

Note: 2/19

The data for *Protest and Prejudice* were collected in 1964 and the book appeared in 1967. In the interim, cries for black power became more pronounced and there was widespread violence in the cities. The book was generally well received on academic grounds (see reference to webpage reviews in this section), but a common criticism was to ask if in light of events such as Watts, Detroit and Newark the book was dated. In a 1969 Postscript to the Harper Torchbook paperback edition I reviewed 15 more recent studies and concluded that in broad outline the descriptive (and more strongly the analytic) findings still held. That is also the case for the vast majority of studies done in the 50 years since the book was published. The conclusion I wrote placing survey data within a broader context of the attitude-behavior links still holds as well: "*The important questions are clearly not so much how many, but who, how intensively, and in what way?*"

*Protest and Prejudice*, Harper Torchbook 1969

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## Postscript: Social Movement and Mass Opinion

What you have to deal with are the visible elements in the community. Until you hear other voices, these are the voices you report on, because these are the voices that are heard.

—Reporter, New York Times

The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime. Only the guiding layers of a class have a political program.

—Leon Trotsky

One common question has run through the minds of the most diverse reviewers of this study: Are the data collected in 1964 still relevant in the face of the profound changes that have occurred on the civil rights scene? Has not the mass moderation found in 1964 now disappeared? Here it is useful to differentiate between the analytic and descriptive findings. In the case of the former there is little reason to anticipate change. Religion still no doubt operates to inhibit militancy, while social mobility encourages it. Being removed from the values of the traditional South and having a positive self-image increase the likelihood of civil rights concern, while having a low morale and being socially isolated decrease it. Those with a high degree of unpleasant economic contact with merchants they perceive to be Jewish are still among those most likely to be anti-Semitic, while hostility toward Jewish and non-Jewish whites no doubt remains strongly related. It is with such questions that this study was primarily concerned and not with the exact percentage of blacks who favored one leader or position over another.

My interest was in analyzing basic orientations toward civil rights and whites and not attitudes toward single issues. It is thus somewhat unfortunate that

although this study has received widespread notice—from the *New York Times* to the *Iowa Bystander* to the *Nairobi East African Standard*—that attention has focused almost exclusively on the descriptive findings. It is also the descriptive findings which might be thought most likely to change in the face of recent events such as widespread violent protest, the death of Martin Luther King, the growth of black power and struggles for community control, and the emergence to prominence of new groups such as the Black Panthers.

Fortunately, presumed changes in opinion can easily be studied. In between their discovery of poverty and violence, American social scientists have found black opinion. We have moved from almost no systematic studies of black attitudes to an abundance of studies; studies which show a high degree of consistency in their over-all descriptive findings, even in the face of new leaders and organizations and an important shift in tactics and goals on the part of crucial segments of the black movement.

In the Preface I noted that

Our data suggest that many people hold an overly sensational image of the Negro mood. To be sure there is deep anger and frustration, as well as varying degrees of suspicion and resentment of whites. Yet, there is still optimism about the possibility of change within the system. Most Negroes favor integration in principle, are loyal to the United States, are opposed to indiscriminate violence, and are not consistently antiwhite or anti-Semitic.

Black attitudes vary somewhat according to region and the way a question is asked; they are sometimes contradictory and are in a greater state of flux now. However this conclusion would seem still to hold in 1969, if perhaps not as strongly.

A descriptive summary follows of fifteen studies which support the above conclusion (involving two national and thirty-four separate city samples and conducted during 1967-68).<sup>1</sup> Following this, attention is given to some general factors affecting the usually moderate American response to radical movements, and the connection between mass and activist attitudes, in a context of social movements, is considered.

Data are reported in the following categories: civil rights groups and leaders; violence and nonviolence; progress; grievances; police; speed of integration; integration and attitudes toward whites; separatism; and black power.

<sup>1</sup>Parts of this paper were read at the 1969 meetings of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, California. I am grateful to the M.I.T.-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies for support.

Excluded are references to earlier studies, with similar findings, mentioned in the text, such as the 1963 and 1966 *Newsweek* Polls and the UCLA study of Watts. See pp. xx, 35, 40, 205. Also excluded are 1966 surveys in various cities conducted by John F. Kraft, Inc., reported in *Congressional Record*, July 27, 1967.

### Civil Rights Groups and Leaders

A national *Fortune* magazine survey asked respondents to identify which among various groups and leaders "fights for what people want." The response for Martin Luther King was 83 per cent, for the NAACP 70 per cent, for Stokely Carmichael 32 per cent, and for the Muslims 15 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

The most comprehensive study of racial attitudes yet undertaken is the 1968 fifteen-city survey carried out for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther King's stand was approved of by 72 per cent, with an additional 19 per cent partly approving and partly disapproving, and 5 per cent disapproving. Support for Stokely Carmichael was considerably less, though nevertheless sizable: 14 per cent approved, 21 per cent partly approved and partly disapproved, and 35 per cent disapproved.

A 1968 national CBS survey finds 53 per cent of those questioned reported they felt the same way about civil rights as Ralph Abernathy and 49 per cent indicated they would give him active support. For Stokely Carmichael these figures were 6 and 4 per cent, for Elijah Muhammed, 2 and 3 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

A six-city survey undertaken in 1967 for the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence at Brandeis reports overwhelming support for more moderate civil rights organizations and notes "while Negro dissatisfaction is real and intense, it has not driven most Negroes to an extremist approach." Similar findings emerge in studies done in Chicago; Washington, D.C.; Atlanta; Miami; and Detroit.<sup>5</sup>

### Violence and Nonviolence

Studies in the various cities also reveal a view of riots as protest, and many people believe they help bring about change. However the overwhelming majori-

<sup>2</sup>"Business and the Urban Crisis," *Fortune*, January 1968 (n = 300). "N" here and following refers to number of respondents.

<sup>3</sup>A. Campbell and H. Schuman, *Racial Attitudes in Fifteen American Cities*, Ann Arbor, Mich., Survey Research Center, 1968 (n = 2,814).

<sup>4</sup>*White and Negro Attitudes Toward Race Related Issues and Activities*, Princeton, N. J., Opinion Research Corporation, 1968. Conducted for CBS News Special, "Portrait in Black and White," September 2, 1968 (n = 478).

<sup>5</sup>Roper Research Associates, "What To Do About Riots," *The Public Pulse*, No. 25, October 1967.

When Chicago blacks were asked whether they "mostly like" or "mostly dislike" what a number of groups and individuals were doing about civil rights, 85 per cent responded "mostly like" to the NAACP, 25 per cent to SNCC, and 13 per cent to the Black Muslims. When asked who best represents their position, 57 per cent chose Martin Luther King, 20 per cent the NAACP, 4 per cent chose CORE, 3 per cent Carmichael or SNCC, and less than 1 per cent the Muslims. The Interuniversity Social Research Committee, *Militancy For and Against Civil Rights and Integration in Chicago: Summer 1967*, Chicago, Community and Family Study Center, University of Chicago, 1967 (n = 711).

In Washington, D.C., a large majority named the most effective leader and spokesman for Negroes from among conventional leaders such as King and Wilkins, while 11 per cent chose

ty prefer nonviolent to violent means other than in cases of self-defense. In many cases this is for strategic rather than moral reasons.

In the *Fortune* survey 14 per cent saw the violence and rioting that has already occurred as "essentially good," 58 per cent as "essentially bad," and 28 per cent as "both good and bad." Sixty-two per cent felt violence was not necessary to achieve Negro objectives, with 35 per cent disagreeing.

When respondents in the fifteen-city survey were asked what was the best way for Negroes to gain their rights, 39 per cent chose "laws and persuasion," 38 per cent "nonviolent protests," and 15 per cent chose "be ready to use violence." One black in three felt riots had helped the Negro's cause, while a quarter think they have had mainly harmful effects, with 12 per cent thinking they helped and hurt equally. Almost six blacks in ten saw the riots as mainly protest while another three in ten saw them as partly a protest. When asked what they would do "if a disturbance like the one in Detroit or Newark last summer broke out here," 8 per cent said they would join it, 9 per cent said they would try and stop it, and 76 per cent said they would stay away. However, among those who would not join the riot, almost six in ten said they would feel sympathetic to those who did.

In the CBS poll, when those interviewed were given a list of actions and asked which ones were good ways to gain equal rights, 89 per cent chose holding meetings, 71 per cent boycotting stores, 59 per cent picketing stores and businesses, and 6 per cent demonstrations that might lead to violence. More than half of those questioned indicated a willingness to take each of these kinds of action, except for demonstrations that might lead to violence, where the figure drops to 3 per cent.

In the six-city survey, half of those questioned felt that riots had done some good and half disagreed with the statement "Congress is now getting fed up with the riots and is unlikely to pass any new civil rights laws as long as they continue."

A study done following the Milwaukee riot finds more than half of those Carmichael or Rap Brown. W. Prouty, "Survey of Three Low Income Areas of the District of Columbia," *Congressional Record*, October 3, 1968 (n = 426). Sample is representative only of blacks living in three poverty areas.

A 1967 study carried out by the Southern Regional Council on the attitudes of Negro high school youth in Atlanta found 75 per cent expressing approval for the NAACP, 72 per cent for SCLC, 55 per cent for CORE, 37 per cent for SNCC, and 11 per cent for the Nation of Islam. James E. Conyers and William J. Farmer, *Black Youth in a Southern Metropolis*, Atlanta, Southern Regional Council, 1968 (n = 688).

In Miami 77 per cent chose Martin Luther King as the individual who had done the most to help Negroes, while 1 per cent chose Malcolm X. P. Meyer, "Miami Negroes: A Study in Depth," *The Miami Herald*, 1968 (n = 530).

A study of Detroit blacks reports a large majority supported the more conventional leaders. J. Aberbach and J. Walker, "The Meanings of Black Power: A Comparison of White and Black Interpretations of a Political Slogan," paper read at 1968 meeting of American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C.

questioned agreeing that "riots are unpopular but an effective method for bringing about desired changes." In response to a question asking what kind of action would be justified on a group's part if the school board failed to take account of the legitimate demands of the group, about one-half of those interviewed supported staging a sit-in or picketing, one-quarter a boycott, 10 per cent the use of force and threats to stop teachers and students from entering the school, and 3 per cent destroying school property.<sup>6</sup>

A survey of Houston's black residents finds 30 per cent thinking riots helped and 37 per cent that they hurt, while for Oakland, California, these figures were 51 per cent and 27 per cent. In a study in Watts 10 per cent of the sample felt another riot would aid them. About seven out of ten in the three communities reported violence as never justified or justified only in self-defense.<sup>7</sup>

In the Chicago study 67 per cent felt that "riots don't help at all," with 9 per cent feeling they "helped a lot." For peaceful demonstrations these figures were 19 per cent and 42 per cent.

In the Washington, D.C., survey half of those questioned felt that riots had brought improvement, though 77 per cent disagreed that "it is necessary to riot in order that things be changed."

In Atlanta about two high school youths in ten agreed with the statements "sometimes Negroes ought to carry guns when protesting," and "civil rights demonstrations don't accomplish anything." Thirty per cent disagreed that "nonviolence is always the best approach for Negroes to use," and 8 per cent indicated they would participate in a riot.

In a 1968 Detroit *Free Press* survey 63 per cent of blacks questioned felt they had "more to lose" by resorting to violence in the civil rights movement while 20 per cent felt they had "more to gain." About seven out of ten agreed with the statement "black leaders go too far when they praise and encourage violence." Ten per cent indicated they would probably join a riot if one occurred.<sup>8</sup>

In Miami 10 per cent chose violence as a way for Negroes to get ahead and indicated a willingness to participate in a riot.

### Progress

Blacks are in a trick bag of the worst sort. The white-dominated social structure is not changing nearly fast enough, which drives some blacks to increased

<sup>6</sup>J. Slesinger, *Study of Community Opinions Concerning the Summer 1967 Civil Disturbance*, The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Office of Applied Social Research, and Institute of Human Relations, 1968 (n = 125).

<sup>7</sup>W. McCord and J. Howard, "Negro Opinions in Three Riot Cities," *The American Behavioral Scientist*, March-April 1968.

<sup>8</sup>P. Meyer, *Return to 12th Street*, Detroit *Free Press*, 1968 (n = 452). Similar findings on this and other items are reported in *The People Beyond 12th Street*, 1967 Detroit *Free Press* survey. The sample is representative only of Negroes living in the Detroit riot area.

radicalism. They are then stigmatized and criticized for being too militant. Though for some black activists what whites label them is clearly irrelevant. Stigmatization may even help validate a claim to radical status. Though for many others the lack of change simply confirms pessimistic expectations and may increase resignation. However, as in the 1964 study, a sizable proportion continues to be optimistic about the change that has occurred and the possibilities of future change.

In the 1968 fifteen-city survey 62 per cent felt "that over the past 10 or 15 years there has been a lot of progress in getting rid of racial discrimination," while 35 per cent disagreed.

In the 1967 national *Fortune* poll 77 per cent report more hope of solving Negro problems than a few years ago, with 4 per cent feeling less hope, and 19 per cent the same amount of hope. Almost eight out of ten feel their "chances of finding a decent job" have become better in the last few years, and a like figure thinks blacks now have more power. About six in ten report whites treat Negroes with more respect, though only about one person in three felt there had been marked improvement in housing. However, in spite of—or partly as a result of—perceived improvement, about one person in two reports they feel more angry now than several years ago.

In the 1968 national CBS poll one person in two felt there would be complete equality between blacks and whites within thirty years, while one in four felt this would take one hundred years or would never happen.

In the 1968 Washington, D.C., survey, about seven out of ten felt their chances of getting or changing jobs were better now than a year ago. Fourteen per cent felt they were worse. Forty-two per cent felt housing had gotten better in the last few years, while 31 per cent felt it had gotten worse.

In the 1968 Detroit *Free Press* study 54 per cent felt things were better for themselves and their families than they were three years ago, with 37 per cent rating them "the same," and 7 per cent responding "worse." Six in ten felt the attitudes of whites toward Negro rights will get better in the next five years, while 8 per cent felt they would get worse.

Studies in Washington, Chicago, Detroit, and Miami that asked questions involving cultural themes (perhaps somewhat ritualized) with moderate implications, again found appreciable acceptance.

In Chicago almost six in ten agreed that "a lot of Negroes blame white people for their position in life, but the average Negro doesn't work hard enough in school and on his job." In Washington, D.C., eight out of ten agreed that "if you try hard enough you can get what you want," while almost as many rejected the statement "things are what they are and probably won't ever be better."

When the CBS national poll asked what was the reason for blacks' not having made more progress, 45 per cent cited discrimination, 22 per cent said "Negroes haven't worked enough," and 18 per cent said "both."

In the Detroit *Free Press* survey, three out of four felt that "most of the unhappy things in people's lives" were due to mistakes they make rather than to bad luck. Almost as many felt that success depends on ability rather than being in the right place at the right time. In Miami about one in four felt people were poor because of "lack of effort" rather than "circumstances," while about half felt both these factors were responsible. About half of those in Miami and four in ten in Detroit agreed that "Negroes should spend more time praying and less time demonstrating." Half of those in Miami and one in three in Detroit accepted the statement "before Negroes are given equal rights they have to show they deserve them." In both cities about four in ten agreed that "an owner of property should not have to sell to Negroes if he doesn't want to." Though in Chicago only one person in four agreed with the statement "white people have a right to keep Negroes out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and Negroes should respect this right."

#### Grievances

That many blacks sense some improvement and are optimistic about the future certainly does not imply satisfaction with the existing order of things or with the slow pace of change.

Compared to whites, the level of black dissatisfaction is quite high. Grievances about certain things, such as employment, housing, police crime, merchants, schools, garbage collection, and recreation facilities reoccur across cities, although the rank order varies somewhat by cities.

In the national CBS poll 42 per cent were satisfied with the education received by their children, with 29 per cent dissatisfied; 43 per cent satisfied with their family income, with 50 per cent dissatisfied; and 50 per cent satisfied with their job, 20 per cent dissatisfied. The satisfaction figures for whites are much higher.

In the six-city survey 60 per cent thought employment opportunities were growing too slowly, and 76 per cent expressed dissatisfaction with the speed of change in housing opportunities.

In the fifteen-city survey almost half of those questioned expressed dissatisfaction with police protection and with recreational facilities for children. Thirty-six per cent were dissatisfied with schools and about 30 per cent with garbage collection. Twenty-four per cent feel that merchants "often" overcharge them, 32 per cent that they "sometimes" do. Thirteen per cent feel they often are sold spoiled or inferior goods, while 29 per cent think this sometimes happens. Sixteen per cent report that merchants often or sometimes treat them disrespectfully. Almost one person in three reports having been refused a job because of discrimination and seven in ten feel "many" or "some" blacks miss out on good housing and jobs because of discrimination.

When asked how hard the federal government was trying to solve the main

problems of the cities, 25 per cent said "not hard at all," 25 per cent "fairly hard," and 39 per cent "trying as hard as they can." For the local mayor these figures were 24, 19, and 47 per cent and for state governments, 32, 22, and 33 per cent. Almost eight in ten felt the poverty program was doing a "good" or a "fair" job. Nine per cent felt that it was doing a "poor" job and 9 per cent had not heard of it.

In Milwaukee only 30 per cent of inner-city Negroes agreed with the statement "in general Negroes around here are being treated fairly." Seven out of ten felt that job opportunities were growing too slowly and almost eight of ten thought efforts to secure open housing to be going too slowly. Less than one person in three expressed satisfaction with various aspects of the school system.

In Washington, D.C., schools were rated "very good" by only 6 per cent, "good" by 20 per cent, "average" by 30 per cent, "poor" or "terrible" by 16 per cent. Disapproval of the school system was expressed by 42 per cent in Houston, 53 per cent in Watts, and 73 per cent in Oakland. Housing was rated poor by 40 per cent in Watts and 21 per cent in Oakland.

In a study of Bedford-Stuyvesant, schools were rated "excellent" by only 3 per cent, "good" by 26 per cent, "fair" by 39 per cent, and "poor" by 18 per cent.<sup>9</sup> Four out of ten felt it possible to get a good education in an all-Negro-Puerto Rican school with the same figure thinking it was not possible. With respect to employment, 56 per cent reported liking their job "very much," 34 per cent liking it "all right," and 9 per cent disliking their job. About seven out of ten report thinking the price of food and merchandise is high. Twenty-four per cent felt the quality of food to be poor. Nine per cent reported disliking "the way storekeepers treat you."

In the Detroit *Free Press* study, about four in ten expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of public schools and garbage collection, while six in ten were dissatisfied with police protection and recreation facilities. Fifty-five per cent responded "often" and 22 per cent "sometimes" when asked if merchants overcharged them. Fifteen per cent answered "often" and 40 per cent "sometimes" when asked if they were sold spoiled or inferior goods. Most resentment was expressed toward grocery stores, furniture stores, loan offices, and home improvement agencies. When asked "Is this the kind of neighborhood you would like to continue to live in?" four in ten replied "yes."

Four in ten of Miami Negroes felt unfair businesses to be a big problem, while 23 per cent saw police brutality as a big problem. Twenty-three per cent reported merchants overcharged them and 14 per cent felt they were sold inferior goods.

<sup>9</sup> *Community Attitudes in Bedford-Stuyvesant: An Area Study*, New York, The Center for Urban Education, Summer 1967. This study was carried out by the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation as a community project.

### Police

Concern over lack of adequate police protection and police brutality continued to be high. In the fifteen-city survey 38 per cent felt that police "don't show respect for people and use insulting language." In the Detroit *Free Press* survey this figure was 57 per cent, in Milwaukee 55 per cent, and in Miami 28 per cent. Thirty-five per cent of those in the fifteen-city survey think the police "rough up people unnecessarily when they are making arrests." In Detroit this figure was 53 per cent, in Milwaukee 54 per cent, and in Miami 24 per cent. When asked if the police actions they reported as unnecessarily rough had involved the respondent himself or people known to him the number of incidents cited declined. In the fifteen-city survey, for example, 24 per cent report knowing people who have been "unnecessarily roughed up" and 4 per cent indicate this has happened to them.

In the national CBS poll (in a question asked in the context of riots) six out of ten felt that in general the police have been too brutal, while about one in four felt they have been fair.

In Bedford-Stuyvesant 73 per cent felt police protection was inadequate. When asked what kind of a job police were doing, 16 per cent responded "good," 39 per cent "fair," and 37 per cent "poor." In Washington, D.C., 6 per cent rated the police as "excellent," 66 per cent "fair or ok," and 19 per cent "poor." Thirteen per cent felt there was "a lot" of police brutality, 26 per cent "some," 34 per cent "only a little," and 10 per cent "none." When asked how police treat Negroes, 58 per cent of those questioned in Milwaukee said "too brutal" and 18 per cent "about right." In Miami a police get-tough policy on crime in Negro areas was supported by 48 per cent and opposed by 39 per cent.

### Speed of Integration

An indirect measure of support for integration is degree of satisfaction with the speed at which it is perceived to be taking place. In cities where this question has been asked, from 25 to 75 per cent of the samples feel it is taking place too slowly while only 1 to 5 per cent that it is occurring too fast.

For example, in the six-city study, seven out of ten blacks questioned felt that the government of their city was doing "too little" to encourage racial integration, while less than 1 per cent felt it was doing too much.

In the Detroit *Free Press* survey 62 per cent felt the government was pushing integration "too slowly," 23 per cent at "about the right speed," and 1 per cent "too fast." In Miami 46 per cent responded "too slowly" and 38 per cent "about right." In Milwaukee seven out of ten felt the city was doing too little to encourage integration, and no one thought it was doing too much. In Chicago 34 per cent felt that the speed at which integration was being pushed was "just about right," with 46 per cent responding "not fast enough." In Houston and

Watts, integration is perceived as taking place at "about the right speed" by half of those questioned, though for Oakland this figure drops to 23 per cent. Less than one in twenty-five felt it was occurring too fast.

#### Integration and Attitudes Toward Whites

More direct support for integration, bordering on unanimity in many of the studies, may be seen in questions which ask what type of neighborhood, school, and employment situation an individual desires.

The national *Fortune* poll reports 5 per cent rejecting integration as a goal for Negroes, though it is significant that among those under twenty-five this figure is 9 per cent, while for those over twenty-five it drops to 2 per cent.

The Detroit study by Aberbach and Walker reports almost nine out of ten respondents endorsing integration, with less than 1 per cent endorsing separation. The Chicago study finds only 5 per cent thinking Negroes and whites should go to separate schools. A study in Bedford-Stuyvesant reports eight out of ten felt integrating schools to be important.

With respect to neighborhood preference, in the national CBS poll, less than one person in five favored building whole new communities just for Negroes. In the fifteen-city survey 8 per cent expressed preference for an all-Negro neighborhood, 5 per cent for one mostly Negro, 48 per cent for one half-Negro and half-white, and to 37 per cent it made no difference.

The survey of Bedford-Stuyvesant finds that four out of five of those questioned favored living on a block with persons of every race. Half of those questioned indicated they would prefer to live in the suburbs rather than in the city. However, integration received relatively low priority compared to the need for better housing, employment, and education.

In the 1968 *Free Press* survey, when Detroit Negroes were asked if they would rather live in a neighborhood "with only Negro families or in a neighborhood that had both Negro and white families," 75 per cent chose the integrated area and 13 per cent the all-black area. An all-black neighborhood was preferred by 23 per cent of those between the ages of 15 and 24 and 9 per cent of those over 50. The least support for an integrated neighborhood was found in Miami, where six out of ten favored it.

In Bedford-Stuyvesant, one person in ten expressed a preference for a Negro employer with most people saying the race of an employer was unimportant. In Milwaukee four out of five blacks answered "mixed" or "it makes no difference" to a question about working in an all-Negro, mixed, or all-white work group.

Studies of social-distance patterns and attitudes toward whites are consistent with the relatively high degree of tolerance found in the 1964 study and in earlier ones. Blacks remain perhaps the most tolerant group in American society.

In the fifteen-city survey 5 per cent preferred their child to have only Negro

friends. When asked whether they felt "they could trust Negroes more than white people, the same as white people, or less than white people," 23 per cent indicated greater trust for Negroes, 7 per cent for whites, and 68 per cent reported no difference. Though unlike the pattern found for whites, out-group hostility varied inversely with age. Thus the proportion of those over sixty trusting Negroes more than whites was 14 per cent, while for the young this figure was 31 per cent.

In light of the age variable, analysis by Sophia McDowell of the social-distance attitudes of black Washington high school students and dropouts is particularly interesting. She finds a very high willingness to associate with unprejudiced whites.<sup>10</sup> For example, on a 0 to 4 scale (with 4 being completely willing and zero completely unwilling), the average score among the 582 youths asked their feelings about attending an integrated school was 3.54; about working on a job with a white person 3.58; and about having a close friend who is white 3.40.

Only 15 per cent said yes to the question "do you feel the same way toward all white people?" The remaining 85 per cent were asked with what kinds of whites they would be willing and unwilling to associate. The criterion overwhelmingly stressed was the attitude of the whites in question toward Negroes. Whatever the shared causes of hostile intergroup attitudes among whites and Negroes this "contingency factor" clearly sets black attitudes apart.<sup>11</sup> Also important to those questioned was the over-all racial composition of the group. For example, willingness to be with whites in schools, clubs, and church situations increased as the hypothetical racial composition changed from "mostly white" to "mixed" to "mostly Negro." This may suggest lesser vulnerability to rejection in more mixed settings, as well as a liking for one's own group.

When Miami Negroes were asked if they would approve or disapprove of various activities with whites, only 3 per cent expressed disapproval of eating lunch with a white and only 6 per cent disapproved of attending a party with whites; however, disapproval for marrying a white person increases to 33 per cent. It would appear that greater hostility is expressed toward Cubans, with

<sup>10</sup>S. McDowell, *Prejudice and Other Interracial Attitudes of Negro Youth*, Report to Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1967. On the moderate attitudes of black youth in Atlanta see Conyers and Farmer, *Black Youth in a Southern Metropolis*.

<sup>11</sup>This contingency factor can also be seen in the New York school decentralization controversy that took on pronounced racial overtones. In commenting on the community controlled interracial staff a participant-observer notes "participation in the multiracial scene of Ocean Hill has convinced me that black and Puerto Rican people—often to a degree that is hard to match among their white counterparts—welcome mutual participation with nonblacks and non-Latins whenever the latter demonstrate, rather than merely proclaim, that they are committed to the interests of the minority community." Agee Ward, "Ocean Hill," *The Center Forum*, New York, Center for Urban Education, November 1968.

whom they may be in direct competition, than toward native whites. Seventy-six per cent of Miami blacks said it bothers them to see Cubans succeeding more than Americans who were born here. Sixty per cent felt the government does more to help Cubans than Negroes.

In the Detroit *Free Press* survey 13 per cent indicated agreement with the statement "Negroes should not have anything to do with whites if they can help it." One in two agreed "it bothers me to see foreigners succeeding more than Americans who were born here." While 23 per cent felt that "people of African descent are basically superior."

In the Chicago study six in ten agreed with the statement "in general Jews are more sympathetic toward the Negro than other whites are."<sup>12</sup> About half felt that "in general white people hate Negroes" and that when whites are nice to Negroes it's usually "because the white person wants to get something out of it."

#### Separatism

Not surprisingly, the reverse corollary of strong support for integration is an overwhelming rejection of separatism. In the national CBS poll only 5 per cent of the blacks questioned felt it would be a good idea for Negroes to have a separate country. This figure was even less for the fifteen-city survey. Ironically, black nationalists can find far greater support and resources for this position in the white community, as 33 per cent of the whites questioned in the CBS poll felt this was a good idea.<sup>13</sup>

Using a three-question index the 1968 study of Miami Negroes found one person in 20 strongly supporting, and 6 out of 10 strongly rejecting, separatism. This 5 per cent included two kinds of persons: radical, proviolence youth and passive, apathetic older people resigned to separatism as a natural order. In the Detroit *Free Press* survey 8 per cent agreed with the statement "there should be a separate black nation here." In Atlanta 12 per cent of the youth questioned agreed with the statement "the more Negroes are separated from whites the better."

When blacks in the Detroit *Free Press* survey were asked if the country was worth fighting for in the event of a big war, 77 per cent felt it was while 18 per cent felt that it was not. Among those in the fifteen to twenty-four age group, 34 per cent felt the country was not worth fighting for. This figure decreases to but 7 per cent for those over fifty. When asked whether the United States should

<sup>12</sup>A small study of selected strata of New York's black community reports data on Negro attitudes toward Jews comparable to that reported in Chapter 6. C. Atkinson, *Attitudes of Selected Small Samples of Negroes Toward Jews and Other Ethnic Groups*, Columbia University, Bureau of Applied Social Research, 1968.

<sup>13</sup>Though this summary has looked mostly at black attitudes, a highly consistent finding has been the marked disparity between blacks and whites on certain items. Many of the interracial differences with respect to ideas about the treatment of blacks; the amount of progress; the worth of demonstrations; integrated schools and housing; the cause, meaning, and consequences of riots; and the type of ameliorative action required are astounding and can lead to deeply pessimistic conclusions. They indicate a profound lack of communication and the absence of understanding or compassion among a very large portion of the white public.

send in troops "if a situation like the one in Vietnam were to develop in another part of the world" only 22 per cent felt that it should. In Atlanta only 31 per cent of high school youth questioned agreed with the statement "black Americans should be proud to be fighting in Vietnam."

#### Black Power

The utility of a unifying symbol such as black power lies partly in its imprecision and vagueness. Analysis by Aberbach and Walker of an open-ended question attempting to ascertain the meaning Detroit Negroes attached to black power finds the vast majority of those questioned did not see it as synonymous with violence, racism, or black rule over whites (although almost six out of ten whites did).

On the other hand, 58 per cent of those questioned did not show positive feelings toward it and those who did, generally interpreted it in a fashion consistent with American pluralism. To 23 per cent it meant developing racial unity; to 20 per cent gaining a fair share of desired resources; to 22 per cent it meant "nothing" (interpreted as a negative response); 8 per cent didn't know; and to the remaining one-fourth it was given a negative evaluation involving things such as violence or racism. Responses of those favorable to black power were interpreted not so much as antiwhite as problack with a strong concern for dignity and black people working together. In the words of one young militant:

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 your skin color has to do with the thing.<sup>14</sup>

Other polls show considerable variation in support, in part as a result of the different way a question is asked. Among Atlanta youth 11 per cent agreed with the statement "I am a strong believer in black power." In the national CBS poll 22 per cent favored black control of black communities. In the six-city survey less than one person in three offered support for black power.

When blacks in Washington, D.C., were asked who should run poverty agencies, 24 per cent felt the people of the area should, 3 per cent local corporations, 26 per cent the government, and 35 per cent were unsure. In Bedford-Stuyvesant, with respect to local control of schools, a majority of respondents felt that parents should not have a say in hiring principals and teachers, though almost half felt they should have a voice in the removal of staff.

With respect to white participation in the civil rights movement, only 8 per cent of those in the fifteen-city survey carried out for the Kerner Commission felt that whites should be discouraged from taking part in civil rights demonstrations. In the Miami and Detroit *Free Press* studies, approximately 20 per cent agreed with the statement "civil rights groups which have both Negro and white

<sup>14</sup>Aberbach and Walker, "The Meanings of Black Power."

leaders would do better without the whites," while 70 per cent disagreed with it.

In the Detroit *Free Press* Survey one person in two agreed with the statement "things would be better in this part of town if more of the policemen were black," though a somewhat different pattern emerges when respondents are asked to compare the behavior of white and black police. In the fifteen-city survey 73 per cent felt there was no difference between treatment accorded them by black or white policemen. The remainder tended to feel white police treated them better. Similarly, most of those questioned felt white- and Negro-owned stores to be about the same in their policies.

In the national CBS poll 54 per cent opposed giving Negroes preference over whites in jobs, while 18 per cent favored it. In Chicago only 3 per cent favored preferential hiring of blacks over whites.

There is very strong support for a version of black power which involves strengthening of black institutions and developing pride in blackness. In the fifteen-city survey almost all of those questioned felt "Negroes should take more pride in Negro history" and "there should be more Negro businesses, banks, and stores." Seven in ten felt "Negroes should shop in Negro-owned stores whenever possible." More than four out of ten felt Negro school children should study an African language.<sup>15</sup>

However, in a time period dominated by impassioned rhetoric and ever-more articulate black demands for separation, it may seem surprising that less than one black in five believes stores in "a Negro neighborhood should be owned and run by Negroes," and even fewer believe schools with mostly Negro children should have Negro principals and mostly Negro teachers. Roughly one in ten indicated preference for an all- or mostly Negro neighborhood and agreed that "Negroes should have nothing to do with whites if they can help it," while only one in twenty favors his child's attending a mostly Negro school or the establishment of a separate black nation (Table A).

Table A. PERCENTAGE OF NEGROES FAVORING SEPARATIST RESPONSE TO EACH OF TEN QUESTIONS<sup>a</sup>

Believe stores in "a Negro neighborhood should be owned and run by Negroes"	18
Believe school with mostly Negro children should have Negro principal	14

<sup>15</sup>With respect to certain aspects of black culture, approximately eight out of ten of Detroit blacks questioned in 1968 indicated a liking for soul food and music. Four in ten disagreed with the statement "I don't much care for those new African clothing styles." Three in ten indicated that they had considered wearing dashiki (bubba) or a tiki. About four in ten agreed "it is better to be called black than Negro."

<sup>a</sup>As presented in A. Campbell and H. Schuman, *Racial Attitudes in Fifteen American Cities*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Survey Research Center, 1968.

Prefer to live in all-Negro or mostly Negro neighborhood	13
Believe school with mostly Negro children should have mostly Negro teachers	10
Agree that "Negroes should have nothing to do with whites if they can help it"	9
Believe whites should be discouraged from taking part in civil rights organizations	8
Prefer own child to go to all- or mostly Negro school	6
Believe close friendship between Negroes and whites is impossible	6
Agree that "there should be a separate black nation here"	6
Prefer child to have only Negro friends, not white friends too	5

#### Lack of Change

Technical differences in the wording of questions and in samples make an exact comparison between the original 1964 data and more recent studies difficult. Yet from the numerous surveys available, mass black attitudes in 1968 did not seem very different from those in 1964. Moderate attitudes characterized the overwhelming majority. Violence and separatism appealed to a minority.

Theoretical analyses of attitude change might lead one to anticipate that there would have been little mass change in this short time period.<sup>16</sup> Attitudes that may be a deep-lying part of an individual's personality, such as orientations to out-groups, sense of national identity, and attachments to the political system and compliance to law, under normal conditions are not likely to change markedly from year to year.

In the light of this evidence, why have reporters of the scene generally assumed that mass attitudes have changed and hence argued that the 1964 data are no longer relevant? Most likely this is a result of their forming their impressions of mass opinion on the basis of riots and extreme pronouncements reported in the mass media. There has clearly been an increase in sensational events to report and hence the assumption is made that mass attitudes have radically changed.

<sup>16</sup>For example: D. Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes", H. C. Kelman, "Three Processes of Social Influence," in E. P. Hollander and R. G. Hunt, *Current Perspectives in Social Psychology*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1963. R. B. Zajonc, "The Concepts of Balance Congruity and Dissonance", in I. Steiner and M. Fishbein, *Current Studies in Social Psychology*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965.

The conditions specified by these authors as necessary for attitude change would seem to be lacking for a very large percentage of the Negro population in the time period in question.



The more extreme the stand the more intense an individual is likely to feel about it.<sup>17</sup> This increases the likelihood of dramatic acts and extreme pronouncements on the part of the highly committed who may claim to speak on behalf of the masses and who may be adept at press relations. Expressive oral traditions, the fragmentation of black leadership, and the lack of unity among bitterly competitive groups is conducive to much verbal battling. Given the press's desire for sensationalism, the more extreme and loudly pronounced a statement or action, the greater may be the media attention. Atypical or unusual events may, almost by default, come to be taken as representative. White inferences about the homogeneity of opinion among blacks are made easier by already existing patterns of racially stereotyped thinking.

The media can play a prominent role in creating, as well as distorting, mass social-movement support and confusing activist with mass attitudes. The mass of moderate Negroes are not heard, except in public opinion polls or occasional local elections.<sup>18</sup>

Relatively little is known about how elites form their ideas about mass attitudes. It is interesting to speculate on the consequences of the fact that white leaders and the public at large may be relatively uninformed of the actual state of opinion in the black community. Does an overreading of the militant mood create a sense of urgency and facilitate efforts at change or does it create immobilizing fear, repression, and the wrong kind of righteous indignation? Does the assumption that blacks desire separatism and are prone to violence lead to actions by whites which may create these very phenomena? The answers to such questions are not really known. Yet they suggest an important area for future research. As community control and decentralization become more prevalent, adequate information about mass attitudes will become even more important.

<sup>17</sup>H. Cantril, "The Intensity of an Attitude," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. April, 1946.

<sup>18</sup>For example, the defeat of Le Roi Jones in Newark for a seat on the Model Cities Neighborhood Council. *New York Times*, August 16, 1968.

Such media distortions are all-too common. According to some estimates, the Yippies, who received national and international attention during the 1968 Democratic Convention, had approximately 10 hard-core members.

During the Joseph McCarthy period, only 10 per cent of those interviewed in a 1952 Roper poll felt that most of those accused by McCarthy were Communists, and in a later poll only 12 per cent of a national sample said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who had the Senator's support. For an interpretation stressing the importance of elite rather than mass support for McCarthy's success, see M. P. Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter*, Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1967.

The proportion supporting McCarthy after his censure by the Senate was about the same as that supporting him before the censure. One of the main things that changed was that the press ceased reporting his activities following his censure.

A related issue is the relative lack of concern in the 1960s over juvenile delinquency when compared to the 1950s. There is no evidence that delinquency has declined, rather the media have simply dropped it in pursuit of more exotic kinds of youthful behavior.

To suggest that mass attitudes may not have changed is clearly not to suggest that black anger is insignificant. Depending on the issue and the question, from about 5 to 20 per cent of the black population (from 1 to 4 million people) hold attitudes indicating a depth of estrangement and bitterness unique in American history. The relative proportion is growing and increases noticeably among the young and those in the North. Still one can be surprised at the degree of restraint. What is perhaps worthy of interpretation is why in the face of past and current oppression this over-all proportion is not much larger. Much of the anger which exists remains directed toward inclusion in the system.

While studies such as those summarized above have a certain intrinsic journalistic quality, for the social scientist they pose important questions. How does the moderation in over-all black attitudes relate to the general American response to radical movements? What is the connection between mass attitudes and the attitudes of activists? What are the implications of the fact that the latter often hold attitudes that are unrepresentative of their presumed constituencies? What role does mass black opinion play in the movement for equal rights and liberation?

#### American Moderation

Black attitudes and the struggle for equality must be seen in the context of general American attitudes and social movements. Many historians have seen fit to comment on the relative absence of a broadly based American radicalism, whether of the right or the left, as compared with Europe.<sup>19</sup>

For example, Potter notes

European radical thought is prone to demand that the man of property be stripped of his carriage and his fine clothes; but American radical thought is likely to insist, instead, that the ordinary man is entitled to mass-produced copies, indistinguishable from the originals. Few Americans feel entirely at ease with the slogan "Soak the rich," but the phrase "Deal me in" springs spontaneously and joyously to American lips.<sup>20</sup>

Historically, belief in American economic abundance and opportunity, along with a high degree of actual social mobility, had a moderating effect on social conflict.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>There are certainly exceptions to this, as some parts of the Populist movement and the Wobblies indicate. The greater sporadic labor violence in this country might also lead to a questioning of such an assertion; however, it could be argued that this is indicative of the absence of a constraining radical organization and ideology which would bind people in a disciplined movement.

<sup>20</sup>D. Potter, *People of Plenty*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1954, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup>On the other hand, the relatively lessened chance for upward social mobility faced by blacks helps explain the scale on which they have developed protest movements—unlike earlier ethnic groups that faced some, but certainly not all, of the same problems. Protest is further facilitated by the fact that even with upward social mobility, the visible marks of ethnic membership remain. A factor in the lack of protest (until recently) on the part of Mexican-Americans, has been the ease with which upwardly mobile members could pass into the amorphous, white middle class.

The high rate of geographic mobility in America may also have had its effect on dampening social conflict. Research on a number of communities in the middle-nineteenth century has found that half or more of the adult population moved in the course of a decade. In Boston, and perhaps in other American cities, there did not seem to have been a large lower-class group with continuity of membership. There were areas that remained lower-class, but the same individuals did not live in them.<sup>22</sup>

The presence of diverse ethnic and religious groups has also inhibited the formation of a broad class consciousness. This may be partly true among blacks too. While perhaps not presenting organizational problems as great as those faced by radicals trying to develop a common working-class consciousness among Irish, Italian, German, and Russian workers, divisions of ethnicity, religion, and region within the black community nevertheless present problems for efforts at unity. In the Boston area, for example, ethnic divisions such as the following can be found within the larger black community: Yankees, West Indians, Cape Verdians, and Southerners. Such potentially divisive factors are compounded by social-class variation, which earlier labor organizers did not have to contend with, although they did have to deal with the skilled-unskilled divisions.<sup>23</sup>

The American commitment to orderly change and the ability of the political structure to adjust to new challenges is also relevant.<sup>24</sup> The fact that American society has managed partly to resolve certain basic historic cleavages such as the place of religion and the granting of citizenship and economic rights to the lower strata has also inhibited radicalism.<sup>25</sup> Whatever other parallels may exist, this fact clearly differentiates the struggle of American blacks from oppressed groups in many other parts of the world. In the colonial situation, where these issues overlap with each other and with ethnic divisions, there is a more ready base for ideological politics. Any assessment of the pervasiveness of black radicalism must take the above factors into account.

<sup>22</sup>See S. Thernstrom, "Working Class Social Mobility in Industrial America," in M. Richter, ed., *Theory and History: The Evolution of a Style*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1969.

<sup>23</sup>Ethnic and religious heterogeneity have also inhibited movements of intolerance among whites, as the 1930s clearly illustrate. Various native fascist groups had trouble uniting, partly because they couldn't obtain consensus as to which minority group was the true enemy. Their prejudices against each other, as in the case of the Klan and Father Coughlin's National Union for Social Justice, were often as strong as their prejudices against the Jews or Negroes.

<sup>24</sup>L. Hartz, *Liberal Political Tradition in America*, New York, Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1955.

<sup>25</sup>S. M. Lipset, *Political Man*, Garden City, Doubleday, 1963, Chapter 3.

Ironically, though, the traditional values, checks and balances, and give and take among a plurality of interest groups with overlapping memberships which are so important to understanding the relative stability of America's past are to some degree also factors in American society's failure to act decisively in confronting racial problems.

American moderation has also been explained by reference to aspects of the socialization process, the nature of occupation and kinship roles, and national character.<sup>26</sup> Studies of the political socialization of children find an early attachment to the nation and compliance with the system of law. The child's earliest disposition is to consider government in terms of a "benevolent leader" who looks after his people.<sup>27</sup> Barber suggests that the importance given kinship and occupational roles exerts a "socially structured pull" away from participation in organizations that may be relevant to an individual's interests.

In the case of national character, the great American emphasis on success through individual mobility and self-development may not be conducive to developing the broad sense of solidarity, social consciousness, and commitment to a larger cause demanded by many movements. Beyond this, with abundant myths of equal opportunity and individualism, those who fail to rise in social position are more likely to blame themselves, rather than blaming the social structure, as in Europe.

While the above research was not carried out with blacks in mind, it may still have some relevance. As noted in chapters 2, 3, and 4, other factors specifically relevant to black militancy include self-image, sophistication, morale, religiosity, fear of intimidation, and vested interests. Consideration must also be given to a number of sociological variables that relate to degree of social involvement, accessibility for protest action, and differences in community structure and local history.

#### Social Movements and Mass Opinion

Questions of general American moderation aside, let us turn to the connection between elite, or activist, and mass attitudes. Here I wish to raise some issues, and summarize some research which helps to put the 1964 and more recent data on mass attitudes into a perspective of social movements and social change.

It is clear from the 1964 data and later studies that the more radical of those caught up in the movement for black equality, while articulating shared sentiments of mass discontent, may have little support on specific substantive issues,

<sup>26</sup>See R. Lane and D. Sears, *Public Opinion*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1964, pp. 94-113.

<sup>27</sup>F. S. Greenstein, "The Benevolent Leader: Children's Images of Political Authority," *American Political Science Review*, December 1, 1960, and R. D. Hess and J. V. Torney, *The Development of Political Attitudes in Children*, Chicago, Aldine, 1967.

portion of his supporters were liberal and internationalist in outlook, favoring peaceful coexistence and supporting the United Nations.<sup>34</sup>

A study of Birch Society members reports that more than six out of ten failed to mention any of the Society's six major programs when they were asked what changes in federal policy they would like to see.<sup>35</sup>

In other cases, apparent support may be deceptive. People may outwardly acquiesce to positions they do not hold because the cost of disagreement is too high. Such a phenomena may often occur in radical public meetings where the tone is initially set by the most extreme speaker. A tyranny of the majority can develop.<sup>36</sup> Many potential dissenters remain quiet in pluralistic ignorance of each other. The hallowness of the cause may inhibit criticism for fear of appearing disloyal or uncommitted, particularly in public where images of unity and mass support are created.

As the Communist vote of the French workers suggests, support may also be offered simply because there is no other dissenting group available.

There may be a tendency to impute one's own beliefs erroneously to the political symbols one supports.<sup>37</sup> The same positively valued symbol may mean very different things to different groups. Partly this is due to the vagueness of the symbol and partly to selective and distorted perception.<sup>38</sup>

Much research suggests that in spite of the occasional outward appearance of mass consensus and social-movement homogeneity, there are likely to be important gradations of involvement, knowledge, understanding, and support of the movement's positions. Variance is likely to be most pronounced when activists are compared with potential members in whose name the movement may claim to speak. This is generally a very large group, as voluntary organizations and social movements usually enroll only a small fraction of their potential membership.<sup>39</sup> Even among activists there is likely to be a small strata of more-

<sup>34</sup>S. M. Lipset, "Three Decades of the Radical Right," in D. Bell, *The Radical Right*, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, 1963, p. 338.

See also N. Polsby "Toward An Explanation of McCarthyism" in N. Polsby, R. Dentler, P. Smith, *Politics and Social Life*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963, pp. 823-4.

<sup>35</sup>F. W. Grupp, Jr., "Political Activists: The John Birch Society and the ADA," paper presented at the meeting of the American Political Science Association, New York, 1966.

For data on the diverse attitudes of participants in an "anti-Communism school" presented by the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, see R. Wolfinger, et al. "America's Radical Right: Politics and Ideology," in D. Apter, *Ideology and Discontent*, pp. 267-275.

<sup>36</sup>John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1956.

<sup>37</sup>In the case of the 1948 election see B. Berelson, P. F. Lazarsfeld, W. N. McPhee, *Voting*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1954.

<sup>38</sup>The 1968 pre-elections polls noted many Wallace supporters had previously been for Robert Kennedy. The meaning Kennedy had for them was rather different from his meaning to Negroes and white liberals.

<sup>39</sup>For example, in the case of student activism, out of 7 million students, SDS is said to have 30,000 members, with many fewer paying dues. A 1968 Harris poll put the number of radical activists at less than 2 per cent, although about one student in five reports participation in some civil rights or political activities.

committed, better-informed members who set the organization's tone, which others may then go along with. Even here, the factionalism endemic to many movements and their tendency to splinter suggests something of the variation present in the outlook of activists.

With respect to matters of ideology, on most issues the bulk of Americans are characterized by moderation, inconsistency, indifference, and a lack of all but the most rudimentary information.<sup>40</sup> The activist on the other hand is likely to have a more partisan, coherent, intensely felt, and informed world view. This both leads to and is reinforced by involvement.<sup>41</sup>

The frequently cited idea of protest leaders running to catch up with the people they are supposed to be leading is at best a half truth. Whatever degree of correctness it has stems, to an important extent, from the constraints the leader faces once in office and not from a proportional comparison of attitudes in the abstract.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>For example, see A. Campbell, P. E. Converse, W. E. Miller, D. D. Stokes, *The American Voter*, New York, Wiley, 1960, Chapters 9, 10.

The case of students, an atypical group to be sure, where this would be less expected, is again instructive. A study of 10,000 college students finds "very few were concerned with any of the current political, social, or educational issues that might disturb student activists... most of them had a kind of uncritical acceptance of, and contentment with, the status quo not unlike that of the 'silent generation' of the past." J. W. Trent and J. L. Craise, "Commitment and Conformity in the American College," *The Journal of Social Issues*, July 1967. Though clearly there is important variation here depending on the type of college. The relatively small number of activists says little about their effectiveness or the ease with which many students can be mobilized.

In the period of 1965-67, the great majority of American students supported the Vietnam War. A 1966 Gallup poll of college students found 47 per cent approving the way "Johnson is handling the situation in Viet Nam," with another 23 per cent disapproving because they felt the U.S. should be more aggressive. In spite of the protest on some campuses, four out of five students felt that grades should determine who is taken by Selective Service. See S. M. Lipset, "Doves, Hawks, and Polls," *Encounter*, October 1966.

<sup>41</sup>For example see the discussion in R. Dahl, *Who Governs?* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, Chapters 27, 28.

<sup>42</sup>However, leaders may be somewhat less militant than those active in the movement but not in leadership positions. A study of activists in the California Democratic Party finds that top leaders hold more moderate views than those below them in the Party hierarchy, even though holding less moderate views than the mass of Democrats. E. Costantini, "Intraparty Attitude Conflict: Democratic Party Leadership in California," *The Western Political Quarterly*, December 1963.

Also relevant here is Lewin's treatment of marginal minority group leaders on the periphery of their group. Though much of his discussion is reminiscent of an earlier period of more quiescent minority group leaders. See K. Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1948, Chapter 12.

Another important source of potential conservatism lies in oligarchic organizational tendencies whereby leaders attempt to keep themselves in power. See R. Michels, *Political Parties*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1949.

Though in times of crisis when emotions are high and shortsightedness present in abundance, leaders may have trouble controlling some followers, particularly those on the periphery. Note wildcat strikes and violence on the part of some ghetto youth that has occasionally accompanied civil rights demonstrations, such as in Memphis shortly before Martin Luther King's death. There may be a tension between the need for control and carefully coordinated action and the occasional need to involve large numbers of people not

Is mass opinion therefore irrelevant? Clearly not. However, its relevance depends on the particular context in question. Greater moral authority accrues to a leader who can justify the claim that he speaks for his people. Particularly in the black community where the number of civil rights and black liberation groups is very large, intense competition for public support may occur. Attracting the limited number of supporters can be crucial to organizational survival. More important, major demonstrations, boycotts, elections, and even riots are likely to stand or fall depending on mass support. There can be little doubt that the degree of mass involvement and support, both nonviolent and violent, was a critical factor in the limited victories of the 1960s. The kind of coordinated mass struggle which characterized the Movement during moments of crisis is atypical of earlier American ethnic groups and remains a beautiful and moving manifestation of the will of the human spirit to be free.<sup>43</sup>

However, public support does not play a specific and deterministic role except at times when mass mobilization is called for as part of a broader strategy. Key suggests that the lobbying efficacy of an interest group depends on factors other than mass attitudes. He notes,

Circumstances surrounding the leadership elements of mass organizations place them, in their work of influencing government, in a position not entirely dissimilar to that of leaders of non-mass groups. They must rely in large measure on means not unlike those that must be employed by groups with only the smallest membership. The world of pressure politics becomes more a politics among the activists than a politics that involves many people. Yet politics among the activists occurs in a context of concern about public opinion, a concern that colors the mode of action if not invariably its substance.

Elsewhere Key even suggests that public involvement may be undesirable: "alterations in the prevailing norms are often subtle matters better obtained by negotiation than by the crudities and oversimplifications of public debate."<sup>44</sup> Though it is precisely the failure of this kind of system, with its assumptions of elite wisdom, benevolence and flexibility, to yield sufficient gains that led blacks to develop strategies of disruptive mass protest.

As a result of the democratic heritage, American social reformers may go to subject to organizational discipline. In such a context Rudé even stresses how the role of leader and follower may be reversed. G. Rudé, *The Crowd in History*, New York, Wiley, 1964, p. 249.

For useful considerations of social movements see R. Turner and L. Killian, *Collective Behavior*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1957, ch. 20, K. Lang and G. Lang, *Collective Dynamics*, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1961, chpts. 10, 13, 14, 16 and 17, and N. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior*, New York, The Free Press, chpts. 9, 10.

<sup>43</sup>Where present among other American ethnic groups this has been likely to involve concern over problems of one's country of origin rather than the problems of one's group in America, e.g., the Irish during the original Sinn Féin and later during the Irish Rebellion and Jews during the birth of Israel and subsequent wars.

<sup>44</sup>V. O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, p. 526, 321.

greater lengths to justify their position in the name of the masses and to develop a mythology of mass ideological support.

Not surprisingly, in a reflexive action, efforts to discredit a movement for social change often fall back on old canards about its presumed unrepresentativeness. This all-too easily spills over into a concern with agitators, opportunism, conspiracies, and cabals. That such accusations may sometimes contain more than a grain of truth is largely irrelevant to the morality of the cause, which must be considered in relation to broader values and not the plebiscite of the polls.

Where this lack of mass support is present and acknowledged, protest leaders may see themselves as an elite vanguard with the function of educating the people to shed their false class consciousness. The mass of people are seen to be whitewashed, brainwashed, duped, and just plain wrong.<sup>45</sup> Their attitudes must be changed for their own good as defined by the activist.

Another response is simply to deny that there is a lack of mass support. Polls are not to be believed because blacks, to stay alive, have been lying to whites and each other for generations. Even if people were telling the truth, unattached black males are under-sampled. Additionally it is argued that the truly militant refuse even to be interviewed. Furthermore, it is widely believed that you can "lie with statistics." Polls are seen as a weapon used by the elite to discredit the true leaders and thus they must be wrong.<sup>46</sup> Because one speaks in the name of the people one must of course be supported by the people. A variant of this is to define supporters as "black people" and to speak only to and for them. Nonsupporters are not black, but "Negro" and as much, or more, the enemy as whites.

To the extent that a movement can create the mythology of mass support, its task is no doubt made easier. A factor in political influence and the gaining of

<sup>45</sup>In the case of the Columbia University controversy, a black student leader states, "We didn't care if the majority of Harlem wanted the gym; they were wrong. We have to build a sense of black community and we didn't want Columbia crossing the line, even if it was providing some facilities for the community." As quoted in D. Bell, "The Case of the Columbia Gym," in *The Public Interest*, Fall 1968.

In an infrequent public acknowledgment of the lack of student support for an unsuccessful sit-in at the University of Chicago, a white student leader states "we must admit to ourselves that we lost . . . There just wasn't enough faculty and student support for us. Perhaps our movement is too radical for the campus at this time." *New York Times*, February 15, 1969.

<sup>46</sup>There can be little doubt that polls have political uses in this context. This of course can create a problem for the social scientist concerned with change, as well as with understanding mass opinion. However, the importance of polls can be greatly exaggerated and they can be of use to groups other than supporters of the status quo. Different parts of the present study have been selectively publicized by black nationalists, as well as white conservatives.

In a related context, George Wallace argued that "Eastern money interests" were deliberately manipulating the 1968 pre-election polls against him.

concessions is a leader's ability to convince those with power that he speaks for and can control a large number of people, whether in fact this is actually the case. Between 1964 and 1968 the relative power of the more militant groups seems to have greatly increased, yet the data summarized here suggests that there has not been a comparable increase in mass support. However, relatively small size need not imply a lack of effectiveness, nor does it have much bearing on the negative power to disrupt.

As Brinton noted, a loss of will among the elite seems a more frequent accompaniment of revolution than a well-organized mass uprising.<sup>47</sup> Revolutions aside, small radical groups have occasionally had a significant effect on American society by raising issues that are picked up by dominant parties.

Visionary and symbolic leaders without mass support or a highly structured organization nevertheless can help politicize the atmosphere, arouse hopes, initiate feelings, spur imagination, create confidence, and offer vicarious fulfillment of emotional needs.<sup>48</sup>

Demands by radical blacks can pull more moderate leaders to the left and also by contrast make them more acceptable to the white establishment. Furthermore, lack of mass support is not the same thing as active opposition. In the ghetto atmosphere, where the sense of grievance is profound and no solution is working very well, there may be a permissive consensus—at least to the point of failure to oppose—for any protest activity no matter how radical or revolutionary.<sup>49</sup>

Louis Lomax's words about the Muslims apply equally to newer forms of black radicalism. "In the end . . . the Negro masses neither join nor denounce the Black Muslims. They just sit home in the ghetto amid the heat, the roaches, the rats, the vice, the disgrace, and rue the fact that come daylight they must meet the man. . . ."<sup>50</sup> Apathy to act on behalf of responsible militancy also means apathy to oppose unrealistic militancy. Considerations of extremist politics must consider not only the absence of support but the strength of opposition. It is here that traditional American democracy is most vulnerable.

*The important questions are clearly not so much how many, but who, how intensively, and in what way?* As the unprecedented domestic violence in the late 1960s and the changing tone of much black/white dialogue indicates, playing the

<sup>47</sup>C. Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1952. The Bolsheviks received only one vote in four in the election to the all-Russian Constituent Assembly held shortly after they seized power. O. H. Radkey, *The Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1950.

<sup>48</sup>See O. Klapp, *Symbolic Leaders*, Chicago, Aldine, 1964.

<sup>49</sup>On the concept of permissive consensus see Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, p. 32.

<sup>50</sup>L. Lomax, *When the Word Is Given*, New York, New American Library, 1964, p. 67.

numbers game with public-opinion data can be conducive to highly unrealistic assessments.<sup>51</sup> "Mass" in polls of black opinion can be an umbrella concept for a highly diverse collectivity which includes the youthful unskilled and unemployed, and ideologically articulate college students, as well as a great many older, more passive people. Everyone's opinion does not count the same, and opinions are changing—if not fast enough for the most radical, certainly much too fast for the most conservative.

<sup>51</sup>While questionnaire studies are crucial and indeed the only way to answer certain kinds of important questions, the relative ease with which the survey method can be carried out also can seduce academics into ignoring broader historical, social-structural, and social-process questions. There is an important need for future public-opinion research on social movements to focus on the interplay between the attitudes of leaders, activists, and masses.