

CONCEPTUALIZING AND MEASURING POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OVER TIME:
A STUDY OF BUFFALO'S URBAN POOR*

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I

The "dilemma" in American race relations that Gunnar Myrdal once wrote about¹ has now reached crisis proportions. Rioting has become a means of expressing disapproval and frustration over the lack of responsiveness of American political and social institutions to meet satisfactorily the needs of the Black ghetto. Rioting as a form of political behavior has been the subject of much attention in private discussions, the media, and ultimately by a commission appointed by the President. The latter, the U.S. Riot Commission, attempted to explain why riots have occurred and what might be done to prevent their recurrence.²

Implicitly, at least, the effort to understand the riots of recent years raises the question of whether Black Americans have abandoned conventional political means (voting, working within political parties, and the like) for more unconventional means. Recent studies of urban disorders have tended to focus on unconventional political behavior, while the literature of political science traditionally has done just the opposite. Our concern, therefore, is to compare participation rates for Blacks and Whites, using both conventional and unconventional measures of political participation, and to isolate some of the important correlates of this participation. Broadly, the questions that concern us include:

1. What are the different rates of conventional and unconventional participation for Blacks and Whites?
2. What effect do social status variables have on political participation?
3. What effects do attitudinal variables have on participation?
4. How are conventional and unconventional participation related?

Before presenting an analysis of data bearing on these questions, it would be useful to place our study of participation within the body of literature concerned with political participation and to make clear some of our central assumptions.

Notions of participatory democracy are in a period of revival. Historically, these ideas were part of classical democratic theory, and we are reminded of the Populist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries with its concern for participatory democracy. The legislation that created the War on Poverty seemed to accept this idea. There was to be "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in the solution of their own problems. The assumption was made that government would be more democratic and useful if it were returned "to the

people." Although some erosion of the principle of "maximum feasible participation" has taken place in the War on Poverty, there is no doubt that participatory democracy continues to be a potent organizing principle at this point in history.

Participatory democracy has been vigorously attacked from time to time by both scholars and social critics. Peter Bachrach labels one source of these attacks as "the theory of democratic elitism."³ The assumption of democratic elitists is that the principle of participatory democracy is outmoded because the masses are basically apathetic about political matters. Elites become the forces in the society that sustain the system. Bachrach summarizes the democratic elitist view thusly:

To be sure, the ordinary man still plays a role in the system since he has the freedom to vote, to bring pressure upon political elites, and to attempt himself to rise to an elite position. But by and large he does, and is expected to, remain relatively passive -- in fact the health of the system depends upon it.... Thus the political passivity of the great majority of the people is not regarded as an element of democratic malfunctioning, but on the contrary, as a necessary condition for allowing the creative functioning of the elite.⁴

Bernard Berelson, in a famous study of voting behavior, has emphasized another reason for the view that citizen apathy is functional for the system: "If everyone in the community were highly and continuously interested, the possibilities of compromise and gradual solution of political problems might well be lessened to the point of danger."⁵ Thus, he continues, democracy requires" ... a body of moderately and discontinuously interested citizens within and across social classes, whose approval of or at least acquiescence in political policies must be secured."⁶ System stability, therefore, is enhanced not by maximum participation but by moderate levels of participation.

Such a position directly confronts the position of classical democratic theory. John Stuart Mill argued that not to engage in political affairs would result in the stunting of man's intellectual and moral capacities.⁷ As Bachrach argues, political involvement "... is an essential means to the full development of individual capacities,"⁸ and that ".... the majority of individuals stand to gain in self-esteem and growth toward a fuller affirmation of their personalities by participating more actively in meaningful community decisions."⁹ We accept this argument and feel that it is particularly important for the Black American. Held back by an oppressive slave system and by legal and extra-legal discriminatory measures,

the Black man has found it more difficult to develop a sense of self-esteem, or identity, if you will. Lacking family ties as close-knit as those of other ethnic minorities, which were so central to their developing a sense of identity, the Black man may need to participate in politics for purposes of self-development as well as for material payoffs.

In addition to missing the important point about the function of participation for individuals, the theory of democratic elitism fails to recognize the latent function that citizen participation performs for the system.¹⁰ Conventional participation involves working within the system and thus builds support for the system. This is the case even if the activities are directed toward changing things; participation of the conventional sort is not directed toward overthrowing the system. Political participation thus performs two important functions that the democratic elitist theory ignores: 1) it functions to develop individual personalities more fully than non-participation; and 2) it functions as an important support mechanism for the system.

Much of the debate between democratic elitists and their critics may have been rendered academic by now. Whether one regards maximum citizen participation as functional or not, increased citizen participation can be noted especially among Blacks. Among other reasons, increased participation by Blacks can be accounted for by:

- 1) rising expectations which lead to increased participation;
- 2) the large number of self-help organizations that have risen in the ghetto; and
- 3) the activities of government.

Will participation by Blacks take the form increasingly of violent upheaval against the system, or will it involve working within the system to affect change? If the latter, we feel it will function both to assist the Black man to develop a sense of identity, and to buttress the democratic system.

Matthews and Prothro define political participation as "all behavior through which people directly express their political opinions."¹¹ In their study of Negro political participation in the South, Matthews and Prothro developed a political participation scale along four dimensions: talking politics; voting in elections; participating in campaigns; and holding office or belonging to a political group.¹² Milbrath has suggested a continuum of political activity that extends from low level "spectator" activity to higher level "gladitorial" activity. He lists fourteen activities ranging from "exposing oneself to political stimuli" at the lowest level, to "holding public and party office" at the highest level.¹³ The list is hierarchical; that

is, it extends from those behaviors most often performed to those least often performed. Thus political participation is said to be cumulative; individuals who engage in the "gladitorial" activities are assumed to engage in the lower level activities as well, but not vice-versa. The striking characteristic of all these activities is that they are conventional in the sense of being considered socially legitimate and acceptable. Unconventional activities, such as public demonstrations and riots, are excluded from the hierarchy of political involvement.

Recent events indicate that political participation involves more than voting, working in political campaigns or even holding public office. In recent years, some of the most significant changes in public policy in the U.S. have followed in the wake of highly unconventional and disruptive political behavior by significant segments of the population. The compelling questions about political participation, therefore, are what kinds of activities are being engaged in by what individuals, for what purposes, and with what consequences for individuals and for the political system.

In attempting to answer these questions, we have cast a broad net in terms of the political activities engaged in by citizens. In 1966-67, a sample of over 1,000 citizens in the Buffalo area was interviewed. Follow-up interviews are currently in the field with the original sample and a control group. Both interviews have contained upwards of 30 participation items which range from keeping informed about politics and voting on the most conventional end, to joining in public street demonstrations and rioting on the most unconventional end. Rather than developing the items in hierarchical or cumulative fashion only, we have tried to devise analytically meaningful categories of participation each containing several items.

Five categories or dimensions of participation have been developed. These are: 1) Citizen Duty; 2) Support of Authorities; 3) Partisan Involvement; 4) Opinion Leadership; and 5) Protest-Demonstrate. The citizen duty dimension involves such basic activities as voting and demonstrating patriotism. The support of authorities dimension involves support for public officials when their authority or the law is challenged. Included in the partisan involvement dimension are the party and campaign activities common to measures of political participation in other studies. Opinion leadership involves, among other things, keeping informed about politics, making one's political views known, and attempting to influence others in their political preferences. The protest-demonstrate dimension consists of a set of items ranging from sending protest messages to public officials and attending protest meetings to demonstrating and rioting.

The development of these dimensions of participation permits an analysis of the kinds of generic activities performed by significant

sub-groupings within the population. What groups are most supportive of legalized authority? Are the poor less supportive than higher status individuals? Are Blacks less supportive than Whites? Are activities on the unconventional protest-demonstrate dimension inversely related to the more conventional activities on the partisan involvement dimension? Do Blacks see standard forms of political participation as means by which they can fulfill their expectations, and do they engage in them to any significant degree? How are such attitudinal variables as sense of self-esteem, political efficacy and political cynicism related to conventional and unconventional forms of participation? Are those who feel less efficacious and more cynical disposed toward unconventional forms of participation? These are illustrative of the kinds of questions that can be explored with conceptually meaningful categories of political participation. Moreover, by repeating items from one survey to another variations in the kinds and rates of participation can be explored. Are increased levels of supportive and partisan activities associated with rising levels of income and education? Are increased levels of inefficacy and cynicism accompanied by an increased tendency to use unconventional means to achieve political goals and express political preferences? Will an increase over time in partisan involvement be accompanied by a decreased propensity to engage in activities of the protest-demonstrate variety?

II

We shall now address ourselves to some of these questions about political participation by presenting data from the survey of 1966-67. Many of the findings presented here derive from a card sorting technique.¹⁴ Respondents were given cards with 21 participation items printed on them. They were asked to sort the cards as to the degree to which they performed the activities (1. Never; 2. Seldom; 3. Fairly Often; 4. Regularly) and the degree to which they felt a responsibility to perform them (1. None; 2. Some; 3. Important; 4. Essential responsibility).

One of our basic research questions was whether Whites and Blacks differed in their performance of conventional and unconventional political activities. Particularly, we were interested in discovering any tendency among Blacks to reject conventional modes of participation in favor of unconventional ones. Given the lower status of Blacks in the community¹⁵ and the rising incidence of rioting in Black ghettos over the last few years,¹⁶ one might expect Blacks to participate in conventional activities at lower levels than Whites, and to show a greater propensity to engage in active demonstrations of protest. Our conventional participation measure consists of several items along the citizen duty, partisan involvement and opinion leadership dimensions. Table 1

lists the conventional participation items for Blacks and Whites with mean scores for each item. As can be seen, Blacks do not differ appreciably from Whites in their conventional participation. On the partisan involvement dimension and the citizen duty dimension there is a slight tendency for Blacks to score higher. On the opinion leadership dimension there is a slight tendency for Whites to score higher.

Our 1966-67 survey contained two items in the area of unconventional activity, mean scores for which are presented in Table 2. It is clear that neither racial group engages in street demonstrations or riots to any great degree. The scores, however, are higher for Blacks than for Whites. Since participation in these unconventional ways is rare, perhaps it is more meaningful to inquire into how much responsibility individuals feel they have to engage in these activities. The scores are again low, but they are higher for Blacks.

While these data show a higher riot propensity among Blacks than Whites, they show as well that Blacks engage at least as much as Whites in conventional forms of political participation. The data would seem to suggest, then, that as a group Black citizens in Buffalo are not rejecting conventional modes of participation for unconventional ones. Rather, it would appear that Blacks are more highly politicized generally. It might be speculated, of course, that Blacks participated even more highly in conventional ways before our study began, and that their conventional participation, therefore, is decreasing. Although we do not have survey data on these matters prior to 1966-67, such a conclusion nevertheless is difficult to accept. In fact, what evidence we have points in the other direction. Buffalo's Black community seems to have become increasingly politicized over the past several years. Steady increases have taken place in voter registrations, voting and the formation of political organizations in the east-side ghetto. We would expect data from our current survey to show further increases in these activities whether this was a Presidential year or not.

These participation data suggests that Blacks are at least somewhat confident that their goals can be achieved through conventional means. If it could be shown, however, that those Blacks who are riot-prone (feel at least "some responsibility" to riot) participate in the more legitimate activities to a significantly lesser extent than those Blacks who are not riot-prone, then there would be some evidence that the more militant have lost confidence in their ability to accomplish ends through conventional means. As Table 3 shows, however, riot-prone and non-riot-prone Blacks are quite similar in their conventional participation activities. Small percentage differences exist between the groups on certain items, the riot-prone being higher on some, the non-riot-prone higher on others. These differences, however, tend to cancel each other out. The two groups simply are not appreciably different.

TABLE 1

CONVENTIONAL PARTICIPATION, BY RACE

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Blacks</u>	<u>Whites</u>
Citizen Duty		
*1. Registered to vote	3.45	3.37
2. Vote in elections	3.66	3.48
Partisan Involvement		
1. Join and support a political party	2.32	2.16
2. Take an active part in a political campaign	1.68	1.57
3. Participate in a political party between elections	1.72	1.68
Opinion Leadership		
1. Keep informed about politics	2.73	3.00
2. Engage in political discussion	2.34	2.39
3. Discuss politics between elections	2.13	2.23
4. Inform others about politics	2.10	1.91
*5. Tried to influence political decisions other than by voting	1.44	1.56
*6. Have been asked for advice about politics	1.53	1.46

*These items did not appear on the card-sort, but elsewhere on the interview schedule. The response categories for them were "yes" or "no." Mean scores for these items were made somewhat comparable to those on the four-point scale by scoring a "4" for "yes" and a "1" for "no."

TABLE 2

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTICIPATION ITEMS,* BY RACE

	<u>Blacks</u>		<u>Whites</u>	
	<u>Perform- ance</u>	<u>Respon- sibility to per- form</u>	<u>Perform- ance</u>	<u>Respon- sibility to per- form</u>
1. Join in public street demonstrations	1.39	1.56	1.11	1.20
2. Riot if necessary to get public officials to correct political wrongs	1.23	1.43	1.10	1.18

*These items correlate highly with each other (.41 for Whites and .46 for Blacks) but not with any of the other participation items.

Thus even among the more militant Blacks there appears to be no tendency to eschew conventional modes of participation for unconventional modes.

The data presented thus far reveal an important aspect of the relationship between Black citizens and their political commu-

nities that the recent emphasis on urban violence may be obscuring -- that is the degree of support for the political system manifested by the rates of conventional participation we have examined here. The reports of the U.S. Riot Commission (including the Supplemental Studies)¹⁷ have emphasized riot behavior among Blacks and

TABLE 3*

PARTICIPATION IN CONVENTIONAL POLITICAL ACTS FOR RIOT-PRONE AND
NON-RIOT-PRONE BLACKS

Dimensions	<u>Non-Riot-Prone</u>		<u>Riot-Prone</u>	
	Not at all- Seldom (No)	Fairly often- Regularly (Yes)	Not at all- Seldom (No)	Fairly often- Regularly (Yes)
Citizen Duty				
**1. Registered to vote	20%	80%	12%	88%
2. Vote in elections	10	90	10	90
Partisan Involvement				
1. Join and support a political party	56	44	58	42
2. Take an active part in a political campaign	83	17	75	25
3. Participate in a political party between elections	81	19	82	18
Opinion Leadership				
1. Keep informed about politics	37	64	44	56
2. Engage in political discussion	60	40	53	47
3. Discuss politics between elections	72	28	73	27
4. Inform others about politics	66	34	67	33
5. Tried to influence political decisions other than by voting	83	17	91	9
6. Have been asked for advice about politics	72	28	73	27

*The N for the non-riot-prone is 199; for the riot-prone it is 67.

**The registration item asked specifically if respondents were registered to vote in the election of November, 1966. The voting item appeared on a card sort and inquired into the frequency of voting generally. Some respondents who reported that they voted regularly may not have been registered to vote in that particular election; for example, newcomers who had not satisfied residency requirements. We would not necessarily expect, therefore, means and percents for voting to be only equal to or lower than those for registration.

the disruptive consequences for the system which flow from this behavior. For all the value the reports may have in arousing the conscience of White America toward injustice, their concentration on unconventional behavior has given us an incomplete and perhaps misleading picture of the consequences of political activism by Blacks. Indeed, the findings of the reports may lead some to draw the wrong conclusions about the loyalty of Black Americans. An examination of the full range of political participation by both Blacks and Whites gives a more balanced view. We do not see here evidence of a Black community refusing to employ the traditionally legitimate and acceptable ways of expressing political pref-

erences. To the contrary, what we see in these data is a Black community apparently willing to work through the system and with it in the same ways that White Americans always have, even though Blacks exhibit a somewhat greater propensity to engage in unconventional behavior. Acceptance of the norms of conventional political participation has important implications for system support among Blacks that should not be overlooked. Especially dramatic in this respect is the finding that conventional behavior is apparently the normal modus operandi even of those who, under certain circumstances, countenance breaking the law and engaging in disruptive behavior to achieve their goals.

III

To understand in more detail what leads individuals to participate in politics in different ways and at different rates, we move now to a discussion of the correlates of political participation. Specifically we shall explore the relationships between participation and social status, political cynicism, political efficacy, political information, and sense of progress and optimism for the future with respect to the self and one's political communities.

Numerous studies have shown that political participation increases with increased social status.¹⁸ Table 4 displays product-moment correlations for Blacks and Whites between education and income and the measures for conventional and unconventional participation. For both Blacks and Whites there is a tendency for participation in conventional ways to increase with increased education and income, although some of the correlations are relatively weak. For both racial groups status correlates most highly with talking about politics. This form of participation involves the use of verbal skills; and, generally speaking, the higher one's education the more likely he is to be skilled verbally and to en-

joy political discourse. To engage in this activity to any great extent, it may also be necessary to have sufficient leisure time or the right kind of work situation. The higher one's income the more leisure time he may have, and the more likely he is to have the kind of job that permits conversation and the opportunity to exchange ideas. The next highest correlations are found between status and informing others about politics, trying to influence political decisions other than by voting, and being asked advice about politics. Again, verbal skills, time and some degree of prestige among one's peers are involved in performing these activities.

Except for the higher positive correlation between income and demonstrating for Blacks, there is little association between status and propensity toward unconventional acts. The .22 correlation between income and demonstrating suggests that among some middle or upper income Blacks, demonstrating may not be viewed as unconventional or illegitimate. It may, indeed, be viewed as occasionally necessary to sustain gains or to pave the way for new ones. One might expect the correlations between both income and education with the demonstration item

TABLE 4
SOCIAL STATUS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION,
CORRELATED BY RACE

Dimension	<u>Blacks</u>		<u>Whites</u>	
	Education	Income	Education	Income
Citizen Duty				
1. Registered to vote	.14	.12	.14	.19
2. Vote in elections	.11	.14	.13	.21
Partisan Involvement				
1. Join and support a political party	.19	.09	.19	.18
2. Take an active part in a political campaign	.16	.20	.21	.19
3. Participate in a political party between elections	.17	.19	.10	.15
Opinion Leadership				
1. Keep informed about politics	.28	.08	.27	.17
2. Engage in political discussion	.32	.21	.34	.32
3. Discuss politics between elections	.31	.27	.35	.26
4. Inform others about politics	.22	.18	.25	.22
5. Tried to influence political decisions other than by voting	.24	.28	.31	.27
6. Have been asked for advice about politics	.20	.18	.20	.24
Protest-Demonstrate				
1. Join in public street demonstrations	.06	.22	.05	.04
2. Riot if necessary to get political wrongs corrected	-.04	-.02	-.07	-.06

to be more nearly identical among Whites than among Blacks given the closer association for Whites between income and education.¹⁹

The findings of other studies that political participation increases as status increases are confirmed here, but only with respect to conventional political activities, and then not in a particularly pronounced way. When a propensity to engage in unconventional participation is measured a different pattern emerges. The effects of status generally are greatest on opinion leadership activities which require verbal skills, time and some degree of prestige. The other conventional activities seem to require no special skills and the masses are encouraged to perform them. The relationships of these items with status are, therefore, correspondingly lower. The fact that partisan involvement and citizen duty activities are frequently engaged in by lower status individuals has implications for system stability. Widespread participation in these activities by both Blacks and Whites strengthens such existing institutional patterns as political parties and the electoral system and thus helps maintain system equilibrium.

Political participation has been shown to increase with increased political efficacy and with decreased political cynicism.²⁰ Our respondents were scored on each of these variables on the basis of responses to several items in each category, with the higher the score, the higher the possession of the attribute. The efficacy category consists of items dealing with an individual's confidence in his ability to effect governmental decision-making, and a belief that government is responsive to citizens. The cynicism items deal with an individual's suspicion of the motives and behavior of public officials.

Table 5 reports correlations for Blacks and Whites between political participation and cynicism and efficacy. As can be seen, the inverse relationship between cynicism and conventional participation is consistent for both racial groups; as cynicism increases, conventional participation tends to decrease. Although the magnitudes of the individual correlations are not great for either group, the observed relationship, for the most part, is slightly more pronounced for Whites than for Blacks. The relationships between efficacy and acts of conventional participation are also

TABLE 5
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, CYNICISM AND EFFICACY, BY RACE

Dimension	<u>Blacks</u>		<u>Whites</u>	
	Cynicism	Efficacy	Cynicism	Efficacy
Citizen Duty				
1. Registered to vote	-.13	.15	-.03	.16
2. Vote in elections	-.09	.16	-.07	.18
Partisan Involvement				
1. Join and support a political party	-.04	.25	-.16	.19
2. Take an active part in a political campaign	-.04	.10	-.12	.15
3. Participate in a political party between elections	-.06	.14	-.09	.10
Opinion Leadership				
1. Keep informed about politics	-.06	.25	-.12	.30
2. Engage in political discussion	-.08	.23	-.17	.27
3. Discuss politics between elections	-.07	.22	-.15	.24
4. Inform others about politics	-.09	.15	-.10	.19
5. Tried to influence political decisions other than by voting	-.10	.26	-.09	.22
6. Have been asked for advice about politics	-.12	.24	-.07	.14
Protest-Demonstrate				
1. Join in public street demonstrations	.03	-.04	.02	.03
2. Riot if necessary to get political wrongs corrected	.18	-.17	.12	-.01

consistent for each racial group; as efficacy increases, there is a tendency for conventional participation to increase. The correlations are of somewhat greater magnitude than those between cynicism and participation. Just as with social status, the effects of efficacy are strongest on opinion leadership activities. To engage in these activities may require a greater amount of confidence than is needed to vote or to join a party. Talking about politics, giving others political advice or trying to be influential are less likely to be attempted by individuals lacking confidence in their ability to communicate political ideas effectively or to be persuasive.

Neither cynicism or efficacy correlate significantly with acts of demonstration. The correlations between propensity to riot and cynicism are positive for both racial groups. For Blacks, efficacy and propensity to riot are inversely related; oddly enough, there is virtually no association for Whites.

Why might the association between cynicism and conventional participation be as low as it is for Blacks? Our survey data show Blacks to be more cynical about politics than Whites.²¹ Years of discrimination and exclusion from meaningful participation in public affairs were highly likely to lead to cynical attitudes. In responding to interview items it is perhaps automatic for Blacks to give "cynical" answers. On the other hand, much that has gone on in recent years may have given Blacks hope that things are finally changing. Blacks are more prominent in public life than at any other time in our history; three major American cities have Black mayors; many of the more significant programs developed in the U.S. in recent years have been aimed at improving the lot of the Black man; and, to put the local situation in proper perspective, Buffalo's present mayor, though a White ethnic, has been identified more closely with the aspirations of Buffalo's Black citizens than any previous mayor of the city. These kinds of developments may explain, at least partially, why our 1966-67 survey showed Blacks to be optimistic about their own personal development and about the future of the U.S. and the Buffalo community. It may be that this sense of optimism is helping Black people to overcome the dampening effects on participation that cynicism normally breeds, even though Blacks themselves may feel that they have had good reason up to now to be cynical about politics. In any event, the relatively weak effect that cynicism has on the acceptance by Blacks of socially approved modes of political behavior might be viewed as another indicator of strong support for the political system by Blacks.

Matthews and Prothro found an individual's level of political information to be highly predictive of his level of participation.²² Our respondents were given political information scores based on their ability to identify selected public leaders. As can be seen from Table 6, in most instances political informa-

tion correlates more highly with conventional participation for both Whites and Blacks than did education, income or political efficacy. Status and efficacy were more strongly related to opinion leadership activities than to any of the other participation dimensions. Here we note that the highest correlations are on some of the opinion leadership items. At the same time, however, information is more highly correlated with some of the campaign activities and citizen duty items than with some opinion leadership items. Apparently the effects of information are more generally distributed among the various conventional participation dimensions than status or efficacy.

When we look at unconventional participation, however, the pattern is different. For Whites there is a very slight inverse relationship between information and unconventional participation, but this is not so for Blacks. In neither case does it appear that knowledge about an individual's level of political information will be a good predictor of that person's unconventional political behavior.

One might assume that levels of participation would be related to a personal sense of progress and a sense of optimism for the future and to a sense of progress and a sense of optimism for the nation and the community. The more progress and optimism an individual felt in these respects, the more likely he would be to participate. On the other hand, those who had little sense of progress and not much hope for the future might be expected to participate in conventional activities at much lower levels, and perhaps be more prone toward unconventional activity as a manifestation of frustration. This model assumes a kind of causal path from a sense of progress and a sense of optimism to high levels of conventional participation and low levels of unconventional participation. The model tends to assume that an individual rationally perceives his sense of progress and optimism for the future and links these conceptions with the different types of participation. Were the model found to be valid empirically it might bode ill for the system, for individuals who sense little or no progress (or who even sense retrogression) and are not optimistic either about their own future or the future of the communities to which they are tied might be prone to engage in behavior disruptive for the system.

On the other hand one may choose to emphasize the notion that participation takes place irrespective of where the individual sees himself in terms of a sense of progress and a sense of optimism and irrespective of whether he sees the national and local communities as progressing and views their future optimistically. This model would tend to see participation as flowing more from a sense of civic duty than from a rational conception of one's own interest. This model would, in addition, emphasize the strong system supportive function of participation.

To measure an individual's sense of progress and optimism with respect to himself, the

TABLE 6

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND POLITICAL INFORMATION

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Blacks</u>	<u>Whites</u>
Citizen Duty		
1. Registered to vote	.29	.22
2. Vote in elections	.22	.29
Partisan Involvement		
1. Join and support a political party	.29	.28
2. Take an active part in a political campaign	.29	.27
3. Participate in a political party between elections	.29	.18
Opinion Leadership		
1. Keep informed about politics	.32	.35
2. Engage in political discussion	.32	.33
3. Discuss politics between elections	.32	.34
4. Inform others about politics	.27	.32
5. Tried to influence political decisions other than by voting	.22	.24
6. Have been asked for advice about politics	.10	.20
Protest-Demonstrate		
1. Join in public street demonstrations	.08	-.04
2. Riot if necessary to get political wrongs corrected	.01	-.06

U.S. and the Buffalo community we used the "Self-Anchoring Striving Scale" developed by Hadley Cantril.²³ Respondents were asked to place themselves, the U.S. and Buffalo on an eleven point scale represented by a ladder with rungs ranging from 0-10, the bottom of the ladder signifying things at their worst, the top of the ladder indicating things at their best. In each case placements were made for the present, five years in the past and five years in the future. By subtracting past from present placements we devised a "Sense of Progress" index. Subtracting present placements from future placements gave us an "Optimism for the Future" index. On each of these respondents could rate themselves or their political communities as worse off, the same, or better off. Scores on these indexes were then correlated with participation scores. For Whites the correlations between conventional participation items and a sense of progress and sense of optimism for the self, the U.S., and Buffalo are negligible. In fact, 50 of the 66 possible correlations range from +.05 to -.05. The correlations for Whites on the unconventional participation items are low as well; only one of the 12 possible correlations lies outside the range of +.05 to -.05. Apparently, for Whites, decisions about engaging in political activities are made quite apart from any explicit considerations about a sense of progress and a sense of optimism.

Optimism for the futures of the U.S. and

Buffalo is somewhat more positively related to the participation rates of Blacks. Earlier in this paper it was suggested that events of recent years may have given Blacks a sense of hope for the future, and that this was having a bearing on their conventional participation. When comparing Blacks with Whites the relationship between participation and optimism is more pronounced for Blacks on such activities as keeping informed about politics, informing others about politics, engaging in political discussion, voting in elections, taking an active part in a political campaign, and participating in a political party between elections. These findings, however, must be interpreted very cautiously. The argument that a sense of optimism influences participation rates implies a direction of causality that the correlation coefficients, by themselves, do not prove. It is entirely possible that for some increased participation has the effect of developing within them a sense of optimism. Even more important, perhaps, is the fact that even the strongest correlations between optimism and participation for Blacks explain very little of the total variance in their participation rates, the highest correlations being only .18. There is no evidence to support the hypothesis that unconventional acts will be engaged in more by those Blacks with little sense of progress or optimism. If anything the reverse is the case, with a sense of personal progress being positively related to a propensity to engage in these acts. (The correlations are

.26 for the demonstration item and .11 for the riot item.)

These data lead one to conclude that for Whites basic decisions about whether to engage in political activities are made quite apart from any explicit considerations about progress and prospects for the future; as suggested above, participation may spring from a sense of civic duty. In addition, a desire to conform to what is thought to be socially acceptable behavior, or simply habit may also be operative. For Blacks a slightly different pattern emerges. There is some tendency for Blacks who are optimistic about the future of the U.S. and Buffalo communities to participate more extensively in a conventional manner. Possibly, the use of politics to advance group interests is at work here.

IV

Our final task is to examine the relationships between the participatory activities presented in this paper. Table 7 shows the intercorrelations of each activity with each other activity for both Whites and Blacks. Certain clustering patterns can be observed for both racial groups. Opinion leadership activities -- keeping informed, discussing politics, etc. -- are highly intercorrelated. Partisan involvement activities -- joining and supporting a party, participating in it regularly, and working in a political campaign -- are also highly intercorrelated. In addition, certain items in each of these two categories correlate highly with items in the other. For Whites, informing others about politics has correlations of .51 and .46 respectively with taking an active part in a political campaign and participating in a political party between elections. For Blacks, informing others has correlations of .50 and .52 with those items. The rest of the items in the opinion leadership category correlate at moderate levels with the rest of the items in the partisan involvement category. The citizen duty items (registering and voting) correlate highly only with each other. We would expect this, knowing that many individuals do not participate beyond registering to vote and voting.

For both racial groups the two unconventional acts correlate reasonably highly with each other, but not with any of the conventional activities. For Whites all the correlations between propensity to riot and conventional activities are at or near zero, except for the citizen duty items. Registering to vote and voting correlate at -.14 and -.10 respectively with propensity to riot. For Blacks citizen duty items are not negatively correlated with rioting. A slight tendency was noted above for Blacks to participate in conventional ways for more purposive reasons than Whites. Perhaps for some Blacks, unconventional behavior is also viewed as purposive. For Whites such does not appear to be the case, and this may be especially so for Whites who

do not participate beyond voting. For them voting may be done out of a sense of citizen duty only, and they would be strongly opposed to engaging in activity that would violate good citizenship norms.

These data suggest that conventional and unconventional forms of participation are not seen as diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive kinds of activities, for if they were, the demonstrate and riot items would have strong negative correlations with the conventional participation items.

V

This paper has compared Black and White citizens of an urban area on measures of conventional and unconventional political participation. One of its central questions was whether a strong tendency existed among Blacks to substitute unconventional behaviors for conventional ones in an effort to achieve political goals or to demonstrate hostility toward the system. No such tendency was observed. While a greater propensity to demonstrate and riot was observed among Blacks, they were seen to participate in conventional ways equally as much if not more so than Whites. Even those Blacks who show a propensity to riot participate in conventional ways as much as Blacks who are not riot-prone.

The factors that help explain differential rates of participation for Whites generally do so for Blacks as well. For both racial groups, conventional participation tends to increase with an increase in social status, political efficacy and political information, and to decrease with an increase in political cynicism, although this latter relationship is somewhat stronger for Whites than for Blacks. A sense of progress and optimism for the future has no relation to participation rates for Whites, but for Blacks there is a very slight relationship between optimism for the U.S. and Buffalo and conventional participation rates. This suggests, perhaps, the beginnings of a linkage for Blacks between decisions to participate and their future hopes, making participation for them a purposive activity. The low correlations between optimism and participation, however, justify advancing this only tentatively.

A propensity to engage in unconventional activities was seen to be essentially unrelated to social status and information level. For both Whites and Blacks riot-proneness increases slightly as cynicism increases. For Blacks riot-proneness decreases slightly as efficacy increases. Contrary to what might be expected, propensity toward unconventional activity is not related for either racial group with a sense of despair or lack of optimism for the future.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we do not find conventional behavior to be inversely related to unconventional behavior. The correlations between propensity to demonstrate or riot and conventional participation items are for the most part very weak.

TABLE 7*
INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES

		Registered to vote	Vote in elections	Join and support a political party	Take an active part in a political campaign	Participate in a political party between elections	Keep informed about politics	Engage in political discussion	Discuss politics between elections	Inform others about politics	Tried to influence political decisions other than by voting	Have been asked for advice about politics	Join in public street demonstrations	Riot if necessary to get political wrongs corrected
							BLACKS							
Registered to vote			.64	.32	.27	.17	.18	.12	.10	.20	.17	.15	.13	.06
Vote in elections		.65		.27	.16	.16	.31	.11	.11	.19	.09	.04	.10	.06
Join and support a political party		.25	.30		.44	.51	.39	.28	.14	.41	.22	.15	.08	-.01
Take an active part in a political campaign		.17	.18	.48		.59	.26	.37	.29	.50	.23	.18	.22	.17
Participate in a political party between elections		.20	.21	.49	.62		.37	.37	.35	.52	.25	.12	.06	-.001
Keep informed about politics		.27	.35	.32	.34	.29		.40	.42	.51	.23	.28	.05	.02
Engage in political discussion	WHITES	.15	.22	.30	.45	.34	.52		.64	.58	.39	.34	.12	.04
Discuss politics between elections		.17	.22	.24	.38	.30	.48	.64		.46	.43	.32	.06	-.05
Inform others about politics		.15	.23	.36	.51	.46	.42	.54	.41		.32	.27	.16	.07
Tried to influence political decisions other than by voting		.16	-.27	.21	.29	.21	.22	.32	.30	.32		.35	.13	-.03
Have been asked for advice about politics		.14	-.06	.22	.35	.28	.25	.34	.33	.36	.38		.04	.01
Join in public street demonstrations		.01	-.005	-.02	.14	.08	.12	.19	.14	.14	.15	.13		.46
Riot if necessary to get political wrongs corrected		-.14	-.10	-.06	.009	.04	-.02	.03	.02	-.02	.00	.03	.41	

*Correlations above the diagonal are for Blacks; correlations below the diagonal are for Whites.

One achieves a better understanding of the political behavior of Black Americans by studying both their conventional and unconventional participation in juxtaposition to that of Whites. Despite a greater propensity to engage in unconventional behavior, Blacks in our community participate equally as much in conventional ways as do Whites. In terms

of adopting socially acceptable and approved methods of expressing political preferences, then, Blacks are equally as supportive of the system as Whites. To the extent that the recent emphasis on urban violence does not touch on this point, we may be getting a one-sided view of the current effects and possible consequences of Black political activism.

FOOTNOTES

- * This paper draws on experience and data derived from an ongoing study of agencies of social change and political behavior in Buffalo. The study has been supported by the State University of New York and the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington, Contract #50-6056-A. Computing time and facilities were contributed by the Computing Center of the State University of New York at Buffalo which is partially supported by NIH Grant FR-00126 and NSF Grant GP-7318. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of James Hottois and Ronald Johnson in the preparation of this paper.
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 5. Bernard Berelson, "Democratic Theory and Public Opinion," Public Opinion Quarterly, XVI (Fall, 1952), pp. 313-330. Reprinted in B. Berelson and M. Janowitz, Public Opinion and Communication (New York: The Free Press, 1966) 2d. Ed., pp. 489-504, p. 492.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Mill's argument is presented in Theory of Democratic Elitism, p. 4.
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 10. For the distinction between manifest and latent functions see Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957) Revised Ed.
 11. Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966) p. 37.
 12. Ibid., pp. 52-58.
 13. Lester W. Milbrath, Political Participation (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1965) p. 18.
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 15. The following tables report the percentage distributions for Blacks and Whites in our sample on education and income.

EDUCATIONAL LEVELS, BY RACE

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Blacks</u>
Grade School	22%	25%
High School Dropout	24	36
High School Graduate	26	24
College	27	14

Footnotes (con't)

INCOME LEVELS, BY RACE

<u>Income Level</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Blacks</u>
0 - \$ 3,000	17%	25%
3 - 5,000	16	30
5 - 7,000	29	30
7 - 10,000	21	12
over 10,000	17	3

16. Buffalo was one of the eight cities experiencing a "major" disorder in 1967 according to the U.S. Riot Commission. Report, pp. 113, 158.
17. Supplemental Studies for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968).
18. Milbrath, op.cit., pp. 53-54.
19. For Whites the correlation between income and education is .48; for Blacks it is .36.
20. Milbrath, op.cit., pp. 56, 79.
21. Close to half of the Blacks in our sample were highly cynical, while only about one-third of the Whites were.
22. Matthews and Prothro, op.cit., pp. 78-82.
23. Hadley Cantril, The Pattern of Human Concerns (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1966).

V

ELECTION-NIGHT FORECASTING--PANEL DISCUSSION

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