gamma) .99 for blacks and .97 for whites.[13]

Table 1 presents a simple profile of Detroit community responses to our question on black power. As noted above, since there were no appreciable differences for either race in the interpretations given by respondents in the riot or non-riot areas, we have included all our respondents in the analysis.[14]

Interpretations indicating a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward black power are

[12] The correlation between interpretations of black power on the open-ended question in 1967 and interpretations in 1968 is (Gamma) .54 for blacks and .78 for whites. We will be gathering data from the same respondents once again in September, 1970, and will report our findings in detail after the third round is completed.

[13] We will present our codings below. A more conservative coefficient for demonstrating the relationship between interpretations of black power on the open-ended question and approval or disapproval on the close-ended question would be Kendall's tau-beta. See Leo A. Goodman and William H. Kruskal, "Measures of Association for Cross Classification," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* (December, 1954). The tau-beta correlations are .86 for blacks and .60 for whites. The lower coefficient in the white case reflects the relatively large percentage of whites who give favorable interpretations of black power but disapprove of the slogan. This will be discussed in more detail in the text.

[14] For the blacks, the riot area respondents gave a greater emphasis to black unity as opposed to fair share interpretations of black power, but the differences are not great. Non-riot area respondents actually were slightly more favorable to black power if we consider unity and fair share responses as indicators of positive feelings.

TABLE 1.—BLACK POWER INTERPRETATIONS,
BY RACE

(Question: What do the words "black power"
mean to you?)

Interpretation	Blacks	Whites
Unfavorable		
Blacks Rule Whites	8.5%	38.6%
Racism	3.9	7.3
Trouble, Rioting, Civil		
Disorder	4.1	11.9
"Nothing"	22.3	5.3
Negative Imprecise		
Comments	6.5	11.7
(ridicule, obscenity,		
abhorrence)		
Other*	4.3	5.9
	49.6	80.7
Favorable		
Fair Share for Black		
People	19.6	5.1
Racial (Black) Unity	22.6	5.6
	42.2	10.7
Don't Know, Can't Say	8.2	8.6
	100%	100%
	(N = 461)	(N = 394)

* "Other" responses were scattered and in-
consistent, although generally negative. They in-
clude references to black power as communism,
radicalism, a return to segregation and a sophis-
ticated failure to define the concept because of a
perception that it has contradictory meanings.
The latter answer was given by one black and five
white respondents.

marked off for the convenience of the reader. As
we go through the various categories the reasons
for our designations will be explained in detail.

Almost 40 percent of the whites believe black
power means black rule over whites, while only
9 percent of the black respondents hold this
view. This attitude of the whites is clearly *not* a
function of a rational projection that the in-
creasing black population in the city of Detroit
(now about 40 percent) will soon elect a black
mayor, but is an almost hysterical response to
the symbolism of the slogan. White people in
this category usually refer to blacks taking over
the entire country or even the world:[15]

[15] The quotes presented here are typical ex-
amples of black power definitions coded in each

(white, male, 47, 12 grades) Nasty word! That
the blacks won't be satisfied until they get com-
plete control of our country by force if necessary.

(white, male, 24, 12 grades plus) Black takeover—
Take over the world because that is what they
want to do and they will. There's no doubt about
it. Why should they care? I'm working and sup-
porting their kids. In time they'll take over—
look at how many there are in Congress. It's
there—when they get to voting age, we'll be dis-
criminated upon.

(white, female, 28, 12 grades plus) The colored are
going to take over and be our leaders and we're
to be their servants. Yes, that's exactly what it
means.

(white, female, 28, 12 grades) They want the situa-
tion reversed. They want to rule everything.

(white, male, 32, 11 grades) The Negro wants to
enslave the white man like he was enslaved 100
years ago. They want to take everything away
from us. There will be no middle class, no ad-
vancement. He is saying, "If I can't have it
neither can you." Everything will be taken away
from us. We'll all be poor.

(white, female, 40, 12 grades) I don't like the
sound of it. Sounds like something coming to take
you over.

Most of our black respondents *do not* interpret
black power in this way. Blacks who were coded
in this category were usually also hostile to
black power. For example:

(black, male, 28, 12 grades plus) It means dom-
inating black rule—to dominate, to rule over like
Hitlerism.

(black, female, 38, 11 grades plus) It means some-
thing I don't like. It means like white power is
now—taking over completely.

(black, male, 29, no answer on education) It means
to me that Negroes are trying to take over and
don't know how.

A few others gave this answer because they
have very vague ideas about the concept:

(black, female, 50, 9 grades) Sounds like they
want to take over control.

category. Respondents are identified by race, sex,
age and educational attainment for the benefit of
the reader. In cases where the respondent has
some specialized training, he is coded with a
"plus" after his grade level.

There were only seven people in this group of 37 blacks who saw black domination over whites as the definition of black power and whose answers could possibly be interpreted as approval of this goal.

A small number of whites and blacks simply defined black power as racism or race hatred. The comments of blacks holding this view were especially scathing:

(black, female, 57, 11 grades) It's like the Ku Klux Klan and I don't like it.

(black, female, 38, 12 grades) It means something very detrimental to the race as a whole. This is the same tactic the whites use in discriminating.

The black power definitions of about 12 percent of the white population and 4 percent of the blacks sampled were directly influenced by the violence of the 1967 Detroit disorders. Terms like "trouble" and "rioting" were commonly used by these individuals, especially blacks in the riot areas and whites outside of it. Clearly, however, the vast majority of black people sampled do not see black power as a synonym for violence and destruction, racism or even black rule over whites, while 57.2 percent of the whites do.

Two views of black power predominate among our black respondents. One represents a poorly articulated negativism or opposition to the term and the other a positive or approving interpretation of the concept and its meaning. Roughly 23 percent of the black respondents indicated that the term meant "nothing" to them. This category was coded separately from the "Don't Know," "Can't Say," and "No Answer" responses because the word "nothing" is generally used as a term of derision, especially in the black community. Some examples of extended responses give the proper flavor:

(black female, 39, 10 grades) Nothing! (Interviewer probe) Not a damn thing. (further probe) Well, it's just a word used by people from the hate school so it don't mean nothing to me.

(black, male, 52, 12 grades plus) It means nothing! (probe) A word coined by some nut. (further probe) There is only one power and that is God.

(black, female, 60, 5 grades) It doesn't mean nothing. (probe) Biggest joke in the 20th century.

It is, of course, possible that some people use "nothing" as a synonym for "I don't know." We have two major pieces of evidence which indicate that this is not so for the major proportion of blacks giving the response: (1) while direct expressions of ignorance ("don't know," "can't

say," etc.) are a function of educational level, "nothing" is used in the same proportion by blacks no matter what their academic accomplishments; (2) blacks use the expression more than four times as often as whites (22 percent to 5 percent) in trying to express what black power means to them; and (3) almost 90 percent of the respondents who interpreted black power in this way in 1968 also expressed disapproval of the term on our close-ended question.[16]

There are other individuals who give less ambiguous, clearly negative interpretations of the term. A small proportion of our respondents (1.3 percent of the blacks and 0.7 percent of the whites) found profanity indispensable as the sole expression of their definition. Others (5.2 percent of the blacks and 11.0 percent of the whites) were slightly more articulate in their condemnation, although their definitions were still imprecise. Often, especially for the whites, they reflect a general abhorrence of power in any form:

(white, female, 52, 12 grades) I hate the expression because I don't like power. It's very domineering and possessive and (they) have only themselves in mind.

(white, male, 54, 4 grades) No more than the words white power mean. They should cut that word out.

(black, female, 37, 9 grades) Black power and white power means the same to me which is no good. Man should be treated as a man.

(white, female, 55, 12 grades) Disaster! You know what you can do with your black power.

(white, female, 53, 12 grades) Scare! Why should there be black power any more than white power? Don't the blacks agree that all races are equal?

The last remaining major category of answers clearly distinguishes the black from the white community in its views of black power. In their statements 42.2 percent of our black respondents as compared to 10.7 percent of the whites emphasized a "fair share for black people" or "black unity." We coded all those answers which stressed blacks getting their share of the honors and fruits of production in society, exercising equal rights, bettering their living conditions or gaining greater political power into our "fair share" categories. Definitions stressing black

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[16] All of the few whites who interpreted black power as "nothing" in 1968 were negative about the slogan.

unity or racial pride were coded separately.[17] Since only 7 blacks and 2 whites mentioned racial pride specifically, we will refer in the text to "black unity" or "racial unity" only. We felt that a definition of black power in terms of black people gaining political power in areas where blacks are in the majority fell under our fair share concept, but there were only two statements of this type. This definition may be implicit in the statements made (or in some of our black unity interpretations), but virtually all references are to justice and equity rather than exclusive control of a geographical area.

Fair share answers were given by almost twenty percent of our black respondents. People whose responses fall into this category see the black power slogan as another statement of traditional Negro goals of freedom, equality and opportunity. Respondents often take pains to reject notions of blacks taking advantage of others:

(black female, 47, 12 grades plus) That we should have blacks represent us in government—not take over, but represent us.

(black, male, 40, 9 grades plus) Negroes getting the same opportunities as whites when qualified.

(black, male, 24, 12 grades) Negroes should get more power to do the same things which whites do.

(black, female, 52, 12 grades plus) Give us an equal chance.

(black, male, 41, 0 grades) To me it means an open door into integration.

(black male, 39, 12 grades) Equal rights to any human being.

(black, female, 54, 7 grades) That America is going to have a new power structure so black people can have a share.

(black, male, 23, 10 grades) Getting in possession of something—like jobs and security.

(black, male, 55, 12 grades) It means equal opportunities for both races. What's good for one is good for the other.

About 23 percent of our black respondents gave "black unity" responses.[18] These were

[17] In a few cases (N = 20) respondents stressed black unity in order to achieve a fair share. We are considering first mentions here and in our analysis, but will probe this in detail when we have more time.

[18] We will combine black unity definitions with the few racial pride references for purposes of analysis.

more militant in tone than the fair share definitions, sometimes extremely nationalistic, but always (as in the fair share answers) concerned with bettering the situation of the black man and not putting down the white man. In fact, the data suggest to us that blacks who are most favorably disposed towards black power simply do not see the political world as one where blacks can gain something only at the expense of whites and vice versa. As we have seen, however, large numbers of whites do see things this way. For them one group or the other must tend to "take over."

The major difference between the "fair share" and "black unity" groups is that the former places heavy stress on blacks as equal participants in the total society, while the latter emphasizes black togetherness and achievement without the same attention to the traditional symbols of Negro advancement. We know from extended answers to our black power question and others that individuals giving black unity responses want equality and a just share of America's goods, but "thinking black" and speaking militantly and with pride are given primacy when talking about black power.[19] It is not that they are against white people; they are simply *for* black people and deeply committed to the idea of black people working together:

(black, male, 35, 9 grades) People getting together to accomplish things for the group.

(black, male, 36, 12 grades plus) Negroes have never been together on anything. Now with the new movement we gain strength.

(black male, 24, 12 grades) We people getting together, agreeing on issues and attempting to reach a common goal.

(black, male, 28, 12 grades) Sounds frightening, but really is what whites, Jews, Arabs and people the world over do—divided we fall united we stand.

(black, female, 41, 12 grades plus) Togetherness among Negroes; but it means you can get along with others.

[19] See footnote 17. About 20 percent of the black respondents mentioning racial unity saw it as a means of achieving equality. For example:

(black, male, 42, 12 grades) Negroes getting together and forcing whites to realize our importance—our worth to the United States. Gaining respect and equality.

The more articulate members of the black unity group are concerned with ends as well as means. See Carmichael and Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–47.

(black, female, 37, 10 grades) It means being true to yourself and recognize yourself as a black American who can accomplish good things in life.

(black, female, 57, 10 grades) The white man separated us when he brought us here and we been that way ever since. We are just trying to do what everybody else has—stick together.

As we have noted, the number of whites giving either the fair share or black unity response is small—just over 10 percent of the white sample. To most whites, even those who think of themselves as liberals, the concept of black power is forbidding. The 1967 riot is certainly one factor that might account for this, but we found little evidence of it. Only 5 whites in the entire sample (one percent) gave answers like the following:

(white, female, 23 college) It's gotten (away) from the original meaning. Means violence to me now.

In addition, as we shall see, even whites who have very sympathetic views about the causes of the disturbances can hardly be described as favorable to black power. The negative presentations of black power in the mass media may be responsible, but Detroit Negroes are also attentive to the same media and their views are quite different. The evidence presented in Table 1 points strongly towards a simple conclusion—the overwhelming majority of whites are frightened and bewildered by the words black power. Some of this seems rooted in abhorrence of stark words like power, but the term *black power* is obviously intolerable. The words conjure up racial stereotypes and suspicions deeply ingrained in the minds of white Americans. The slogan presents an unmistakable challenge to the country's prevailing racial customs and social norms; for precisely this reason it seems exciting and attractive to many blacks.

In summary, the vast majority of white people are hostile to the notion of black power. The most common interpretation is that it symbolizes a black desire to take over the country, or somehow deprive the white man. Blacks, on the other hand, are almost evenly divided in their interpretations with 42.2 percent clearly favorable to black power and 49.6 percent defining it in an unfavorable way. Those blacks who are favorable to black power see it as another call for a fair share for blacks or as a rallying cry for black unity, while those who are negatively inclined tend to see it as empty and meaningless (our "nothing" category, for example). Blacks certainly do not interpret the term the way the whites do. They do not see it as meaning racism,

a general black takeover, or violence, and those few blacks who do define the term in this way are negative about such meanings. It is evident that "black power" is a potent slogan which arouses contradictory feelings in large numbers of people. Interpretations of the term may differ, but the slogan clearly stimulates intense feelings and may be exciting enough to move men to purposeful action.

Although these data invite many different forms of analysis, we have decided that an attempt to understand the sources of favorable reactions to the black power slogan is of primary importance. We have, accordingly, conducted a detailed investigation of factors which predispose an individual to give a "fair share" or "black unity" response to our question on the meaning of black power. In the case of blacks, we are confident that all such definitions indicate a favorable attitude and for whites we know that they usually represent a positive attitude and always indicate at least a grudging respect or admiration. Certainly, as indicated above, we will miss a few black people who are favorable to black power if we follow this procedure, but the number is very small. In most cases, in order to keep the tables and text from becoming inordinately complex, we will combine the fair share and black unity categories and speak of individuals favorably interpreting black power, but where differences between respondents giving these two answers are of great importance we will consider them separately.

IV. THE APPEAL OF BLACK POWER: SOCIAL CHANGE, SOCIALIZATION AND DEPRIVATION

Many social scientists in recent years have been struggling to understand the increasing militancy within the black community and the concurrent rise in popularity of slogans like black power. To date, most systematic social science research in this area has centered on the "conventional militancy" of the early 1960's[20] or

[20] The best example of work in this area is Gary T. Marx, *Protest and Prejudice: A Study of Belief in the Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967). Marx defined "conventional militancy" by the standards of civil rights activists and organizations at the time of his study (1964). All were (pp. 40–41) "urgently aware of the extensiveness of discrimination faced by the American black man. All called for an end to discrimination and segregation and demanded the admission of the Negro to the economic and political mainstream of American life. And they wanted these changes quickly—'Freedom Now.' In pursuit of this end, participation in peaceful demonstrations was encouraged."

the backgrounds and attitudes of rioters and those who sympathize with them.[21] The civil disturbances of the mid-1960's were clearly watersheds in American racial history, but most scholars concentrating on the riots would agree that there is more to the current upheaval in the black community—symbolized by the slogan black power—than violence. Recent calls for racial pride, black unity and black self-esteem, and programs to promote these ends, are meant to reach members of the community and help them to become a constructive force in their own behalf.

This section is devoted to a discussion of the factors which predispose an individual to interpret black power favorably. The major emphasis in our analysis will be on our black respondents, but at times we will compare them to whites in order to highlight certain points. The relative lack of support for black power among white respondents prevents a more elaborate analysis of their views in this section stressing favorable versus unfavorable interpretations of the term.

It is probably best to begin by laying to rest the so-called "riffraff" theory, which has been the favorite target of many riot researchers, as a possible explanation for the appeal of the black power slogan. The riffraff theory, drawn from the report of the McCone Commission on

the Watts riots of 1964,[22] holds that urban unrest is a product of a deprived underclass of recent unassimilated migrants to the cities. We will discuss the issue of migration below, but neither education (Gamma $= -.02$)[23] nor income (Gamma $= -.06$) nor occupation (Gamma $= .00$) is a very potent predictor of favorable interpretations of black power for blacks. For whites, on the other hand, education (Gamma $= .32$), income (Gamma $= .23$) and occupation (Gamma $= .48$) are associated with positive views of black power, but here it is the upper status elements who interpret the slogan favorably.[24] It is clear that any notion that black power appeals strictly to the less privileged in the black community is without foundation.

Some scholars, and many journalists and politicians, have adopted the clash between generations as a principal explanation of the growing popularity of the black power slogan.[25] The riots

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[21] Riot research is widespread. See, especially, David O. Sears and John B. McConahay, "Riot Participation," and Raymond J. Murphy and James M. Watson, "The Structure of Discontent: Grievance and Support for the Los Angeles Riot," *Los Angeles Riot Study* (Los Angeles: Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of California, 1967); Nathan S. Caplan and Jefferey M. Paige, "A Study of Ghetto Rioters," *Scientific American* (August, 1968), pp. 15–21, also reported in the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (The U. S. Riot Commission Report)*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1968); *Supplemental Studies for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1968), especially Angus Campbell and Howard Schuman, *Racial Attitudes in Fifteen American Cities*, Chapters 5–6 and Robert M. Fogelson and Robert B. Hill, *Who Riots: A Study of Participation in the 1967 Riots;* and Louis H. Masotti and Don R. Bowen, eds., *Riots and Rebellion: Civil Violence in the Urban Community* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1968). Studies which emphasize aggregate data can be found in Ted R. Gurr and Hugh D. Davis, eds., *The History of Violence in America* (New York: Bantam Press, 1969).

[22] *Violence in the City—An End or a Beginning? A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots* (Los Angeles: McCone Commission Report, 1965).

[23] In the calculations which follow, unless otherwise noted, the black power variable is dichotomized with a favorable interpretation ("fair share" or "racial unity") scored *one* and unfavorable interpretations scored *zero*. Respondents with "don't know" or "no answer" responses were not used in the analysis. In this association, for example, those with low educational achievement were slightly less likely to approve of black power (give the "fair share" or "racial unity" interpretations) than those with substantial educational achievement.

[24] We do not think that this is simply because their higher level of education makes them more aware of the content of the actual debate over black power. Relative youth, education, and support of integration are all intertwined and each of these factors is related to a favorable interpretation of black power.

[25] See Jerome H. Skolnick, *The Politics of Protest* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), p. 162, and *The U. S. Riot Commission Report, op. cit.,* especially p. 93 where "a new mood among Negroes, particularly among the young" is described. "Self-esteem and enhanced racial pride are replacing apathy and submission to 'the system.' Moreover, Negro youth, who make up over half of the ghetto population, share the growing sense of alienation felt by many white youth in our country. Thus, their role in recent civil disorders reflects not only a shared sense of deprivation and victimization by white society but

in Detroit and Los Angeles are seen as only one manifestation of a worldwide revolt of youth against the established order. The young are said to be more impatient and less willing to accept marginal gains than their elders.

When we divided our respondents according to age, however, we did not find great differences over the interpretation of black power within either racial group, although age was a better predictor for whites (Gamma $= -.26$) than for blacks (Gamma $= -.11$). Among blacks, 51 percent of those in their twenties gave the racial unity or fair share interpretations, but almost the same percentage of thirty, forty and fifty-year-olds gave similar responses. Approval of black power drops off among sixty and seventy-year-old blacks, but they constitute a small percentage of our sample. As noted above, age is a better predictor for whites with individuals forty and older somewhat less likely to offer an approving interpretation of black power than those under forty.

A. Social Change and Socialization: Breaking the Traditional Mold

One might assume after examining this relationship that the much discussed "generation gap" is not very wide, especially in the black community. But that conclusion would be unwarranted. Differences among blacks exist, not between youth and age, but between those who grew up in Michigan and those who were born and grew up in the South. Blacks who were born in Michigan are much more likely to give the racial unity or fair share interpretation of black power than those born in the South (Gamma = .33).[26] When we related age and attitudes to-

also the rising incidence of disruptive conduct by a segment of American youth throughout the society."

[26] We have defined the South as the 11 states of the Confederacy (N = 255) and the border states of Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, and West Virginia (N = 49). Blacks born in border states were actually less likely to interpret black power in fair share or black unity terms than those born in the former states of the Confederacy, although the differences are small. One hundred and seven of our black respondents were born in Michigan (coded one). This accounts for only 412 respondents. Of those remaining, 43 were born in the United States, but outside of Michigan and the South, 1 in Canada, 1 in the West Indies and 1 in Puerto Rico. We lack information on 3 individuals. The 43 respondents born in the U.S., but not in Michigan or in the South, come from a

TABLE 2.—PERCENTAGES OF BLACK RESPONDENTS FAVORABLY INTERPRETING BLACK POWER* ACCORDING TO THEIR AGES AND REGIONS OF BIRTH

Present Age (In Ten's)	Southern Born (Arrived in Michigan after age 21)	Southern Born (Arrived in Michigan before age 21)	Born in Michigan
10's	**	33%(6)	67%(12)
20's	39%(13)	46%(26)	59%(41)
30's	21%(19)	44%(45)	58%(24)
40's	52%(25)	64%(31)	55%(20)
50's	35%(20)	63%(19)	**
60's	17%(12)	33%(12)	**
70's	33%(12)	**	**
	(Gamma = −.02)	(Gamma =.15)	(Gamma = −.12)

* For economy of presentation and because of the complexity of our black power code, we display only the percentages of respondents favorably interpreting black power, that is, those who gave fair share or black unity interpretations of black power.

** Percentages are not displayed if N is less than 5.

ward black power with regional background controlled (Table 2), we found that the background factors clearly predominated. Those in our sample who were born in Michigan are much younger, on the average, than the rest of our respondents (78 percent are under 40 years old and 98 percent are under 50), but definitions of black power are almost invariable for this group between age categories. There is also very little variance between age categories for those who were born in the South and came to Michigan after they were 21 years old, although, of course, there is much less approval for black power in this group. In both cases, it is regional background and not age which is the most powerful explanatory factor. Further confirmation of this conclusion comes when we examine those respondents who were born in the South, but arrived in Michigan before they were 21.

Within this group we find that the percentage of those voicing approval of black power actually *increases* along with age from the teens to the fifties, and then decreases again for the small number who are in their sixties.

wide variety of places. They are more favorably disposed toward black power than the Southerners but less so than the Michigan-born.

It might be thought that regional differences mask a more fundamental difference between blacks who were born in cities and those raised in rural areas. This is not the case. Thirty-nine percent of Southern-born Negroes who grew up on farms and in small towns favored black power; the percentage giving fair share or black unity interpretations is only 4.3 percent higher (43.3 percent) for respondents raised in the large Southern towns and cities (Gamma = .03).

This evidence leads us to conclude that, for all but the very old, it is primarily the experience of life in Michigan and not the respondent's age which helps determine his reaction to black power.[27] A great migration began during World War II which brought thousands of black workers to the auto plants and foundries of Detroit. Their children are coming of age in the 1960's. It is not their youth, however, which leads them to see black power as a call for racial unity or a fair share for their race; it is their experience with the culture of the urban North. It seems that the further one is from life in the South, and the sooner one experiences life in a city like Detroit, the more likely one is to approve of black power.

Life in the Northern city brings to bear on a black person forces which lead him to reject the traditional, subservient attitudes of Southern Negroes, particularly if these forces represent his major socializing experience. Away from the parochial, oppressive atmosphere of the South, he is born into or slowly appropriates the more cosmopolitan, secularized culture of the North. The new life in the promised lands of Detroit, New York and Chicago is exciting and disillusioning at the same time. It brings new hopes and the promise of a better life, and disappointments when achievements do not live up to expectations.

The Southern migrant arrived in the "promised land" to find bigotry, filth, and a more sophisticated form of degradation. With time, he grasps sufficient information about the urban

[27] Other bodies of data and our own show that almost all riot participants are young and that age does have an impact on favorable attitudes toward violence, especially for young men. This is not surprising in light of the physical attributes helpful to a participant in a disturbance and the bravado of the young. However, age is unrelated to more general notions of whether riots helped or hurt the black cause (Murphy and Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 82) as well as to attitudes toward black power. It is clear that age is an important variable in the study of our recent strife, but by itself it does not explain contemporary militancy or even sympathy for those who participate in civil disturbances.

TABLE 3.—PERCENTAGES OF BLACK RESPONDENTS FAVORABLY INTERPRETING BLACK POWER BY CHURCH AFFILIATION WITH BIRTHPLACE CONTROLLED

Affiliation	Place of Birth	
	South	Michigan
Church Member	33%(143)	39%(58)
Non-Member	48%(107)	67%(33)
	(Gamma = −.32)	(Gamma = −.52)

paradise. Traditional attitudes of deference and political passivity fade as a militant social and political stance gains approval in the community.[28] This is the atmosphere for the emerging popularity of fair share and racial unity interpretations of slogans like black power.

Just as the trip North represented an attempt to find deliverance, so the Negro church was another traditional avenue of entry into the "promised land." Most blacks who break with the church are more likely to define black power in fair share or unity terms.[29] This relationship holds even with region controlled (Table 3). In

[28] See Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 280–283 for a discussion of the potential for "political radicalism" of second generation slumdwellers. Claude Brown makes the same points in the graphic Foreword to his autobiography, *Manchild in the Promised Land* (New York: Macmillan, 1965). We will make some distinctions between the effects of dissatisfaction on lower and upper status groups in the section on deprivation below.

[29] The sample was divided into church (coded *one*), non-members (coded *zero*) and members of groups, usually action groups, connected with a church (not included in the analysis). People in the latter category (N = 25) chose to emphasize their group above their church affiliation in answering our open-ended question on membership in "church or church-connected groups." They were about as likely as the non-members to approve of black power and should be the subject of intensive study because of their pivotal position in the black community.

For a detailed discussion of the similar influence of religion on conventional militancy among blacks, including consideration of denomination and religiosity, see: Gary T. Marx, "Religion: Opiate or Inspiration of Civil Rights Militancy Among Negroes," *American Sociological Review* (1967), pp. 64–72.

fact, membership and place of birth exert an independent effect. Michigan-born church members are about mid-way between Southern-born church members and Southern non-members in their approval of black power. Retention of a church affiliation acts as a brake on the effects of being raised in the Northern urban environment. It represents a strong tie to the traditional Negro culture.[30]

Another aspect of traditional Negro culture is the unique measure of esteem granted the federal government and its personnel. Through the years the federal government, for all its shortcomings, has been the black man's special friend in an otherwise hostile environment. It won him his freedom, gave him the best treatment he received in his worst days in the South, provided relief in the Depression and in the difficult periods which have followed, and has done the most to secure his rights and protect him during his struggle for equality.[31] In addition, it has been the symbol of his intense identification with and "faith in the American Dream."[32] Evaluation of local government in the North has been less positive, but still higher than evaluation of local government in the South.

Systematic research on political trust is rather recent, but what does exist indicates that blacks have always had at least the same distribution as whites on answers to political trust questions focused on the federal government.[33] In fact, when one takes into account the extraordinary amount of interpersonal distrust present in the black community,[34] the level of trust in the fed-

eral government has always been remarkable Our data indicate that this pattern is now breaking down, at least in cities like Detroit. Using the Standard University of Michigan Survey Research Center political trust questions, we found blacks less trusting of both the federal and Detroit governments than whites.[35] These differences in levels of political trust are not a function of education, income or other non-racial status discrepancies.

Let us assume that the black power slogan strikes a most responsive chord in the minds of black people who want to break their traditional ties with paternalistic friends and allies. For them, expressing distrust of government, especially the federal government, is in fact a rejection of dependency—an assertion of self-worth and non-utopian thinking about the realities in the United States.[36] As we can see in Table 4, expressions of political trust and approval of black power are indeed inversely related. The higher a person's score on the various trust indices, the less likely he is to favorably interpret black power. This relationship is especially strong for trust in the federal government which has traditionally been granted unique esteem in the black community.

When we consider all three indicators of traditionalism together—place of socialization, church affiliation and level of political trust—we see that each is important in its own right (Table 5). The combined explanatory power of these variables is substantial. Only 20 percent of the Southern-born church members who exhibit high levels of trust give approving interpretations of black power compared to 77 percent of the Northern-born non-members who are distrustful of government. Michigan-born church members are a particularly interesting group for further study in that church membership significantly depresses the effects of political trust. Our future research will emphasize the impact of socialization into the secular polit-

[30] The impact of region as a variable will surely diminish over time as the effects of national black leadership and the messages of the media and relatives are diffused throughout the nation. However, church affiliation is likely to remain important.

[31] For example, see William Brink and Louis Harris, *The Negro Revolution in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), pp. 131 and 232–233 on black attitudes towards various political institutions and figures.

[32] See Louis E. Lomax, *The Negro Revolt* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 250, and also Gunnar Mydral, *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper and Row, 1944), pp. 3–5, 880 and 1007 on blacks as "exaggerated Americans."

[33] Donald E. Stokes, "Popular Evaluations of Government: An Empirical Assessment," in Harlan Cleveland and Harold D. Lasswell, (eds.), *Ethics and Bigness* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), pp. 61–73 and Joel D. Aberbach, *Alienation and Race* (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1967), pp. 119–126.

[34] Lee Rainwater's "Crucible of Identity—The

Negro Lower-Class Family" in *DAEDALUS* (1966), especially pp. 204–205 and 215 is very insightful on this point, but this distrust is not confined to lower class ghetto dwellers. See Aberbach, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–114 for a detailed discussion.

[35] For a detailed discussion of our findings and a critique of the existing literature on Political Trust see Joel D. Aberbach and Jack L. Walker, "Political Trust and Racial Ideology," a paper delivered at the 1969 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, especially pp. 2–7. A revised version will appear in this REVIEW (December, 1970).

[36] Political trust has complex roots. See *ibid.*, pp. 7–13 for an analysis of its origins.

TABLE 4.—GAMMA CORRELATIONS FOR BLACKS
BETWEEN MEASURES OF POLITICAL TRUST
AND FAVORABLE INTERPRETATIONS
OF BLACK POWER

	Trust Detroit Government**	Trust Federal Government***	General (Combined) Measure of Political Trust****
Black power interpretation*	− .22	− .52	− .39

* A negative coefficient indicates that the higher a person's score on the various trust indices (high score equals high trust), the less likely he is to favorably interpret black power.

** The Trust Detroit Government measure is a simple additive index of answers to the following questions:

1. How much do you think we can trust the government in Detroit to do what is right: just about always, most of the time, some of the time, or almost never?
2. How much do you feel having elections makes the government in Detroit pay attention to what the people think: a good deal, some, or not very much?

*** The Trust Federal Government measure is a simple additive index of answers to the following questions:

1. How much do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right: just about always, most of the time, some of the time, or almost never?
2. Would you say that the government in Washington is pretty much run for the benefit of a few big interests or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?
3. How much do you feel that having elections makes the government in Washington pay attention to what the people think: a good deal, some, or not very much?

**** The General Political Trust Measure runs from 0 to 4 and equally weights the Trust Detroit Government and Trust Washington Government answers.

ical culture of the Northern black communities, with special attention to the development of more refined indicators which will help us to understand better this acculturation process.

B. Deprivation: Dissatisfaction and Discrimination

We asked our respondents to tell us about "the life you would most like to lead, the most perfect life as you see it." Once they had de-scribed this kind of life they were shown a picture of a ladder with ten rungs and asked to imagine that their ideal lives were at the top of the ladder, on rung number ten. They were then asked to rank, in comparison with their ideal, their present lives, their lives five years ago, and what they expected their lives to be five years in the future.[37] Answers are therefore based on standards meaningful to the individual, with no simple objective indicator of achievement such as education, income or occupation serving as a substitute for his subjectively defined goals.[38]

[37] This is the famous Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale which indicates the discrepancy between an individual's definition of the "best possible life" for him and his past, present, or future situation. See Hadley C. Cantril, *The Pattern of Human Concerns* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965). Our respondents were given the following set of questions:

Now could you briefly tell me what would be the best possible life for you? In other words, how would you describe the life you would most like to lead, the most perfect life as you see it? (Show R card with a Ladder)
Now suppose that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, the one you just described, and the bottom represents the worst possible life for you.

"Present Life" A. Where on the ladder do you feel you personally stand at the present time?
"Past Life" B. Where on the ladder would you say you stood five years ago?
"Future Life" C. Where on the ladder do you think you will be five years from now?

[38] In the black community sample, for example, level of education is correlated (Gamma) .06 with scores on the past life ladder, .09 with the present life ladder and .29 with the future life ladder. Education is, therefore, only important as a predictor of assessments of future prospects and even here other factors are obviously at work. Income and occupation work much the same way. It is

TABLE 5.—PERCENTAGES OF BLACK RESPONDENTS FAVORABLY INTERPRETING BLACK POWER
ACCORDING TO CHURCH AFFILIATION, PLACE OF BIRTH, AND LEVELS OF
TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Level of Trust in Government*	Place of Birth:	South		Michigan	
	Church Membership:	Member	Non-Member	Member	Non-Member
High (2–4)		20%(76)	29%(65)	38%(16)	58%(26)
Low (0–1)		55%(40)	66%(73)	44%(16)	77%(31)

* The General Political Trust measure was employed in this table.

This question revealed a great deal of current dissatisfaction in the black community, but also substantial optimism about the future. When asked to rank their lives five years ago only 13 percent of our black respondents put themselves in the top four categories (7, 8, 9 and 10); when asked to rank their present lives 23 percent place themselves within the top four ranks; but 64 percent chose the top four categories to describe their lives as they expected them to be five years in the future.

As Table 6 indicates, both current dissatisfaction and, to a greater extent, pessimism about the future are strongly related to approval of black power in the zero-order case. When we control for level of education, however, the relationship only holds for the lower education group. The same general trend holds true for reports of experiences of discrimination. However, the differences are less pronounced. Experience of discrimination is a more powerful predictor of fair share or racial unity interpretations of black power for the lower than the upper education group, but it still has a noticeable effect for the upper education group.[39]

These data fit a general pattern which we have discussed in detail elsewhere.[40] For lower education blacks, approval of black power is strongly influenced by dissatisfaction with one's current lot and pessimism about the future as well as by reported experiences of discrimination. For blacks with higher levels of educational attainment, however, personal dissatisfaction with present achievements or prospects for the future do not help us to understand favorable interpretations of black power. Even reported personal experiences of discrimination are only moderately related to approval of the slogan. The views on black power of this higher education group are more strongly influenced by their identification with others in the community—their feelings for the group.

Upper status blacks who have broken free from traditional moorings become a part of a *black political community* which includes persons from all social classes. The responses of these upper status blacks to questions about the interpretation of significant events and the evaluation of leaders are most strongly affected by their sense of empathy and identification with

clear that people's evaluations of their achievements vary more within than between objectively defined status groupings.

[39] Reported experiences of discrimination are unrelated to education (Gamma = .01).

[40] Aberbach and Walker, *op. cit.,* (1969), especially pp. 11–16.

TABLE 6.—CORRELATIONS (GAMMA) FOR BLACKS BETWEEN LADDER POSITIONS ON THE SELF-ANCHORING SCALES, EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION, AND APPROVAL OF BLACK POWER, BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Scales	Zero-Order	Low Educa-tion*	High Educa-tion*
Present Life**	−.27	−.34	.06
Future Life**	−.40	−.47	−.05
Reported Experiences of Discrimination***	.30	.34	.20

* Respondents in the low education group (N =322) include all those who have completed high school (but had no additional training), while those in the high education group (N =122) have, at minimum gone beyond high school to either specialized training or college. We chose education as a status indicator and dichotomized the sample so as to preserve the maximum number of cases for the analysis.

** The ladders were trichotomized as follows: 1–3 =0; 4–7 =1; 8–10 =2. Therefore, a negative coefficient means that the higher a person's score on the ladder the *less* likely he is to give a fair share or racial unity interpretation of black power.

*** This is a simple additive index of reports of personal experiences of discrimination in Detroit in obtaining housing, in the schools, from a landlord, or in obtaining, holding or advancing on a job.

their racial community than by their feelings of achievement or even their personal expectations about the future. They share a set of beliefs and a mood of protest about racial issues with those lower status segments of the black community who have also assimilated the secular culture typical of the urban North.[41] The major difference between the two groups is that dissatisfaction with one's current lot and prospects for the future interact with church membership, region of socialization and political trust in determining interpretations of black power for the lower education group, but not for the upper education group.

V. THE BLACK POWER IDEOLOGY

So far our attention has been concentrated on the demographic and attitudinal correlates of approval of black power. Some scholars have ar-

Black Power by	Low Education	High Education
Church Membership	−.38	−.42
Place of Birth	.31	.34
Political Trust	−.39	−.37

[41] The correlations (Gamma) between church membership, place of birth and approval of black power are actually slightly higher in the upper education than in the lower education group:

gued that interpretations of this kind of slogan stem from a more comprehensive belief system, a "riot ideology," which is said to be developing within the black community.[42] We found that knowledge of the black power slogan has diffused widely through the black community of Detroit. There are many different interpretations of the slogan, but only about 8 percent of the population were unable to respond when asked about its meaning. The question remains whether an individual's reaction to black power, be it positive or negative, is related in any logical way to his attitudes about other issues of racial policy, his interpretation of significant events, and his choice of leaders or representatives. In order to investigate this question, we turned to our data in search of evidence of a coherent or constrained belief system on racial matters within Detroit's black community; something we might justifiably call a racial ideology.

Anyone acquainted with recent research on public opinion might doubt the existence of a set of ideas resembling a racial ideology among any but a small activist fringe in the black community. Public attitudes about political leaders or questions of public policy are usually fragmentary and contradictory. Citizens readily express opinions about public issues, but these beliefs seldom hang together in a coherent system; knowing an individual's position on one issue does not allow one to predict his positions on other, related issues. The classical liberal or conservative ideologies may often be employed by political activists or leaders as a guide to policy making, but most citizens seem to use as a guide some form of group identification or other considerations of self interest when formulating their attitudes toward political questions.[43]

Converse argues that the degree of constraint

in a belief system is determined most directly by the amount of information the individual has acquired about the issues involved. Levels of information, in turn, are usually affected by the relative centrality or importance of the issues to the individual. The more deeply concerned the individual becomes about a subject, the more likely he is to seek information about it, and, as time passes, to form consistent or comprehensive beliefs about the issues involved. Converse, of course, has dealt most often with liberalism and conservatism in their American incarnations. Comprehensive belief systems of this sort generally "rest upon the kinds of broad or abstract contextual information about currents of ideas, people, or society that educated people come to take for granted as initial ingredients of thought."[44] This form of contextual or background information is usually accumulated after extensive, formal education, a factor which seems to be a prerequisite to ideological thinking, in most cases. Since only a small minority of the public possesses this important educational prerequisite, ideological thinking is said to be rare.

Since our respondents share the educational limitations of average Americans, and do not have any special access to political information, we would not expect them to be capable of broadly ideological thinking. As Converse suggests at several points, however, it would be unwarranted to infer from this fact that average citizens are incapable of consistent thinking about all areas of public affairs. Even without a grasp of classical liberalism or conservatism and with a minimum of formal education, respondents might have consistent belief systems concerning subjects which they found to be of inescapable personal importance, and which also involved the social groupings with which they most strongly identify.

Bearing in mind the possibility that considerable structure might be uncovered in the social and political thought of our respondents if the proper issues could be identified, we asked openended questions at several points in our interview about topics we thought might be salient for our respondents. Using these methods we discovered clear indications that a coherent belief system dealing with racial matters has developed within Detroit's black community. This belief system seems well organized and serves as a guide for most of our respondents in formulating their answers to our questions about racial problems. The high degree of constraint existing among the elements of this belief system is displayed in Table 7 where we present a matrix of

[42] T. M. Tomlinson, "The Development of a Riot Ideology Among Urban Negroes," *American Behavioral Scientist* (1968), pp. 27–31.

[43] The best single statement is Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in David E. Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 206–262. For a brief review of this literature see: Lester W. Mibrath, *Political Participation* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965); and Herbert McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics," this REVIEW (1964), 361–382. For some recent work see: Robert Axelrod, "The Structure of Public Opinion on Policy Issues," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1967), 49–60; and Norman R. Luttbeg, "The Structure of Beliefs Among Leaders and the Public," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1968), 398–410.

[44] Converse, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

TABLE 7.—CORRELATIONS (GAMMA) AMONG RESPONSES TO RACIAL ISSUES BY
BLACK RESPONDENTS, BY EDUCATION*

| | | High Education (N = 122) | | | | |
		1. Approval of Black Power	2. Word to Describe Riot	3. Sympathy for the Rioters	4. Reasons for the Riot	5. Leader Who Represents You
Low Education (N = 322)	1. Approval of Black Power**	X	.34	.46	.32	.29
	2. Word to Describe Riot**	.36	X	.40	.58	.22
	3. Sympathy for the Rioters**	.45	.30	X	.62	.49
	4. Reasons for the Riot**	.64	.37	.48	X	.41
	5. Leader Who Represents You**	.41	.29	.32	.35	X

* Respondents in the low education group include all individuals who have completed high school (but had no additional training), while those in the high education group have, at minimum, gone beyond high school. Correlations for the high education group are recorded above the diagonal, and those for the low education group are below the diagonal.

** The following items make up this table:

1. What do the words "black power" mean to you? For this table only the signs on the black power code are reversed so that all coefficients are positive.
2. What would you call the events that occurred in Detroit between July 23 and July 28? What word would you use? Open-end question coded as follows: 1) Insurrection; 2) Riot; 3) Disturbance; 4) Lawlessness.
3. Do you sympathize with the people who took part in the (Respondent's term for the event)?: 1) yes; 2) somewhat; 3) no.
4. Which of the following comes closest to explaining why the (Respondent's term for the event) took place?: 1) people were being treated badly; 2) criminals did it; 3) people wanted to take things.
5. What single national or local leader best expresses your views on relations between the races? Open-ended question coded as follows: 1) Militant Black Leaders; 2) Other Black Leaders, excluding Martin Luther King; 3) Martin Luther King; 4) White Leaders, excluding Robert F. Kennedy.
   A militant is defined here as someone who unequivocally endorsed black power before the time of our interviewing (September, 1967). Persons identifying Robert F. Kennedy were not considered in the calculation of coefficients for this question because of the special nature of his partisans. See below (footnotes to Table 11) for a discussion of this.

correlations of answers by our black respondents to five questions concerning racial issues.[45] The coefficients appearing below the diagonal are for all those with a high school education, or less, while above the diagonal are findings for those

who have, at minimum, progressed beyond high school to either specialized training or college. The relatively high correlations in this table make us feel justified in referring to this set of opinions as a racial ideology.

One of the most significant aspects of Table 7 is the attitudinal consistency existing among those with lower educational achievements. A careful examination of the table shows that the

[45] To judge the relative strength of these relationships, see a similar matrix for a national cross-section sample in Converse, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

two educational groups display almost the same levels of constraint. Associations among the upper education group are slightly higher, as earlier research on ideology might lead one to expect, but only by .02, on the average. Further, as we shall establish, respondents in our sample are not only capable of consistency, but display, as well, an impressive amount of knowledge about these questions, and demonstrate the capacity to make several subtle distinctions among leaders and political symbols.

The results of Table 7 are even more significant in view of the fact that three of the five items in the matrix were completely open-ended questions. We have already discussed our open question on the meaning of black power and the way in which we constructed our code and identified favorable and unfavorable responses. The question on the word used by the respondents to describe the riot was also open-ended. At the beginning of each interview respondents were asked what word they would use to describe the events "that occurred in Detroit between July 23rd and July 28th" of 1967, and that word was used by the interviewers throughout the interview. Although some responses were quite unorthodox (one young woman called it a "steal-in" and an older woman called it "God's vengeance on man"), we found it possible to code most of the answers into four categories: revolt, riot, disturbance, and lawlessness, which roughly form a dimension from an understanding of the events as an expression of political demands, to a belief that they were an anomic, lawless outburst. We also asked our respondents, without supplying any cues, to name "the single national or local leader who best expresses your views on relations between the races." The list of leaders mentioned were then arranged according to their publicly stated views on black power. This arrangement was made on the basis of our knowledge of these leaders and their public statements.[46]

Open questions require respondents to formulate their own answers, a formidable challenge to those with limited powers of expression. Some error may be introduced by interviewers when recording answers to open questions, and once they have been recorded, they must be coded. It is extremely difficult, both to construct comprehensive codes for responses of this kind,

and to complete the coding process without introducing even further error. In view of all these difficulties, the relatively strong associations we have found among the items in Table 7 are strong evidence of the existence of a racial ideology. We believe that the success of these techniques and the high degree of consistency in our respondents' opinions was due to their intense interest and concern with racial issues. It would seem that the relative salience of an issue for an individual, or his interest in a subject, is more important than his educational level or his ability to manipulate abstractions in determining the coherence of his beliefs.[47] Our findings confirm the proposition that where issues of sufficient personal importance are concerned, even the poorly educated are capable of developing relatively sophisticated, inter-related, ideological belief systems.

A. Black Power Ideology and Integration

Some of our respondents may not have an advanced understanding of the justifications for their views, but we are certain that the questions in our matrix require a choice among legitimate alternatives; they are not being translated by our black respondents into simple tests of racial loyalty. An inspection of our questions will show that we are not asking merely if they are sympathetic or unsympathetic toward the aspirations of blacks in America. Our respondents are being called upon to identify and evaluate political leaders as representatives, interpret the causes of the Detroit riot, and define the meaning of a controversial political slogan. One can be closely identified with his racial group and greatly concerned for its welfare, and yet be either *positive* or passionately *negative* about black power, the riot, or many black political leaders. Our black respondents are prevented from employing some simple form of racial chauvinism as a guide for answering our questions because of the necessity of choosing sides in fundamental disputes over the role of blacks in American society which have traditionally divided their racial community.

Some symbols and ideas, of course, seem to be accepted by virtually all members of the black community. Had questions concerning these topics been included in our matrix we would not

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[46] The two remaining questions in the matrix were close-ended and provided respondents with a set of alternative answers from which to choose. See the footnotes of Table 7 for their exact wording

[47] See Converse, *op. cit.;* and Roy T. Bowles and James T. Richardson, "Sources of Consistency of Political Opinion," *American Journal of Sociology* (1969), who argue on p. 683, that "interest in politics is a more powerful predictor of both ideological conceptualization and consistency of opinion than is ability to use abstract ideas."

have such strong evidence of a racial ideology, because our responses could then be interpreted as mere expressions of support for the black community. This would have been true, for example, of any questions dealing directly with racial integration. In order to find how both racial groups felt about this issue, each of our respondents was asked whether he favored "racial integration, total separation of the races, or something in between." In response to this question, 27 percent of our white respondents endorsed integration, 17 percent favored total separation, and 54 percent chose "something in between." Even the most sympathetic whites overwhelmingly disapprove of black power, but as we can see in Table 8, approving interpretations of black power came most often from those whites who endorsed integration. The relationship was matched by a separate finding that whites who reported having friends among blacks were somewhat more approving of black power, although blacks who reported having white friends did not differ appreciably from others in their interpretation of the slogan. All of the aversion of whites toward black power cannot be attributed to an aversion toward blacks; some of it grows out of a fear and dislike of the general use of power to achieve social ends, and an unease and resentment of all forms of protest. Nevertheless, it is our impression that when most whites are asked about symbols like black power and integration, they are less likely to respond directly to the complicated issues being raised, but are tempted to translate the questions into the much simpler issue of whether they are favorable or unfavorable toward black people.[48]

When our black respondents were asked the same question about racial integration, 86 percent endorsed integration, while only 1 percent chose separation. Years of struggle against institutionalized segregation and great efforts by opinion leaders in both racial communities for almost a century have made integration a potent, positive symbol for blacks. Asking for an endorsement of this idea is almost akin to asking for an expression of loyalty to the black community. Since we recognized the emotional connotation of these terms we substituted the word "separation" for "segregation" in our questions, but even in this form the positive attraction of integration proved overwhelming. The consensus on the desirability of integration

[48] The issue of the nature of racial ideology among whites will be explored in Joel D. Aberbach and Jack L. Walker, *Race and the Urban Political Community* (Boston: Little, Brown, forthcoming).

TABLE 8.—PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS FAVORABLY INTERPRETING BLACK POWER, BY RACE, ACCORDING TO ATTITUDES TOWARD INTEGRATION

Form of Race Relations Preferred	Percent Favorably Interpreting Black Power	
	Whites	Blacks
Integration	25%(96)	46%(364)
Something in Between	8%(197)	46%(54)
Separation	5%(65)	*
	Gamma = −.57	Gamma = .01

* N is less than 5.

includes most black writers and intellectual leaders as well as the average citizens. Debate over the idea has remained sharp and vigorous, but it has primarily concerned the question of whether integration ultimately should result in virtual assimilation, or in some form of social pluralism.[49]

In view of the special status of integration as a symbol within the black community, it is not surprising that we should find conclusive evidence that approval for black power among blacks *does not* imply approval of racial separation. In Table 8 there are no appreciable differences in approval for black power between black respondents who endorse integration and those who do not.

The racial ideology we have identified, even though not merely an expression of racial loyalty, may still have social rather than purely in-

[49] Strong advocates of black power are almost uniformly in favor of social pluralism and reject cultural assimilation as resting on the demeaning "assumption that there is nothing of value in the black community." (Carmichael and Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 53). However, they do not endorse separatism holding that black power is "ultimately not separatist or isolationist." (Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 193). The basic idea is that after the black man develops "a sense of pride and self-respect . . . if integration comes, it will deal with people who are psychologically and mentally healthy, with people who have a sense of their history and of themselves as whole human beings." (Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 182) Detailed discussion on the meanings of assimilation can be found in Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

TABLE 9.—PERCENTAGES OF BLACK RESPONDENTS
FAVORABLY INTERPRETING BLACK POWER
ACCORDING TO WHEN THEY BELIEVE
INTEGRATION WILL OCCUR

Time for Integration	Favorable Interpretations of Black Power		
	Fair Share	+Black Unity	=Total
Near Future	18%	16%	34%(140)
Distant Future	22%	33%	55%(206)

tellectual origins. An individual's status or the
role he plays in the economy may prompt him
to adopt the beliefs of the leaders of his social
group because he is convinced that this is a way
to advance his own interests. This form of intel-
lectual emulation would be most likely among
those, like many of our respondents, who have
little education or experience with abstract
thinking, and also have a strong sense of group
identification. Several beliefs may be appropri-
ated by an individual under these circumstances
which may appear to him as natural collections
of interdependent ideas, even if he does not have
the intellectual capacity to make a similar syn-
thesis of his own. In other words, he may know
that several different elements of his belief sys-
tem naturally go together, and he may also
know that certain kinds of responses are consid-
ered appropriate for certain kinds of questions,
without having any notion of why.[50]

Our respondents' racial ideologies may have
originated through this process of social dif-
fusion and group mobilization, but we find
enough subtlety in the responses to conclude
that many individuals have developed a surpris-
ingly elaborate understanding of the applicabil-
ity and meaning of the beliefs they hold. For ex-

[50] Converse discusses this possibility in a section
called "Social Sources of Constraint." Converse,
op. cit., pp. 211–213. For other treatments of the
origins of ideology, see William H. Form and
Joan Rytina, "Ideological Beliefs on the Distribu-
tion of Power in the United States," American
Sociological Review (1969), pp. 19–30; Samuel H.
Barnes, "Ideology and the Organization of Con-
flict," Journal of Politics (1966), 513–530; Rich-
ard M. Merelman, "The Development of Political
Ideology: A Framework for the Analysis of Politi-
cal Socialization," this REVIEW (1969), 750–767;
Everett C. Ladd, Jr., Ideology in America (Ithaca:
Cornell University Press, 1969). pp. 341–350; and
Robert E. Lane, Political Ideology (New York:
Free Press, 1962), pp. 213–439.

ample, although virtual unanimity exists within
the black community about the desirability of
integration as an ultimate goal, there is consid-
erable disagreement over how soon it might oc-
cur. As we can see in Table 9, those who believe
that realization of the goal is in the distant fu-
ture are more likely to approve of black power
than those who believe it will soon appear. In
analyzing our data we have found that the per-
ception of obstacles to racial progress, or the ac-
tual experience of some form of discrimination,
is related to approval of black power. Table 9
demonstrates that the more pessimistic respon-
dents are also more likely to interpret black
power as an appeal for racial unity rather than
a call for a fair share or an equal opportunity.
There is evidence in this table, and in others we
shall present, that the capacity for subtle shifts
of emphasis and interpretation is not merely
confined to the community's activist minority,
but instead is widely diffused among a large seg-
ment of Detroit's black population.

B. Black Power Ideology and the Detroit Riot

The Detroit riot of July, 1967 caused fear and
anxiety among almost all the citizens of the city,
both black and white. Immediate reactions to
the event ranged from those who believed it was
a sign that the Negro citizens of the city were

TABLE 10.—PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS
FAVORABLY INTERPRETING BLACK POWER, BY
RACE, ACCORDING TO WORD THEY
USE TO DESCRIBE THE RIOT

a. Total Sample

Word Used to Describe Riot	Percent Favorably Interpreting Black Power	
	Whites	Blacks
Revolt	32%(28)	62%(51)
Riot	10%(212)	50%(194)
Disturbance	0%(19)	33%(42)
Lawlessness	8%(25)	27%(33)

b. Black Respondents Only

Word Used to Describe Riot	Interpretation of Black Power		
	Fair Share +	Racial Unity	=Total
Revolt	25%	37%	62%(51)
Riot	23%	27%	50%(194)
Disturbance	19%	14%	33%(42)
Lawlessness	21%	6%	27%(33)

rising up in revolt against discrimination and injustice to those who saw it as an uncivilized expression of lawlessness and hooliganism. If, as we have suggested, responses to black power are a part of an individual's basic orientation toward race relations, there should be a strong relationship between his response to this slogan and his evaluation of the causes and consequences of the riot.

In Table 10a we can see that in both races those who use the word "revolt" to describe the events were much more likely to express approval for black power. In Table 10b where the black respondents are divided according to whether they gave racial unity or fair share responses we find that racial unity interpretations clearly predominate among those who see the riot as a protest against injustice. This is another demonstration of the shift in emphasis that occurs among those who are most aware and resentful of discrimination and inequality. The more convinced our black respondents are of the existence of injustice, the more they begin to interpret black power as a call for racial solidarity.

C. Black Power Ideology and the Choice of Leaders

Our respondents were asked to name "the single national or local leader who best expresses your views on relations between the races." This question, like the one on black power, was completely open ended. Table 11 displays the relationship for Negroes between the selection of various leaders and fair share or black unity interpretations of black power.

The list of leaders is arranged so that the percentage totals of respondents favoring black power are in descending order. The table seems to us to indicate the validity of our measure since respondents identifying with militant black leaders are the most favorably disposed towards black power while those choosing white leaders are least positive. In addition, the assumptions we made earlier about the meaning of the "black take-over" and "nothing" responses also seem warranted as individuals who identify with the least militant leaders most often give responses of this kind.

There are some more subtle differences revealed in this table. Negroes who felt best represented by black leaders other than the late Martin Luther King favored racial unity over fair share definitions of black power by a ratio of two to one. Dr. King's partisans, however, heavily emphasized fair share definitions. In addition, the likelihood of a favorable definition of black power is a direct function of the type of

TABLE 11.—PERCENTAGE OF BLACK RESPONDENTS FAVORABLY INTERPRETING BLACK POWER ACCORDING TO THEIR SELECTION OF A LEADER BEST REPRESENTING THEIR VIEWS ON RACE RELATIONS

Leader Best Representing Respondent*	Black Power Interpretation		
	Fair Share	+ Racial Unity	= Total
Militant Black Leaders (N =59)	26%	50%	76%
Robert F. Kennedy (N =17)	12%	47%	59%
Other Black Leaders, excluding Martin Luther King (N =107)	17%	34%	51%
"No One" (N =20)	10%	30%	40%
Martin Luther King (N =150)	28%	10%	38%
White leaders, excluding Robert F. Kennedy (N =30)	11%	13%	24%

* Question: What single national or local leader best expresses your views on relations between the races?

N's in parentheses are the bases for the calculation of percentages, i.e., persons giving don't know or no answer responses to the black power question were not used in the table.

Total N's for the categories on leadership are given in the explanations of the leader classifications below:

A militant black leader (N =61) is defined here as someone who unequivocally endorsed black power before the time of our interviewing (September, 1967). They include: Muhammad Ali (N =3); H. Rap Brown (N =9); Stokely Carmichael (N =15); State Senator James Del Rio (N =13); Dick Gregory (N =6); Floyd McKissick (N =3); Adam Clayton Powell (N =8); and Rev. Albert Cleage (N =4). Del Rio and Cleage are local figures.

Robert F. Kennedy (N =21).

Other black leaders, excluding Martin Luther King (N =111) mentioned were: Senator Edward Brooke (N =16); Ralph Bunche (N =3); U. S. Representative John Conyers (N =31); U. S. Representative Charles Diggs (N =17); Detroit Common Councilman Nicholas Hood (N =10); Detroit Urban League Head Francis Kornegay (N =1); Judge Thurgood Marshall (N =4); Carl Rowan (N =1); Roy Wilkins (N =17); State Senator Coleman Young (N =1); Whitney Young (N =5). Hood, Kornegay and C. Young are local figures.

"No One" (N =21).

Martin Luther King (N =165).

White Leaders, excluding Robert F. Kennedy (N =33), mentioned were: Senator Dirksen (N =1); President Eisenhower (N =1); TV Commentator Lou Gordon (N =1); Vice President Humphrey (N =1); President Johnson (N =14); President Kennedy (N =9); Walter Reuther (N =3); Governor Romney (N =3). Gordon is a local figure.

The total N =412. Of the remaining 49 individuals in our black sample, 27 could not answer the question and 22 mentioned their minister (no name given), coach or assorted persons (including themselves) we could not categorize with confidence on a leadership spectrum.

black leader selected. As a general rule, the more militant the leader who represents the respondent, the greater the chance of a positive orientation toward black power.

Over seventy-five percent of our Negro respondents chose a black leader who best represented their views, but there were white leaders selected as well and instances where the interviewee could make no selection. The number of respondents who could not name a leader is

small and we have divided them into two groups. "No one" is a category for individuals who decisively stated that they had no representative. This tiny group was often cynical about black power (and everything else) with over one-third saying that black power meant "nothing" to them. When they did define the slogan, however, black unity was the dominant theme. Another small group (N = 25) simply could not think of any person who represented them and they were also unlikely to answer the question about black power (i.e., they were coded in the don't know or no answer category on black power). These individuals were not visibly cynical about racial leaders or approaches; they were simply uninformed.

Thirty-one respondents identified with white leaders other than the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy. They were generally negative about black power, showing no meaningful preference for either positive interpretation. Over fifty percent of the black respondents who selected Senator Kennedy, however, gave favorable definitions of black power and they were disposed towards racial unity definitions of the term by a ratio of four to one. While the number of people who named Senator Kennedy is small, his importance as a link with the more militant elements in the black community should not be underestimated. The severing of this connection between the white and black worlds is a major tragedy. In the next phase of our research we will explore the impact of the deaths of both Kennedy and King on the beliefs of their followers.

D. Black Power Ideology: An Overview

Black power has no direct, generally accepted meaning, but the slogan still provokes strong responses from both blacks and whites. The power of all effective political slogans lies in "the emotional charges or valences they carry, the very elements that make cognitions dissonant or consonant," and in "their associative meanings, the very ambiguities that permit them, like Rorschach ink blots, to suggest to each person just what he wants to see in them."[51] In their efforts to shape a meaning for black power, our black respondents have fallen back upon fundamental sets of beliefs which have spread throughout all sectors of their racial community. Many of those who share these beliefs may be unaware of their most profound implications, but the beliefs are consistently organized in the minds of our respondents primarily because they are securely focused on the issue of racial injustice in America, a problem faced by most blacks in one form or another virtually every day of their lives.

When Converse speaks of ideological thinking, of course, he usually refers to "belief systems that have relatively wide ranges and that allow some centrality to political objects."[52] The racial ideology we have identified has a much narrower range. Given the limitations of our data, we cannot be sure that individuals holding a consistent racial ideology would also have consistent opinions about federal aid to education, or governmental measures deisgned to ensure full employment. Those with a racial ideology might be able to think in coherent ways only about questions of public policy which bear some relationship to the status of blacks in American society, but not about the general relationship between government and private business, or about America's relations with foreign countries.

The ideology of black power is not a wide ranging, highly elaborated, political world view. Nevertheless, the tone and quality of American political life in the latter 1960's was profoundly altered by the development of this belief system and its exceptionally wide diffusion among black Americans. In its radical form, as it is developing among our more disillusioned black respondents, the belief system includes doubts about the possibilities of realizing the goal of integration in the near future, sympathetic explanations of the July, 1967 disturbances in Detroit and a revolutionary label for them, selection of a militant leader as a spokesman, skepticism about improvements in the quality of life in the future, and a definition of black power which stresses the need for greater racial solidarity. This system of beliefs does not arm many of our respondents with concrete programs of social and economic reform, but in spite of its limited scope, its existence is of great potential significance. Its impressively wide diffusion is a striking indication of the growing mobilization and increasing sense of group identification within the black community.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Black power is a potent, meaningful slogan for most of our respondents. Some react with fear, others with cynicism, many with warm approval or strong disapproval, but in most cases reactions are intense and interpretations of the idea's meaning are related to an individual's basic orientation toward social and political problems. Whites have an overwhelmingly negative reaction to black power. The slogan is seen by most whites as an illegitimate, revengeful challenge. Among blacks, however, about forty-two

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[51] Robert E. Lane, *Political Thinking and Consciousness* (Chicago: Markham, 1969), p. 316.

[52] Converse, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-209.

percent of our sample see the term either as a call for equal treatment and a fair share for Negroes, or as an appeal for racial solidarity in the struggle against discrimination.

The partisans of black power among Negroes are somethat younger than the rest of the black community, but neither their age nor other standard demographic factors, such as income, occupation, and education, are very helpful in explaining the distributions we have found. Sharp divisions exist within the Detroit black community, but they are not merely the result of a clash between young and old; instead, they represent a clash between those who have appropriated the cosmopolitan, secularized culture typical of the North and those whose social outlook and political attitudes are rooted in the paternalistic culture of the South. Approval for black power, as our analysis has shown, comes most often from those who were born or grew up in Detroit, are not members of churches, and have begun to doubt the trustworthiness of government in both Detroit and Washington.

Black power is the rallying cry of a generation of blacks whose fathers fled from the South to seek a new life in the "promised lands" of Detroit, New York, or Chicago. The move from the grinding poverty and overt oppression of the South to the cities of the North was seen as a great step forward by the original pioneers. But most of their children cannot be satisfied by these changes. In the words of Claude Brown:

The children of these disillusioned colored pioneers inherited the total lot of their parents—the disappointments, the anger. To add to their misery, they had little hope of deliverance. For where does one run to when he's already in the promised land?[53]

This modern generation finds little compensation or hope in the evangelical, "old time religion" of their parents, nor do they share the traditional faith of Southern Negroes in the ultimate benevolence of white men. Many are distrustful of government, unimpressed with most of the civic notables and established political leaders of both the black and white communities, and increasingly pessimistic about their chances to achieve a satisfactory life in this country. They have not surrendered the ultimate aim of social equality and racial integration, but they have begun to doubt that the goal will be reached in the foreseeable future.

We encountered few racist, anti-white interpretations of black power among our black respondents and most of those came from respondents who were *not* sympathetic to black power.

[53] Claude Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

There was chauvinism and some glorification of blackness, especially among those who interpret black power as a call for racial unity or solidarity, but most were pro-black rather than anti-white. Black unity definitions of black power are not disguised appeals for separation from American society; at least, not at the present moment. If insufficient progress toward racial accommodation is made in the future and tensions continue to mount, separationist sentiments might begin to spread within the black community. Today, we find, instead, a deep concern with the rights of and desires for respect within the American black community. These feelings are most eloquently expressed in the interpretation of black power given by one of our young respondents:

(black, male, 19, 12 grades) It means mostly equality. You know, to have power to go up to a person, you know, no matter what his skin color is and be accepted on the same level, you know, and it doesn't necessarily have to mean that you gotta take over everything and be a revolutionary and all this; just as long as people are going to respect you, you know, for what you are as a person and not, you know, what you skin color has to do with the thing.

Restraining ties with the traditional culture of the South are being steadily eroded as the percentage of blacks who were born and grew up in the North increases, the influence of the church wanes, and faith in the benevolence of paternalistic friends and allies weakens. The children born in Detroit since World War Two are coming of age politically in the midst of a social revolution. Events as diverse as the Detroit riot, the dominance of black athletes in every major American spectator sport, the collapse of colonial empires in Asia and Africa, the total integration of the American armed forces, and the murders of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy are all accelerating the break with traditional modes of thought and accommodation. The reservoir of potential supporters for black power is bound to grow.

The social revolution now in progress has resulted in a more unified, more highly mobilized black political community. Franklin Frazier's accommodating, apolitical "black bourgeoisie"[54] is rapidly disappearing as the sense of empathy and racial identification among the black middle class grows stronger. This developing racial community is profoundly restless and is searching for new forms of political expression and participation. The result of this search is likely

[54] E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: Free Press, 1957).

TABLE 12.—PERCENTAGES OF BLACK RESPONDENTS
FAVORABLY INTERPRETING BLACK POWER
ACCORDING TO THEIR WILLINGNESS TO
TAKE PART IN A RIOT

Would You Riot*	Percent Favorably Interpreting Black Power
No:	35%(262)
Yes:	57%(60)
Maybe:	69%(93)

* Question: Can you imagine any situation in which you would take part in a _____ (respondent's term for the events of July, 1967)?

to be increased activity of all kinds, both conventional and unconventional. Our data indicate a willingness to participate in political campaigns and elections on the part of even the most militant advocates of black power. Their involvement in this activity, however, would not preclude their taking part in other, more flamboyant, forms of protest.

No single, dominant tactical stance is likely to evolve among blacks; questions about the feasibility and utility of tactics are major sources of disagreement within the black community. Most of our black respondents, for example, believe the Detroit riots of 1967 were an understandable reaction to social injustice, and there is some sympathy for the individuals who actually did the rioting, but there is almost no approval of the sniping and fire bombing that took place. Extreme violence of this kind is presently thought of as a legitimate or useful expression of grievances by only a tiny minority of blacks in Detroit, but many others express considerable ambivalence about the utility of violent protests. For example, when we asked our black respondents, "Can you imagine any situation in which you would take part in a _____ (respondent's term for the events of July, 1967)?" a majority said no, but, as we can see in Table 12, respondents who expressed ambiva-

lence were even more supportive of black power than those who said they definitely would participate. This undecided group is a substantial proportion of our sample, they have made the sharpest break with traditional forms of social thought, they are the most sympathetic toward the black power ideology, and they are wavering.

The outcome of this search by blacks for acceptable modes of political expression will depend primarily on the behavior of whites, both those who control all the public and private institutions that matter, and the average citizens who must adjust to changes in prevailing customs. If Detroit's future is to be peaceful, ways must be found to pull down the barriers to equal opportunity which now exist, and there must be radical improvement in the prospects for personal advancement of the city's black population. Although success in these efforts depends, in large measure, on the flexibility and compassion of the whites, it also depends on the capacity of many public and private governmental institutions to mobilize the resources necessary to create a decent, livable, urban environment.

Some of the most important decisions about Detroit's future will not be made in the city, but in Washington, in suburban city halls, or in the state capitol in Lansing; the policies adopted by labor unions, businesses and manufacturers in the city will probably be more important than anything done by the officials of city government. This complex, decentralized system of social choice, with its elaborate checks and balances and its many barriers to radical change, will be faced during the next decade with an insistent challenge from a new generation of black Americans. To successfully meet their demands large efforts will have to be made toward the creation of a truly inter-racial society. Depending on the extent and success of these efforts, this new black generation could either become a persuasive and creative new influence within the democratic system, or a force bent on the violent disrupton of American urban life.