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**Survivors of the 1979 Greensboro Massacre: A study of the long
term impact of protest movements on the political socialization
of radical activists**

Bermanzohn, Sally Avery, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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SURVIVORS OF THE 1979 GREENSBORO MASSACRE:
A STUDY OF THE LONG TERM IMPACT OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS
ON THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF RADICAL ACTIVISTS

by

SALLY AVERY BERMANZOHN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Political Science in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

1994

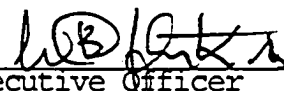
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

SURVIVORS OF THE 1979 GREENSBORO MASSACRE:
A STUDY OF THE LONG TERM IMPACT OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS
ON THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF RADICAL ACTIVISTS

by

SALLY AVERY BERMANZOHN

Advisor: Stanley Renshon
Reader: Kenneth Sherrill

How do events influence political learning of an individual who becomes a radical activist? Is the "identity" stage in adolescence and early adulthood an important period for political learning? How do families affect the socialization of radicals? Are the leftists carrying on a family tradition, rebelling against their parents, or incorporating some values and breaking with others? Can steps in a process of political learning for radical activists be identified?

This dissertation project examines the political socialization process of a group of radical activists, most of them communists, who were demonstrating against the Ku Klux Klan in 1979 in Greensboro, North Carolina, when a caravan of Klan and Nazis attacked them, killing 5 people and wounding 8. How did these individuals decide to become radical activists? Why did they develop communist politics? How did families and the experience of protest movement influence their politicization? What happened to idealistic visions and activist behavior after these activists were murderously attacked? Through in-depth interviews with 50 demonstrators, half white, half black, I trace their political socialization, including childhood in the segregated South, adolescence during the Civil Rights Movement, adult activism, the experience of a deadly assault, and finally, their political views and involvement today.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was made possible by the unique combination of scholarly guidance and personal support of my advisor, Stanley Renshon. Kenneth Sherrill also provided critical insight and essential advice.

My family has been a source of daily encouragement, including my daughters, Sandy and Leola, who hardly remember when their mother was not a graduate student; my loving parents, Roy and Elfie Avery; and my husband, Paul, who has been my biggest supporter, patient editor, and soul mate.

To the memory of
Cesar Cauce
Mike Nathan
Bill Sampson
Sandi Smith
Jim Waller
who died on November 3, 1979,
in Greensboro, North Carolina,
protecting others from the Klan and Nazis.

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INTRODUCTION

On November 3, 1979, in Greensboro, North Carolina, a group of radical activists gathered to demonstrate against the Ku Klux Klan. As they were preparing to march, a caravan of Klan and Nazis drove into their midst and opened fire on them, killing five people and wounding seven. The victims were members of a multi-racial group called the Communist Workers Party. As youth they had joined the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-War Movement of the late sixties and early seventies. While leftist politics ebbed across the nation in the mid 1970s, they became more radical, defining their politics as communist. Now more than a decade after the murderous assault, some of these individuals are still activists, others are no longer involved.

Why does a person become a radical activist, focusing his or her life on trying to change society? What is the process of development? How do families, peers, and schools interact to affect one's political commitments? What is the influence of social movements? Once individuals join a movement, what is the effect of participation in protests on their political evolution? How are individuals affected by a murderous attack? What happens as social mobilizations wane, and they must cope with the

tasks of adulthood, such as raising their children and growing older?

This dissertation addresses the relationship between people and social change, focusing on the individual development of political beliefs and behaviors. It analyzes a group of radical activists in particular circumstances in order to shed light on larger questions in the field of political socialization. What is the effect of experiencing events on political learning? Does the individual's age, his or her stage in the life cycle during these events, make a difference? Is Erikson's "identity stage" an important concept for socialization scholars?

The examination of this group is an opportunity to raise additional questions about operational models in the field. Is it possible to identify a process of political learning that includes family influences on the one hand and the experience of events on the other? Are there specific steps to becoming a activist? Can the political socialization of a radical activist be mapped over time?

The Design of the Dissertation

Part I presents the theoretical framework of the dissertation. Chapter 1 reviews the political socialization literature, where I argue that the Easton/Hyman theory failed to understand the impact of events on political learning. Civil rights and other social movements of the 1960-70s shattered this understanding of political socialization, and researchers since have been striving to establish new models. One area that is a

stumbling block is understanding the impact of current events on the socialization process. This dissertation incorporates psychological development theory, including Erikson's theory of life cycle stages into a political learning framework.

Chapter 2 focuses on the nature of radical activism, reviewing the political socialization literature on protesters of the 1960s-70s. I propose a model for mapping the political learning of individual activists. This proposed model builds on the relationship between the individual's life cycle and events occurring at the same time. It provides a context for considering the influence of traditional "agents of socialization" such as families, schools, and peers.

Chapter 3 discusses models of protest behavior from the social movement literature. I examine and criticize the deprivation theory, the resource mobilization theory and the opportunity/disruption theory of social protest. Although none of these models is adequate for understanding the political learning of individual activists, useful aspects of each model are identified and retained for the model I develop.

Part II of the dissertation presents the research, analyzing the political learning of 50 individuals who became radical activists. Chapter 4 includes the research design and methodology of the project, followed by Chapter 5, providing the historical context, tracing the conflict over race in the United States from the origins of this country up through the Civil Rights Movement.

Chapters 6 through 11 focus on the respondents, examining their step by step evolution towards radical activism. Chapter 6

looks at the childhoods of the respondents, particularly the political orientations of their families. Chapter 7 examines the earliest political memories mentioned by the respondents. The next chapter analyzes the process through which the respondents became politically active, including their first activist experience, and their decision to become an activist as a life focus. Chapter 9 explores the decisions of these individuals to become communists, followed by a chapter on the Greensboro Massacre through the eyes of the respondents. Chapter 11 looks at the respondents in 1990, a decade or more since the murders, in terms of the evolution of their politics and their current activism. The findings of the study are summarized discussed in the final chapter.

PART I

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 1:
POLITICAL LEARNING AND THE IMPACT OF EVENTS:
A REVIEW OF THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION LITERATURE

What is "Political Socialization?"

Although philosophers have debated the motivation of homo politicus for thousands of years, a specific conception of "political socialization" first appeared in American political science in the 1950s. Herbert Hyman describes political socialization as *learned behavior*, transmitted from one generation to another. In his view, individuals passively receive their parents' politics and the norms of society in a process which was assumed to be complete by adolescence. Hyman argues that political socialization functions to stabilize society, teaching young children a political orientation that would persist through their lives.¹

Hyman laid the basis for the development of political socialization as an inter-disciplinary subfield of political science, psychology, and sociology. Political socialization is the study of the process of political learning and the development of political beliefs and behaviors in individuals. Significant aspects of Hyman's conception of socialization have

¹ Herbert Hyman. Political Socialization (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1959).

been challenged, however, including the passivity of those being socialized, the persistence of early learning, and the regime stabilizing character of such a process.

Roberta Sigel, one of the early critics of the Hyman model, describes a contrasting view of the political learning process. She sees political socialization as "a learning process... begun very early in childhood and never really ended."² She agrees with Hyman that learning about politics begins in childhood, and that adolescents develop political orientations, based on their cognitive ability to engage in abstract thought. But Sigel states that "political dispositions do not become frozen" in the teenage years, but instead retain the potential to change throughout life as individuals face different experiences.³

After years of research, most scholars have come to agree with Sigel that political socialization does take place beyond adolescence. However, two approaches to socialization have continued. Beck explains their differences:

Political socialization research has been characterized by two general perspectives. The first, which I will call the teaching perspective, conceives of political socialization as the process through which political orientations are taught. The second, or learning perspective, emphasizes the individual's own learning activities and development and relegates teaching per se to a secondary, though not unimportant, role. The teaching perspective implies that the individual is taught all of his political views -- an assumption the learning perspective

² Roberta Sigel, "In Retrospect," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 361 (September, 1965): p. 128.

³ Roberta Sigel, ed. Political Learning in Adulthood (Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1989) pp. vii- xiv.

would emphatically deny.⁴

Renshon describes the first approach as "molding the child to an a priori set of conventions." ⁵ Sears characterizes it as "the *inculcation* of orientations...valued by adults." ⁶ In contrast, the second approach, according to Renshon "considers the child as an active innovator and modifier of political learning during the socialization process." ⁷ Sears defines this approach as "the gradual development of the individual's own particular and *idiosyncratic* views of the political world."⁸

Debate continues over these two approaches. The book Political Learning in Adulthood, edited by Sigel in 1989, contains articles from both perspectives. The molding/inculcation approach is used by Steckenrider and Cutler, who define political socialization as learning to "perform various roles adequately." They state:

Effective socialization means internalizing beliefs, conforming to shared expectations and taking on the basic standards of society or a group related to a particular

⁴ Paul A. Beck, "The Role of Agents in Political Socialization," in Stanley Renshon, ed. Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research (New York: Free Press, 1977) p. 115.

⁵ Stanley Renshon, "Assumptive Frameworks in Political Socialization Theory." In S. Renshon, ed. Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research (New York: Free Press, 1977) p. 4.

⁶ David O. Sears, "Whither Political Socialization Research?" in Political Socialization, Citizenship Education, and Democracy Orit Ichilov, ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990) p. 90, emphasis added.

⁷ Renshon, "Assumptive Frameworks", p. 4.

⁸ Sears, "Whither Political Socialization?", p. 90, emphasis added.

role.⁹

Renshon, in another article in the same volume, uses the interactive learning/idiosyncratic approach, stating "socialization is a reciprocal process between the individual and the environment."¹⁰ His article describes adult political development in political leaders, which goes beyond learning which is necessary for their jobs, including some examples of "major changes in the way leaders approach their political responsibilities."¹¹

This dissertation views political socialization from the second perspective, as an interaction between the individual and society that is idiosyncratic and takes place over a life time. This approach sees the potential for change on both sides of the equation: on the one hand, individuals (as leaders, or in groups or social movements) can influence society; on the other, societal experiences can significantly alter political beliefs and behaviors of individuals, even during adulthood.

The other approach, the "inculcation" perspective, describes much of the political socialization that takes place in society. Indeed, people do learn various roles throughout their lives.

⁹ Janie Stechenrider and Neal Cutler, "Aging and Adult Political Socialization: The Importance of Roles and Role Transitions," in Roberta Sigel, ed. Political Learning in Adulthood (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989) p.60.

¹⁰ Stanley Renshon, "Psychological Perspectives on Theories of Adult Development and the Political Socialization of Leaders," in Roberta Sigel, ed. Political Learning in Adulthood (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989) p. 201.

¹¹ *ibid.* Renshon's approach is discussed in more detail in the section on adult political socialization later in this chapter.

But this approach it is not adequate to understand the learning of those who are politically active, such as political leaders or activists. The limitations of this perspective are evident particularly in analyzing radical activists, who often carve out roles that are different than traditional ones established by society.

One of the key differences between the two approaches is their assessment of the impact of events on political learning. In the original political socialization model, Hyman saw the family as the main source of socialization, with schools and peers considered as additional "agents of socialization." The theory does not consider the influence of events as important. Sigel, on the other hand, criticizes the Hyman model for its lack of attention to "the particular historical or structural settings in which socialization takes place." In general, the interactive/idiosyncratic approach to socialization allows more space for the influence of events on learning.

The main theoretical question of this dissertation involves the impact of events taking place in the larger political world on the political learning of individuals. I examine the interaction between people and their "historical or structural settings," asking how the different settings affect an individual's political learning.

The following section briefly surveys the development of political socialization in social sciences and criticizes the ahistorical character of the Easton/Hyman theory. Sections 2 through 4 review the research on children, adolescents, and adults, focusing on scholars' analyses of how socialization is

affected by events. The final section summarizes the findings important to the framework of this dissertation.

I The Easton/Hyman Theory and Its Ahistorical Character

Hyman's 1959 theory of political socialization became an important aspect of political science theory because it coincided with "the behavioral revolution" in the discipline. During this period, the social sciences advanced through a paradigm shift, changing from concentrating on the role of institutions in society to focusing on the processes of human behavior.

Perhaps the most influential theorist in the U.S. at that time was David Easton. He proposed a universal theory of politics, based on "systems analysis", emphasizing communications networks and system responses.¹² He incorporated Hyman's theory of political socialization as a key concept in his theory, stating that political socialization in the U.S. created *diffuse support* for the American political system among the general population. Diffuse support meant that "regardless of what happens the members will continue to be bound to [the political system] by strong ties of loyalty and affection."¹³

Thus political socialization was born as part of a new paradigm, as an interdisciplinary subfield of political science, psychology, and sociology. It focused on two questions: (1) how do people learn about politics? and, (2) what implications does

¹² David Easton. A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: John Wiley, 1965).

¹³ David Easton. A Framework for Political Analysis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) p. 124.

such learning have for society? Easton's stress on empirical research stimulated numerous research projects, research which eventually undermined the simplistic elegance of his paradigm.

Most of all, historical events in the 1960s and 70s undermined the Easton/Hyman theory. Underlying societal tensions erupted into protest movements over issues of black civil rights, the Vietnam War, and women's equality. The cohorts whose socialization Easton, Hyman, and others, had studied during the 50s, became adolescents and young adults during the 1960s.

Instead of society benefiting from the stabilizing influence of these socialized young adults, massive numbers of the baby boom generation became protesters against the very political system for which they were supposed to feel "strong ties of loyalty and affection." What happened to the "diffuse support" inculcated by families and schools during the fifties? Why did these children become angry young adults challenging the system?

The Easton/Hyman theory assumed the transmission of political orientations from parent to child regardless of the context. But in the 1960-70s, the historical stage presented the American public with moral questions of right and wrong, and many youth grappling with these issues came to different conclusions than their parents.

Political socialization theory blundered by leaving out the impact of events on political learning. The Easton/Hyman theory failed to recognize its own historical setting. Observing overall tranquility during the 1950s, Easton, Hyman, and others assumed that society was stable and sought to explain the reasons. They did not realize they were experiencing

particular historical conditions, and that tensions were growing in significant parts of society. As Renshon noted:

... the political theory of political socialization put forward as the most important rationale for the field had paradoxically failed to take into account the importance of actual political events.¹⁴

By the late 60s, Easton acknowledged some of the weaknesses of his theory. In a 1969 address to American Political Science Association, he described a narrow vision of political socialization, asking:

... how can we account for the natural, effortless way in which inquiry has sought to reveal the contributions of preadult political learning to the stability of systems, virtually ignoring the equally significant function of socialization in bringing about political change?¹⁵

Two years later, he recognized that the general historical assumptions he made in the 1950s were themselves historically conditioned. Easton stated, "In retrospect it now appears that in The Political System what I had virtually accepted as an absolute was only an historically conditioned characteristic of science."¹⁶

Renshon comprehensively critiqued the Hyman/Easton theory in 1977, reorienting the field to a more solid and modest footing. Global theories run into trouble, Renshon points out, because the relationship between society and people is complex. The Hyman/Easton theory neglects "the specific historical

¹⁴ Stanley Renshon, "Political Socialization," in Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan, eds. Encyclopedia of Government and Politics Vol. 1. (London: Routledge, 1992) p.451.

¹⁵ David Easton, The Political System (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, 1971) p. 339.

¹⁶ ibid., p.353.

context" in the socialization process and the significance of economic, social, and cultural differences. Renshon agrees with Easton's emphasis on research, but points out that empirical research does not lend itself well to large generalizations because it needs specificity. Moreover, by orienting research towards proving regime stability, there is danger of "confusing intended aims of the process with the actual outcome". Renshon critiques the assumption of *tabula rasa* in the early research, which assumes everyone is the same at birth, and minimizes factors such as energy level or intelligence and their impact on political learning. Human nature is "multi-determined, contextual, and interactive." The ambitions of the field should be more modest, aimed at developing mid range theories and models that are more specific.¹⁷

Renshon's critique places socialization research on a more realistic basis, allowing the pursuit of many questions. What is the effect of historical events on the process of socialization? Does the life cycle influence how a cohort experiences these events? Why had young people responded more dramatically than their parents to the events of the sixties? What effect, if any, did the childhood processes of political socialization have on them? And, the underlying question for this chapter, have scholars adequately incorporated the impact of events into their analysis?

¹⁷ Renshon, "Assumptive Frameworks," p. 3.

II The Political Socialization of Children

The early years of political socialization research focused almost exclusively on the political learning of young children. Easton and Hyman based their theory on a literal reading of Freud which emphasized that early childhood experiences determined behavior in later life. Early researchers developed and tested a series of hypotheses including:

1. *The diffuse support thesis*: political socialization creates diffuse support for the political system which stabilizes society;
2. *The primacy principle*: children learn a political orientation that endures through life;
3. *The family writ large thesis*: the family provides the model of the larger polity; the father is the authority figure with whom the child identifies;
4. *The benevolent leader thesis*: the child projects the father's benevolence on to the US president, personalizing and highly regarding the president, regardless of who holds the office.

All the early studies saw political socialization as a universal process that occurred in the family and in schools, unaffected by outside political events. Regardless of the historical context, parents and teachers transmitted political views to children. But challenges, both in theory and in empirical research, came swiftly, altering or disproving all of the above propositions. These findings are summarized below.

1. *The diffuse support hypothesis fails to stand up:*

Even in the early research projects, scholars debated how to conceptualize political socialization. Easton and Hess co-sponsored a survey project in the early 1960s of 12,000 school children in eight cities around the country. But they published different books analyzing the data; Easton and Dennis focused on regime stability as the function of political socialization,¹⁸ while Hess and Torney looked more at the socialization process itself.¹⁹ As Easton admitted, the link between the political learning and regime stability could not be established by direct evidence, and, as the 1960s progressed, there was too much change for "stability" to be the model. As a result, research began focusing on the socialization process itself.

2. *The primacy principle not supported:*

Early projects demonstrated conclusively that children do develop political understandings, but the *persistence* of such learning was far more problematic. For one thing, persistence could not be proven with single-shot surveys. Longitudinal data is needed, and if such a project begins in childhood, it takes a lifetime to complete.²⁰ In the most ambitious and sophisticated

¹⁸ David Easton and Jack Dennis. Children in the Political System (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969).

¹⁹ Richard Hess and Judith Torney. The Development of Political Attitudes in Children (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

²⁰ One longitudinal study by 1985 covered kindergarten through fourth grade. See Stanley W. Moore, The Child's Political World: A Longitudinal Perspective (New York: Praeger, 1986).

project to date, Jennings and Niemi studied 18 year olds and then reinterviewed them when they were 26 and 35. This research found little support for the primacy principle in the cohort studied. (This project is discussed in detail in the following section on adolescent political learning.)

As the result of a number of Jennings and Niemi and other studies challenging the primacy principle, Searing proposed a more flexible concept, the "structuring" principle, which postulates that the basic orientation developed early in life structures later political learning on specific issues.²¹ This continues to be an assumption held by many scholars, which will be assessed in this research. The question is how much can individual beliefs and behaviors vary from the "structure" they learn in childhood?

3. *The "Family writ large" principle was not supported:*

Davies elaborates a "family writ large" thesis, which posits that political socialization begins around age three, ends a decade later, and has a lasting impact. As Davies states "the political socialization process, at least in America, is basically complete when the child is about thirteen." ²² In his psychological model, the family is the central socializing agent because it provides all the child's basic needs. Davies

²¹ Donald Searing, "The Structuring Principle," American Political Science Review 67 (1973) p. 414.

²² James C. Davies, "The Family's Role in Political Socialization," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 361 (September 1965) p. 10.

describes the hypothesis:

The child identifies with his parents and adopts their politics... The father becomes the proto-typical authority figure and thereby initiates the child's view of political authority. ²³

Families that did not fit the norm resulted in deviations in political socialization. According to Davies, when the child "suffers physical or emotional deprivation, he is likely to establish a pattern of chronic dependence that includes the political." ²⁴

Some researchers pointed out that such models were based on a "static and homogeneous" ²⁵ conception of American families. Indeed, the individuals survey were ethnically homogeneous. The Easton/Hess studies were designed to study only mainstream children. Surveyors explicitly avoided ethnic neighborhood schools, and the questionnaires of children from "readily identifiable groups where there may be sub-cultural influence" were left out of the analysis.²⁶

Jaros demonstrated that the family writ large thesis (as well as the benevolent leader thesis) is culture bound, through a study of Appalachian children. These children were part of an American subculture that varied from the mainstream because of poverty, rural lifestyles, and different cultural norms.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Roberta Sigel, "Political Socialization: Some Reactions on Current Approaches," presentation to the American Political Science Association, New York City, 1966.

²⁶ Hess and Torney, Attitudes in Children, p. 263, footnote 4.

Moreover, the family composition in Appalachia varied from the typical Americans at that time, with a higher percentage of homes with single mothers. Jaros found deficiencies in the psychological model of the father providing the authority figure that carried over to the child's view of remote political authority. Jaros' research found:

...no support at all for the notion that affect toward the father is extended to remote political authority... nor is there evidence that disrupted family structures, measured by father absence, contributes to negative political evaluation. In fact father-absence is associated with more favorable political valuation in Appalachian children! ²⁷

The role of fathers was also undercut by later studies, including Jennings and Niemi's landmark studies of high school seniors and their parents. Looking at political party preference, this study found:

If either parent plays a more impressive role in maintaining the family homogeneity of party preferences, it seems to be the mother and not the father... when the mother is the more highly politicized, she has relatively more "pulling power" than the father in maintaining the child's loyalty to his parents. ²⁸

"Family writ large" principle is based on a homogeneous model of a middle class family with the father as authority figure. Studies of sub cultures disproved the universality of this model. Merelman points out that the model neglects relationship of family to society. Where there is friction between the family and the society, political learning us

²⁷ Jaros, D., et.al., "The Malevolent Leader: Political Socialization in an American sub-culture," American Political Science Review 62 (1968) p. 575.

²⁸ M. Kent Jennings and Kenneth P. Langton, "Mothers versus Fathers: The Formation of Political Orientations Among Young Americans," Journal of Politics 31 (1969) pp. 329-58.

affected.²⁹ In addition to their place in the social structure, families are also affected by events. Is the process only "transmission" from parents to children? Or do other dynamics go on? If so, what are they?

4. *The benevolent leader hypothesis falters: among certain cultural subgroups, young children viewed political leaders far less benevolently.*

The "benevolent leader" hypothesis is closely related to the "family writ large" thesis, and maintains that children transfer the benevolent feelings they have for their father on to the political authority figure of the president. In 1958 Greenstein conducted open-ended interviews of 650 school children in New Haven, Connecticut, and he found "idealization of the president by young children,"³⁰ He theorized that the vulnerable youngster idealizes the powerful political authority figure, and that such universal views of presidential benevolence legitimized the system and persisted through life.

Greenstein's survey did include minorities, but only five percent of his project were black children.³¹ But studies that focused on subcultures did not support the benevolent leader thesis. Jaros found that Appalachian children were "dramatically

²⁹ Richard Merelman, "The Family and Political Socialization: Towards a Theory of Exchange," Journal of Politics 42 (1980) pp.461-86.

³⁰ Fred I. Greenstein. Children and Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) p. 41.

³¹ *ibid.*

less favorably inclined toward political objects than their counterparts" in other studies. He found some support for the proposition that children's opinions represented their parents passing on political values, in this case negative views towards leaders.³² Comparative studies of African-Americans also undermined the "benevolent leader" thesis, and supported Jaros' contention. Abramson compared the responses of black and white children in 38 studies and found that black children's levels of political trust were lower than whites.³³

Events of the 1970s, specifically the Watergate scandal and the resignation of President Richard Nixon, transformed the benevolent leader to malevolent leader in the eyes of mainstream American school children as well. A study by Arterton during the Watergate crisis, tested whether idealization of the president was part of child's development "fairly impervious to influence on contemporary events," or whether the view of the president was dependent on the popularity of the specific incumbent. Arterton's study used the same questions asked in a Easton and Hess' 1962 survey of school children. While in 1962 children had idealized the president, in 1973 their response was "wholly negative;" the children "strenuously rejected" the president. Arterton concluded that "the effect of Watergate has been to transform the president into the malevolent leader" (p. 285). Also, like Jaros, he found no support for "family writ large" hypothesis, no relationship between view of one's own father and of the

³² Jaros, "Malevolent Leader," p. 329-58.

³³ Paul R. Abramson. The Political Socialization of Black Americans (New York: Free Press, 1977).

president. He concluded that "politics do have an impact on the attitudes children hold...the incumbent himself is a relevant variable." ³⁴

Arterton conducted a second study in 1975 which revealed that school children continued to be sensitive to events concerning Watergate. These interviews took place while Gerald Ford was president, after he had pardoned Nixon. Arterton found the children's views of the president had moderated somewhat, but were still far more negative than 1962. He noted that parents and teachers may try to shield children from negative events, but the protracted nature of Watergate and extensive television coverage of it overrode the protective insulation from politics ordinarily provided by parents and teachers. ³⁵

Other studies revealed national differences affected children's politics. A study of Canadian and U.S. children compared children of similar backgrounds in age, class, and even proximate geographic area (they lived across the river boundary from each other). The U.S. children were significantly more "geo-centric" than the Canadians, who viewed their country as just a small part of the world. ³⁶ Based on this and other

³⁴ F. Christopher Arterton, "The Impact of Watergate on Children's Attitudes toward Political Authority," Political Science Quarterly, vol 89, June 1974, p. 288.

Similar results in study by Robert G. Meadow, "Information and Maturation in Children's Evaluation of Government Leadership During Watergate," Western Political Quarterly, vol 35, 1982, pp. 539-51.

³⁵ F. Christopher Arterton, "Watergate and Children's Attitudes toward Political Authority Revisited," Political Science Quarterly, vol 90, Fall 1975, p. 493.

³⁶ David Statt, "The Influence of National Power on the Child's View of the World," Journal of Peace Research, vol 11, 1974, pp. 245-47.

studies, Landes challenged the benevolent leader theory for confusing role with role occupant. He pointed out that children's views of leaders were culturally influenced and vary over time, indicating that children respond to the leader, not just to the role.³⁷

In summary, hypotheses concerning regime stability, persistence, family writ large, and the benevolent leader did not survive the 1960s-70s. Political socialization as a stabilizing factor and the "benevolent leader" thesis were undermined by tumultuous political times including social movements and a corrupt president. Many research projects indicated that *events can have a significant impact on the process of political learning*. Children's views of politics appeared to be conditioned at least in part by their family's relationship to society, often varying by racial or ethnic subgroup that are economically and socially distinct. Research indicates that socialization is an interactive process where clearly events make a difference, sometimes even in the politics of young children.

Models Incorporating the Impact of Events in Childhood Political Learning:

R.W. Connell proposed an alternative model of the political learning that emphasized the active role of children making sense of the ever-changing political world around them. His framework

³⁷ Ronald G. Landes, "The Use of Role Theory in Political Socialization Research," International Journal of Comparative Sociology, vol 17, 1976, pp. 59-72.

was supported by Abramson's analysis of socialization studies comparing black and white American children.

Connell stated: "The children do not simply reproduce the communications that reach them from the adult world... They work them over, detach them from their original contexts and assimilate them to a general conception of what government is about." ³⁸

Based on open-ended interviews of over 100 children in Australia between the ages of five and sixteen, Connell found a developmental pattern. Between the ages of five and seven, children went through a period of "intuitive thinking" about politics, where fact and fantasy intermixed. Next, from age seven to age nine, children developed political views based on primitive realism. Between nine and twelve, children began to construct their own political world, and after age twelve, Connell observed adolescents' ability to think abstractly. Connell found that children received political information from a variety of sources, including parents, teachers, mass media, and direct observation of authority figures.³⁹

Connell countered Davies contention that a child's view of politics was based on identification with his or her parents. Connell found that only a few of his respondents based their party preference on simple identification with their parents. He found that for most children, their political views were better described as "diffuse family loyalty" and that "their

³⁸ R.W. Connell. The Child's Construction of Politics (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1971), pp. 27-28.

³⁹ *ibid.*

agreement with their parents [was] the result of quite reasonable acts of political choice." ⁴⁰

The political learning of children is a process of constant development, Connell stressed, and one cannot expect much persistence into adulthood from something that is constantly changing. Moreover, events have the potential to influence political learning at any time. He wrote:

The development of political belief is to be regarded, not as a mechanical function or input of a system, but as a contingent, historical process... One which stretches across historical time and which links events present with events past... ⁴¹

Psychiatrist Robert Coles strongly supported Connells' model. He worked in the Civil Rights Movement in the South for many years, and noted how black children developed political views based on their own direct experiences, even ones contrary to the prevailing views they learned in school. He described a child blurting out during a meeting of adults planning a civil rights protest:

I don't like the teachers; they say bad things to us. They're always calling us names; they make you feel no good. We saw the man on television, the governor, and he wasn't any good either. ⁴²

The child had linked his own experience in school, with watching the governor on TV and seeing adults organizing protests, into a coherent political orientation.

Larger socialization studies also revealed the differing

⁴⁰ ibid., p. 83.

⁴¹ ibid., p. 235.

⁴² Robert Coles. The Political Life of Children (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986) p. 28.

political orientations between black and white children.

Abramson compared the responses of black and white children in 38 major socialization studies on the issues of efficacy and trust. Black children generally felt less politically powerful and less likely to trust political leaders. Abramson analyzed four different theories of why there could be such a difference, and found the most explanatory power from "political reality" theory, concluding that "black children may be responding to political realities." ⁴³

Abramson found black children quite sensitive to events. For example, they had stronger feelings of trust toward federal political leaders than state leaders, which correlated with the more progressive role of the federal government in supporting civil rights over the recent years. The state governments particularly in the South, continued to be bastions of segregation at that time. Furthermore, studies conducted before 1967 revealed higher levels of political trust than those studies after that year. During the summer of 1967 ghetto riots broke out in several cities, and more rioting occurred the following year after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Interestingly, political efficacy (the belief that one can influence events or political leaders) remained more stable before and after 1967, continuing to be lower for blacks compared to whites. ⁴⁴ The questions of political trust and efficacy, of comparing black and whites, are pursued in this research project.

Greenberg compared white and black children in Philadelphia

⁴³ Abramson. Socialization of Black Americans, p. 76.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

in the spring of 1968, using a sophisticated methodology for black and white, middle class and working class, school children. He found "the greatest racial disparities appear in children's assessment of government benevolence" and that "environment and political events seem to have a great impact on children's political orientation."⁴⁵ (One problem in Greenberg's research is that the respondents were interviewed during the spring of 1968 -- and on April 4 of that spring Martin Luther King, Jr. was gunned down. Greenberg does not mention this fact or whether any of his interviews took place after this traumatic event. Such an event certainly could have greatly affected the interviews of white and black school children.)

In summary, even young children are sensitive to dramatic and persisting political events. Individuals develop political orientations during childhood based on their own assessment of information from parents, teachers, and their own direct experience. As Stechenridge and Cutler summarize:

The basic and early political learning does, of course, provide a foundation for adult political orientations, but childhood is a time of 'incomplete socialization' because it cannot sufficiently prepare an individual for the volume and variety of political and social experiences that the adult will encounter.⁴⁶

Since political development is clearly not complete by adolescence, scholars began researching teenage socialization.

⁴⁵ Edward S. Greenberg, "Children and Government: A Comparison Across Racial Lines," Midwest Journal of Political Science 14 (1970) pp. 249-275.

⁴⁶ Stechenridge and Cutler, "Aging and Adult Political Socialization," p. 57.

III Political Socialization during Adolescence:

Jennings and Niemi carried out an ambitious project which became a landmark in socialization research. They surveyed a random sample of 1700 high school seniors and 2000 of their parents in 1965. Eight years later they interviewed the same individuals, and nine years after that they interviewed them a third time. Thus the study gathered a portrait of the political views of the cohort at ages 18, 26, and 35. This three wave study demonstrated the complexity of political socialization, and provided a wealth of information comparing the effect of different agents of socialization over time.

Following the first wave of interviews in 1965, the "parent-child transmission" model was clearly in trouble. Jennings and Niemi cast doubts on "any model of socialization which rests on assumptions of pervasive currents of parent-to-child value transmissions." They concluded that "the eighteen-year-old is no simple carbon copy of his parents."⁴⁷ In 1973, after Jennings and Niemi interviewed the same young people and their parents again, they found that the parents' politics were basically unchanged. Yet their offspring's views had diverged from them even further. Referring to the "pluralism of socialization forces," Jennings wrote:

Rather than being a product of a monolithic set of conditioners, the growing child in a complex society is more

⁴⁷ M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi, "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child," American Political Science Review 62 (1968) p. 183.

often the product of variegated multi-hued conditioners... [who might] evolve unique solutions which do not directly reflect any particular sources." ⁴⁸

Moreover, Jennings recognized that the experience of political events can profoundly affect the socialization process:

Sometimes these experiences are dramatic and leave a visible imprint on those undergoing them and particularly vulnerable to their effects... the attitudes of the young were particularly dependent on their direct and indirect experiencing of external events, quite apart from cue-giving within the family and school." ⁴⁹

While the events of the 1960s affected the young people dramatically, they appeared to have little influence on their parents, who remained "extra-ordinarily stable" compared to their children. ⁵⁰

Thus, it appeared that the age of the respondents -- the adolescence and early adulthood of the young people compared with their middle-aged parents -- affected the process of political learning. Individuals are more likely to be influenced by dramatic events during their youth than later in life. This and other studies threw the notion of persistence into question. Pre-adult learning, at least for this cohort, did not appear to persist into adulthood.

Many (including Jennings and Niemi) noted that universal theories of political socialization cannot be based on the three-wave study, because the events experienced by these youth were

⁴⁸ M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi. Political Character of Adolescence (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) p. 329.

⁴⁹ ibid., pp. 330-31.

⁵⁰ ibid. See also M. Kent Jennings and G.M. Markus, "Partisan Orientations Over the Long Haul: Results from the Three Wave Political Socialization Panel Study," American Political Science Review 78 (1984) pp. 1000-1018.

not typical. As Sears described the 1965 high school graduates:

The cohort was highly unusual, living its formative years through the decade of the most tumultuous social and political change since the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.⁵¹

Although every cohort studied will have particularities of its own historical context, the Jennings and Niemi panel remains very important to the understanding of the dynamics of political socialization. It analyzes a period when the pull of events was often in the opposite direction of the push of family influences.

The three wave study is particularly important to this research project because the cohort that Jennings and Niemi studied is the same general age group as the majority of the respondents in this dissertation. (The birth date of the Jennings and Niemi cohort was 1947; the median birth date of the 50 respondents in this study was 1949, the mean 1950 and the mode 1951.) So the three wave study provides a large framework with which to compare this research's smaller sample.

Jennings and Niemi demonstrated that political events can have a powerful effect on the political socialization of a whole generation. But why is this so? In order to understand the dynamics between the life cycle and the experience of historical events, a theory of individual development -- psychological as well as political -- is necessary.

⁵¹ David O. Sears, "Whither Political Socialization Research?" in Orit Ichilov, ed. Political Socialization, Citizenship Education, and Democracy (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990) p.76.

Erikson's Theory of Psychological Development:

As Connell demonstrated for school aged children, political learning is connected to psychological development. The early political socialization research relied on a literal reading of Freud, that childhood experiences, such as those of the child with his/her father's authority, formed an orientation which persisted through life. There was no model for political learning after childhood, no theory to assess experiences later in life. Erikson's theory provided a framework to look at political learning in life after childhood, one which points to the importance of society, of events going on around individuals, to the course of this learning.

Erikson elaborates a theory of life cycle development, diagrammed below. As each individual goes through life, he or she must work through a series of conflicts that can be understood as ego stages. During adolescence and early adulthood, individuals go through a particularly important stage for political learning. Erikson calls it a search for identity, stating that during this stage, "the individual is much closer to the historical day than he is at earlier stages of childhood development." ⁵²

Erikson states that one cannot separate "the identity crisis in individual life and contemporary crises in historical development because the two help to define each other and are truly relative to each other."⁵³ Such was the case for the

⁵² Eric Erikson. Identity Youth and Crisis (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968) p. 27.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 23.

respondents of this study, many of who traversed adolescence during the Civil Rights Movement. Writing in sixties, Erikson

Figure 1.1

Erik Erikson: Life Cycle Stages

VIII								INTIMACY vs. ISOLATION
VII							GENERAL- IZITY vs. ISOLATION	
VI						INTIMACY vs. ISOLATION		
V	Trust vs. Mistrust	Autonomy vs. Shame Doubt	Initiative vs. Guilt	Industry vs. Inferiority	Identity vs. Identity Confusion	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Genera- lity vs. Isolation	Intimacy vs. Isolation
IV				INDUSTRY vs. INFERIORITY	Task Ident- ification vs. Sense of Failure			
III			INITIATIVE vs. GUILT		Autonomy vs. Shame Doubt			
II		AUTONOMY vs. SHAME DOUBT			WILL to Be Controlled vs. Self-Doubt			
I	TRUST vs. MISTRUST				Trust vs. Mistrust			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Diagram from Erik Erikson, *Identity Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968) p. 93.

was well aware of the burgeoning youth movement. "Youth today," he commented, "seem to want to be everything which 'society' tells them not to be..."⁵⁴ One cannot separate individual from communal change, Erikson theorized, explaining that "identity formation ... is really a generational issue."⁵⁵

There are two implications of Erikson's identity concept that will be explored in this analysis. First is the importance of the period of adolescence and early adulthood to political learning, and second is the impact of historical events particularly during this developmental stage.

Some misinterpret Erikson's theory, seeing youthful rebellion as a temporary stage. But Sears distinguishes between two different life cycle models of socialization. The first he calls the "life cycle" model which posits that individuals have different dispositions at different points in their lives, specifically to rebel as youth and later become more conservative with age. An alternative model is that of "impressionable years", that sees the teens and twenties being a period where political development is more likely than any other period of life. He explains that the "impressionable years" thesis posits that "any dispositions are unusually vulnerable in late adolescence and early adulthood, given strong enough pressure to change."⁵⁶

Eriksonian theory is more consistent with the "impressionable years" model, where a strong identity formed in youth might persist through life. Erikson wrote case studies,

⁵⁴ ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁵ ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁶ Sears, "Whither Political Socialization?", p.77.

including Young Man Luther and Gandhi's Truth elaborating how the identity formed during youth and young adulthood and persisted through the lives of these two leaders.⁵⁷

Moreover, a recent article by Beck and Jennings, reanalyzing the three wave data, found evidence of the "impressionable years" model. They wrote that "the youth generation was less open to change after 1973 than it had been before," possibly because "their partisan inclinations began to harden with maturation and political experience..."⁵⁸ Rather than continue to change through out their lives, the baby boom cohort began stabilizing around the identity formed during their youth, an identity distinct from their parents.

However, debate continues over the models. Sears proposes testing three models. Along with the "life cycle" and "impressionable years" frameworks, he proposes a third called the "life long openness" model. This one is the opposite of the "persistence" perspective, proposing that "dispositions have an approximately uniform potential for change at all ages... age is irrelevant."⁵⁹ This dissertation tests the viability of these three models in people who became radical activists in adulthood and now are middle aged.

⁵⁷ Eric Erikson. Gandhi's Truth (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969); and Eric Erikson. Young Man Luther (New York: W.W. Norton, 1958).

⁵⁸ Paul A. Beck and M. Kent Jennings, "Family Traditions, Political Periods and the Development of Partisan Orientations," Journal of Politics, vol. 53, no.3, August. 1991, p. 756.

⁵⁹ Sears, "Whither Political Socialization?" p. 77.

Agents of Socialization:

Before going from adolescent to adult political socialization, a few points need to be made about "agents" of political socialization. In the early research on children, researchers placed much emphasis on these agents, particularly families, schools, and peers, producing countless books and articles on the subject. A comprehensive review is beyond the scope of this project, but a brief discussion is necessary.

The early socialization models contain static views of agents, as if they were constants transmitting traditional political values of society. Almond criticizes the field for being:

....engaged in a futile effort to impute relatively fixed values and weights to agents of socialization... socialization research overlooked the larger historical context and the inherent instability of variables.⁶⁰

Thus one complicating factor to studying agents of socialization is that they, too, are affected by historical and structural factors. Merelman points out that the family's social context, the link of a family to the polity, affects the role that the family played in socialization. When there is friction between the family and the larger society, (due to impoverishment, discrimination, dislocation, or other reasons) the family may pass on negative views of the political system.⁶¹

A second complicating factor is that the influence of the various agents over the individual changes during the life cycle.

⁶⁰ Gabriel A. Almond. A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science (Newbury Park: Sage, 1990) p.37.

⁶¹ Merelman, "Family and Political Socialization."

Beck graphed the "rough exposure of an individual to various agents from birth into adulthood, shown below:

Figure 1.2

Paul A. Beck: Rough Estimates of Exposure to Agents

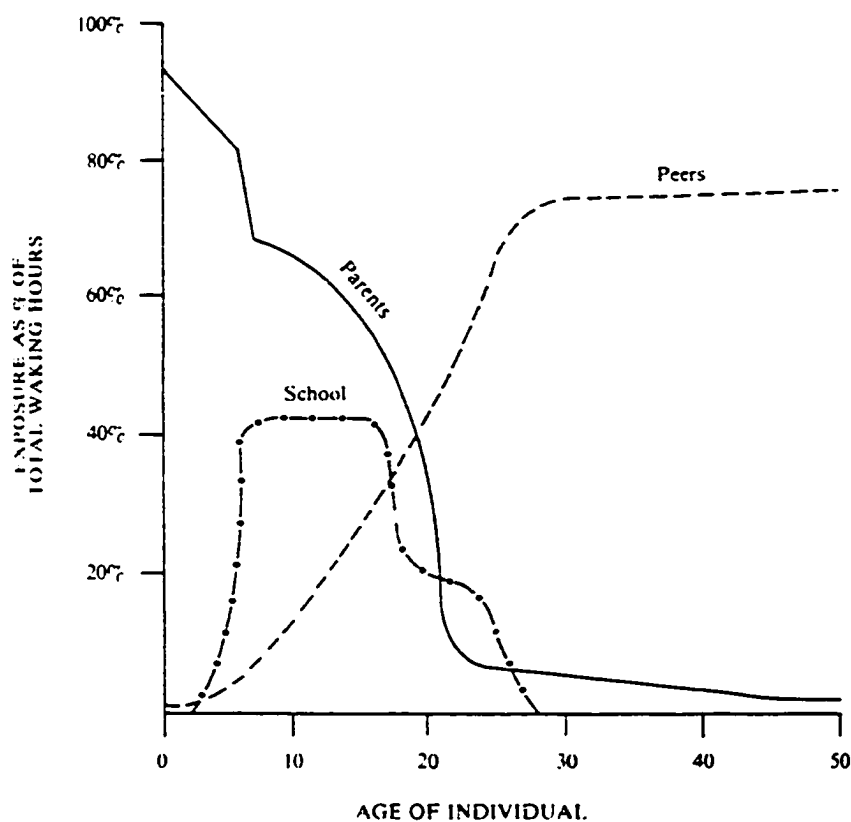


Diagram from Paul A. Beck, "The Role of Agents in Political Socialization," in Renshon, ed. Handbook of Political Socialization (New York: Free Press, 1977).

Beck explains that exposure is one of the "preconditions" for agents to influence individuals. Other preconditions included communication between the agent and the individual, and receptivity of the learner to the socializer. If one recognizes the potential for political learning after childhood, the graph demonstrates why studies of political socialization become more complicated as individuals become teenagers and young adults. The exposure of children to their parents and to schools drops off precipitously during these years, while time spent with peers increases. Communication and receptivity between parent and child might also diminish, although these preconditions clearly vary widely. Moreover, for different U.S. subcultures the norm of exposure, communication, and receptivity may vary widely.

Despite these serious complications to understanding the influence of agents of socialization, research has revealed some relationships between the agents that are useful for this project. The research reveals a paradox; on the one hand, the findings of Jennings and Niemi and other researchers failed to support the hypothesis that parents transmitted a political orientation to their young children which persisted over the lifetime. On the other hand the same research projects demonstrated that families did exert far more influence than any other agents. ⁶² Beck offered an explanation:

⁶² Studies finding that families exerted more influence than other agents include Donald T. Cundy, "Parents and Peers: Dimensions of Political Influence," Social Science Journal 19 (1982) pp. 13-23; Kenneth Langton and David Karns, "The Relative Influence of the Family, Peer Group, and School in the Development of Political Efficacy," Western Political Quarterly 22 (1969) pp. 813-26; Merelman, "Family and Political Socialization"; and Jennings and Niemi, Adolescence.

The most logical conclusion seems to be that agential influence explains only a part of political learning because the individual is capable of doing a substantial amount of learning on his own.⁶³

Not only is the influence of socialization agents limited, but also the relationship between them is often quite complex. Langton, for example, studied the relative impact of family, peer group and school in development of political efficacy in high school students in Jamaica. He found that "the family accounted for almost four times more movement along the entire efficacy scale than either the peer group or school."⁶⁴ But he also found that schools and peers influence some students in a different direction than their families. Specifically, schools in Jamaica that were homogeneously working class reinforced working-class norms. But "working class students in heterogeneous class schools appear to be re-socialized in the direction of higher class norms."⁶⁵

Like Langton's study, Jennings and Niemi's project also indicated that parents were more influential than high school teachers or peers in terms of partisanship, but peer relationships sometimes exert more influence on youth on policy issues. Tedin found a similar result. He interviewed recently graduated high school seniors, their parents and their best friends, to compare relative influence of peers versus parents.

⁶³ Beck, "Role of Agents," p. 141.

⁶⁴ Kenneth P. Langton and David A. Karns, "The Relative Influence of the Family, Peer Group, and School in the Development of Political Efficacy," Western Political Quarterly, vol 22, 1969, p. 813.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Langton, "Peer Group and School and the Political Socialization Process," American Political Science Review, vol 61, 1967, p. 753.

He found adolescents were more liberal and less partisan than parents, and closer to their best friends on issues such as racial integration of schools and foreign policy. But that there were "higher correlations between adolescents and parents than between adolescents and peers" on partisan identity.⁶⁶

Variation in dynamics between the "agent" and the child have an impact. Cundy tested the influence of parents versus peers in partisan choices in university students living away from home. He found that the character of the relationship between parents and their now grown children make a difference, especially the frequency of political discussions between them. He found that parents were more influential than peers, unless their relationship with their child was emotionally distant. In that case, the college students' friends sometimes filled the void on partisan choice.⁶⁷ Jennings and Niemi also found that the more discussion that went on within the family, the more agreement between parent and child. When parents disagreed with each other, the child was more liable to develop political views independent of both. When the parents agreed with each other, they exerted far more influence.⁶⁸

Langton proposes a model of cumulative learning, combining both persistence and change that may explain the dynamics of a

⁶⁶ Kent L., Tedin, "Assessing Peer and Parent Influence on Adolescent Political Attitudes," American Journal of Political Science, vol 24, 1980, p. 136.

⁶⁷ Donald T. Cundy, "Parents and Peers: Dimensions of Political Influence," Social Science Journal, vol 19, 1982, pp. 13-23.

⁶⁸ Jennings and Niemi, Political Character of Adolescence.

"structuring" from childhood -- and its limitations. Langton explained that research:

...demonstrates that although attitudes may be changed over the life-cycle, these same attitudes in adulthood are still being structured by the persistent influence of earlier socialization experiences.⁶⁹

Langton interviewed Peruvian mine workers and compared them with the Almond and Verba study on the US. He found "halo effect" of memories of past effective participation influenced perception of effective participation in the present. Langton posits that early learning in the family has a "halo effect" that influences how experiences in school are perceived, and which in turn influences how later experiences in the work force are perceived. Langton argues that socialization effects are cumulative; if experiences in school and at work reinforce early learning in the home, political socialization usually remains unchanged.

If experiences in school or at work contrast those in the family, however, an individual might change his or her views or beliefs. This also could happen if the individual becomes involved in a social movement. Langton's analysis of experience either affirming or contradicting childhood learning is explored in detail in this research.⁷⁰

In short, research indicates that political learning does take place throughout adolescence, in a process that involves the individual interacting with a number of socialization agents.

⁶⁹ Kenneth P. Langton, "Persistence and Change in Political Confidence Over the Life-Span: Embedding Life-Cycle Socialization in Context," British Journal of Political Science, vol 14, 1984, p. 462.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 461-81.

The exposure of the individual to the parents drops off, but a halo effect of early learning carries on, particularly if the experiences as an adolescent reinforce learning from childhood. On the other hand, the search for identity begins, making the adolescent more susceptible to influences from society.

IV Adult Political Socialization

Reviewing the research on adult political socialization, Sigel suggests that political outlooks and behaviors do indeed undergo changes during adulthood. This happens as people assume new roles or are exposed to new experiences. She states:

Adult political socialization is a social-learning process affected both by the individual's own development and the societal demands he or she has to cope with.⁷¹

Sigel's perspective is supported by a study conducted decades earlier. In the late 1930s, Newcomb studied Bennington college students over a four year period, documenting changes in political viewpoints in most students (all of them women). Newcomb weighed the factors of contemporary events as well as institutional influences.⁷² In the 1960s, Newcomb and colleagues carried out a retrospective study of the same students 25 years later. They found that for most women, the political changes in college had persisted over 25 years. Some, however, had become more liberal and others more conservative over time. Newcomb

⁷¹ Sigel, Political Learning in Adulthood, p. 459.

⁷² Theodore M. Newcomb. Personality and Social Change: Attitude Formation in a Student Community (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1943.)

found that the changes could be attributed largely to the influence of references groups, including spouses and friends, as well as contemporary events.⁷³

Current debate over adult socialization centers on the depth of the changes during adulthood. Are they superficial, connected to learning a new role as an adult? Or can they involve deeper changes in beliefs, philosophy, and character? The difference between the two contending orientations, "inculcation" versus "interactive", referred to earlier in this chapter, are most apparent in the research on adult political.

Many scholars who have the "inculcation" approach recognize that learning does take place during adulthood, but they see it as limited to learning new roles. Much current research political learning in the context of careers; for example, Peck's study of United Nations representatives indicating evolution of views over time⁷⁴, Searing's study of rebel Members of Parliament in Britain.⁷⁵

Steckenrider and Cutler summarize the inculcation approach, which is similar to Sears "structuring" principle. They recognize that adults are susceptible to change in political views, as a result of phenomena such as wars, depressions, or social movements, or changes in individual life situation. But

⁷³ Theodore M. Newcomb, et.al. Persistence and Change: Bennington College and Its Students After 25 Years (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967.)

⁷⁴ Richard Peck, "Socialization of Permanent Representatives in the United Nations: Some Evidence," International Organization 33 (1979) pp. 365-90.

⁷⁵ Donald Searing, "Theory of Political Socialization: Institutional Support and Deradicalization," British Journal of Political Science, vol 16, 1986, pp. 341-76.

they see this as superficial, based on the structure established in childhood:

Many, if not most, of an individual's basic political orientations are relatively stable through the life cycle... *the core of the political self is indeed acquired in childhood and remains quite stable, becoming the filter or perceptual screen to evaluate later political stimuli.*

By contrast, adult political socialization is generally conceived as being more relevant to specific events, programs, and personalities, which are more susceptible to change than basic social and political identifications and general beliefs about political institutions.⁷⁶

Renshon, in contrast, argues that adults are capable of deeper changes. He differentiates between "learning" and "development". Learning includes "role specific" knowledge as Steckenrider and Cutler describe. "Development", on the other hand, involves more significant change. In a study of political leaders, Renshon demonstrates political modifications in adults involving "the integration of information or understandings which significantly alter the way leaders think and act." These can lead to "major changes in the way leaders approach their political responsibilities." ⁷⁷ Renshon explains that political development can go either direction. It could be a "reversal", involving "changes in nature and direction" (such as Reagan changing from a liberal to conservative as a young adult). Or the development could be an "elaboration", defined as "an important change in understanding and perspective... more in a deepening and specification of that perspective than an reversal

⁷⁶ Steckenrider and Cutler, "Aging and Adult Political Socialization," p. 59, emphasis added.

⁷⁷ Renshon, "Adult Development," in Sigel, ed. Adulthood, p. 204 .

of it." ⁷⁸

Renshon bases his thesis on the psychological theories of Erikson and Levinson. Erikson sees potential for growth or decline at any of the stages of life of an individual, during adulthood or childhood. His studies of Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi reveal significant psychological and political changes during their adult years. ⁷⁹

Levinson's work is based on Eriksonian theory, but it is more specified for "regular people". He focuses on the psychological development of 40 men, stating that adult development involves the "evolution of the life structure," which is the "underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time." ⁸⁰ The individual's structures evolve and could greatly change based on time and conditions. Levinson outlines three basic stages of adulthood. The first, early adulthood, runs from age from age 18 to age 40 (thus encompassing Erikson's identity stage). The second, middle adulthood, begins around age 40 until age 60, and the third stage, starts when the individual reaches 60 years of age. ⁸¹

Renshon points out the significance of the Erikson/Levinson psychological theory for political learning. Early

⁷⁸ ibid. Other scholars emphasize adult learning as well. See Virginia Sapiro, "What do we Know about Political Socialization During Adulthood?" paper presented to the International Society for Political Psychology, Washington DC, July 11-14, 1990.

⁷⁹ Erikson, Ghandi; and Erikson, Luther.

⁸⁰ D.J. Levinson, et.al. The Season's of a Man's Life (New York: Knopf, 1978) p. 42.

⁸¹ ibid.

psychoanalytic models emphasized the persistence of patterns developed early in life. But Renshon holds the "character, self, and personality dynamics unfold not only during childhood, but after it." Therefore, "all but the most rigid political leaders can develop in adulthood even at the level of character." And such development takes place in the individual's social-political context, where one builds "life structures in the confines of the socio-cultural world." The source of the changes are experiences, which could be of many different kinds: historic events, personal traumas, or "mismatches between beliefs and expectations." The changes could be in policy issues or "more basic orientations like political beliefs and philosophy".⁸²

The framework used for this project includes the Renshon approach to adult political learning based on the Erikson theory of life cycle development.

V Summary

Looking back at the four basic questions raised in the Introduction, in light of this chapter's review of the political socialization research, the following points can be summarized:

1. *Events affect all aspects of political learning.*

The Hyman/Easton theory may explain political socialization in tranquil times, but it fell apart during the 1960s. The

⁸² Renshon, "Adult Development," pp. 216-18.

sixties generation "turned socialization theory upside down,"⁸³ The very process of political socialization appears to be substantially different during times of great upheavals. Not only are children and adolescence affected by events, but adults as well. In turbulent times, the agents of socialization are themselves affected and become unstable. This dissertation looks in detail at the effect of the events of the sixties and seventies on 50 individuals. Is proximity to events important? Do specific occurrences have greater influence if they are connected to larger historical questions, unresolved issues, or social movements?

2. *Age appears to make a big difference in political socialization.*

Jennings and Niemi found in a representative sample of the sixties generation that young people responded to the same events as their parents, but that they *changed their political attitudes and orientations* while their parents did not. Thus the "identity stage" described by Erikson seems to have explanatory power, especially if it occurs during dramatic historical events. Studies by Renshon on political leaders demonstrates that significant changes can also occur in later periods of adulthood. This dissertation studies 50 people, most of them -- but not all -- were in their "identity stage" during the Civil Rights Movement. Are young people more liable to change their political orientations and/or become activists during this time? Do

⁸³ Almond, Discipline Divided, p. 38.

significant changes occur even later in life?

3. *Families play a big, though not determining role, in socialization.*

Though children are not "blue prints" of their parents, families play a bigger role in political socialization than any other agent. Families role varies greatly. Many questions for this research project: how do families affect the political socialization of radical activists? Are the radicals carrying on a family tradition? rebelling against their family? incorporating some values and breaking with others? These questions are taken up in the review of the research of activists of the 1960s in the following chapter.

The final question posed in the introduction is "can a process of political learning for radical activists be identified; can steps in this process be mapped?" This is the specific focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

RADICAL ACTIVISM:

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON 1960s PROTESTERS AND A
PROPOSED MODEL FOR MAPPING
THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF RADICAL ACTIVISTS

"Rarely in history has apparent apathy been replaced so rapidly by publicized activism," wrote Kenneth Kenniston describing the sudden outburst of protest among young people in the 1960s.⁸⁴ Matthews and Prothro wrote that they were witnessing "a revolution in progress,"⁸⁵ as they studied southern blacks during this period. Analyzing the corresponding student movement in the North, Flacks delineated a "liberated generation."⁸⁶ This chapter reviews these and other studies of the protestors of the sixties and seventies. It also summarizes the more recent retrospective studies of the same cohort of activists, including Braungart and Braungart's "life course" analysis of activist leaders which is especially important to the

⁸⁴ Kenneth Kenniston, "The Sources of Student Dissent," Journal of Social Issues 23n3 (1967) p. 109.

⁸⁵ Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro. Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1966) p. vii.

⁸⁶ Richard Flacks, "The Liberated Generation: An Exploration of the Roots of Student Protest," Journal of Social Issues 23n3 (1967) pp. 52-75.

theoretical framework of this dissertation.⁸⁷ The chapter concludes with my own elaboration of a life-course model for mapping the development of radical activists. First, however, it is necessary to define some basic terms such as "activist" and "radical".

Defining "Radical Activists"

This dissertation analyzes two dimensions of an individual's politics -- beliefs and behavior. Often related, these dimensions are nevertheless distinct. One can be politically active and have any one of a wide range of beliefs. On the other hand, a person can have radical political beliefs and never act on them.

Activism belongs in the dimension of political behavior. The clearest way to describe it is to place it on a scale with other forms of political participation. Matthews and Prothro developed a scale of political involvement. "Talking about politics," ie. paying attention and discussing current events, is the lowest level of involvement, followed by voting, and by membership in a political organization. One becomes an activist at the next level by becoming involved in a campaign or participating in a demonstration. There are varying degrees of activism, from a single act, to periodic participation, to

⁸⁷ Margaret M. Braungart and Richard G. Braungart, "The Life Course Development of Left- and Right-Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s" Political Psychology 11n2 (June 1990) pp. 243-82.

activism becoming a regular part of daily life.⁸⁸ A scale of political participation, based on Matthews and Prothro, is used throughout this dissertation to measure activist involvement of the respondents and their families. It is further discussed in Chapter 4 on methodology.

Radical describes a category of political beliefs, which may or may not accompany activist behavior. It is thus part of a dimension of politics separate from involvement. This dissertation traces the evolution of the respondents' political beliefs, particularly the development of leftist politics. Radicals are distinct from liberals in terms of the degree of change they see necessary, and their orientation towards the existing power structure. They are "that segment of society which has sought fundamental changes in the economic, political, and cultural systems" as distinct from "reformers who believe that change can be accommodated to existing capitalist structures."⁸⁹ Whereas liberals see the need for change, they believe it is possible to bring it about through working "within the system". Radicals, in contrast, believe that change should be fundamental, and that the system itself should be reordered.

Like any political belief, there are many shades of radicalism. The respondents in this study developed communist politics, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 9. One point must be made clearly, however. The respondents in this study are clearly distinct from radicals those who became terrorists. The

⁸⁸ Matthews and Prothro, New Southern Politics, pp.37-60.

⁸⁹ Mari Jo Buhle, et.al. Encyclopedia of the American Left (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1992) p. xi.

distinction is based on the use of violence. Though the respondents were radical, their tactics were non-violent. In contrast, some sixties activists such as the Weathermen, became terrorists and carried out violent acts.⁹⁰

In brief, activism is a dimension of political behavior, that requires greater involvement than voting or organizational membership, and can be quantified in a political participation scale. Radical refers to the dimension of political beliefs that sees the need for fundamental change. The process of development of both these dimensions in 50 individuals is the focus of this dissertation.

Studies of the Activists of the "Liberated Generation"

On February 1, 1960, four black college students sat down Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C., and ordered a cup of coffee. When the waitress refused to serve them, as dictated by the southern custom of segregation, the well-dressed young men continued to sit until the store closed. They returned the next day, and the next, each time accompanied by more students. Matthews and Prothro described the impact of their actions:

Thus began the "sit-ins", a movement that was to plunge the South into turmoil for many months and revolutionize the pace and tactics of the Negro civil

⁹⁰ Braungart and Braungart describe the process of becoming terrorists in "From Protest to Terrorism: The Case of SDS and the Weathermen", paper presented to the International Society of Political Psychology, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 1989.

While there are cases of leftist terrorism in the US, the most prevalent form of terrorism is from the far right, from the Ku Klux Klan, whose entire strategy is terrorism, a point discussed in the historical context chapter.

rights activities in the U.S. from that day forward.⁹¹

The sit-ins spread like wild-fire among African-American youth in the South, as they targeted segregated public accommodations, including movie theaters, restaurants, swimming pools, beaches, and others. With-in a few days of the Greensboro action, sit-ins were held in Durham, Winston-Salem, and other cities in North Carolina. Within a month they had spread to South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Florida, and Alabama. Within a year and a half, there had been demonstrations reported in over 100 cities and towns, involving more than 70,000 blacks and their white supporters.⁹²

In 1962 Matthews and Prothro conducted a comprehensive study on the changing political participation of blacks in the South. As well as surveying political leaders and average black and white citizens, they interviewed a representative cross-section of black college students from the South. 340 students were randomly selected from 11 black universities (the only institutions of higher education that admitted large numbers of blacks at that time).

The degree of participation of the African-American students revealed that they were truly a "liberated generation," radically breaking from the political posture of their parents, and challenging the power structure of the South to its core. *Eighty-five percent of the students interviewed approved of the sit-ins, and one in four had participated in them.* Despite their

⁹¹ Matthews and Prothro, New Southern Politics, p. 407.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 408.

non-violent tactics, 10% of the protesters were pushed, jostled, or spat upon, 15% were arrested, and 5% thrown in jail.⁹³

Matthews and Prothro found that the young women participated at rates nearly equal to the young men. This was in sharp contrast to the older generation they interviewed at the same time, where they found not only a very low level of political participation among black adults, but also that there were extremely few women among those politically active.⁹⁴

The psychological profile that Matthews and Prothro found among the protesters was the opposite of the alienated or bitter discontent. In contrast they found that the sit-in participants were "unusually optimistic about race relations and tolerant of whites" compared to the overall black population of the South.

Matthews and Prothro found that the higher the social status of the African-American students, the more likely they were to be active. However, the family incomes of the "better off" students were quite modest compared to national standards. The same year that Matthews and Prothro carried out their study, Michael Harrington published the classic, The Other America, describing \$3000 as the poverty line at that time.⁹⁵ A significant percentage of the student protesters surveyed fell beneath this line. The highest income category in Matthews and Prothro's study was \$6000 or more annual family income. Thirty-four percent of the students from this category had been "personally involved" in

⁹³ ibid., pp. 413-15.

⁹⁴ ibid., pp. 416-117.

⁹⁵ Michael Harrington, The Other America (New York: Penguin Books, 1962,1981) pp. 190-96.

the sit-ins. Students from the lower categories of family income were somewhat less involved (19% of those with family incomes of \$4000 to \$5999; 26% of those in the \$2000 to \$3999; and a big drop off for the very poorest -- only 6% of those whose family incomes were less than \$2000 a year). However, over 40% of Matthews and Prothro's interview sample were from families who were below \$3999 -- people who were near or below the poverty level. Matthews and Prothro explain that the protestors "felt deprived by "white" or general American standards of judgement at the same time they felt relatively advantaged by Negro standards."⁹⁶

The black students in the South inspired many throughout the nation, including their white counterparts in other parts of the nation. During the 60s, Flacks studied the "increasingly self-conscious student movement" which "began primarily as a response to the efforts by southern Negro students to break the barriers of legal segregation in public accommodations." He noted that hundreds of northern white students participated in the Civil Rights Movement, and that the scope of their concerns expanded to include such issues as the arms race, civil liberties, poverty, educational issues, and the war in Vietnam. ⁹⁷

Flacks carried out political socialization studies focused on the relationship between the student activists and their parents. Whereas Matthews and Prothro's study demonstrated a general generational change, through comparing the youth they surveyed to the older generation they surveyed, Flacks' studies

⁹⁶ Matthews and Prothro, New Southern Politics, p. 424.

⁹⁷ Flacks, "Liberated Generation," p. 53.

demonstrated the *specific* relationships between the youth and their parents.

Flacks carried out two studies that compared student activists and non-activists. The first study included approximately 50 student activists and their parents, matched with 50 non-activists and their parents. The second study involved students at the University of Chicago where an anti-Vietnam draft sit-in became a building occupation in 1966. The respondents included randomly selected sit-in participants, uninvolved students, and students opposed to the sit-in. Flacks compared the protesters to the non-protesters, characterizing them as "urban, highly educated, Jewish or irreligious, with professional and affluent parents." ⁹⁸ Of those whose family income was \$15,000 more than half were activists. (At that time, \$15,000 annual income included people in the top fifth of the country economically.⁹⁹) Their fathers tended to be professional, and their mothers employed.

Flacks found that activism was related to a complex of values, shared by both the students and parents. The student protesters were more idea oriented, intellectual, with aesthetic pursuits and humanitarian concerns. In contrast, the non-participants had more conventional orientations, were more oriented towards material success. While the students were more radical than their parents, the parents were more liberal than average parents. Flacks hypothesized that the radical youth were

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁹⁹ Harrington, Other America, p. 194.

acting out values they had learned in the home.¹⁰⁰

Kenneth Keniston's in-depth studies of anti-war activists involved in the 1967 "Freedom Summer" supported Flacks findings. Kenniston wrote a compelling portrait of these activists, emphasizing the distinction between activist and alienated youth. He defined an activist as one who "acts together with others in a group... is concerned with some ethical, social, ideological or political issue, and ...holds liberal or 'radical' views."¹⁰¹ Like Flacks, he found that activists he studied (who were all white) came from upper middle class homes, and were altruistic and optimistic. He summarizes:

...activists are not drawn from disadvantaged, status-anxious, underprivileged or uneducated groups; on the contrary, they are ... from among those young Americans who have had the most socially fortunate upbringings.¹⁰²

Kenniston pointed out that some historical settings are especially conducive to protests, and that "current realities fall so far short of the ideals [the young protester] sees as central to the American creed." Like Matthews and Prothro's finding of a generally positive psychological profile among black student activists, Kenniston concluded that protesters as a group are "unusually 'healthy' psychologically".¹⁰³

Despite the observations of Kenniston and Matthew and Prothro that the protesters were psychologically more healthy

¹⁰⁰ Flacks, "Liberated Generation," p. 68.

¹⁰¹ Kenniston, "Sources," p. 116.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, pp. 112-127.

than the norm, I am not making this assumption in this dissertation. Instead, my assumption is that the psychological health of the respondents reflects the norm of society. Scholars have sometimes debated the character of those who are moved to action versus those who remain uninvolved. Gergen and Ullman reviewed numerous research projects on various character traits of political activists, including aggression, optimism-pessimism, authoritarianism, group affiliation, alienation, autonomy, conformity, power and dominance, distrust, self-esteem, altruism, and intellectual ability. They found little unity among these studies, except on group affiliation, a characteristic they found to be high among activists (who after all have joined groups).¹⁰⁴ Based on these findings, the assumption in this project is that the overall psychological characteristics of protesters is not fundamentally distinct from the general population.

In short, the early studies of young black protesters in the South and young whites in the North found many similarities, but also some differences. In both regions of the country, activism was a generational issue, and in both cases the youth were responding to events taking place around them. The two groups differed in family economic status, with the northern whites considerably better off compared to the southern blacks. And there was a difference in issues that were the objects of protest. While in all regions of the country protests involved a wide range of issues, in the South, issues of race predominated, while in other regions, the anti-war protest played a bigger

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth J. Gergen and Matthew Ullman, "Socialization and the Characterological Basis of Political Activism," in Stanley Renshon, ed. Handbook, pp. 411-44.

role.

Of significance to this project is the fact that more political socialization studies focused on whites than on blacks. The studies on blacks tended to be surveys rather than in-depth interviews, including their relationships with their parents. For example, Orum analyzed data collected on over 3000 black college students in black colleges in 1964, finding that men were more active than women, and that individuals from stable families tended to be more active.¹⁰⁵ Fenwich compared white and black college students, finding the black respondents were more liberal than the whites, with less variance within the group.¹⁰⁶ The in-depth studies, such as those of Flacks and Kenniston, that focused on interactions between activists and their families are limited to white middle-class, mostly men, outside the South.

Retrospective studies in the 1980s:

Jennings analyzed the individuals in his large sample who reported that they were political activists. Over three waves of interviews, Jennings found that there was some "erosion over time" in their political orientations, but overall a strong continuity in terms of their party identification and electoral

¹⁰⁵ Anthony Orum, Black Students in Protest (Washington: American Sociological Association, 1972).

¹⁰⁶ James M. Fenwich and Ellis S. Kraus, "Student Activism and Adult Left-Wing Politics," in Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change, vol 1. JAI Press, 1978.

choice.¹⁰⁷ In the 1980s, studies based on interviews or reinterviews of sixties activists, including Braungart and Braungart,¹⁰⁸ Whalen and Flacks,¹⁰⁹ Hoge and Ankney,¹¹⁰ Marwell,¹¹¹ Fenwich and Turner,¹¹² found strong continuity over time in the basic beliefs of the respondents. A number of individuals continued to be active, but many of those interviewed were less active for a variety reasons, including disillusionment and loss of efficacy (Flacks) or mellowing political views and age factors (Braungart).

The most interesting retroactive is the study by Braungart and Braungart on left and right youth activist leaders from the 1960s. They interviewed individuals who a generation ago were leaders in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a left wing student group, founded in 1960; and Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), a right-wing campus organization also founded in 1960.

The Braungarts call for the development of a "life course" model of political learning, encompassing three different

¹⁰⁷ M. Kent Jennings, "Residues of a Movement: The Aging of the American Protest Generation," American Political Science Review 81n2 (June, 1987) pp. 367-82.

¹⁰⁸ Braungart and Braungart, "Life Course."

¹⁰⁹ Jack Whalen and Richard Flacks, "The Illa Vista 'Bank Burners' 10 Years Later," Sociological Forces 13 (1980) pp. 215-35.

¹¹⁰ Dean R. Hoge and Teresa L. Ankney, "Occupations and Attitudes of Former Student Activists 10 Years Later," Journal of Youth and Adolescence 11 (1982) pp. 355-71.

¹¹¹ Gerald Marwell, et.al. "The Persistence of Political Attitudes Among 1960s Civil Rights Activists," Public Opinion Quarterly 51 (1982) pp. 359-75.

¹¹² James M. Fenwich and R.W. Turner, "The Transition from Student to Adult Politics," Social Forces 67 (1989) pp.1049-57.

theories of political socialization. The three theories are:

(1) life cycle: the Eriksonian life stages and their impact on political learning; (2) socialization: the learning aspect of developing a political outlook; (3) generational: the impact of a large cohort experiencing historical events at the same stage in their life cycle. In their study of right and left activists, the Braungarts found that the respondents had similar life cycle and generational effects, but different socializing experiences.¹¹³

Braungart and Braungart found that almost all of the respondents followed the political direction of their parents, although they were much more active. The parents of the SDS leaders were similar to those studied by Flacks -- individuals who worked in the public sector, teachers, civil servants. The parents of the YAF leaders were somewhat more diverse, but tended to be conservative.¹¹⁴

The Braungarts' model, focusing on the interaction between individuals and their socio-historical settings, provides a useful framework for this dissertation. Like the Braungart study, I am analyzing the activists' relationship to their parents, on the one hand, and to political events, on the other. This project, however, studies demographically different respondents. Braungarts' study (like most of political socialization research) involves northern, middle-class, white respondents, where as this project includes an equal number of black and white respondents, many from working class backgrounds

¹¹³ Braungart and Braungart, "Life Course," p. 280.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 258-62.

and from the South. Moreover, the individuals the Braungarts studied are approximately 8 years older than the average age of the respondents I interviewed. Braungarts' respondents became leaders as college students in the early 1960s. In contrast, this research includes mainly adult activists in the 1970s, who were grass roots activists, a few of whom were local leaders; some of them first became involved as student protesters, others who never went to college, and still others dropped out of school to be full-time activists.

A Proposed Model for Mapping the Political Socialization of Activists:

Based on a review of the political socialization literature, it is clear that the political learning process is complex. In order to get a handle on such a complex process, I propose a "map" for charting the political learning process. How does one "map" a radical activist? To address the basic four questions raised in the introduction, a model of political socialization for this project should incorporate contemporaneous historical events, the life cycle of individual respondents, the interaction between the respondents and different agents of socialization, and the decisions made by these individual over time.

Brewster Smith proposes a "map for analysis of personality and politics,"¹¹⁵ which he explains is a "declaration of intellectual strategy." Reproduced below, Smith's map points out

¹¹⁵ M. Brewster Smith, "A Map for the Analysis of Personality and Politics," Journal of Social Issues, vol.24, no.3, 1968, pp. 15-28.

Figure 2.1

M. Brewster Smith:

Map for the Analysis of Personality and Politics

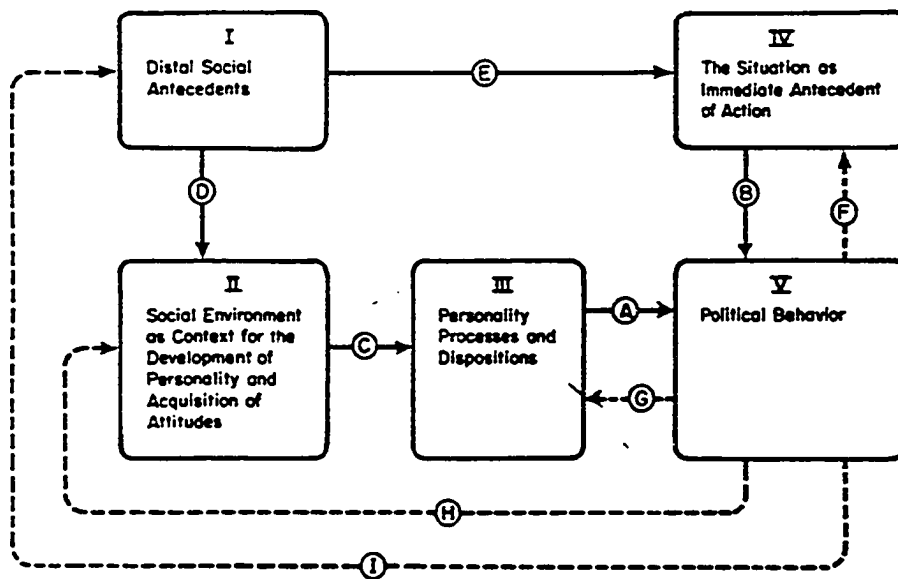


Diagram from M. Brewster Smith, "A Map for the Analysis of Personality and Politics," Journal of Social Issues 24n3 (1968) p.17.

the factors deemed important and some aspects of their relationships to each other. Smith's model indicates that he considers events to play a significant role in individual political behavior. The five boxes in his map are:

I "Distal social antecedents": these are remote historical events, such as those which might have occurred during childhood.

II "Social environment as context for the development of personality and the acquisition of attitudes": these include factors such as social-economic class, race, gender, geographic location.

III "Personality processes and dispositions": this aspect of Smith's model is developed in great detail in his article. Many of the factors he discusses are beyond the scope of this project.

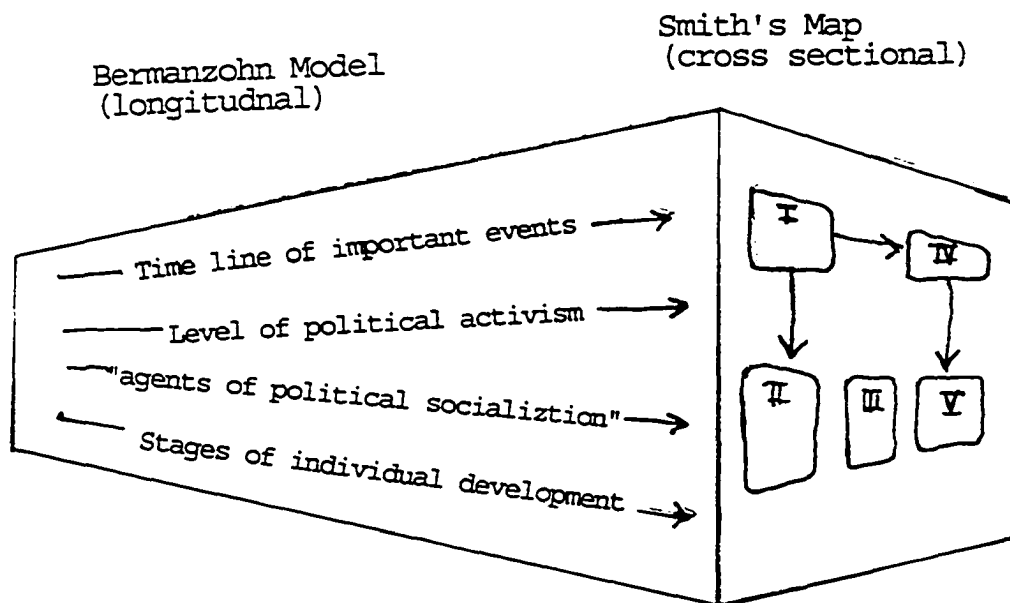
IV "The situation as immediate antecedent of action": indicates that a proximate event can affect political behavior.

V "Political behavior": the action an individual takes.

This dissertation looks at all these factors, but from a different perspective. Smith's map is cross sectional; mine is longitudinal. Looking at development longitudinally lends itself to the consideration of life cycle evolution and the impact of families and other agents of socialization over time. Thus I take Smith's factors and look at them over time. Below is a three dimensional diagram of showing the relationship between Smith's map and my proposed framework.

Figure 2:2

Relationship between Smith Map and
Longitudinal Proposal in this Dissertation



On the next page is my proposed framework for mapping the political development of an activist that incorporates the following points:

1. Historical events in one's life time affect one's political socialization. Therefore a model of socialization for an activist should include a time line, starting at the date of birth, and including significant events for that individual's social context. (The time line includes Smith's "distal antecedents" and "immediate situation".)

2. Psychological development and life cycle events influences one's politics, and should be included. This model indicates some of the stages outlined by Erikson and Levinson.

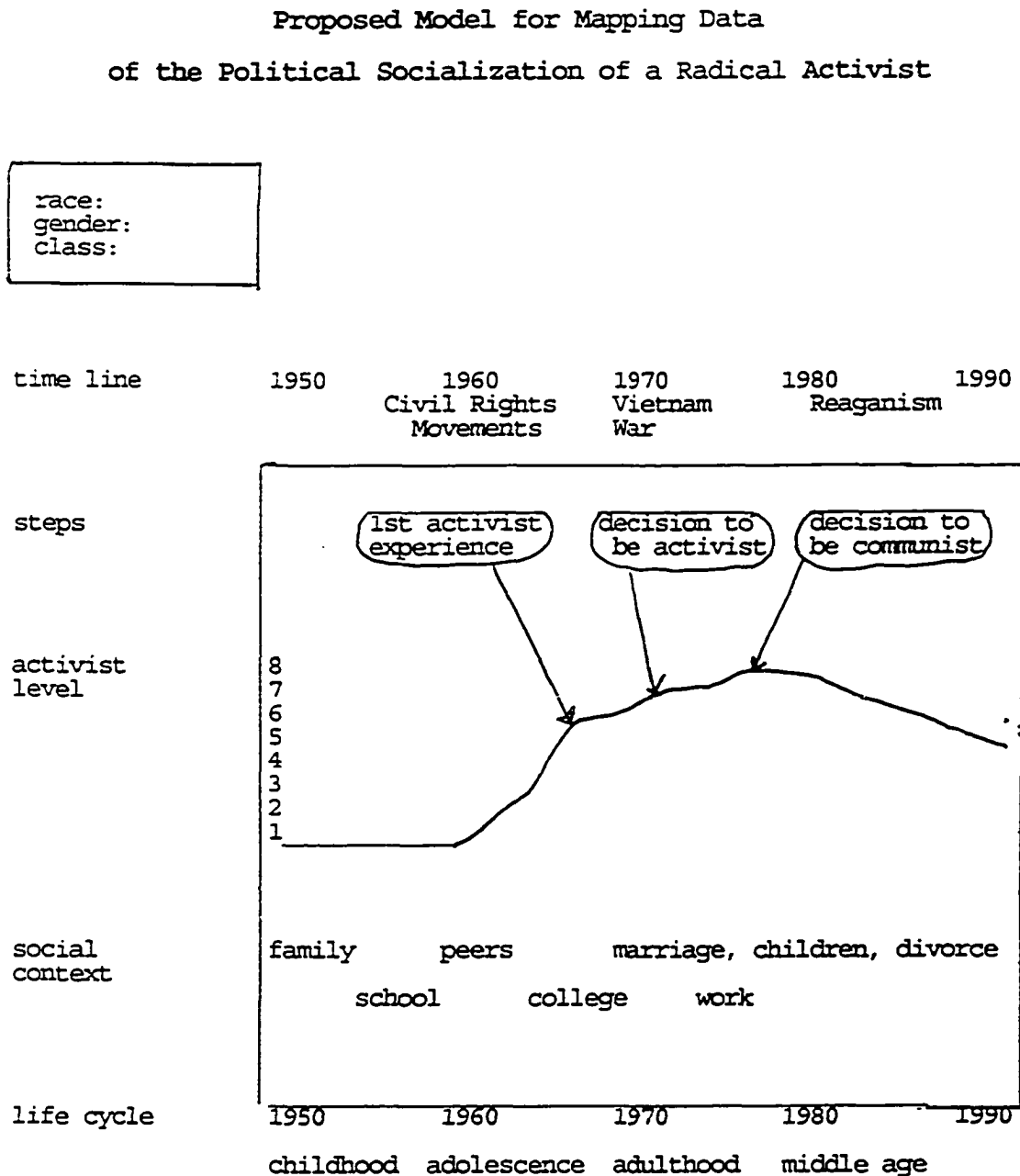
3. Agents of socialization, including the family, peers, school, and jobs, are considered in their own social context. (Smith includes these in his social environment box, but they are more specified in this model.)

4. Political behavior is charted in terms of levels of activism. (Note: beliefs are harder to quantify, and are considered separately.)

The top box, includes important individual demographic factors -- race, gender, and social class. Factors such as ethnicity, religion and geographic location could also be included if determined important to that individual.

Next is a time line, the historical context, indicating long-lasting events significant to the individual's development.

Figure 2:3



Moving down the diagram, the next band are the major steps the individual takes in his or her activist development, including the first activist experience, the decision to become an activist as a life focus, and, for these respondents, the decision to become a communist. By placing them on a time line, one can look at them in relationship to family experiences and historical events.

Just below is a graph of levels of activism for the individual at different points in his or her life. The scale is explained in Chapter 4 on methodology.

The next band is the social context, indicating the "agents of political socialization," including the family, peers, school, work, marriage, and children. Each of these factors can be a positive or negative influence on activism.

Finally, at the bottom of the diagram are the basic stages in the life cycle.

This model is used to chart the life course political learning of the 50 radical activists in this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3
MODELS OF POLITICAL PROTEST
FROM THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT LITERATURE

The study of political socialization of individuals who were involved in the protest movements necessitates consideration of the social movement literature. This body of literature addresses the origins of protest movements, their tactics, successes, failures, growth, decline, the response of political elites, and the movements' impact on the larger society. The level of analysis is quite different from that of political socialization, where the focus is on the individual. The framework of this dissertation combines aspects of both literatures, because it analyzes the impact of social movements on individuals' political socialization. Thus it is important to identify aspects of social movement theory that help explain the impact of collective protest on the political learning of activists.

The social movements of the sixties jolted not only theories of political socialization, but also stimulated debate over collective protest. This chapter assesses 3 models of protest behavior developed through studying the 1960s, and one based on European movements in the 1980s. These include Gurr's deprivation model, the resource mobilization model, Piven and Cloward's disruption model, and Melucci's new social movement

model. Before discussing these theories, the section below defines protest in the context of political participation. The final section of the chapter summarizes the aspects of each theory used in the framework of this research.

Definition of Protest in the Context of Political Participation

Dalton defines protest behavior as a form of citizen participation that "bursts beyond the bounds of conventional politics to include demonstrations, protests, and other forms of unconventional political action." It is "a direct-action technique of confronting political elites, instead of participating within a framework defined by elites."¹¹⁶

Marsh outlined four categories of unconventional political behavior, diagramed below. Protest activism is a spectrum which lies between conventional political behavior (such as voting or lobbying) and violent upheaval (civil war, sabotage, guerrilla warfare, etc.) The type of protest closest to conventional politics includes signing a petition or attending a lawful demonstration. The next gradation includes direct-actions such as boycotts. The third level involves illegal but non-violent protests, for example, unofficial strikes, peaceful building occupations, and sit-ins and other civil disobedience. The final type of protest involves use of personal violence such as

¹¹⁶ Russell J. Dalton, Citizen Politics in Western Democracies (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1988), p. 59.

Figure 3.1

Alan Marsh: Diagram of Protest Political Behavior

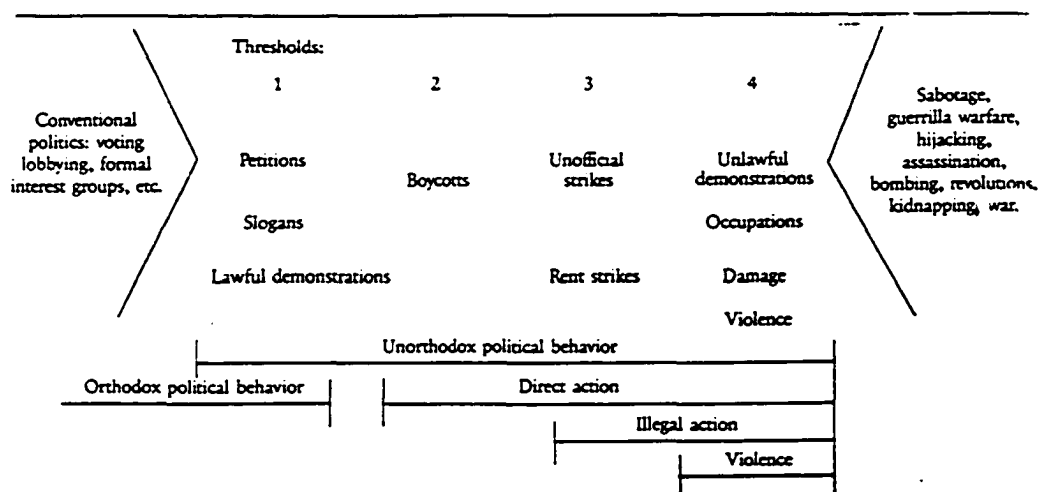


Diagram by Alan Marsh, modified and reproduced in Russell J. Dalton, Citizen Politics in Western Democracies (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1988) p.64.

fighting with police or deliberate damage of property.¹¹⁷ Thus protest covers a wide range of political behavior.

Historically, social scientists viewed protest politics as a last desperate attempt of oppressed groups. But beginning in the 1960s, such participation markedly increased. Barnes and Kasse state, "the waves of political protest that swept the advanced industrial democracies in the late 1960s startled the scholars as well as the politicians,"¹¹⁸ and based on a study of eight western nations in the 1970s, they conclude that "this increase in potential for protest [is] a lasting character of democratic mass publics..."¹¹⁹

Why did these social movements of the sixties and seventies erupt? Several explanations have been offered.

Deprivation Model:

In 1970, Gurr expounded a theory of why people rebel, based on studies of conflicts between groups inside many countries. Using historical, societal, and psychological factors, Gurr described a three step process, diagrammed on the next page.

The first and most important step involved the development of discontent based on deprivation. Gurr hypothesized that the

¹¹⁷ Alan Marsh and Max Kasse, "Measuring Political Action," in Barnes and Kasse, ed. Political Action (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979) pp.70-71.

Note: an example of different types of collective action can be seen on November 3, 1979. The respondents of this study planned the demonstration as a lawful one, including a police permit (Marsh type 2 protest). The Klan and Nazis violently attacked the demonstrators (Marsh type 4).

¹¹⁸ Barnes and Kasse, eds. Political Action, p. 13.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.524.

Figure 3.2

Ted Gurr: Deprivation Model

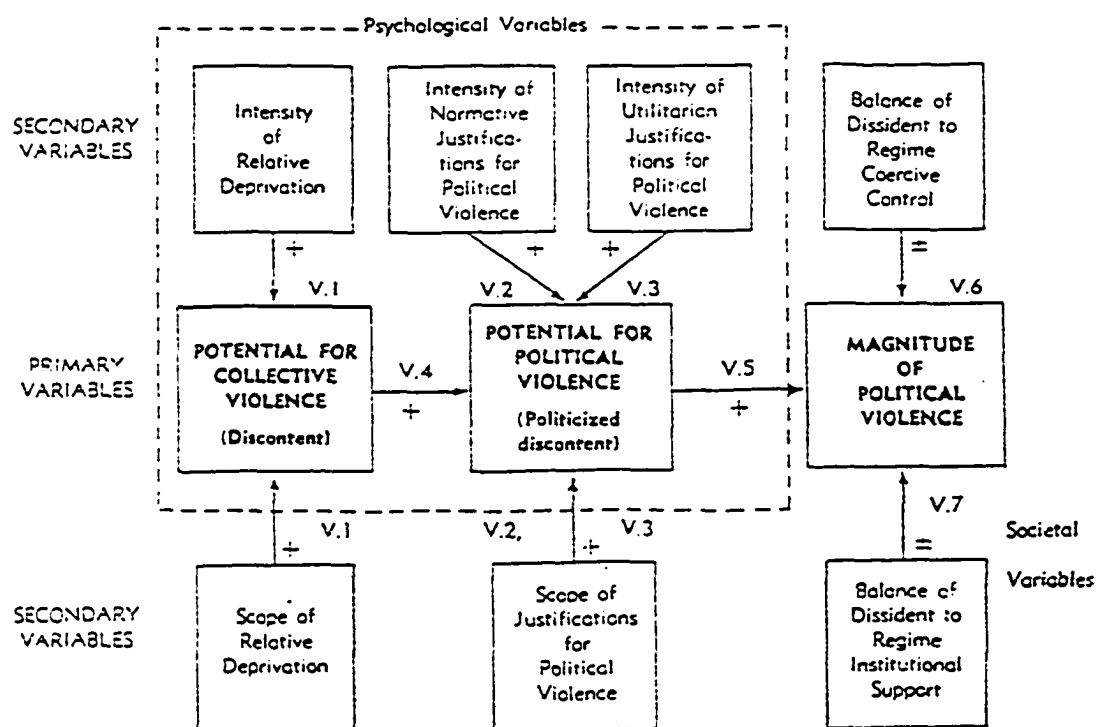


Diagram from Ted R. Gurr, Why Men Rebel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 320.

primary source of protest behavior is "the frustration-aggression mechanism." Anger induced by the frustration of relative deprivation "is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression."¹²⁰

In the second step, the individual holds the government as responsible for his or her discontent, and thus discontent is politicized. This is affected by beliefs and various kinds of justifications, including utilitarian ("it will work"), normative ("it is the right thing to do"), and historical ("avenge our forefathers").

The manifestation of protest in political action, the third step, is particularly affected by the political environment. The coercive powers of the state and the variety of peaceful channels to vent grievances shape the nature and outcome of the protest actions.¹²¹

Gurr's theory stimulated many survey research projects as well as debate. Controversy centered mainly on the theory of relative deprivation as the basis of protest and rebellion. For example, Dalton analyzed political participation in the United States, Britain, France, and West Germany, in the 1970s, and found that material deprivation was not the basis of activism. Protestors were dissatisfied with existing policy, but of the many who are dissatisfied relatively few demonstrate. The four-nation study found protest more common among males and the highly educated than among women and the less educated;

¹²⁰ Ted Gurr, Why Men Rebel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) p. 22.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

collective action was notably higher among the politically efficacious. Dalton summarized the findings:

In short, protest is not simply an outlet for the alienated and deprived; often, just the opposite appears. Policy dissatisfaction is a motivation to protest, but... protesters are individuals who possess the abilities to organize and participate in political activities of all forms, including protest.¹²²

These findings were similar to those of the eight-nation study of Barnes and Kasse. They concluded that the "indicators of absolute deprivation -- that is quantified measures of material well-being -- have seldom been useful predictors of political protest." Situational factors and resources appeared to play a more important role than material deprivation. Thus the survey research analyzed by Dalton, Barnes, Kasse (and others) found that protest is more accurately described by a different model, that of resource mobilization (discussed below).

Muller, in 1980, reviewed a decade of empirical research under Gurr's framework, concluding that "strong claims about frustration or relative deprivation being the 'root' psychological cause of protest and violence must be rejected." According to Muller, studies found only that relative deprivation "may bear a modest relationship to individual propensity for participating in political protest..."¹²³ Research showed that other factors Gurr described played an important role, including normative and utilitarian justification, leading Muller to summarize that "people rebel when they believe it is right to

¹²² Dalton, Citizen Politics, p. 68.

¹²³ Edward N. Muller, "The Psychology of Political Protest and Violence," in Gurr, ed., Handbook of Political Conflict, (New York:Free Press, 1980) p. 84.

rebel and that rebellion will pay off."¹²⁴

Despite Gurr's excessive emphasis on deprivation as the root of protest behavior, his overall model is useful. The three steps -- discontent, its politicalization, and its manifestation in political action -- define a basic process than an individual goes through in becoming an activist. The justifications for protest and the social environment, particularly the state's use of coercion, play critical roles in how protest is expressed. Moreover, the debate over deprivation also raises interesting questions for activist political learning. On the individual level, if deprivation is not the basis of protest, what is? Altruism? A combination of deprivation and altruism? This question is discussed in the following chapters.

Among social movement theorists, however, the prominence of Gurr's deprivation model has been displaced by the resource mobilization model, discussed below.

Resource Mobilization:

The resource mobilization (RM) model "has emerged as the dominant sociological theory of social movements."¹²⁵ This approach emphasizes resources -- people, organizations, communication networks -- on the development of a social movement. Oberschall points that resources can be material (jobs, money) or nonmaterial (trust, friendship, skills, moral

¹²⁴ ibid., p.97.

¹²⁵ Aldon D. Morris, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement (New York: Free Press, 1984), p. 325, footnote 15.

commitment).¹²⁶

RM theorists, including Tilly, Oberschall, and Morris, stress the institutional continuity between conventional and protest behavior. They maintain that people join social movements based on rational assessments of costs and rewards. Grievances are ubiquitous, they point out, but social movements arise only when there are political opportunities and groups able to organize around them. Morris explained how the mobilization model differed from the deprivation model:

Grievances, psychic strain, and other psychological states of participants are not central to the analysis.... Collective action from this view is rational and grows out of pre-existing social structures and political processes. Resource mobilization theory predicts that social actors who have access to resources and who are well integrated within the institutions of a community are more likely to engage in protest than individuals who are marginal and uprooted.¹²⁷

Tilly emphasizes that activists consciously try to change society; they are not simply responding to stress. He criticizes the tendency of some theorists to base their models on Durkheim's model of a society where the whole population shares common values and consciousness.¹²⁸ Durkheim said that as society undergoes rapid change, traditional social controls weaken, and that *anomie* develops among parts of the population, resulting in

¹²⁶ Anthony Oberschall, Social Conflict and Social Movements (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 28.

¹²⁷ Morris, Origins, p. 279. Morris stresses the indigenous resources that Southern blacks were able to mobilize during the Civil Rights Movement, compared to other theorists of this school such as Oberschall who place a greater emphasis on resources mobilized from outside the south.

¹²⁸ Charles Tilly, As Sociology Meets History (Orlando, Fla: Academic Press, 1981) pp. 105.

disorientation and increasing conflict. Both abnormal development and the general unrest of contemporary society "spring from the same causes," states Durkheim in his book Suicide, written in 1897.¹²⁹

In contrast, Oberschall points out that in a complex society, various classes and groups in society have different concepts of equality, justice, rights, etc. The development of political opposition based on group interests is a different process than reacting to stress through criminal activity or suicide. However, some theorists have used Durkheim's model to portray political activists as psychologically deviant and irrational.

Smelser, for example, does not distinguish between protest, political opposition, and non-conforming behavior, on the one hand, and criminal behavior, on the other. Moreover, Smelser emphasizes the non-rational elements of collective protest such as threats, conspiracies, and magical beliefs.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Emile Durkheim, Suicide: A Study in Sociology (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1951) p.391.

¹³⁰ Neil Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York: Free Press, 1962); Oberschall, Social Conflict, pp. 19-27.

Note: Durkheim's concept of societal stress leading to protest can also be seen in Gurr (deprivation causing frustration leading to aggression). But Gurr sees the resulting protest as a deliberate attempt to change society, and his writing shows respect for those who rebel. For example, Gurr wrote:

Many Americans believe that protest and rebellion are mainly the work of radicals and riff-raff, not "ordinary people." The belief is not a new one: the British officials of colonial America dismissed our revolutionary forefathers as "rabble"...

In the United States, almost every group with a serious grievance has been willing to participate in protest, and where anger and ambition were the greatest, they were willing to use violence.

See Ted Gurr, "Political Protest and Rebellion in the 1960s," in Graham and Gurr, eds., Violence in America, (Beverly Hills: Sage

Oberschall points out elites and better-off segments of society often deprecate groups trying to change the social order. Commonly the protest behavior is described as deviant or irrational. The characterization of the activists can become a critical in the midst of a political struggle, when both sides are competing for legitimacy. RM theorists insist that protesters are generally normal people who are motivated to change society. As Oberschall states, "there are emotional and nonrational components in collective behavior, but the same can be said for everyday behavior." ¹³¹

Dalton, Barnes and Kasse, and others involved in large survey research projects support the view that activists as rational actors, in that their ends are understandable, and possibly achievable. The in-depth studies of activists also support this view. By establishing that protesters are basically rational individuals who use demonstrations and sit-ins to organize for political change, RM theory makes a significant contribution.

However, the Civil Rights Movement was more than accumulation of resources and the building of organizations. In the course of collective protest, *people behaved differently*. Although rational and deliberate, their behavior was none the less a break with the past. Following generations of submissiveness and fear, Southern blacks and their supporters suddenly demanded equal rights, boycotted buses, raised their

Publications, 1979) p. 64.

¹³¹ Oberschall, Social Conflict, p. 25.

voices, put their bodies on the line in marches and sit-ins, and risked their lives. A sophisticated theory of social movements must be able to explain this kind of change in behavior.

Although psychological theory sometimes has been misused to discredit groups or individuals by describing them as deviant,¹³² it is not inherently biased. Psychology is the study of human behavior and mental activity, which can be used to study healthy human development. Yet some social movement theorists have overreacted to the misuse of Smelser and others, and eschew discussion of any behavioral or psychological factors. For example, McAdam goes to great lengths to emphasize that the African-American movement was a political, non-psychological, phenomenon. McAdam nevertheless discusses psychological factors, although he never mentions the word. He emphasizes that an "attribution process" is crucial to the emergence of a movement, pointing out that "mediating between opportunity and action are people and the subjective meanings they attach to their situations."¹³³ How can this be described without considering psychological factors and changes in behavior?

With its focus on organizations and the rationality of protesters, RM theory is inadequate to analyze individual protest behavior. Some theorists recognize this short-coming. Morris,

¹³² For example, Harold Lasswell's classic book on political psychology is titled Psychopathology and Politics, implying that the psychological basis of political involvement is pathological. Interestingly enough, despite the title, the book does not assume pathology is the basis of involvement. See Harold Lasswell Psychopathology and Politics (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1930).

¹³³ Doug McAdam, Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) p. 48.

for example, sees "serious limitations" in the model "in accounting for the dynamics of the Civil Rights Movement." In his book on the origins of the Civil Rights Movement, he incorporates Weber's concept of charisma to explain the appeal of leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. But this does not explain the behavioral change of grassroots participants. Jenkins presents a more comprehensive model, recognizing the need to incorporate psychological factors. He calls for "refining the basic mobilization model by developing a more sophisticated social psychology of collective action."¹³⁴

For the framework of this dissertation, the RM model makes the following contributions: 1) the stress on the rationality of protesters, 2) the importance of tactical effectiveness on the ability to organize large numbers of people, and 3) the importance of organizations, resources, and opportunities in understanding social movements. On the other hand, the theory is severely limited in explaining the motivation of protest behavior.

Disruption Model

A third model, developed by Piven and Cloward during the Civil Rights Movement, stresses the change in behavior of protestors and the ensuing politics of disorder. In contrast to RM's focus on organization, they emphasize the spontaneous character of the Civil Rights Movement and the disruption caused

¹³⁴ J. Craig Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements," American Sociological Review 9 (1983) p.549.

by protest behavior. Motivated by the "efficacy of civil disobedience," protesters took advantage of political and economic conditions that were ripe for a social change. The resulting widespread disorder prompted action by the president and federal government, who channeled the movement into one for voting rights. (This is discussed in more detail in chapter 5). Thus the massive defiance of segregation laws and customs by blacks and their supporters brought the gains of the movement.¹³⁵

Piven and Cloward discuss the dramatic change in people's behavior in Civil Rights and other poor peoples' movements, describing a very psychological process:

The emergence of a protest movement entails a transformation of consciousness and of behavior. The change in consciousness has at least three distinct aspects. First, "the system" -- or those aspects of the system that people experience and perceive -- loses legitimacy. Large numbers of men and women who ordinarily accept the authority of their rulers and the legitimacy of institutional arrangements come to believe in some measure that these rulers and these arrangements are unjust and wrong. Second, ...people who are ordinarily fatalistic, who believe that existing arrangements are inevitable, begin to assert "rights" that imply demands for change. Third, there is a new sense of efficacy; people who ordinarily consider themselves helpless come to believe that they have some capacity to alter their lot.¹³⁶

The political system's loss of legitimacy in the eyes of the protesters and their growing sense of efficacy are key factors in the politicalization process for radical activists. These factors are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Piven and Cloward's theory differs from both the deprivation and resource mobilization models. They criticized the

¹³⁵ Frances F. Piven and Richard A. Cloward, Poor People's Movements (New York: Vintage, 1979).

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

deprivation model as a theory of "malintegration... in which movements are portrayed as mindless eruptions lacking either coherence or continuity with organized social life."¹³⁷ They therefore agree with the RM school that protesters are rational actors. However, Piven and Cloward believe that the resource theorists have gone overboard on seeing protest as normal, focus too much on the conventional nature of protest politics, and belittle the disruptions of rebellion. RM theory, they maintain, tends to "direct attention away from rule-violations [and] treat collective protest as if it were merely interest group politics."¹³⁸

While Piven and Cloward's accurately criticize resource mobilization theory for "normalizing" protest, they incorrectly describe the roles of organizations in movements. They state:

...because they were acutely vulnerable to internal oligarchy and stasis and to external integration with elites, the bureaucratic organizations that were developed within these movements tended to blunt the militancy that was the fundamental source of such influence as the movements exerted. And finally, for the most part, the formal organizations collapsed as the movements subsided.¹³⁹

Social movements are inherently unstable. While some organizations have thwarted militant tactics, more often grassroots groups have helped sustain protest behavior longer than it might otherwise have lasted. As Jenkins concludes:

¹³⁷ Frances F. Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "Collective Protest: A Critique of Resource Mobilization Theory," International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 4n4 (1991) p. 435.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p.437.

¹³⁹ Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, pp. xv-xvi.

Piven and Cloward are correct that disruptiveness leads to success and that disruptions can be mobilized without formal organization; they are wrong in asserting that formal organization is necessarily incompatible with mobilization.¹⁴⁰

Despite this short-sighted view of organizations, Piven and Cloward's model contributes significantly to the framework of this project through their recognition of the significant change in behavior during collective protests. They have the most in depth approach to the change in thinking that activists go through. They are among the few who identify the loss of political system's legitimacy in the eyes of the protesters and the growth of political efficacy.

New Social Movement Model:

A model, proposed by Alberto Melucci, is based on analyzing the European peace movement of the 1980s. Melucci emphasizes the cultural and permanent aspects of the movement, even if it is only occasionally visible in political mobilizations:

The normal situation of today's "movement" is a network of small groups submerged in everyday life which require a personal involvement in experiencing and practicing cultural innovation. They emerge only on specific issues, as for instance the big mobilizations for peace, for abortion, against nuclear policy, etc....¹⁴¹

Melucci describes these social movements as based not on crises or dysfunctions, but on deep structural changes in

¹⁴⁰ Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory," p. 527.

¹⁴¹ Alberto Melucci, "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements," Social Research 52n4 (Winter 1985) p. 800.

society, stating "they become stable and irreversible components of contemporary social systems, because they are strictly connected to deep structural changes in these systems."¹⁴² Thus the "submerged" movement creates a permanent subculture of people with a oppositional relationship to the mainstream social structure.

Melucci emphasizes the importance of analyzing individual action in its social/cultural context:

Action has to be viewed as an interplay of aims, resources, and obstacles, as a purposive orientation which is set up within a system of opportunities and constraints. Movements are action systems operating in a systemic field of possibilities and limits. That is why the organization becomes a critical point of observation, an analytical level too often underestimated or reduced to formal structures. The way the movement actors set up their action is the concrete link between orientations and systemic opportunities/constraints.¹⁴³

Aspects of Social Movement Models Used in Dissertation

The social movement literature focuses on the movements themselves -- their origin, tactics, successes, failures, growth and decline. In contrast, the level of analysis of this dissertation is on the individual activists, and their political learning throughout their lives. Political socialization theory is the basic framework because of its focus on individual development. But social movement theory must be considered because movement involvement was critical to the development of this group of radical activists. The convergence of the social

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 789.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p.792.

movement and political socialization literature for this project is the question of why people protest, why they join social movements. The divergence is the consideration of individual political learning both before the social movement and after its decline.

In short, this dissertation takes aspects from each of the three models, as summarized below.

1. Piven and Cloward's disruption theory: The Civil Rights Movement involved a fundamental behavioral change on the part of its participants in which they stopped seeing the political system as legitimate, began asserting their rights, and gained a sense of political efficacy through the experience of collective protest.
2. Resource mobilization theory: Protesters tend to be rational actors who choose to join a social movement to make political changes. They tend to be individuals who are not marginal, but rather socially connected to the communities from which they come.
3. Melucci's new social movement model: The political mobilizations of social movements can be only occasional, while the "submerged" form of the movement can be permanent with important cultural ramifications for society.
4. Gurr's deprivation theory: Activists go through a process involving three steps -- discontent, its politicization, and its manifestation in protest. Although Gurr overemphasizes deprivation as the root of protest, he raises questions which are

analyzed in this project: What is the basis of deprivation in the development of protest? Might other considerations play a role? What of altruism?

Part II:

**The Process of Political Learning
of 50 Radical Activists**

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research design of this project, including the criteria for choosing who to interview, the basic demographics of the respondents, the interview methodology, general hypotheses, the use of the data, and, finally, the limitations of the study.

Who was Interviewed

On November 3, 1979, the Klan and Nazis attacked a group of demonstrators 40 minutes before the anti-Klan rally was scheduled to begin. The march was supposed to begin at noon, and around 11:00 A.M., the activist core began showing up at the designated meeting site.¹⁴⁴ At 11:22 A.M., the caravan of Klan and Nazis drove up to the meeting place, open fire, and 88 seconds later five demonstrators lay dead or dying.

I attempted to interview everyone who had participated in the anti-Klan demonstration on November 3, 1979. Because the protesters were attacked before the demonstration was scheduled to begin, only the activist-organizers had gathered. Of 66

¹⁴⁴ The meeting site was at Morningside Homes, a housing project in Greensboro. It was listed on the permit the demonstrators received from the police department, and it was through the police department that the Ku Klux Klan found out where the meeting site was.

potential respondents, I was unable to locate 9 people, and 5 refused to be interviewed. Two of those who refused to be interviewed were young children when they experienced the Greensboro Massacre. More than a decade later, they were still traumatized by the event, and did not want to discuss it. Three adults also refused to be interviewed, citing personal reasons. (The demographics of those who declined include 2 black women, 1 black man, 1 white man, and 1 white woman.)

Out of a possible 66 respondents, 52 were interviewed, representing 79% of the survivors of the fateful demonstration. All but 2 interviews are used in the study. The eliminated interviews included the oldest respondent who was unable to answer the questions due to senility, and the youngest because he was only three in 1979.

Demographics of the Respondents

The demographic categories analyzed in this study are race, gender, social class, religion, geographic location, and year of birth. Greenstein emphasizes the importance of social characteristics in studying personality and politics. Politics is a matter of human behavior, and such behavior is "a function of both the environmental situation in which actors find themselves and the psychological predispositions they bring to those situations."¹⁴⁵ Researchers should study both social and psychological characteristics "as they impinge on each other."

¹⁴⁵ Fred I. Greenstein, Personality and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) p. 7.

Greenstein explains:

...social and psychological characteristics are in no way mutually exclusive. They do not compete as candidates for explanation of social behavior but are complementary. ¹⁴⁶

In fact, Greenstein assumes that psychological predispositions are to a considerable extent "environmentally determined, largely by prior social experience."¹⁴⁷

In the framework proposed for this research, the social characteristics of race, gender, family's social class and religion, are recognized as those the respondents inherit at birth and which largely shape the environments of their childhoods. Moreover, they continue to play major, and often decisive, roles in their experience throughout their lives.

The demographics of the 50 respondents are reviewed below.

Race:

Racially the group is split in two; exactly half of the respondents are black, half are white. Just this fact makes this an unusual study. Previous studies are either of whites (Flacks, Kenniston) or blacks (Matthews and Prothro, Orum).¹⁴⁸ The only exceptions are those of Fendrich and Krauss, who compare black

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 36. .

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 36.

¹⁴⁸ White activists have been studied by Flacks, "Liberated Generation," and Kenniston, "The Sources" and Young Radicals.

Black activists have been studied by Matthews and Prothro, New Southern Politics; and Anthony Orum, Black Students in Protest (Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association, 1973).

and white activists involved in 1963. But even in this case, the respondents are students from different universities.¹⁴⁹ I have found no studies political socialization studies of activists from a racially mixed group.

Gender:

In this research, females make up a slight majority, 56% of the total respondents. The specific breakdown of race and gender is: 16 black females (32%); 9 black males (18%); 12 white females (24%); and 13 white males (26%).

Diversity in both race and gender makes this study unique. The studies mentioned above studied both genders of black activists or of white activists. But the one study that compared black and white activists, by Fendrich and Kraus, only included men.¹⁵⁰

Social class of childhood:

Almost two-thirds of the respondents grew up in working-class families, including almost all the African-Americans. A little over half of the whites were raised in middle-class homes; the rest in poorer families. The breakdown between males and females is relatively even in terms of social class.

¹⁴⁹ James M. Fendrich and Ellis S. Kraus, "Student Activism and Adult Left-Wing Politics: A Causal Model of Socialization for Black, White, and Japanese Students of the 1960s Generation," in Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change Vol. 1 (1978: JAI Press) pp. 231-55.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

All the activist studies previously mentioned focus on college students from a range of class backgrounds. The surveys ask questions to determine class background, and generally these studies found the activists to be from "high SES" backgrounds, but how they measured high SES varied (see Chapter 3).

The respondents from this study are more diverse than previous studies, in terms of social class, because the study includes a substantial number of respondents who never were college students. Thirteen respondents (26% of the group) never attended college. In addition, at the time of the interviews in 1990, the respondents represented a wide range of educational level: 11 individuals had some college, junior college or trade school experience; 7 had bachelor degrees, and 19 had graduate degrees.

The diversity of the families in factors of class, race, and gender, is indicated by the occupation of the parents. The chart below shows the respondents' parental occupations in major Census Bureau categories. The numbers in the chart reflect the racial and sexual segregation of the work force during the respondents' childhoods. Five black parents were professionals compared to 19 white parents, the vast majority of them white fathers. All the service and domestic workers were black and overwhelmingly female. Those in farming occupations were all black. On the other hand, all the housewives were white mothers, while the black mothers were all in the labor force. Blue collar jobs, including crafts, factory and transportation work, were evenly split between the races, but included more than twice as many fathers as mothers.

Figure 4.1

CHART OF PARENTAL OCCUPATIONS

Occupational Categories	Black Mothers	Black Fathers	White Mothers	White Fathers
professional	2	3	5	14
technical	2	0	0	0
sales	0	0	1	1
service	5	1	0	0
domestic service	3	0	0	0
farming	6	6	0	0
craft	1	0	0	1
factor operators/ transportation	2	6	2	5
armed services	0	0	0	1
not in labor force (includes house wife)	0	0	12	0
do not know (includes parent not in home)	4	9	5	3
TOTAL:	25	25	25	25

Diagram includes CPS occupation code, major group categories,
1980 Census.

If the element of history is considered in analyzing
parental occupations, the factor of race is even more apparent.

All of the African-American respondents whose parents were professional or technical were born after the Civil Rights Movement, with only one exception.¹⁵¹ This indicates the economic opportunities which opened up to some blacks during the 1960s. Gender roles in occupation also change over time. All the younger respondents have mothers who work outside the home, compared to the older white respondents, many of whom had mothers who were housewives.

Religion:

Politics involves beliefs, and it follows logically that religious beliefs have an impact. The influence of the religion in the Civil Rights Movement is well studied.¹⁵² During the interviews, respondents were not asked specifically about religion. However, more than half (27 respondents) felt that their family's faith was important enough in their development as an activist to volunteer it in the interview. These include 7 respondents who grew up in families that were Baptist, all of them black. Six whites came from other Protestant denominations, including Methodist and Episcopalian. Five (4 blacks, 1 white) grew up in Fundamentalist congregations, and 2 (1 white, 1 black) were Catholic. Seven white respondents grew up in Jewish homes.

¹⁵¹ The only pre-Civil-Rights-Movement black professional was a mother who was a nurse.

¹⁵² Morris, Origins, discusses extensively the influence of the Black Church on the movement. Evans discusses the role of religion for white Civil Rights activists in the early 1960s. Sara Evans Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and New Left (New York: Vintage, 1979) pp. 27-38.

Seventeen did not mention religion at all, but since there were no specific questions about religion, these respondents may have been from religious families but did not feel it was of great importance in their political development. Six people stated their family was not religious.

Geographic Location in Childhood:

Proximity to the South during the 1960s-70s is clearly an important factor in this research. Two-thirds of the group grew up in the South, including almost all the black respondents. Forty percent of the whites were from the South, and the rest from the Mid West and North East. Two respondents, 1 white, 1 black, grew up in other countries. The most common state of childhood was North Carolina where 21 respondents (18 black, 3 white) were raised; the second most common state was South Carolina where 4 blacks grew up. Thus half the sample spent their childhood in the Carolinas. Two-thirds of the 50 people grew up in towns or small cities; 9 (mostly black) grew up in rural areas; and 8 (mostly white) in large cities of over 500,000 people.

Birth dates:

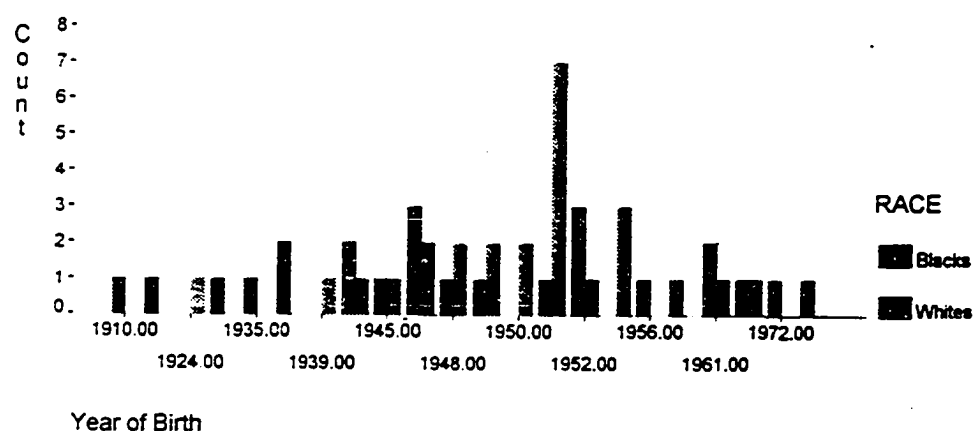
Birth dates are important to a study such as this one because they establish the individual's historical context. In some cases, one's birth date places a person in a "political generation" which can be a critical aspect of one's political

socialization.¹⁵³

Below is a graph illustrating the respondents birth dates and race.

Figure 4.2

Birth Dates & Race of 50 Respondents



The birth dates of the respondents cover a wide period of time, from the oldest born in 1910 to the youngest in 1973. The majority, 35 respondents, were baby boomers. The respondents fall into 3 age categories. The older group, born before 1940,

¹⁵³ Braungart and Braungart, "Life Course Development," pp. 250-51.

includes eight people. The middle one is the largest, 35 people born between 1940 and 1956. The 7 youngest respondents were born after 1960. The 25 blacks include a majority of both the older and younger group, while the 25 whites include most of the baby-boom group.

Interview methodology

The data for this project was gathered through in depth, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions.

Runyan defines in-depth interviews of individuals as the "life history method." He describes this technique as "the procedure of eliciting and recording personal stories in the subject's own words."¹⁵⁴ It is used by Braungart and Braungart in their study of right and left activist leaders. They state "the life-history method is well-suited to preserving individuality throughout the analysis," because it allows the examination of "the intersection between individual and collective histories."¹⁵⁵

The Braungarts' study, like this research, is a retrospective. They explain that it is:

...based on a respondent's self-report of his or her personal experiences and the interpretations of these experiences...The interest is less in the accuracy of the account than in how events have been remembered and interpreted, for it is these interpretations that have affected subsequent perceptions, attitudes, and responses to

¹⁵⁴ W.M. Runyan. Life Histories and Psychobiography (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ Braungart and Braungart, "Life Course Development," p. 252.

politics.¹⁵⁶

Some aspects of this research differ from the Braungarts' methodology. For example, I interviewed each respondent individually, in face to face sessions that usually took place in the respondent's home, in contrast to phone interviews used by Braungarts. The interviews lasted between one and three hours, which was the same time range as the Braungarts' interviews.

Another difference from the Braungarts' study are the open-ended questions used. Braungart and Braungart divided their questions into three periods of the respondents' lives: childhood, the student activist period, and post-activist stage. My questions are open-ended, which allows the respondents themselves to structure their own experience. This is in contrast to studies which predigest responses (as surveys necessarily do). Using a semi-structured instrument is midway between a completely unstructured interview and a specific list of force-choice questions. John Straus, a theoretician of psychiatric research, advocates the use of semi-structured questionnaires for research because it allows for new concepts to emerge.¹⁵⁷

The rationale for the semi-structured questions is discussed below.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ John S. Straus, "On the Subjective Experience of Schizophrenia II: Towards a New Dynamic Psychiatry," Schizophrenia Bulletin, 15n2, 1989, pp. 179-87.

The Interview Questions

The questionnaire in the original proposal for this research project contained 55 questions. During a trial interview, I realized that there were too many questions, and that proceeding question by question interrupted people's train of thought. Although I wanted the respondent to cover a lot of ground, I did not want to distract his or her memory process by imposing questions. Basically I wanted these individuals to describe the sequence of events that led them to becoming political activists, noting various factors that influenced them. In order to accomplish this, the interviews had to be open-ended and only semi-structured.

I greatly reduced the number of questions, deciding to explain the overall nature of the research at the beginning of the interview, pose a few questions, and not to interrupt the respondents once they began speaking. I received informal training from a psychiatrist¹⁵⁸ on such interviews, including tips on making respondents feel comfortable and on how to ask prompting questions to encourage the respondent to continue his or her train of thought. I also had a colleague interview me, which sensitized me to the interview experience from the respondents' perspective.

The interview questions used in this project are listed in the Appendix. The step by step process of the interviews is discussed below.

¹⁵⁸ Paul C. Bermanzohn, M.D.

Introducing the interview to the respondent:

I found it very important to explain the project at the beginning of the interview. Below is a transcript of what I said to each respondent to begin the interview:

This is a research project where I am interested in your experience, how you became political, and how your ideas and activities have developed through your life. It's open-ended and semi-structured, meaning I do have questions but you can take as long as you want to answer any given question. You can also say you would rather not answer a question. It's really up to you.

Question 1: How the respondents became interested in politics:

Immediately following the introductory statement, I elaborated the first question, transcribed below:

The first basic question is how you became a political activist. You can go as far back as you want in terms of things that might have influenced you as a child, memories that you have that made an impression on you, people that were important, events that influenced you. In other words, how did you become politically involved?

The respondents described how they became interested in politics, their earliest memories, and their first experiences as an activist. Most respondents paused at this point, but some went on without interruption to explain why they decided to become activists and, ultimately, communists.

Question 2: The reaction of their parents to the respondents' activism:

Because political socialization as a field has focused on parents as the main agents of socialization, I was interested in how the respondents' parents reacted to their children's

political involvement. Most respondents did not automatically describe their parents reaction, except for those who became active when they were quite young. So this was a question I directly asked, usually following a pause after the respondents' first activist experience. In the cases where the respondent did not pause, I left the question for later when they did stop talking.

I asked "how did your parents respond to your involvement?" Follow up questions varied respondent by respondent. What I wanted to find out was the parents support or lack of support for their offspring's activism, and the parents' political attitudes and involvements.

Question 3: Political history up to 1979:

Following the respondents' reports on their parents reactions, I asked them to continue with their political history, how their ideas evolved, what activities they were involved in.

Question 4: Why did the respondent decided to become a communist?

Often the respondent included their development towards communism in response to question 3. When necessary, I explicitly asked how they became interested in communism.

Question 5: Their experience on November 3, 1979:

This was extremely traumatic for all involved. I told each

respondent that they did not have to talk about their experience that day, but most decided to. As we approached this part of the interview, I tried to prepare the way by stating something like, "we are approaching November 3rd, is there anything you want to say before describing that day?" Following their response, I asked:

Please describe your personal experience -- what you saw, what you did, what you thought, and what you felt -- on November 3, 1979.

During this part of the interviews, most respondents relived the massacre, describing their memories very emotionally, usually crying. In nearly every case, we took a break after they finished.

Question 6: The immediate impact of the murders on the respondents:

Each responded was affected differently; some lost husbands, others close friends, some were wounded, some lost their jobs, had to move from their homes, some dropped out of political activity, other increased their involvement. These are described in each interview.

Question 7: The evolution of their views and involvement since then:

I asked the respondents, "looking back now, more than a decade later, how have your political beliefs changed or remained the same?" Their accounts usually included their personal

struggles (dealing with grief, families, jobs), their political involvement, and how their ideas evolved over time. If they left out one of these areas, I asked them about it. I asked them whether they thought society had gotten better or worse since the 1970s, and whether they were still hopeful about social change.

Question 8: Current political activity:

I asked them specifically about their current political involvement, including issues they were working on, organizations they were in, leadership roles they held, and time spent on political activities.

Question 9: Respondents' views about their offspring's political involvement:

The majority of respondents have children. I asked them how they talked about the massacre to their offspring, and whether or not they wanted them to become activists. Before ending the interview, I asked if there was anything else the respondent wanted to add.

Theoretical Questions and Hypotheses

Below are the four groups of basic theoretical questions examined in this dissertation, followed by general or framing hypotheses for this group of respondents. More detailed

hypotheses are discussed in each chapter.

1. How do events influence political learning? Is the process of political socialization different during times of great upheavals than it is in relatively tranquil times? Is proximity to events important? Do specific occurrences have greater influence if they are connected to larger historical questions, unresolved issues, or social movements?

Hypothesis: these respondents lived in close proximity to the profound social upheaval of the South during the Civil Rights Movement and the other social movements of the late 1960s-70s. I hypothesized that events significantly influenced their political socialization.

2. Does the individual's age make a difference? Is the "identity" stage of adolescence and early adulthood a particularly important period for political learning? Are young people more liable to change their political orientations and/or become activists during this time?

Hypothesis: although political learning takes place at any age, individuals are more likely to undergo changes in political orientation and behavior during late adolescence and early adulthood. These changes can be particularly powerful when social movements coincide with an individual's "identity stage," and can become a permanent part of the individual's identity particularly in terms of basic political values and beliefs.

3. In counter distinction to events, how do families affect the political socialization of radical activists? Are the radicals carrying on a family tradition? rebelling against their family? incorporating some values and breaking with others?

Hypothesis: individuals relationships with their parents vary widely and are often complex. Following several trial interviews, I hypothesized that there would be no simple type of parent-child connection that would explain the radicalization process. For these respondents, there is a great diversity of family relationships and family political traditions that are explored in subsequent chapters.

4. Can a process of political learning for radical activists be identified? Can steps in this process be mapped?

Hypothesis: Based on trial interviews, I hypothesized that a process of political radicalization could be identified for these respondents. The common steps and experiences include:

1. childhood memories (often vivid).
2. step one: a first activist experience.
3. step two: the decision to become an activist.
4. step three: the decision to become a communist.
5. the experience of the Greensboro Massacre.
6. beliefs and activism today.

The steps in this process became the basis for organizing the data in the dissertation. A diagram later in this chapter indicates how the steps are mapped for each respondent.

The Data

The interviews trace the political life history of 50 unique individuals. All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. I developed a code for data analysis, included in Appendix II on page, which organizes all the data from the interviews. There are over 100 questions in the code, with numbers assigned to all the variations in the respondents' answers. After coding, all the interviews were entered into SPSS.

Much of the data is qualitative, but some can be quantified. People gave dates for their most significant political experiences, and from this information their ages at the time of these events can be determined. Ages and dates of the respondents is the basis of some quantified analysis in the dissertation.

Another type of data that is possible to quantify is levels of activism. I formulated a scale is based on Matthews and Prothro who developed it in a study of changing black political participation in the early 1960s. Matthews and Prothro had a five point scale which I expanded to the nine levels listed below.¹⁵⁹ This scale is used in several points in this dissertation, including the level of activism of the respondents' parents, the level when the respondents became activists, the level in 1979, and the level they are at in the 1990s.

¹⁵⁹ Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966) pp. 37-60. Note: Matthews and Prothro's scale included the numbers 0,1,2,4,6 of the scale used in this dissertation.

Figure 4.3

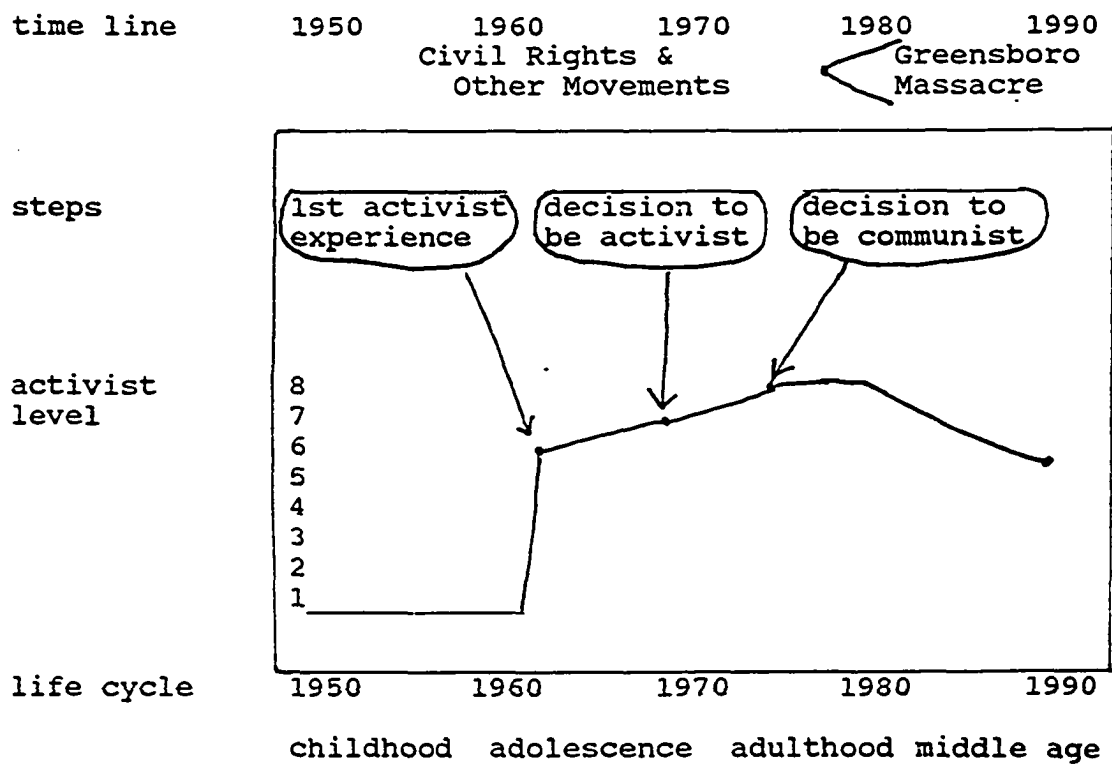
Activist Scale

- 0 = no political activity or discussion of politics
- 1 = talks about politics
- 2 = votes
- 3 = donates money to a political cause or organization
- 4 = membership in a political organization
- 5 = membership in political organization, time donated
- 6 = periodic involvement in campaigns (issues or candidates)
- 7 = active at least 2 times a week
- 8 = active more than 4 times a week

The diagram below shows how the activist levels for each respondent can be mapped over time. This diagram is for a hypothetical respondent born in 1950, whose first activist experience was in the early sixties, who decided to become an activist as a "career" in the late sixties, and who adopted communist politics in the mid-1970s. The activist levels, 1 through 8, refer to the scale above. This map indicates that this respondent was apolitical as a child, suddenly becoming involved as a teenager, and steadily increasing his/her activism through early adulthood. Following the Greensboro Massacre in 1979, this respondent stayed active, but during the 1980s, the involvement tapered off considerably.

Figure 4.4

Mapping Data from the Interviews



Limitations of the Study

1) The use of retrospective interviews. Some social scientists are skeptical about the use of retrospective interviews. Runyan summarizes the criticisms as: "gaps in topical coverage, lack of representativeness of informants, and reliance on possibly inaccurate retrospective reports."¹⁶⁰ Runyan recommends corroborating factual information from the life histories with other sources. This has been done where ever possible in this research.

In general, however, the personal accounts of the respondents are not being used to established a factual history. Instead the purpose is to look at their individual process of political development. As Braungart and Braungart state, "the interest is less in the accuracy of the account than in how events have been remembered and interpreted." ¹⁶¹ This is because the personal interpretations have affected the respondents subsequent political development, which is the focus of this research.

2) *The findings in this research can not be universalized beyond the sample studied.* The 50 respondents interviewed in this study are an unusual group of people. Although most of them are part of a "protest generation", they became far more radical

¹⁶⁰ Runyan, Life Histories, p. 5.

¹⁶¹ Braungart and Braungart, "Life Course Development," p. 252.

than most. Moreover, they endured an extremely traumatic, and unusual, event in 1979.

Runyan points out that there are three levels of generality in the study of lives:

1. What is true of all human beings.
2. What is true of groups of human beings (distinguished by sex, race, social class, culture, historical period, occupation, and combinations of these and other characteristics).
3. What is true of individual human beings (such as particular public or historical figures, clinical patients, ourselves, or others of interest).¹⁶²

The level of generality in this research is in the third category. These individuals are being studied because of their involvement in an historic event. Any findings in this research can not be universalized beyond the group of respondents. Hypotheses based on the findings, however, can be tested on other research subjects.

3) *My personal involvement.* I know these individuals well. I was part of the group and at the demonstration that day. My specific involvement, and the evolution of my own political development is included as Appendix III in this dissertation.

I have thought about the implications of my personal involvement for this project. On the one hand, interviewer bias can be a serious problem. One's own experience can limit one's ability to hear another's different account. For this reason I was careful to tape record and transcript all of the interviews.

On the other hand, the level of trust between myself and the respondents has facilitated the interviews. Because of my

¹⁶² Runyan, Life Histories, pp. 7-8.

knowledge of the events they had experienced, the respondents did not have to describe everything that had happened, but could focus on their own perceptions and understandings. The level of trust allowed much more depth to the interviews. In some cases it was necessary for the interview to take place at all; several respondents stated that they were unwilling to talk to someone they did not know.

CHAPTER 5

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE STRUGGLE FOR BLACK FREEDOM AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Race always has been a big issue in American history, going back almost 400 years to the earliest days of European settlement. Despite the lofty wording of the Declaration of Independence, and the bloody Civil War that ended slavery, basic political rights for blacks were guaranteed only in recent decades, as a result of the social earthquake called the Civil Rights Movement. Race-related issues remain today, particularly poverty, which plagues blacks at far greater rates than whites.

Understanding the process of political development of the respondents requires placing them in historical context. This chapter looks at the issue of race in the formative years of the U.S. up through the 1800s. The conditions in the segregated South during the first half of the twentieth century are discussed, including recollections of the color line by the older respondents. The chapter focuses on the significance of the Civil Rights Movement to the lives of the research subjects,

drawing on the vivid memories of the respondents.

Race in the formation of the U.S.

In 1619 -- a year before the Mayflower arrived at Plymouth Rock -- the slave trade in America began when a ship landed in Jamestown bearing 20 Africans who were sold into slavery.¹⁶³ Through the next century and a half, millions in bondage were sent out of Africa to the New World, as well as throughout the Middle East and into Asia. Steinberg estimates that European colonists imported at least 500,000 Africans to the area that became continental United States.¹⁶⁴

Steinberg emphasizes the economic motive of the Europeans use of slavery in the New World. They were determined to wrest a profit out of the vast new lands, and during the development of the emerging nation in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, the North as well as South depended on the growth of the cotton industry. Growing cotton demanded lots of back-breaking labor. Steinberg points out that "since the United States lacked an indigenous class of serfs, it had to create one, and this it did through the importation and enslavement of over a half a million Africans." ¹⁶⁵

During the American Revolution, the contradiction between slavery and freedom, black and white, became codified in the formative documents of the new nation. The Declaration of

¹⁶³ Lerone Bennet. Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America, 1619-1964 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966).

¹⁶⁴ Stephen Steinberg, The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989) pp.24-31.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 26.

Independence declares:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness...

Thomas Jefferson's original draft of the Declaration included the slave trade as one of the litany of wrongs perpetrated on the colonists by the King of England:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere... ¹⁶⁶

But the slave-owning delegates protested, so the Founding Fathers deleted the entire paragraph. Thus the final document proclaims inalienable rights for all humans, but makes no reference to the existence of bondage perpetuated by the revolutionaries themselves.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the Declaration of Independence "was a great impetus to early protests against slavery. Its very doctrine of the natural rights of man was inconsistent with slavery." ¹⁶⁸ The inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are echoed in protest documents over the

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Jefferson, "Draft of the Declaration of Independence," in Bernard E. Brown, ed. Great American Political Thinkers Vol. 1 (New York: Avon Books, 1983) p.304.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Jefferson himself embodied the tension over racial bondage. Jefferson called for the abolition of slavery, yet himself had slaves. He agonized over the immorality of founding a nation that sanctioned the owning human beings, writing "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever...." in Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," in Brown, Great American Political Thinkers, p. 327.

¹⁶⁸ Joanne Grant, ed. Black Protest (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968) p. 17.

next hundred years.

In contrast to the Declaration's statement of noble principles, the Constitution explicitly sanctioned slavery. It stated that slaves were to be counted as "3/5 of a person" for purposes of representation and taxation, and that the slave trade could continue until 1808. Thus the formation of the country involved a contradiction between slavery and the creed of freedom and justice for all. Ultimately it took the Civil War, the bloodiest war in the history of the world until that time, to abolish slavery and to amend the Constitution to grant blacks as well as white the right of equal protection.

But the Civil War did not solve the problem of race, and in reality, "protection" did not become equal for all. Though slavery was abolished, racism ¹⁶⁹ continued in new forms. After the Civil War, blacks in the South participated politically when they could. During Reconstruction, many took part in new state governments formed by Radical Republicans. People elected African-Americans as representatives in all the state legislatures, and several as lieutenant governors. Blacks ran for national office as well, and fourteen served as Congressmen and two as U.S. Senators. The key to black participation was the coercive power of the federal troops, who occupied the South to protect the rights of the newly freed people.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Rothenberg defines racism as "prejudice plus power." Paula Rothenberg, ed. Race, Class, and Gender (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) p. 7.

Note: Rothenberg also defines sexism using the same criteria.

¹⁷⁰ Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) pp. 28-29.

The same year that ended the Civil War, however, saw the birth of the Ku Klux Klan, composed of many former Confederate officers and prominent citizens, as well as poor whites. Wherever the blacks tried to assert their newly won rights, the night-riders threatened them or worse. Chalmers describes the Klan's early years:

The method of the Klan was violence. It threatened, exiled, flogged, mutilated, shot, stabbed, and hanged. It disposed of Negroes who were not respectful... It drove out Northern school teachers and Yankee storekeepers and politicians, and 'took care of' Negroes who gained land and prospered, or made inflammatory speeches or talked about equal rights.... As a self-appointed police organization, it regarded itself as the enforcer not the breaker of the law. It was police, judiciary, and executioner. Its purposes and the 'needs of the times' justified its actions, and no sense of guilt lingered.¹⁷¹

The rights of blacks were further undermined by the Compromise of 1877, which removed federal troops from the South. The radical governments collapsed as all political power returned to the former slave owners, who still needed vast amounts of cheap labor in the cotton fields. Reconstituted southern legislatures quickly passed "Black codes" which relegated blacks to a condition essentially of servitude.¹⁷² The Supreme Court in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896 constitutionally sanctioned segregation in the doctrine of "separate but equal".

Race relations were the "American Dilemma", a contradiction between the creed of freedom and the reality of segregation.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ David M. Chalmers Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperback, 1968) pp. 9-10.

¹⁷² W.E.B. DuBois, "Black Codes," in Rothenberg, Race, Class and Gender, pp. 284-90.

¹⁷³ Gunnar Myrdal An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy (New York: Harpers & Bros, 1944).

As the nineteenth century closed, the Presidency, Congress and the Supreme Court turned a blind eye to the plight of blacks in the South. In most regions, race faded as a prominent national issue for whites. In the South, blacks continued back-breaking labor in the cotton fields. Lynching became "a form of public terror" to keep them in their place. In the 1890s on average southern whites lynched an African-American every two days.¹⁷⁴

American History and Radical Activism

The "American Dilemma" is the ideological basis of radicalism in the United States, according to Staughton Lynd. He states:

Any critic of the American present must have profoundly mixed feelings about our country's past. On the one hand, he will feel shame and distrust towards the Founding Fathers who tolerated slavery and exterminated Indians, and blandly assumed that a good society must be based on private property. On the other hand, he is likely to find himself articulating his own demands in the Revolutionary language of inalienable rights, a natural higher law, and the right to revolution.¹⁷⁵

A reoccurring theme in American social movements is the critique of political realities in contrast to the principles of the Declaration of Independence. Often protesters used the language of the natural rights of man, including the words of Jefferson.¹⁷⁶ Since the advent of slavery in the New World,

¹⁷⁴ William Brink and Louis Harris. The Negro Revolution in America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964) p. 36.

¹⁷⁵ Staughton Lynd. Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard, 1982), p. v.

¹⁷⁶ Grant, Black Protest, pp.17-23.

slaves rebelled against their bondage, documented by Aptheker.¹⁷⁷ Abolitionists were radical activists in the 19th century who advocated "individual disobedience to laws which sanctioned slavery."¹⁷⁸ They organized the underground rail road, which was an escape route peopled by blacks and whites risking their lives to enable slaves to flee northward away from their masters.

The nineteenth century also brought the beginnings of the trade union and womens' rights movements, which were both interconnected with the fight for black freedom. Labor organizations developed as industry grew in America, and the early labor organizations focused on wages and working conditions in specific shops. But Foner documents how the labor struggles were "interlocked with the struggle against Negro slavery." In the shops of New England, he states, "there was a growing conviction among the workingmen that to preserve their own civil and political liberties they had to support the struggle for the democratic rights of the Abolitionists to fight slavery."¹⁷⁹ A women's rights movement developed during the nineteenth century, as white married women (who were considered property of their husband with no legal rights of their own) became involved in the Abolitionist Movement. They recognized the similarity of their own lack of right with those of slaves, and as they organized, they too also adopted the language of the Thomas

¹⁷⁷ Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts (New York: International Publishers, 1943).

¹⁷⁸ Grant, Black Protest, p. 101.

¹⁷⁹ Philip S. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Vol.1 (New York: International Publishers, 1975., pp. 266-67.

Jefferson. The document of the first women's rights convention held in Seneca Falls, N.Y., in 1848, declared: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that *all men and women* are created equal..."¹⁸⁰

Thus the issues important to the twentieth century protesters -- civil rights and social justice for blacks, women, and working people -- are rooted in struggles that developed during the nineteenth century. Some of the most articulate spokes people one hundred years ago, linked the different efforts. For example, Henry David Thoreau, philosopher of civil disobedience, opposed not only slavery, but also the Mexican-American war, and the wars against Indians, all on the same basis of trampling on the natural rights of other peoples. The famous Abolitionist orator, Frederick Douglas, was also a major supporter of the rights of women.¹⁸¹

The Twentieth Century

Southern blacks continued to be disenfranchised during the first half of the twentieth century. "The politics of the South revolves around the position of the Negro," wrote V.O. Key, in his 1949 classic, Southern Politics. He analyzed how political control remained "lily white" through the prevention of black political participation. The legal means included the grandfather clause, white primaries, and poll taxes. The illegal

¹⁸⁰ Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Seneca Falls Convention, 1848, in Paula S. Rothenberg, ed. Race, Class and Gender, p. 266.

¹⁸¹ Lynd, American Radicalism, pp. 130-140.

ones were lynchings and the other forms of terror perpetuated by the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁸² Between 1900 and 1950, there were 4,733 lynchings reported, including men, women, and children, for offences such as failing to show respect for a white person or attempting to vote.¹⁸³ The combination of laws and terror were effective. As of 1952, less than 20% of all African-Americans living in the South were registered to vote (18% of blacks were registered in North Carolina).¹⁸⁴ The national institutions of government allowed the situation to continue.¹⁸⁵

The 50 respondents in this study were born between 1910 and 1973. They can be divided by birth date into three groups:

(1) Eight were born before 1940, spending their entire childhood and part of their adulthood during the years of southern segregation. (2) Thirty-five were born between 1940 and 1956, members of the "baby boom," spending their early years under segregation, and their adolescence or young adulthood during the social movements. (3) Seven came into this world after 1960 as children of activist parents.

The struggle for black freedom, more than any other issue, motivated the 50 individuals in this study to become radical activists. The "American Dilemma" was not remote history, but a daily experience for them. Their memories are discussed below.

¹⁸² V.O. Key Southern Politics (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984) p. .

¹⁸³ Brink and Harris, Negro Revolution, p. 36.

¹⁸⁴ Matthews and Prothro, New Southern Politics, p. 148.

¹⁸⁵ Carmines and Stimson, Issue Evolution, pp.27-37.

Growing up Black in the Pre-Civil Rights South

Fourteen black respondents in this study grew up in the segregated South. Born before 1950, they attended segregated schools and faced discrimination whenever they came in contact with white society. For some the connection with the past was ever-present. As Respondent 12 explained, "My mother's grandparents had been slaves; the white family that lived down the road had been the slave owners of my mother's family."

Brute repression was a fact of life in those days. Two respondents witnessed terrorist murders during their childhoods. Respondent 11¹⁸⁶ grew up in rural South Carolina, and she vividly described an incident that occurred in the early 1950s when she was 9:

There was a black man and a white woman going together. They both consented... White men came and locked them in a barn and set it on fire. They threw stones at the woman and somehow she ran away.

The man burned to death... You could hear the man in the barn holler for a while, and that screaming went on in my nightmares for a long time.

As well as being horrified by what happened, the respondent's family was appalled by the fact that the county sheriff appeared on the scene and said he would do nothing about the murder, that it was "none of his business." This reflected the southern legal tradition at that time: the law was there to protect whites and their property; if a black was suspected of murdering a white, a lynching was in order, but if it was the other way around, "the

¹⁸⁶ In order to preserve anonymity, each respondent has an identification number. Respondent 1 is the oldest, Respondent 50 the youngest.

law" would ignore the incident.

Respondent 11's family lived in constant fear, as they simply tried to survive. People feared that any form of opposition to any injustice might lead to their death or disappearance. As she explained:

I remember black people would work in tobacco, and they would come back not even paid, but they were grateful to be alive. Sometimes people would go to work there and never return, and their family would not know what had happened. They'd be afraid to ask too many questions because then they would disappear too.

Sometimes the most non-political actions, focused on economic survival and feeding one's family, could still bring reprisals. For example, the family of Respondent 10 was targeted by white terrorists because his father managed to buy some farm land in rural North Carolina from a white man in the early 1940s. For this audacious act, his family was harassed by night-riders for years. In faltering words, Respondent 10 explained:

My father buying that land... A lot of white people tried to keep him from buying it. They tried to beat him, make him lose it in some kind of way.... [We] had to stay in the house all the time for a long time... 'cause they came and threw bricks at the house.

He said the attacks, from brick throwing to law suits, went on for years.

Other respondents described repressive (though less traumatic) incidents. For example, as a child in the 1940s, one watched as police accused a black man of stealing food, and they knocked his bagged groceries out of his arms all over the street. Respondent 4 described how the black people in the area scattered, too afraid to do anything to help the accused.

In addition to the constant threat of brutality, blacks

endured the daily indignities of segregation. Respondent 7 described them:

I would go to the drug store. And you couldn't even wait in line. You had to wait until they got done with everybody, 'til they finished with all the white people, before they got to you. Everybody was used to that... but we didn't like it.

Several respondents described attending segregated schools. In the words of Respondent 22:

...we got all the old buses that the white school done wore out. Then we would get them. We got all the old books, with five or eight names in them. They would've passed over that many years, then we would get them. I don't recall until about the last two years in high school that we saw some new books. You know, that kinda makes you bitter.

The daily humiliation of segregation coupled with the threat of physical harm resulted in feelings of anger and bitterness among African-Americans. Morris writes, "the objective social position of black people created an antagonistic relationship between them and the established political order controlled by whites."¹⁸⁷ But the resulting anger could not be expressed without risking one's life. Myrdal explained that even though people were forced to appear passive that:

Deep down in the most dependent and destitute classes of Negroes in the rural South, the individual Negro of the masses ordinarily keeps a recess in his mind where he harbors the Negro protest.¹⁸⁸

But what political options did blacks have before the Civil Rights Movement to express their opposition? Despite the

¹⁸⁷ A.D. Morris, et.al., "The Civil Rights Movement and Black Political Socialization," in Roberta Sigel, ed., Political Learning in Adulthood (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) p. 279.

¹⁸⁸ Myrdal, American Dilemma, p. 744.

repressive conditions, Morris writes that a tradition of resistance existed. "At times the spirit of protest was expressed subtly in a black spiritual or a defiant glance. At other times protest burst forth in ... organized and collective forms."¹⁸⁹

This "spirit of protest" is evident in the accounts of the respondents during the years of segregation. For several, the feelings of injustice led to anger and to fist fights with white children. Respondent 11 explained,

I would fight the white kids every day where they would cross our paths coming home from school. Not just me fighting them, but other black kids, too. They had to change the school hours, they made us get out later, to give the white kids a chance to pass.

But overall, very few blacks did anything to challenge the status quo. Each individual faced a dilemma. The societal order went against the grain of human dignity, but any form of opposition endangered one's life. Respondent 7, at the tender age of 7, did stand up for her rights, and quickly learned there were serious consequences. Below is an excerpt from her transcript.

There was a little hot dog stand down near Hoover Road, and I used to go get hot dogs.... [The white people] could go in, but I had to stand on the outside, and they would give the hot dog through the little window.

I asked for two hot dogs. They were six cents a piece, and a soda. And he gave me one. I told him I wanted two.

So he cursed, and I cussed him back. I was about seven years old. It wasn't far from the house, and I was on my bicycle.

He said, "you said you wanted one."

I said, "I wanted two."

He said, "little girl, who are you talking to?"

There was a lot of mens out there from the mill across the road. It was probably lunch time, because they were outside. They said, "little girl, you better go on home, go

¹⁸⁹ Morris, Origins, p. ix.

on home, and stop talking like that."

And I said, "I paid that man for two hot dogs, and he gave me one."

And the man said, "well, you go on home and tell your mama and daddy."

So I went on home, and I told my daddy, and he said, "you shouldn't have talked like that, talked to them like that, cussing and all, 'cause they could have hurt you."

Well... it liked to have scared him to death, and he whipped me for that.

So I told my cousin. He was about ten. I said, "lets go back down there."

He said, "I ain't going down there."

I said, "I'll buy you a hot dog."

So he loved hot dogs, so we went. There were lots of little rocks there, and we threw them at the store.

And the police came, and they brought me home. They said, "you do it again, we'll carry you to the court, this man can carry you to court."

I said, "I paid for two hot dogs, and he gave me one, and he talked nasty to me."

That was all I did. At that time children were scared of policemen. All you had to do was see the uniform. So they didn't have any more trouble out of me.

This incident capsulizes the segregated South. There was no justice and no place to appeal, not the law, nor the police, nor even her parents. Despite her determination, and based on a child's clear sense of right and wrong, she learned that injustice could not be protested. She concluded her account stating, "they didn't have any more trouble out of me." That is, not until 20 years later with the advent of the Civil Rights Movement. She endured the injustice, but she did not forget it.

Respondent 7's experience is similar to another, now famous, black person who grew up in the segregated South. Jesse Jackson, when he was 8 years old in Greenville, South Carolina, ran into a small grocery store and whistled to get the attention of the store keeper. The shop keeper pointed a .45 at Jesse, warning

"Goddamn you, don't you ever whistle at a white man again."¹⁹⁰

Thus, a critical part of Jackson's and Respondent 7's childhood socialization was learning to accomodate to segregation inspite of strong feelings about its injustice. Accomodation, regardless of how angry one felt, was necessary for physical survival. Meanwhile, African-Americans learned to harbor their rage, looking for means to express it.

Inspite of the harsh cnditions and risk of death, occassionally there were collective protests during the years of segregation. Respondent 2 was involved in an armed protest against the Ku Klux Klan in 1941. To protect themselves against faceless night-riders, as well as to hunt wild game, some southern blacks bought firearms. Respondent 2 learned how to use a gun as a young man. Everyone in the tiny town, black and white, knew he was an excellent marksman, and he credits this with saving his life in a confrontation with the Ku Klux Klan:

I believe it was in 1940 or '41, the Ku Klux Klan was going to parade in Greenwood [South Carolina]. The police came down about sundown and told everybody they had to leave, get off the street, go home. Everybody did, they thought, anyway.

My brother was working there on Main Street... We had to get him out... I parked in the middle of the street and ... I stood there just about 10 minutes, waiting for my brother to come out. My brothers was in my car... [and the Klan] was in their cars... if they had got out, I could have kilt [killed] the ones that got out. I knew one thing, I had to get my brother out. I didn't know what the consequences was going to be. The consequences was that he got out, and we got out, because as I told you, they knowed me and I knowed them.

Respondent 2 and his friends were determined not to cower before the Klan. They took their lives in their hands to attack

¹⁹⁰ Barbara Reynolds. Jesse Jackson: America's David (Washington: JFJ Associates, 1985), p. 18.

the Klan:

They [the Klan and police] thought everybody had gone home but these guys didn't go home. There was a whole lot of us, almost as many as they were. We got sticks, rocks, and some had guns, and when the Klan started coming down the street, we attacked them. They run. Police were there, but they ain't got but two police men and they were walking at the front. We were at the rear. They never came back no more. And I guarantee you that next morning the street of Greenwood was just littered --you couldn't take a truck down it. After that the Klan didn't come no more.¹⁹¹

Despite the success of the anti-Klan action, the blacks who participated faced retribution. Everyone suspected of involvement was fired from the local mill.

Such collective protests were few and far between. Overall, African-Americans fended for themselves as best they could as the nation turned a blind eye to their plight.

On the White Side of the Racial Divide

Respondents in this study grew up on both sides of the racial divide. Most white respondents came from liberal homes. For example, the oldest one grew up in Cincinnati in the 1930s, and she recalled:

¹⁹¹ Another example of the role of guns in race relations in the rural South is expressed by a lawyer who worked in McIntosh County, Georgia:

"I came to realize... during my years in south Georgia, that one of the principal reasons for relative peace between the races was that both were equally armed and each side knew it. Particularly the whites knew that the blacks all had guns; they all had shotguns and handguns. They carried them around with them in their cars, and their homes were all armed. You really had here a condition of deterrence that prevailed."

In Melissa Fay Greene. Praying for Sheetrock: A Work of Nonfiction (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1991) p. 202.

My mother and dad were both teachers, and they worked in downtown junior high schools, and a large proportion of their students were black. They cared about these kids; to them these kids were important. They would bring them home, give them jobs to help them earn money. They would have meals with us.

It was never discussed, but it was always understood, that you did not discriminate. You were concerned about those in need, and you did what you could about it. In the 30's, during the Depression, the standard occurrence was having somebody come to the back door asking for food -- they were never turned away at my home....

Another respondent had a father who was a union organizer in the 1940s, and who was known to be against racism. During World War II he was drafted into the army and was involved in some type of incident:

[In the Army] he was in a group of South Carolina whites, and something must have happened, something involving racism, something where he got caught fighting against racism. Every time he talked about it he got bitterly angry, and talked about how he never wanted to put up with racists like that again.

He was determined to stand against discrimination, and do what he as an individual could do. Yet the descriptions of these parents who tried to oppose segregation portray a sense of powerlessness to change the status quo. In both cases above, the parents were somewhat reluctant to talk about their views. As one stated, "it was never discussed..." These parents did what they could do as individuals, but they did not feel that they had any influence on the social order.

Not all white respondents came from liberal backgrounds, however. Seven whites were born into white families that supported segregation. For example, Respondent 28 was the child of Dixiecrat politicians:

I was growing up under a legacy of my grandfather in the Byrd Machine in rural Virginia. The Byrd machine was a segregationist regime, that ruled Virginia for years, and my

grandfather was a big figure in that in Southside Virginia, which is a Black belt region [majority black population]. I grew up with a lot of conservative political ideas....

The respondents from conservative backgrounds come from families with a wide range of views towards black people. One's parents were Republicans in Mississippi, who supported segregation but explicitly opposed the violence of the Klan. One respondent, however, was born into a Klan family in rural southern Alabama. "My father was in the Ku Klux Klan," she stated simply. "He was very bigoted. He was in the John Birch Society, and was the Chaplain for the Klan."

In the South, the transformation from terrorist-bigotry to civil rights activist is unusual, but there are examples in the historical literature. For example, Ehle in The Free Men focuses on Pat Cusick, an Alabama man from a Klan family, whose great grandfather, a Confederate major, founded the local chapter of the Klan. Despite this background, Cusick became a civil rights leader in Chapel Hill, N.C. Ehle writes, "Pat grew up hearing Civil War and Klan stories." But then he was sent away to a Catholic boarding school, where he spent four years arguing over segregation with a priest. As Cusick explained:

The priest was saying that segregation is wrong, and the students were all arguing that it was right. I led the revolt, but when I graduated from there, I was changed; I was convinced in my mind that segregation was wrong.¹⁹²

For Cusick the struggle for civil rights became a question of right versus wrong.

¹⁹² John Ehle. The Free Men (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) p. 6.

Gunner Myrdal wrote his classic, An American Dilemma, in the 1940s, documenting the myriad ways separating the races affected the U.S. He wrote "when we choose to view the Negro problem as primarily a moral issue, we are in line with popular thinking."¹⁹³ The dilemma affected people in all parts of the country. For example, a white respondent (R8) grew up in Chicago in the 1940s. In school she learned that "America was the land of the free," but at home, her parents forbid her to socialize with blacks. She explained:

As far as racism, my parents talked a good ball game, but it was hypocritical. I had several childhood experiences where I took the credo about all the races being equal very seriously, but then reality was thrown in my face. I wanted to bring home black playmates or play with black children, and I was subtly or unsubtly discouraged from doing that.... One time I brought a black girl friend home from school and we listened to classical music together. My mother was very cordial. But then when she left, my mother said, "don't bring her home again."

In the South, in the 1940s-50s, separation of the races pervaded all aspects of life, backed up by the seemingly omnipotent power. Southern whites advocating civil rights were social pariahs. Sara Evans writes about several southern white women who spoke out against the status quo, pointing to "the intertwined racial and sexual repression in the south." She writes:

By the late 1940s and 1950s a few isolated women actively opposed the segregated culture of the south... But such rebels remained few -- shunned and persecuted by the white community, excoriated in the southern press.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Myrdal, American Dilemma, p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ Sara Evans. Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) p. 28.

By 1950, Morris summarizes, "southern whites had established a comprehensive system of domination over blacks... economically, politically, and personally." ¹⁹⁵ Not only were African-Americans limited to the lowest paying jobs, disenfranchised from any form of political participation, but also "segregation was a personal form of oppression that severely restricted the physical movement, behavioral choices, and experiences of the individual."¹⁹⁶

Despite the calm on the surface, however, a Civil Rights Movement gathered steam to change the South forever.

The Civil Rights Movement

Suddenly southern blacks were marching, sitting-in, organizing boycotts, demanding equal rights. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man in a bus in Montgomery Alabama. Four students in Greensboro, North Carolina, asked for service at a segregated lunch counter. These acts are part of the nation's history, known today by school children across the nation. But what made these incidents so powerful was the massive numbers of blacks and white supporters who closed ranks behind these individuals. A movement grew as hundreds of thousands of blacks demanded respect and equal treatment in incidents that never made the evening news.

The Civil Rights Movement was a watershed in American history, a fundamental step forward towards the ideal of "liberty

¹⁹⁵ Morris, Origins, p. 1.

¹⁹⁶ ibid., p. 3.

and justice for all." Historian William Chafe terms it "the most significant social movement in all of American history."¹⁹⁷

Sears described it as the decade of the most tumultuous social and political change since the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.¹⁹⁸

Book titles on the movement portray it in biblical terms, such as Parting of the Waters by Taylor Branch, and Bearing the Cross by David Garrow, to name just a few.¹⁹⁹

The most striking aspect of the Movement was the change in the political behavior of African-Americans. Why did this change occur? Morris argues that the massive collective protests built on a tradition of protest in the black community. He criticizes social scientists who saw an entirely new race consciousness emerge in the 1960s. In contrast, he notes that "the rebellious spirit and acts of protest" have been documented from the slave ships on.²⁰⁰ He goes on to state:

...political values and orientations, whether acquired in childhood or during later periods, are relatively malleable and potentially responsive to changes in political opportunities and options.²⁰¹

The Civil Rights Movement provided a huge change in "political opportunities and options." Feelings hidden for years, based on

¹⁹⁷ William H. Chafe The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II (New York: Oxford University Press) p. 146.

¹⁹⁸ David O. Sears, "Whither Political Socialization Research?" in Ichilov, Orit, ed. Political Socialization, Citizenship Education, and Democracy (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990) p.76.

¹⁹⁹ Taylor Branch Parting of the Waters (New York: Simon and Schuster); and David Garrow Bearing the Cross (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

²⁰⁰ Morris, Origins, p. ix.

²⁰¹ Morris, "Black Political Socialization," p. 278.

fear of reprisals, could suddenly be expressed. Moreover, political participation by massive numbers of people was bringing change.

How and why massive protests occurred when they did involves numerous factors, economic, social, and political. Despite the entrenchment of segregation, by the 1950s conditions were ripe for change. Piven and Cloward document the economic changes in South undermining the need for agricultural workers. Through the first half of the century blacks migrated in massive numbers out of the rural areas; In 1900 more than 90% of African-Americans lived in the South; by 1960, almost half lived in the North. Moreover, less than half of the blacks living in the South remained in rural areas.²⁰²

Eight respondents in this study migrated from rural areas of the Carolinas to the cities of Greensboro and Durham, North Carolina. One respondent explained why his family migrated:

My mother and father were farmers. They owned their own land. My grandfather and grandmother came across the land, too. They grew tobacco, corn, peanuts... It was like an inherited thing, 'til my mother and father gave up their part, and came here to Durham for something better than the farm.

Not only were there economic opportunities in urban areas, but physical domination was less pervasive than the rural South.

Along with economic conditions undermining the old order, the legal foundation of segregation faltered. A series of cases brought by the NAACP undermined legality of Southern caste system, culminating in 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown versus Board of Education*, which overturned the "separate but equal doctrine,"

²⁰² Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, pp. 191-92.

and mandated the integration of public education.

Several of the older respondents commented on the NAACP in their interviews, expressing a range of views. One respondent, whose father was president of the NAACP chapter in a rural county in Eastern North Carolina, remembers his family talking about the landmark decision in 1954, and whether or not it would affect his school. As long as he was in school, however, segregation remained. Another respondent, a mill worker, became a member of the NAACP in the 1950s. A third respondent expressed impatience with the NAACP in those years:

I would see so much injustice.... I don't remember anything being in place for you to address your grievances. I heard about the NAACP, but that was just as far fetched for me as I am from the moon. I never seen it do anything... just that it was this grand organization. I don't remember it coming into our neighborhood, talking to us. That was something for the bourgeoisie black folks, the doctors, not just ordinary people.

Although many factors enabled the eruption of protest, the Civil Rights Movement was not inevitable. People had to make decisions to protest, to risk their lives. During the 1950s, there was much debate over how to fight for equality inside the black community. Impatience with tactics of the NAACP grew. Despite impressive legal victories against segregation, not much changed for blacks in the South. Martin Luther King, Jr. described how the debate over tactics in the 1950s was guided by both impatience and fear:

During the fifties, many voices offered substitutes for the tactic of legal recourse. Some called for a colossal blood bath to cleanse the nations' ills... But the Negro of the South in 1955 assessing the power of the forces arrayed against him, could not perceive the slightest prospect of victory in this approach. He was unarmed, unorganized, untrained, disunited, and most important, psychologically and morally unprepared for the deliberate

spilling of blood. Although his desperation had prepared him to die for freedom if necessary, he was not willing to commit himself to racial suicide with no prospect of victory.²⁰³

King universalized the rhetoric of the movement. A child of the South, King went North to pursue graduate studies. He attended a predominantly white theological seminary in Pennsylvania. He studied Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, and according to Cone, rarely referred to race during his graduate education.²⁰⁴ But the plight of his people was constantly on his mind as he developed a language that pinpointed the predicament of blacks in the South in the context of a universal struggle for freedom. Upon graduation he took a post at a church in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955.

During the Montgomery bus boycott in 1956, King rose to national attention with his stirring oratory. Morris describes the bus boycott as a "disorderly non-violent protest," that was supported by all parts of the black community in Montgomery. There had been earlier boycotts, but the Montgomery protest caught the attention of the national and international press because it was so massive and lasted for over a year.²⁰⁵ Through impressive organization and discipline, the boycott successfully politicized discontent with tactics that brought results, becoming a tactical blueprint for the movement for the

²⁰³ Martin Luther King, Jr. Why We Can't Wait (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) p. 24.

²⁰⁴ James H. Cone. Martin and Malcolm and America (New York: Orbis Books, 1991) p. 31.

²⁰⁵ Morris, Origins, pp. 51-63; Garrow, Bearing the Cross, pp. 1-52.

next decade.²⁰⁶

The tactics of non-violent civil disobedience were debated throughout the black community in the 1960s. Several respondents described such discussions as important to their their political development. Respondent 12 joined the Air Force following high school in the early 60s. He recalled:

1963 was a political time, the year of the big March on Washington. In the US, King was the center of the movement. What was right and wrong were clear. In the Air Force, my room mate was a white Southerner. We couldn't talk to each other.

After I was transferred to Europe, I met more political men and I used to debate King's non-violent philosophy with them. They used ridicule and logic to argue that the position of non-violence and turning the other cheek was untenable.

Other respondents were drawn to more radical analysis.

Respondent 22 remembers:

I read a lot of Malcolm X... Rapp Brown, I liked a lot of stuff he said. But Grandma would always tell us, "if somebody is bothering you, pray for them." I figured that ain't gonna work.

Respondent 4 also disagreed with King's philosophy:

I never really been a great follower of Dr. King. I appreciated what he was doing, but I never could get into all this passive resistance -- somebody hits you, you fall down on your knees and start praying for that bastard. Me and Dr. King, our philosophy is so different. I was more into what Malcolm was saying. So I would read a lot of Malcolm to tune into him.

The comments of these respondents reflect a long tradition of discussing strategies for change within the African-American community. Cone states that "integrationism and nationalism represent two broad streams of black thought in response to the problem of segregation in America."²⁰⁷ Martin Luther King Jr.

²⁰⁶ Morris, "Black Political Socialization," p. 282.

²⁰⁷ Cone, Martin and Malcolm, p. 4.

espoused an integrationist philosophy, while others, including Malcolm X argued for black nationalism, a more explicitly anti-white philosophy.

But even though some respondents criticized King's philosophy, they joined the non-violent protests. Both respondents who felt drawn to the ideas of Malcolm X, also described marching in civil rights demonstrations. Like thousands of blacks throughout the South, many respondents participated because they had the opportunity to do so, and because they believed it was effective. As one described her first activism in 1961: "My first involvement was when I was in the eighth grade. There was a CORE chapter at my church, so I did demonstrations."

The sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C., in February, 1960, was a critical step in the development of the movement, because it touched off the involvement of massive numbers of students in sit-ins throughout the South and the country. During the 1950s, the boycotts and other protests were largely organized by ministers, and the foot soldiers were mainly adult members of the black community. However, as the sixties opened, the Greensboro sit-ins got the youth involved. The Encyclopedia of the Civil Rights Movement describes the protest at Woolworths as "the opening gambit of an unequalled student protest movement that shocked the South to its foundations."²⁰⁸

Respondent 6 found herself in the middle of the famous sit-

²⁰⁸ Charles D. Lowery, ed., Encyclopedia of African-American Civil Rights (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992) p. 224.

The Greensboro sit-in is described in detail in William Chafe Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, N.C. and the Black Struggle for Freedom (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1981.) pp. 79-86.

in, while Respondent 16, only 13 years old at the time, watched from the side lines:

Me and my sister and my brother, we were scared to go inside of Woolworth's, but all this stuff was going on, and these students would come and sit down, and they had to get up, and then the police would come, and we would be standing outside of Woolworth's, looking through the windows. We know something was going on, but we were really small, there was nothing we could do about it. But we knew something very exciting was happening.

Crucial to the success of the burgeoning movement was the weakening of repressive societal force. Many blacks in the mid 1950s assumed that the movement would be suppressed as all other protest activity had been before it. But this time there were important factors mitigating the use of force. Non-violent tactics and rhetoric gave the protestors the moral upper hand, and captivated the attention of the press. For the first time since Reconstruction, the brutality of the prevailing political power was curbed.

None knew this better than those who had experienced brutality first hand. Respondent 11, who had witnessed a man burned to death for dating a white woman, came to Greensboro to college in 1961. She described how a proposal for a protest march stimulated intense debate among the students about whether or not to participate. Breaking with her fearful childhood, she argued for joining the demonstration, and ended up marching in the front. Protesting, she said, "gave us a taste of freedom, that we could do some things." It enabled her to overcome her own fear and the forced passivity of her childhood.

Teenage blacks, including a number of respondents, began defying authority in the early sixties, in ways their parents

could not have imagined. One described an incident when he was 15:

In 1960 on a trip to Charlotte, N.C., a friend and I got on a segregated bus in Gastonia. We refused to sit in the back of the bus and took a front seat. We were beaten up...

Another was 13 in 1960, working on a summer job:

We were working on this big flower farm down here for 33 cents an hour, about 100 and some acres and no trees -- all there were flowers. And hot. They would take us up town on the back of a truck during dinner [lunch] time. We could either go to service station and get some canned food or we could go round to the back of this segregated cafe and stand in line.

I just went inside there on the white side... They were taking my money, and I figured I could go in the front as good as I could go in the back. I just went in there on the white side and told them I wasn't gonna leave. I guess instead of shuffling me out on the street or calling the police, he just told them, "go ahead and fix him some hot dogs and get him outa here." They fixed the hot dogs....

Nothing could stem the tide of the black movement. The fight for black freedom became a national issue, and the southern power structure lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the country. Despite his hesitation, John F. Kennedy could not ignore the growing movement. "We are confronted primarily with a moral issue," he stated in 1963. "It is as old as the Scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution." ²⁰⁹

For blacks, joining the civil rights struggle meant fighting for their own humanity. A Louis Harris poll during the summer of 1963, and found that blacks wanted "nothing less than the full equality which is supposedly the birthright of every American, white or black." On the other hand, the movement posed a

²⁰⁹

Brink and Harris, Negro Revolution, p. 20.

different sort of challenge for whites. The Harris poll found that "the whites could not ignore the Negro's demand, for it went straight to the heart of America's hallowed creed of liberty and justice for all." However, Harris points out that establishing that equality "was the greatest change in the social fabric of the United States since its very beginning."²¹⁰ Whites, especially those in the South, had to decide whether to oppose the movement, join it, or try to sit on the sidelines.

The White Respondents and the Civil Rights Movement

The memories of the early 1960s of the white respondents in this study are not as vivid as many of the blacks. In part this is because of age and geographic location. But, more important, segregation was not a daily humiliation for them. It was something that happened to others, something they gradually became aware of as they were growing up. For the white respondents, the movement in the early 1960s was distant; it did not affect their lives as quickly as it did blacks.

Seven white respondents lived in the South during the early 1960s. Four were under 10, two were teenagers, and one was middle-aged. The oldest white respondent remembers wanting to be involved in the Civil Rights Movement, but family responsibilities, and her husband's opposition, prevented her. Her daughter, also a respondent, remembers her mother taking food to a neighbor in jail for civil rights activity. Another respondent knew someone who participated in the Freedom Rides in

²¹⁰ ibid.

the early 60s.

The most vivid memories came from a white respondent (R29) who grew up in Jackson, Mississippi:

In 1962 or so, I was a kid in elementary school. There were several things that occurred [including] the killing of Medger Evers. When James Meredith tried to matriculate at Ole Miss, they had a big riot. [I remember] people talking about getting their shot guns and going up to Oxford. There was the freedom riders, when they turned the fair grounds into a little concentration camp.

Just lots of time there would be riots. I would hear of riots, that there was "trouble." Even the inflection that there was "trouble" -- you would know what the "trouble" was.

I favored the idea of desegregation, I thought it was a good idea. I remember I had a job where I was working with some black guys. Me and my buddies decided we wanted to just go do something. I wanted to have some friends with some black people. Here I was in Jackson, which was almost half black, and I was about 16 and realized "how come we don't even know any black people? Its sort of weird, isn't it?"

So we were going to go out. First we were going to go to a little bowling alley, which was a big hang out. My parents were afraid the whites would beat us up. They talked sense into us, "how about the drive-in movie?" So we went to the drive-in movie, just guys, and we talked about our different cultures, parallel cultures.

Another respondent in the midst of the social upheaval in the South was not yet ready to embrace the movement in the early 1960s. The daughter of a Klansman, Respondent 17 described her memories of the movement in Alabama during her teenage years:

I was actually there when George Wallace stood in the doorway, and I remember watching him stand in the door. But I don't remember having any feelings about it. It astounds me looking back. I was disconnected; I don't remember thinking, "this is really terrible." I was very buried in being a good student...

She did not become involved in the movement until the later 60s and 70s.

Another white respondent, growing up outside the South, in Cleveland, Ohio, recalled his gradual awareness of the movement:

During the early 60s, when I was in junior high and high school, I became aware of the Civil Rights Movement in the South and poverty in Cleveland.

I grew up in Cleveland, in Shaker Heights which is a very wealthy Republican suburb. I had this idea that the whole world was like where I lived. The school I went to was a private country day school, all well-to-do kids. The only black people I had ever had any contact with at all were the guys who would come and cut the grass at the neighbors' house or the maids who would come to Shaker Heights and do people's laundry and take care of their kids....

Then I started getting out and away from the house a little bit. I started riding rapid transit into downtown Cleveland Indian baseball games. The trolley ran through neighborhoods in Cleveland that to me looked so desolate. I thought maybe there had been a big fire. Little shacks along the side of the trolley tracks that looked like they had been put together with roofing tin and asphalt paper. Little by little as I started getting out and hearing about civil rights, I started becoming aware of poverty. It was in such incredible contrast to what I was used to that I thought it was a terrible thing to have poverty and racism in this great country of ours. I thought that there were these little pockets of poverty, and this little bit of racism, maybe down South.

A social earthquake, the Civil Rights Movement shook the South to its foundations. Almost half of the respondents, 14 blacks and 9 whites, participated in some aspect of the movement in the early 1960s. Many were aware of the movement, but too young to participate. In 1960, the average age of the of the respondents in this study was 12; for blacks it was 13, for whites, 11 years old. Though the Civil Rights Movement affected all of them, half did not become active until later.

The Movement Shifts Towards More Radical Politics

By the mid 1960s, the movement accomplished some important victories. In 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, and in 1965 the Voting Rights Act, significantly improving the formal

political rights of blacks in the South. Piven and Cloward state that "in the South the deepest meaning of the winning of democratic political rights is that the *historical primacy of terror as a means of social control* has been substantially diminished."²¹¹ Blacks could participate politically without fearing for their lives. Of course, the degree of freedom from terror varied from place to place. Some areas, especially rural ones, remained almost untouched by the movement. Others, like Greensboro and Durham, were centers of the movement, and political protest became a common occurrence.

Yet for many, especially younger people, their focus in the 1960s was not on what had been accomplished, but on what still needed to be changed. People demonstrated to break down barriers of many types, economic, social, and political. There were some victories, but they were primarily social or political. The economic gains of the movement were limited, as Piven and Cloward note: "For most poor blacks, occupational conditions did not much improve."²¹² In the eyes of activists at the grassroots, they had gained the right to eat at almost any restaurant they wanted, but still did not have the money to pay the bill.

Morris captures the views of many of the respondents around 1965. They knew that change was possible, but felt that the movement had just begun, that much more remained to be done:

... by the mid-60s, the movement had failed to achieve racial integration nor had it accomplished Dr. King's dream of a "beloved community" where people would not be judged by the color of their skin.

²¹¹ Piven and Cloward, Poor Peoples Movements, p. 182 (emphasis added).

²¹² *ibid.*

To the contrary, in the mid-60s blacks were still highly segregated and occupied inferior economic and political positions. Moreover, civil rights victories occurred in the context of white violence and major setbacks: black children were attacked, beaten, arrested, and at times killed when they challenged the established order; civil rights workers, including Medgar Evers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, Jimmy Lee Jackson, Viola Liuzzo, James Reeb, and others were murdered... ²¹³

In this context many in the movement became more militant, in what Morris describes as "the shift to more 'revolutionary' protest politics." It was during the late 60s and early 70s that the majority of the respondents in this study became politically active, in a process described in Chapter 8. During the mid-1970s most of these individuals adopted communist politics, which is discussed in Chapter 9.

The next chapter, however, focuses on the respondents and their families, taking a closer look at the political traditions these individuals were born into, and their childhood memories. It addresses some intriguing questions: How did African-American respondents break with apolitical parents? Why did other blacks decide to carry on their parents' activist tradition? Why did whites decide to join the movement? What was the diversity of their families' backgrounds? How did the daughter of a Klansman join the movement for civil rights?

²¹³ Aldon D. Morris, "Black Political Socialization," pp. 289-90.

CHAPTER 6
THE RESPONDENTS' FAMILIES AND THEIR POLITICS

Families have the greatest influence on the politics of individuals, according to political socialization research. Scholars refuted the early theory that a child develops his/her political orientation by age 13, but they also recognized that much learning takes place during these years. For example, the studies of Jennings and Niemi concluded that young adults were "not carbon-copies of their parents." However, the same study found that no other agent of socialization plays as big a role as the family.²¹⁴ Thus families are important, but not all-determining. What is the role of parents in their children's political learning? How do they influence socialization? What are the limitations on the family's role?

This chapter analyzes the families of the 50 respondents. The first section is a critique of the political socialization studies of activists and their families, contrasting the model elaborated by Flacks, that activists are "carrying out values learned in the home," with the "structural-interactive" approach suggested by Morris, Hatchett and Brown. The rest of the chapter discusses the findings of this research on the families of the 50 respondents. The first finding is the extraordinary

²¹⁴ Jennings and Niemi, Adolescence.

political diversity of the family political traditions among the respondents. The second is that race and class are significant factors in the different family political traditions. The third finding is the sense of minority-group status that a majority of respondents reported as important to their political development. The final finding discussed in this chapter is the general family stability and other social characteristics of the respondents' families.

Families and Activists:

A Paucity of Political Socialization Research

The relationship between activists and their families is a fertile ground for study, but little research has focused on this area. The most comprehensive study is Jennings and Niemi's three-wave panel, which studies an entire cohort and their parents, including activists and the far greater numbers of non-activists.²¹⁵ The studies of Flacks, Kenniston, and Braungart and Braungart are only political socialization research known to the author that specifically focuses on sixties protesters and their families. Flacks' studies in the early 1960s confirmed the importance of the family's influence on protesters. He researched University of Chicago students, comparing activists with the uninvolved, and found that radical youth were carrying out values learned in the home.²¹⁶ Studies by Kenniston and Braungart also in the 1960s confirmed these findings, and more

²¹⁵ ibid.

²¹⁶ Flacks, "Liberated Generation."

recent retrospective studies of early sixties activists by Braungart and Braungart also supported this thesis.

But all of these researchers studied only a very limited sample of protest activists. All of their subjects were students from the North or West Coast, involved in the early 1960s. Most were men and nearly all were white.

Does the findings of Flacks, Keniston, Braungart and Braungart hold true for all groups of activists? As the social movements spread across the country, did all the young people involved come from liberal homes? What about the South, where there was wholesale exclusion of black political participation before the Civil Rights Movement? Did the movement involve no white southerners from families that supported segregation?

Morris, Hatchett, and Brown propose an alternative structural-interactive approach to socialization. They review the political socialization literature from vantage point of blacks' experience during the Civil Rights Movement, arguing that "political socialization is a process rooted in a groups' history and shaped by available options."²¹⁷ Specifically, they argue that "the political orientations and actions of black Americans are influenced by changing racial-political climate."²¹⁸ This contention is supported in a study comparing black disaffection with white society across several cohorts of 16 year olds in Detroit.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Morris, "Black Political Socialization," p.281.

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 277.

²¹⁹ Shirley J. Hatchett, "Black Racial Attitude Change in Detroit: 1968-1976," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1982.

The structural-interactive framework of Morris, Hatchett, and Brown suggest that political learning in the family is not adequate to explain the overwhelming participation of black youth in the movement. Even if particular black parents transmitted fear to their children and argued against activist participation of any kind, the political options suddenly available to blacks in the Civil Rights Movement drew many to actively participate, breaking with their family's political traditions.

Moreover, Morris et.al. point out that an important factor for black activists was the tradition of protest that has always been a part of American history, though not present in all black families. Black protest has taken many forms over the centuries, from slave revolts, to the underground railroad, to marching on Washington.²²⁰ Thus, Morris identifies a factor that is unique to the political socialization of many African-Americans.

Morris, Hatchett, and Brown raise several important questions for political socialization theory. First is the importance of the historical context for the political development of individuals. The second is the question of the differences between the political learning of an individual in a dominant political group, from those in a minority group.²²¹ This leads to a wide range of questions. How does political learning differ for blacks and whites in the U.S.? What about the unique political heritages of religious or ethnic minorities? What

²²⁰ ibid., pp. 280-1. Note: Morris also stresses this point in Origins.

²²¹ Some scholars refer to minority groups as "marginal." However, in analyzing African-Americans, "marginal" is not an appropriate term because of their centrality to American history and the large size of the group (12% of the population).

about the difference in political experience between girls and boys?

The "structural-interactive" approach indicates that the Flacks model of activists political socialization may not be adequate for protesters coming from a greatly different experience. The respondents in this study differ from the subjects studied by Flacks, Kenniston, Braungart and Braungart in many ways: Not only were they racially mixed and from the South, but also most became involved in the late 1960s-1970s (compared to the early 1960s) and they were community-based activists, rather than campus-based.

Despite the lack of political socialization research on Civil Rights Movements, the process of individual change during this period is widely discussed in the historical literature. For example, in Coming of Age in Mississippi, Ann Moody writes a compelling autobiography of her experiences as a young girl growing up in poverty in the deep South during the 1950s, and joining the Civil Rights Movement as a young adult.²²² Maya Angelou, in I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings, describes her early childhood in rural Arkansas in the 1940s.²²³ James Forman tells his personal history in rural Mississippi, in The Making of Black Revolutionaries.²²⁴ Jesse Jackson's childhood in South Carolina

²²² Anne Moody Coming of Age in Mississippi (New York: Dell Publishing, 1968).

²²³ Maya Angelou in I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings (New York: Random House, 1970).

²²⁴ James Forman The Making of Black Revolutionaries (New York: Macmillan Company, 1972).

is recounted by biographer Barbara Reynolds.²²⁵ Like the older black respondents in this research, all these individuals spent their childhoods in the rural segregated South in families that dared not express their views politically. It was only the advent of a massive social movement which enabled them, along with millions of others, to participate politically.

On the white side of the racial divide, there is also an extensive historical literature. Sara Evans, in Personal Politics: the Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left, describes how several white southern women became "dissidents" against the system of segregation in the 1940s and 50s, becoming activists in the Civil Rights Movement (and eventually in the Women's Liberation Movement).²²⁶ John Ehle, in The Free Men, examines individuals in the early movement in Chapel Hill, N.C., including several white men, one from Alabama who had grown up hearing pro-Klan stories, and whose great grand-father had founded the local in the Ku Klux Klan.²²⁷ Pat Conroy, in The Water is Wide, chronicles his personal journey as a racist southern high school student who "changed sides" becoming an activist for civil rights.²²⁸

²²⁵ Barbara Reynolds, Jesse Jackson: America's David (Washington, D.C.:JFJ Associates, 1985).

²²⁶ Sara Evans, Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Random House, 1979) pp. 24-59.

²²⁷ John Ehle, The Free Men (New York: Harper & Row, 1955).

²²⁸ Pat Conroy, The Water is Wide (New York: Bantam Books, 1972).

In summary, there are two distinct frameworks for analyzing the relationships between activists and their families. One is the thesis elaborated by Flacks, based on studies of Northern anti-war activists, that protesters are carrying out traditions learned in their homes. The second is the structural-interactive approach, elaborated by Morris, Hatchett, and Brown, supported by many accounts of individual civil rights activists. Which approach corresponds more closely to the 50 respondents in this study, and their relationships to their families?

Family Political Traditions of the 50 Respondents

Finding 1: The families of the 50 respondents in this research are extraordinarily diverse, including apolitical parents, left-wing activist parents, to right-wing activist parents.

The political environments of the respondents' childhoods ranged from families where the parents were communists to one where the father was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. A significant number grew up in homes where politics was never discussed. One respondent described the group as containing people from "all walks of life." Below is a breakdown of the different parental political traditions:

<u>Parental Politics</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
1) liberal to left-wing	27
2) conservative to right-wing	7
3) apolitical	16
Total:	50

Below each category is briefly described.

1) **Liberal to Left Wing Families:**

Slightly more than half the respondents grew up in homes where their families held liberal to leftist political views. This group is equally divided between blacks and whites. During their childhoods, these respondents' parents talked about politics and in some cases were actively involved. The childhood political socialization of this group is consistent with Flacks' thesis of carrying on values learned in the home.

The parents in this group ranged from mainstream liberals who talked about politics in the home to parents who were communists and also respondents in this study. This category can be further divided into the following sub groups:

<u>Liberal to Left Parental Politics</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
liberals who talked about politics:	10
liberals who were activists:	9
communist who were also respondents in this study:	8
Total:	27

These subgroups indicate a wide range of politics among these families. Ten respondents came from homes where politics was discussed, but their parents were not active beyond voting. Seventeen came from families where at least one parent was involved politically. Nine of these respondents had a parent who was involved, including one who was president of the local

chapter of the NAACP in rural North Carolina during the 1950s, and another who was a trade union organizer for bus drivers. Eight other respondents are in a sub-group because their parents were not only communists, but also respondents in this study.

2) Conservative to Right Wing Parents:

The line between liberal and conservative parents is drawn between those who were Democrats and those who were Republicans.²²⁹ There are 7 respondents from families in the conservative category, all of them white, all but one from the South. Most of their parents not only talked from conservative viewpoint, but were actively involved in organizations and causes. These families ranged from mainstream Republicans to the far right. They included the mothers of 2 respondents who were leaders of civic organizations, the parents of 1 respondent who were active in Dixiecrat party politics, the parents of 2 respondents who were pro-segregation but otherwise not politically active, 1 whose father was an advocate of the John Birch Society, and finally 1 father who was a member of the Ku Klux Klan as well as the John Birch Society. All these families were middle class, except the Klansman, who was quite poor.

This category sharply contrasts with the finding of Flacks. Clearly as activists who became communists during the 1970s, they were not "carrying out values learned in the home." As the

²²⁹ The only exception was the oldest white respondent whose parents were pro-integration Republicans in the 1930s and 40s. At that time, the Democratic Party was the party of segregation in the South, so this family is categorized on the liberal side of the scale.

political development of these individuals is traced in subsequent chapters, various alternative models are discussed, including adolescent rebellion, and the structural-interactive framework suggested by Morris.

3) Apolitical Parents:

Sixteen respondents came from apolitical families. Their parents did not discuss politics in the home and did not participate politically. Only 2 respondents in this category reported that their parents voted, and in both these cases, the parents did not tell the respondent who they voted for.

This category is mutually exclusive from the previous 2 categories, because there is no way to determine where these parents fell on the right to left political spectrum. Their activism level is zero on the activism scale.

The respondents from apolitical families include 11 blacks and 5 whites. All 11 blacks were born in the South before 1950 to poor families. At that time, not only were most blacks denied the right to vote, but many were also terrorized by the Klan. Fear was a reasonable response to the political environment, and it goes a long way in explaining why so many poor black families were apolitical. The apolitical families of white respondents, in contrast, were not fearful, but simply lacked any interest in politics. They included both working and middle-class families.

This group does not correspond to Flacks' model; clearly they, too, were not "carrying out values learned in the home," but were breaking with their family tradition to become involved.

The structural-interactive model appears more relevant to explain the development of this subgroup of respondents.

The Factors of Race and Class in Family Political Traditions

Finding 2: Race and social class are significant factors in the family traditions of these 50 respondents.

The respondents are demographically not equally distributed among these three family political traditions. Race and class were major factors in the distribution. Gender, on the other hand, was not significant, in that the political traditions of the families were almost equally divided in each category between men and women. The two bar graphs below illustrate the factors of race and class.

Figure 6.1 shows the race of the 50 respondents in each of the family political tradition categories. The respondents from liberal to left families were almost equally divided between blacks and whites. Those from conservative families, in contrast, were all white. Those from apolitical homes were mostly blacks, all of them born before 1950.

Figure 6.1

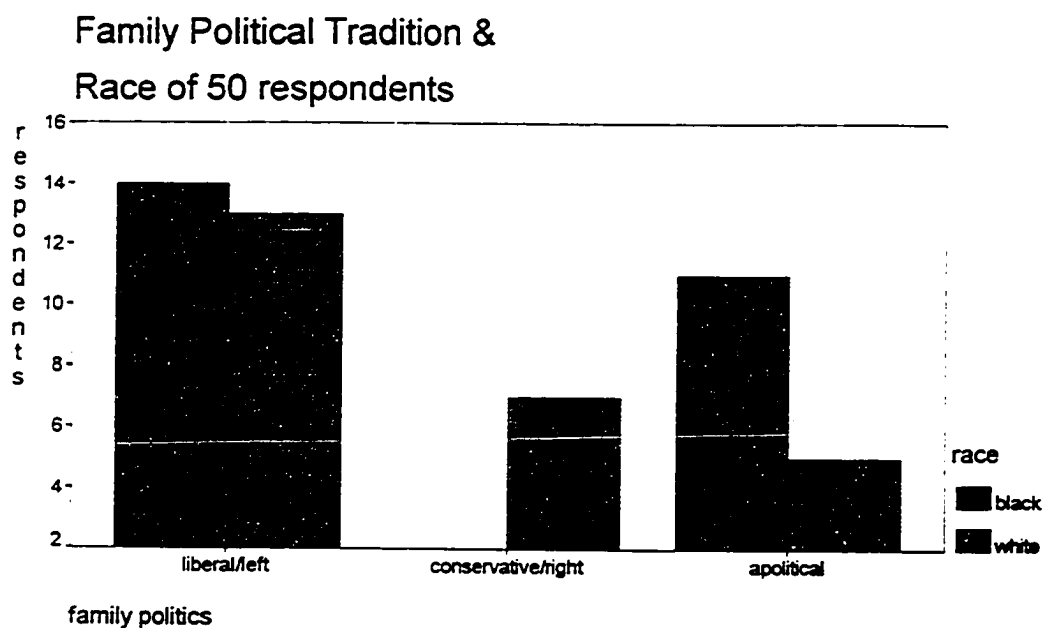
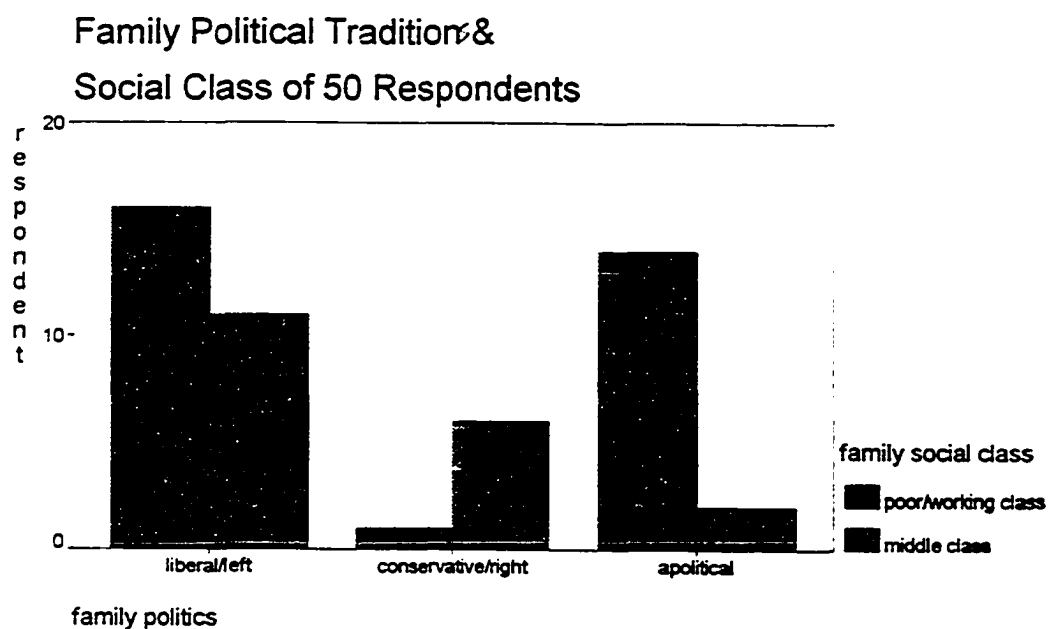


Figure 6.2 illustrates the social class of the 50 respondents in the three family political tradition categories. Respondents from liberal/left families were divided between those from the middle-class and the working-class, with somewhat more than half of the came from working-class homes. The conservative families, in contrast, were middle-class, except for one (the Klan family). And the apolitical families were overwhelmingly poor and working-class. All the blacks in this category came from poor families; 2 of 5 of the whites were from middle-class homes.

Figure 6.2



Awareness of Political Minority Status

***Finding 3:** The vast majority of these respondents -- 78% -- reported that during childhood they developed the sense of being in a minority political group.*

All 25 black respondents reported becoming aware as a child of being part of a racial minority group. They described racial

discrimination as central to their political development. (Some of their memories are elaborated in the next chapter.)

In addition, 14 whites reported some sense of being in a political minority, although for some it was not as central to their development as it was for the black respondents. (The other 11 whites (22%) mentioned no type of minority status.) All 7 respondents born into Jewish families reported that their Jewish identity was important to their development. For some, including one respondent who was the child of Holocaust survivors, it was central to their identity.

Two female respondents grew up in families that discriminated against them based on gender. Awareness of women's oppression came early and laid the basis of their later radicalism. (Several other respondents discussed sex discrimination later in their adolescence or young adulthood.)

Several white respondents described their family being part of a political party that was the minority as they grew up. Two were from Republican families in Democratic areas, and 2 others were from Democratic families in Republican areas. While this was not as central to these 4 respondents as the minority status of other respondents, it nonetheless made them aware of being a political minority.

Growing up in poverty was also cited by several respondents as important to their political development. One 1 white male was bitterly aware of his family's poverty status. (A number of blacks also mentioned poverty-status awareness, intertwined with their racial awareness.)

The sense of being born into a political minority became an

important factor for the majority of the respondents, leading many to become sensitive to injustice towards their group. This theme of unfairness is developed more fully in the next chapter, on the earliest political memories of the respondents.

Family Stability and Other Social Characteristics

Finding 3: the respondents come from relatively stable families.

Family stability is but one indicator of the psychological health of an individual. Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation review the scholarly debate concerning psychological health and political activism (see pages 56-61 and pages 77-83). Kenniston and Matthews and Prothro found sixties protesters to be more optimistic and altruistic and less alienated than the norm.²³⁰ On the other hand, Gergen and Ulman reviewed various research projects on behavioral traits of political activists, and found little unity among the studies,²³¹ leading to the view that activists reflect the general population psychologically.

The findings for this research are that most of the respondents' parents provided generally stable family units for their children. Two-thirds of those interviewed reported both parents in the home. The others grew up with their mothers, including three whose fathers died during their childhood, and 13

²³⁰ Kenniston, Young Radicals; and Matthews and Prothro, New Southern Politics.

²³¹ Gergen and Ulman, "Characterological Basis." Note: Group affiliation was the one characteristic that their review found consistency across studies.

whose mothers were divorced or never married. Two reported being raised in extended families, including their mothers, aunts, and grandparents. The majority of blacks (56%) had both parents in the home, as did 80% of the whites.

Among the 50 individuals, there is a general sense of strong family units. But there were several exceptions. One white respondent described a mentally-ill mother, and another called her family "dysfunctional." One black respondent reported a "cruel" step father. Two (1 white, 1 black) said that their fathers drank too much. These troubled families come from no one political tradition and include both working- and middle-class families. They make up only 10% of the whole sample.

Many of the respondents' families were large. Half had 3 or more siblings, and 4 respondents were from families of 10 children. The majority of the big families were black, although 6 whites also had numerous siblings. Twenty respondents came from average-size families with 2 or 3 children. Most of these were white, but this category also included 5 blacks. Five respondents (2 blacks, 3 whites) were only children. The factor of family size also changed over time. While many of the older respondents came from larger families, all of the younger respondents are in average or smaller-sized families. The place of the 50 respondents among their siblings spread fairly evenly. Eighteen were the oldest child or among the oldest children, 7 were middle children, and 15 were the youngest or among the youngest.

Thus no single social characteristic describes the respondents. They do not tend to be single children nor the

oldest child, but from a wide variety of family sizes. They come from generally stable families. The 10% from troubled families are spread over differing racial, gender, and class groups as well as various political traditions.

In summary, the respondents came from generally stable families with extraordinarily diverse political traditions. The vast majority developed a sense of being part of a political minority during childhood, based on race, class, gender, religion, or a combination of these factors. What was it that led people from such different backgrounds to common political views and behavior? The respondents reported that the process started in childhood. The following chapter analyzes their earliest political memories, providing a more detailed look at the early experiences of the respondents.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHILDHOOD: EARLIEST POLITICAL MEMORIES

Biographies and autobiographies often begin with the earliest memories of their subject, a logical starting point in looking at the development of an individual. Likewise, it seems to make sense to look at the earliest memories reported by the respondents in this study. Braungart and Braungart, in their retrospective study of left and right student leaders in the 1960s, asked their respondents when they were first interested in politics.²³² However, I know of no other political socialization study that considers "earliest political memories" as an analytic category.

Robert Coles emphasizes that children develop the beginnings of political understanding at an early age, an understanding which evolves as they grow older. In The Political Life of Children and The Moral Life of Children, and his many other books, Coles extensively documents the emerging understandings of young people.²³³ In particular, Coles looks at children in crisis, including long-standing racial impasses, dire poverty,

²³² Braungart and Braungart, "Life Course Development," p. 260.

²³³ Robert Coles. The Political Life of Children (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1986); and Robert Coles The Moral Life of Children (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1986).

and historical crises such as the Civil Rights era in the South.

He states:

I tried to uncover a psychology of everyday life; a psychology of turmoil and response to turmoil; a psychology of hope against hope with plenty of interludes of doubt and fear... What of the child as citizen? The child as churchgoer? The child as the law's instrument of legal redress, as history's fateful actor or actress? The child as a parent's hope, not only as object of obedience, manipulation, punishment? The child as civilization's major preoccupation, a society's obsessional regard?... The child as moral protagonist or antagonist -- as in the South's racial conflict?²³⁴

Childhood political experiences could be remembered by adults years later, providing a beginning of individuals' political journey. In the interviews, I asked each respondent "How did you become politically active?" I encouraged them to remember as far back as they could to recall how they became interested in politics. The questions were open-ended, asking the respondents to free associate (to the extent they wanted to) from their individual experience.

After all the interviews were completed, the earliest memories mentioned by each respondent were identified. As the examples in the following pages demonstrate, many respondents recalled witnessing or experiencing some form of injustice in childhood. Their memories shed light on the respondents' introduction to the political world, and the relationship of their parents to that world.

²³⁴ Coles, Moral Life, pp.4-9.

Types of Earliest Political Memories

The memories of the respondents can be divided into two kinds, based on whether the respondent recollected something their parents did, or whether it was something that occurred outside the home. Twenty-five respondents (50%) reported earliest memories which involved their parents, understandable since childhood revolves around the family. These memories include family discussions about current events, watching a parent do something political, or participating in a demonstration with them.

The second type of memory involved the respondent observing something outside the family. This includes a variety of recollections, from the respondent becoming generally aware of societal conditions, to a more direct and, in some cases traumatic, personal experience. Fifteen respondents (30%) reported a general awareness type of recollection; ten respondents (20%) described more direct personal (often dramatic) experiences.

The earliest political memories closely corresponded to the different political environments in the home.

Finding: The differences in family political traditions had profound effects on the earliest political memories of the respondents:

The vast majority of respondents from politically involved families (whether right-wing or left-wing) remember some parental activity as their earliest memory.

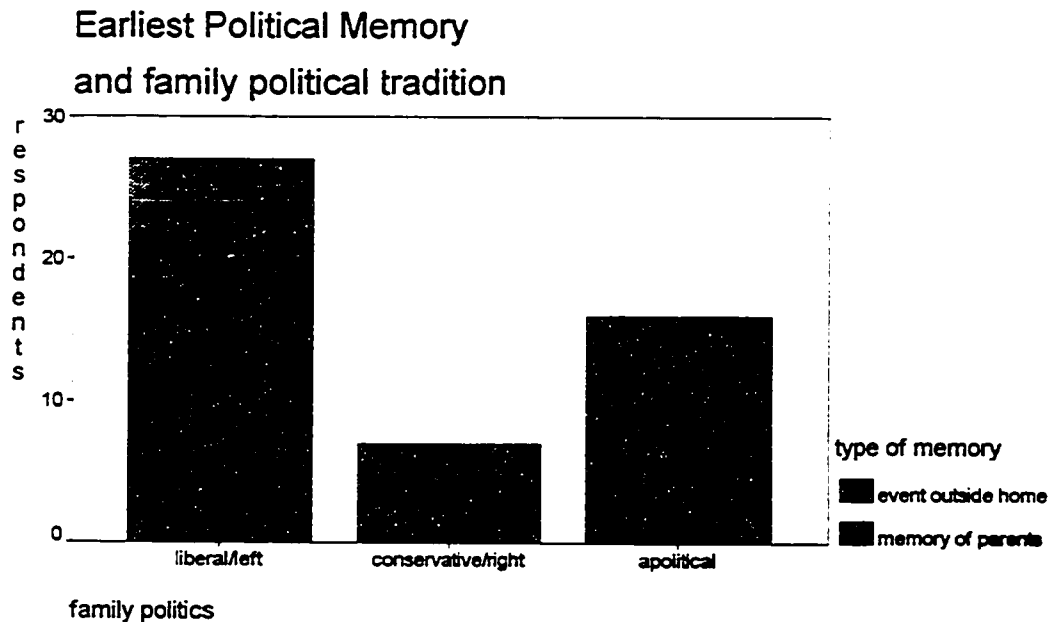
The respondents from apolitical families remember events

that were outside of their homes.

Below is a bar graph of earliest political memories of the respondents from different family traditions (liberal/left, conservative/right, and apolitical). The memories are divided on each bar by whether they are the memory of parent (darker shade) or by something that occurred outside the home (lighter shade). There is a clear relationship between type of memory and parental political involvement. Most respondents from active families, whether the politics was left or right, remembered their parents' involvement (73%). In contrast, the earliest memories of respondents from apolitical families were all observations of conditions or events outside the home (100%).

On the following pages is a discussion of the earliest memories of these individuals in these three different family traditions.

Figure 7.1



I Apolitical Families

Sixteen individuals described their parents as apolitical, with no discussion of politics in the home. Eleven blacks and 5 whites were in this group.

Finding: The first political memories of all the respondents from apolitical families were observations of events outside the home. The memories vary considerably by race and age: the most vivid

and traumatic experiences were from blacks who grew up in the South under segregation.

Blacks from Apolitical Families:

All 11 blacks with apolitical parents were born in the South before 1950 into poor families. Five described early childhood experiences with segregation. One remembered going to the movie theater and having to sit in the balcony because the better section was for whites only. Another recalled going to a segregated school and resenting the torn up books handed down from the white school across town. A third remembered fighting with white kids when they crossed paths going to their different schools. And one described her white childhood friend whose mother broke up their friendship because she did not want her child to be seen going into a black family's home.

More brutal were the earliest memories of six other respondents. Four refer directly to incidents of Ku Klux Klan terror during their childhood. As nameless, faceless night-riders, the Klan terrorized blacks especially in rural areas.²³⁵ During his interview, Respondent 15, who still lives on the same land where he grew up, pointed to where Klan activity had gone on in his childhood:

I remember two meetings, right in that big field. They used to ride up and down the road there in their little sheets, and sometimes we would be sitting out in the yard, and they would ride by and call names and shoot up into the air.

Two other respondents from rural areas also have traumatic earliest memories. R 10's family was targeted by whites because

²³⁵ See Chalmers, Hooded Americanism.

they had bought land from a white person. R 11 remembered whites killing a black man for dating a white woman, and her mother's fear that any expression of opposition would result in people disappearing, never to be seen or heard of again. (The earliest memories of Respondents 10 and 11 are detailed in Chapter 5.)

How does a child make sense of brutality? The feeling of fear, powerlessness, and desire for simple justice pervade the accounts of the black respondents growing up under segregation. Several struggled to gain a sense of self-respect despite what they witnessed around them. For example, Respondent 2, who grew up in the South Carolina in the 1920-30s, remembers "the Ku Klux Klan going into people's houses, dragging them out, beating them, hanging them." He stated:

Naturally being a kid I was searching myself: "is this the way its gotta be?" What I said to myself is "it won't happen to me. Nobody will ever do me the way I don't want them to do. If you do, you're going to have to kill me first."

Respondent 4 described how her earliest memory jarred her from her family's apolitical character. She explained that growing up in the 1940s, "I really wasn't dealing with the world as racist; in fact that word was very seldom used... But I would see things..." When she was about 10 years old, she watched as police accused a black man of stealing and knocked his groceries all over the street. She described how the black people in the area scattered, because they were afraid to come to his aid. She continued:

I remember thinking, "maybe if I could save a white person's life, maybe then we would be accepted."

It sounds silly now, but I remember thinking, "maybe we are not doing enough. Maybe if I did a great thing, like they were hit by a car, and I pulled them out of danger, then this would be the opening." In my young way of

thinking, I was just trying to figure it out.

Her mother, however, counseled her to give up such ideas, and to submit to segregation to survive. She recalled her mother's fatalistic advice:

My mother was a domestic worker all her life. She would say to me,

"When you grow up and get a job, you're going to have to learn how to get along with these white folks. You can't be high and mighty with them, or voice your opinion.... You just forget about all that trying to change white folks; you can't do anything with white people, that's just the way they are. You can't do anything about it."

The parents of these respondents did not vote or talk about politics. One described her parents response to the political system: "They didn't like it, but they stayed back; Whatever was said, they had to go along with it." Some tried to hide brutality from their children. As Respondent 22 explained:

The grownups kept it hid from you. Something happened to such and such a one, he was dragged out in the middle of the night, and beat up or shot, and if you asked questions, they would say 'you don't need to know about that.' If you asked about them about a cross burning, they wouldn't explain it to you, they just didn't want you to know.

But regardless of what they did, these parents were powerless to shield their children from the injustices of society.

Whites from Apolitical Families:

Five white respondents also came from apolitical families, but their experiences were quite different, characterized by a distant awareness of the political world. Two respondents were from the middle-class, whereas 3 were from working class

families. Four lived outside the South. One respondent from a middle-class family said her first memory was JFK's assassination, which occurred when she was 7 years old. She said that her family never talked about politics, and she herself never read a newspaper until she left home to go to college.

Despite their family's lack of interest in politics, the question of injustice plays an important role in some of these memories. One respondent stated that his family was so uninterested in politics that they had no reaction to Kennedy's assassination. Nevertheless, his first memory was as a child of five or six, lying awake at night worrying about starving people across the world. The 3 others were from poorer families. One of them reported that his parents occasionally voted, but never told him for whom. His first reported memory was seeing a labor strike in his town. Another respondent remembers seeing a segregated park; another, watching news about the Vietnam War on TV. All of these memories were of events outside the home; all of them are characterized by a distant perception of the political world, and all involve awareness of injustice.

In sum, in the apolitical families the racial differences were dramatic. Like the blacks, the white respondents were introduced to the political world through observations of events outside their families. But unlike the blacks, the whites' earliest memories reveal a removed awareness of the political world. Whereas fear pervaded the black apolitical families, lack of political interest infused the white apolitical families. Regardless of whether they were black or white, it was not the parents who sparked the political interest of these respondents.

How the respondents from apolitical families broke with their parents' traditions of inactivity to become politically involved is the subject of the next chapter.

II Liberal to Leftist Families

The 27 respondents from liberal to leftist homes remember as children their parents discussion of or involvement in politics. This became an important basis for the respondents' development as activists; in Flacks words, they were "carrying out values learned in the home."

Finding: For 78% of the respondents with liberal to leftist parents, the earliest political memories involved their parents.

There is a wide range of family political traditions within this liberal to left category. Five subgroups are discussed on the following pages:

1. Black parents who talked about politics in the home from a liberal perspective (4 respondents).
2. Jewish parents who talked about politics in the home from a liberal perspective (4 respondents).
3. White parents who talked about politics in the home from a liberal perspective (2 respondents).
4. Parents, black and white, who were liberal activists before and during the Civil Rights Movement (9 respondents).
5. Parents, black and white, who were communist activists during the 1970s, and who were also respondents in this study (8

respondents).

1. Black parents who talked about politics in the home from a liberal perspective:

Family discussion was a powerful influence for a number of respondents, including 4 from black families who talked about politics in the home. For example, Respondent 19 described her earliest memories during the 1950s:

I grew up in a household where my parents weren't activists but my father was a very strong person on freedoms and rights... He worked at R.J. Reynolds [tobacco factory]. My next door neighbor was one of the organizers of the R.J. Reynold's strike. I used to hear my parents talk about him and people who were political and stuck their necks out...

I remember being very young and talking issues and my father was always encouraging me to argue with him.

Another child in this subgroup has a vivid memory from her childhood:

I remember my mother and my father walking the floor of the very small house which we lived in, wondering if we would survive the night. For they had heard rumors from neighbors that there was riots breaking out....

I remember holding on to my mother's uniform as she would be walking from door to door, looking out the door, because of all the turmoil that was going on. We would ask them what was going on, and they would tell us not to worry about it. Yet the fear filled the room. A child can feel fear better than anyone.

This respondent grew up in Durham, N.C., where there was a riot following King's assassination in 1968, and the National Guard was called in. Respondent 44 was 7 at the time, and perhaps this is the basis of her memory. Her older brother, also a respondent, recalled playing "cat and mouse" with the National Guard who were patrolling his neighborhood during that time. If this incident was the basis of Respondent 44's memory, her

parents had good reason to be pacing the floor!

2. Jewish parents who talked about politics in the home from a liberal perspective:

Out of 50 respondents, 7 are Jewish, and 4 of them came from families that talked about politics.²³⁶ One respondent's parents survived Nazi concentration camps, and from the time he was very young, he grew up listening to his mother telling him about the Holocaust. Another Jew grew up in South Africa. Asked how he became interested in politics, he responded that it was "growing up in South Africa under apartheid." He described his earliest memories:

I remember early on feeling ill at ease with black workers who would get off the bus and who would be chanting and walking up to their place of residence. As a young boy I was kind of scared of them. They were smelly, they were loud, they were different. I thought "Wow! What is going on here?" I knew they were different from me and that they did the hard dirty work.

He also described discussions in his family:

I would always be participating in debates in my family about the situation, the pros and cons of living there. I never really felt at home. I grew up as a Jew. The people who were in control of the government at the time were pro-Nazis... I was a white person, but not part of the mainstream white.

Another respondent of a liberal Jewish family described her parents as "free thinkers" who were "critical of the way things were done." Her earliest memory was her father criticizing a relative who made racist comments.

²³⁶ The other 3 Jews include 1 from a liberal-activist family, and 2 from apolitical families.

3. White parents who talked about politics in the home from a liberal perspective:

Two white respondents from liberal families also talked about politics. One remembers moving to Saudi Arabia with her family. "I remember getting involved in thinking about dramatic different points of view and struggle," she said, about the right of Palestinians to have their own state. She added, "I wasn't involved politically, because I didn't do anything, but that's when I started thinking... of taking a side against another side."

The other respondent was a working class boy, whose earliest remembrances involved his parents' divorce when he was five, leading to a dramatic change in life style for his family:

Then my father left us, and all of a sudden all the nice things were gone. We moved from a nice house in that nice neighborhood to a crappy old project [in a] poor neighborhood. It was a different world. People treated you different, there was a lot of racial tension... So I guess that's when I first became aware that there are differences in this country.

4. Parents, black and white, who were liberal activists before and during the Civil Rights Movement:

Nine respondents had politically active parents before or during the Civil Rights Movement, including four blacks and five whites. Two blacks born before 1950 had activist parents, a rare occurrence in the South at that time. Respondent 14's father was a tobacco worker, involved in the tobacco union in Durham, N.C. At that time, there were segregated union locals of workers from the same plant, and this respondent's father was involved in the effort to merge the two locals. This respondent followed the

tradition of his father, becoming an activist in the factory where he worked after high school. Respondent 12's father was a local NAACP president in eastern North Carolina. This respondent credited his family with his start towards activist politics. Asked about how he became politically active, he replied, "the principal thing was my family, the discussion in our household."

Two other black respondents had parents who were involved during the Civil Rights Movement activity. One's mother was involved in voter registration, the other, from Bermuda, became involved in a Civil Rights Movement in that country that closely paralleled the US movement. He remembers going to marches and conferences with his grandfather and other relatives.

Five white respondents had parents who were active before or during the Civil Rights Movement. Respondent 3, grew up in Ohio in the 1930-40s with parents who were "Taft-Republicans in a city where the Democrats essentially were racketeers." Her parents were pro-racial integration, religious, and "very very straight". She remembers her mother as "a total leader, a speaker, she could do everything," setting a high standard for her daughter to follow.

Another white respondent, #34, described her union-organizer father during the 1950s:

The biggest influence on me becoming politically active was my father who was a union organizer for the CIO... He was virtually never home. He did nothing to take care of us kids, although we loved him, especially me... From a very early time, to "do right" as my father said, was to be on the side of the working man, the little person.

A third white respondent had a father who was a high-ranking official in the Central Intelligence Agency. He described his earliest political memories:

I grew up with a political mind set. My father worked for the CIA. He never discussed the content of his work, but we would watch the news together. A political orientation was part of my home culture... My expectation was that as a man I would help run the world. It was part of my self image as a child... I never saw individuals as helpless in a machine.²³⁷

This respondent inherited a strong sense of efficacy, in sharp contrast to the black respondents growing up in the segregated South.

Another white respondent had parents who were members of the American Civil Liberties Union, and whose earliest memory is of family political discussion. And one respondent had a father who became an activist around the same time that she did, in the 1960s.

The contrast between the memories of the black and white respondents whose parents were active before and during the Civil Rights Movement reflect their differing places in the social structure. The black parents in this group were grass roots activists organizing against segregation. The white parents were in higher social strata. However, there are similarities in how all these respondents were introduced to the political world -- through observing their parents actively participating to change it.

²³⁷ This respondent's family tradition was categorized as "liberal-activist" because his father was a Democrat and pro-civil rights. From a perspective of radical political change, however, this father was quite conservative, leading his son to rebel against him, which is discussed in the subsequent chapters.

5. Parents, black and white, who were communist activists during the 1970s, and who were also respondents in this study

Eight respondents were the children of other respondents.²³⁸ Six are black, two white. The earliest memories of all of them are of parental involvement.

Four respondents, born between 1951 and 1961, remember their mothers' involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Two were sisters. The older one stated, "the thing that really got me into the Civil Rights Movement was my mother, knowing that she was active in some of the things going on around me." Her younger sister agreed, saying "the main influence was sitting and listening to my Mom while she had company." Another daughter of a respondent described herself as a "child of the movement."

Four other respondents were younger, born between 1968 and 1973. Their earliest memories are of their parents involvement in the Communist Workers Party. For example, the youngest respondent recalled a picket in support of striking workers in Greensboro in 1977, when she was 4 years old:

I don't remember the place... Everyone had signs. My mother wouldn't let me participate, but I was there. I was sitting on a car, and everybody was marching.

Another stated, "our house seemed to be a central meeting place." She described the close relationships she developed with the

²³⁸ Below is a list of the respondent/parents and their respondent/offspring:

Respondent 3	parent of	Respondent 32
Respondent 6	" "	Respondent 42
Respondent 7	" "	Respondent 36 and Respondent 45
Respondent 8	" "	Respondent 48
Respondent 11	" "	Respondent 47 and Respondent 50
Respondent 12	" "	Respondent 49

other children of respondents: "We had a ball... The grown ups were always in meetings. We didn't care what they were doing."

In summary, most of the respondents from liberal to leftist families, gained their introduction to politics through their parents. These individuals were fairly evenly divided between blacks and whites, males and females, and middle- and working-class. In 10 families, current events were discussed seriously. In 17 other families, at least one parent was actively involved in trying to change the world.

III Conservative to Right-Wing Families

Seven respondents, all white and all but one southern, came from homes on the conservative side of the political spectrum. These families ranged from mainstream Republicans to the far right. They included the mothers of 2 respondents who were leaders of civic organizations, the parents of 1 respondent who were active in Dixiecrat party politics, the parents of 2 respondents who were pro-segregation but otherwise not politically active, 1 whose father was an advocate of the John Birch Society, and finally 1 father who was a member of the Ku Klux Klan as well as the John Birch Society. All these families were middle class, except the Klansman, who was quite poor.

Finding: Four out of 7 respondents from conservative families described earliest memories involving their parents. These remembrances the respondents indicate that the conservative and

right-wing parents, like the liberal parents, stimulated their offspring's early interest in politics.

The descriptions of the respondents indicate that activist parents had a powerful influence on their children whether they were on the right or left side of the spectrum. Eventually all respondents from conservative families would rebel against their parents' politics (in a process described in Chapter 8). But their memories of early childhood show close emotional ties, particularly on the part of the two female respondents whose fathers were the most right wing. Extensive excerpts from the transcripts of these two women are reproduced below.

Respondent 17, the daughter of a member of the Ku Klux Klan, described her earliest political memory:

I was about eight. I remember my mother told me she wanted to show me something. I can see the picture in my mind of her taking me to this hall closet in our house and pulling out this Klan robe. I remember being shocked. I don't remember having the sensibility to be offended... I just was shocked. I can't remember what I thought about it.

Respondent 17 went on to describe the social context of her childhood, her complex relationship with father that included feelings of love and a gradual realization of his bigotry:

I grew up in a very very profoundly religious community. The church I grew up in was like a family. It was a very tiny Protestant denomination, centered in a tiny rural community in South Alabama, so everyone was cousins. It was a very nurturing...

It was a great place to grow up as a kid. Very family, very tight, very close, very country and Southern. There was nothing socially progressive about it. I don't remember any context of the outside world...

I consider that real roots for me for any desire to do anything useful. The real basic Christian message, if people hear it, is very caring and loving, and I think I grew up with that.

My father was in the Klan, and it may be that some of

my early interest in doing something else, may have been a reaction to him. We were alike in many ways. I think I was his favorite, because I was intellectually curious, and more than my two older sisters.

I did well in school, and was the darling of the little tiny town I grew up in. It was my great desire to excel and do something big -- and it was my ticket out of town.

When I was 16 I left to go to college, pretty much on my own. No one in my family had ever done that before. I remember starting to conflict with my father about when I went to college. I didn't like the stuff he talked about, he was very bigoted.

There was a point where I realized what he was doing was very racist. But was racist in a real psychologically understandable Southern way. I think it was the way he dealt with his own miserable non-nurturing childhood, and he projected. He was very loving, and would bring people home off the street, hitchhikers -- everybody, black or white. He was one of those curious Southern paradoxes, that I think is fairly well studied and described, because he was a kind person one-on-one to either black people or white people. He would give you the shirt off his back. He never lectured that you should do that, but that is the way he lived. He drove my mother crazy. But in a group process, he projected his unhappiness on black people, the logical people you did that to in the 1940s or 50s, as a southern man.

Respondent 17's entire description centered around her father. I asked her about her mother, and she replied:

She was one of these typical southern religious women, very quiet. I remember thinking that if she ever had an independent thought in her life, I never knew what it was. She mirrored my father, she reflected whatever he said. But she never talked about bigoted stuff; she just sort of nodded a lot.

It took Respondent 17 many years to sort out her own political feelings about what was right and wrong. Her process of becoming an activist is discussed in chapter 8.

Respondent 33, in contrast, rebelled against her parents at a very young age. She, too, had loving yet complex ties with her parents. Her transcript is excerpted below, a description which blends her rebellion with her respect for her parents. She started her interview, stating:

I would say that one of the factors in my development was being the only girl with three brothers in a family where my parents were very conservative.

My mother is a very strong personality... [She is] from a very poor, West Virginia, back-in-the-mountains family. I was at odds with her a good deal.

I remember being very upset that I wasn't a boy when I was little, arguing with my older brother that I was a boy when I was about three. He would tease me and say "you're a girl." My mother heard all this and said "God wants you to be a girl, so you should accept it, because God chose this for you."

I remember thinking very consciously of boys and girls being treated unequally. My brothers got to go out and play while I had to help with the housework on Saturdays. It was a real, constant theme, that I was always very angry about, thought about it at home a lot. "Why do I have to help clean up the dishes after supper and they don't?"

My mother would say "you can't go outside and play if you don't do this." [We were] constantly battling it out, I never gave in.

I would say "Okay," and I would take my book and go off in my room and spend all Saturday reading, rather than participating in this unfair treatment. I would say to her over and over, "it's not that I don't want to help you. I would help you if you'd get them to help too." I wouldn't budge on it.

My mother was the first person in her family to go to college. She became a pilot. She was an aircraft patrol operator in World War II. When I was a young girl, she was flying T34 jets, a single-pilot jet, because that was her hobby. Amelia Erhart was her hero. I've told her she's a feminist, and she doesn't want to admit it. She has very traditional ideas. She does believe that women are equal -- actually she believes women are better than men. ...Their job is to run this home. She believes the family is the core of everything...

We get along, now, real well. But it was difficult growing up with her because [we were] two real strong wills battling all the time...

R 33 continued her interview, discussing her relationship with her father:

My father was an officer in the military. He was very political, interested in the John Birch Society. He had friends in the John Birch Society. When I was a young kid, he gave me a lot of reading material, anti-communist stuff, which I read. I read it all, I discussed it with him, we had a lot of political discussions. I was his only child who was really interested in politics, and that was one of the things we liked to share when I was kid....

I was eleven. My dad brought me this list of 100 books. He said even if you didn't go to college, if you read these 100 great books in western civilization, you

would be fairly well read, better educated in some ways than a college graduate.

I started with Plato. I made it my business to check off that list. I went down the list, and after I got to the sixth book, I was about thirteen or fourteen, he said "I'm concerned about your heavy reading... You don't read any light reading anymore, just philosophy, history..."

I was astonished. I said, "I thought this was the thing to do. I thought that was what you wanted me to do. Anyway it's what I want to do."

He said, "I didn't expect you to take it to heart quite so much."

So I kept doing it. He expressed a number of times that he was concerned about me becoming morose, involved in too many deep issues... So he was giving double messages. I had a little problem with that...

Both R33 and R17 had close relationships with their right-wing fathers, based in part on the intellectual discussion of ideas. But as young women, both these respondents rejected the right-wing character of their father's politics, turning to the left. R33 was motivated from an early age by her parents' unfairness towards her based on gender. R17 gradually saw the injustice of her father's views towards blacks, and simultaneously, she began to rebel against the rigidity of expectations of her as a southern woman.

Three male respondents also came from conservative backgrounds. Though their descriptions are not as vivid as the two women just described, their families also appeared to be loving. Respondent 28 was the son of a Dixiecrat family in southern Virginia, who during his childhood assumed that he would carry on the family tradition. Respondent 29 was the son of "business Republicans" in Jackson, Mississippi, who explained that the Republicans were somewhat less racist than the Democrats who controlled the state political machinery. His mother was active the local president of the Women's Club. The third male, Respondent 18, was also the son of wealthy Republicans, and his

mother was active in mainstream women's organizations. R 18 began rebelling against his parents as a teenager, but he also feels that his mother taught him positive lessons during his childhood, particularly to "be an individual -- not a conformist."

The final 2 respondents in this category, R25 and R46, are sisters whose parents talked about politics from a conservative pro-segregation viewpoint, although they were not actively involved. Their family was southern, white, and middle-class. The older sister was fifteen in the mid-1960s, attending a private church school. Her earliest political memory was being jarred by discussions in school about the War in Vietnam. As she remembers it:

Then the war in Vietnam came along. I was all for that war....

I remember somebody said, "do you realize they are killing people in that war?"

[I thought] "You mean a war to kill people? Not just a war to prove that we're the best country in the world?"

This experience started her on a path towards activism in which she would break with her family's politics.

Her sister, younger by eleven years, stated:

My earliest memories are of my older sister and the way my family perceived my sister. She was "a communist". She was always "doing wrong". She was "way out in left field."

Though Respondent 46 shared her family's view of her sister "being out in left field" when she was a child, later, when she rebelled against her parents as a teenager, she went to live with her older sibling.

All 7 respondents from conservative to right-wing backgrounds rebelled against their families' politics, although most of them maintained personal ties with their families. This process is discussed in chapter 8.

Summary

The childhoods of the respondents, their families and political traditions, can be summarized in three general findings.

1. Parental influence was considerable in introducing the respondents to the political world:

In describing the origin of their political development in childhood, the respondents overwhelmingly talked about their mothers or fathers. The children of activists report the powerful influence of their mothers and fathers; the children of apolitical parents nevertheless recalled their parents' attempts to shield them from the political world, and teach them survival skills.

2. There are sharp differences in the types of earliest political memories of the respondents based on family traditions.

The first recollections of those with apolitical parents were events that occurred outside the home. In contrast, the vast majority of those from politically-involved families were introduced to the outside world through their parents' words or actions. This was regardless of whether the parental politics

were liberal or conservative. Even if the parents only talked about politics but did not act on them, the majority of their respondent-offspring (73%) remember these discussions as their first political memories.

3. The role of events:

This chapter has focused on families and inherited political traditions, the recollections of the respondents indicates the importance of events during their childhoods. All respondents, and their families, reacted to the often tumultuous events taking place around them. Some families tried to ignore events, and shield their children from brutality; others talked about what was happening, and still other parents acted on their convictions.

Through their earliest memories, the respondents reveal the beginning of their paths towards political activism, and how this first step varied according to family traditions, and social context, particularly race. Some would carry on a liberal activism inherited from their families; others would build on the activism of their parents but break with its conservative or right-wing direction. A large group turned the "talk-politics" nature of their family into an action orientation. Another group broke decisively with their parents lack of political involvement.

The question for the next chapter is how did the respondents become actively involved? What was the process of becoming a political activist?

CHAPTER 8

BECOMING ACTIVISTS

How does a person become a political activist?

This first section of this chapter considers three factors present in the development of most radical activists: political efficacy, political mistrust, and a sense of injustice in the world. The following section identifies two steps taken by each respondents as she/he became politically involved: (1) the first activist experience, and (2) the decision to become an activist as a life focus. Finally, the bulk of the chapter examines these two steps, using many examples from the respondents' interviews.

Although this dissertation focuses on 50 individuals, it is important to keep in mind that the respondents were part of a protest generation. Jennings and Niemi's landmark panel study provides an overall view of this cohort, which Jennings and Niemi recognize as politically distinct from their parents generation, more politically involved, more liberal, and more independent.²³⁹

A number of politicians prominent in the 1990s got their start in the protest politics of 20-30 years ago. Bill Clinton, Hilary Rodham Clinton, Al Gore, and Tipper Gore all participated in anti-war demonstrations. The Civil Rights Movement produced

²³⁹ Jennings and Niemi, Adolescence.

leaders including Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, Maynard Jackson, Ron Dellums, Ben Chavis and many others. Not as well-known are the thousands of grass roots activists who entered politics through the protest movements decades ago, and are still organizing today in trade unions, city councils, and community service agencies across the nation.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of the sixties generation did not become political activists. Moreover, most of those who marched in a demonstration or 2, returned to more typical lifestyles. Why do some individuals choose activism while most do not? Richard Merelman examined Jennings and Niemi's landmark study, separating out the activist subgroup of the cohort panel. Merelman analyzed those individuals in the panel who, in 1965, stated that they intended to become activists, and who, 9 years later in 1974, reported that they were still politically involved. Merelman's work is particularly useful because it provides a picture of activists during the same period that the respondents in this research were also becoming activists. Merelman described these individuals:

[At age 18 they] were unusually efficacious and ideologically coherent compared to other political types... These activists continued to develop as they became young adults... distinguished by their propensity to move towards still higher levels of efficacy, more political independence, and greater ideological constraint.²⁴⁰

Merelman's analysis provides a snapshot of activists in the middle and end of a remarkable period of American history. In 1965, when the first wave of interviews took place, the social

²⁴⁰ Richard M. Merelman, "The Development of Political Activists," Social Science Quarterly 67 (1968) pp. 473-90.

movements were growing; by 1974, they had waned. But Merelman's analysis is only a snap shot. It does not describe the process of development of these individuals. What happened to these individuals between 1965 and 1974 as they became activists? How did they move towards "still higher levels of efficacy, more political independence, and greater ideological constraint"?

Factors Conducive to Political Activism

Gamson identifies 2 key factors found in radical activists. One is strong political efficacy, and the other is low political trust. They are discussed below, along with a third factor -- a sense of injustice -- stressed by the respondents.

Political efficacy:

Political efficacy is "the ability to influence," the feeling on the part of individuals that they can affect the system through their political participation. The social movements of the sixties and seventies, where massive political participation resulted in substantial political changes, were a fertile ground for the development of political efficacy.²⁴¹ Piven and Cloward state that in the course of a social movement: "there is a new sense of efficacy; people who ordinarily consider themselves helpless come to believe that they have some capacity to alter their lot." ²⁴²

²⁴¹ William A. Gamson, "Political Trust and its Ramifications," in Gilbert Abacarian and John Soule, eds., Social Psychology and Political Behavior (1968).

²⁴² Piven and Cloward, Poor Peoples Movement, p.4.

A number of respondents reported that during the sixties they gained the feeling that they could significantly change the political system. For example, R11 grew up in the rural South in the late forties and fifties, in a family that lived in fear. When she was only a child, she witnessed a murder of a black man for dating a white woman (see Chapter 5). R11 entered A&T College in Greensboro in 1961, a year after the famous Woolworth sit-in, when segregation laws were still in effect. She remembers intense discussions on campus about whether civil rights marches were a good idea. Despite her fearful past, away from home, she jumped at the chance to become involved. She and thousands like her marched, spoke out, sat-in. As a result, she developed a strong sense of political efficacy. During the interview, she stated, "we won a lot of concessions." Then she smiled remembering those days, and added, "protesting gave us a taste of freedom, that we could do something."

Political mistrust:

Growing efficacy during the late sixties and early seventies often accompanied declining political trust. R11, for example, like many black respondents, had never mistrusted the police growing out of her childhood experiences in the rural segregated South. After a black male was killed by whites for dating a white woman, R11 remembers the sheriff stating that it was none of his business. R11's movement experience confirmed her mistrust and extended it to local officials, and eventually the government as a whole. Gamson describes how political mistrust develops:

There is probably a hierarchical relationship among different objects of political trust. An unpleasant outcome on a specific issue may not have any appreciable effect on more general attitudes of trust. However, if such unpleasant outcomes are repeated frequently or if one of them is especially important, the dissatisfied recipients may conclude that the authorities are biased against them. And if such experiences extend over several sets of authorities, they may conclude that the institutions themselves are a source of bias and that throwing the rascals out will have little effect. The seeds of revolution are contained in such generalization of political trust.²⁴³

For some white respondents, the process took longer than for many of the black respondents. R3, the oldest white respondent, detailed a long process of governmental trust eroding into mistrust. She recalled that the Vietnam War brought:

...disillusionment with my country as being benign, benevolent and moral; it was real shattering. But I still held on to my faith in the political system.... I still believed that the courts were for justice.

But then she got involved the Wilmington 10 case, and 2 of her children got jailed during an anti-war protest. She continued, detailing her involvement in various issues and how they affected her view of the political system:

We did tax resistance, telephone tax resistance, against the war. Also draft resistance.... the trials of the children of friends.... By this time I knew that the courts were an evil part of an evil system. I knew how they were used to attack oppressed people.

Gamson explains that "the loss of trust is the loss of system power," and cites "the collapse of power in the Johnson Administration from 1964-68," due to the Vietnam War.²⁴⁴ Events in the early 1970s, such as Watergate and Nixon's resignation,

²⁴³ Gamson, "Political Trust," p. 39.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 43.

continued to erode political trust among some segments of the population.

Piven and Cloward describe the decline of political trust as the loss of legitimacy:

"The system" -- or those aspects of the system that people experience and perceive -- loses legitimacy. Large numbers of men and women who ordinarily accept the authority of their rulers and the legitimacy of institutional arrangements come to believe in some measure that these rulers and these arrangements are unjust and wrong.²⁴⁵

Gamson: Political efficacy + political mistrust = activism

Political efficacy and political mistrust are powerful factors producing activists, according to Gamson. He theorizes that:

...a combination of high sense of political efficacy and low political trust is the optimum combination for mobilization -- a belief that influence is both possible and necessary.²⁴⁶

Issues Raised by the Social Movements: The Sense of Injustice

Asked why they became political activists, the respondents described the issues raised by the social movements more than anything else.

Finding: Racial injustice was mentioned by every black respondent (100%) as their most important motivating factor in becoming an activist, and by 88% of the whites.

²⁴⁵ Piven and Cloward, Poor Peoples Movements, pp.3-4.

²⁴⁶ Gamson, "Political Trust," pp. 47-48.

Over 90% of the respondents saw the struggle for black liberation as significant in their political development. Opposition to the Vietnam War was also a major issue, particularly for 20 whites and 3 blacks (46% of the respondents). All but one of the white males indicated the war was a key factor for them, and 5 of them applied for Conscientious Objector status to avoid being drafted. The emerging women's movement was significant as well, mentioned by more than half of the white women and several black female respondents, all of them part of the baby boom generation. Concerns about many issues related to poverty were mentioned by many respondents.

Many saw their involvement as a response to the events of the times, recognizing that the social movements provided them with an opportunity for involvement. One explained:

The political climate of the 60s is what kicked off [becoming an activist] for me. I think that the personal experiences that I had would not have made me an activist if there hadn't been that climate of mass activism.

These respondents faced concrete political problems in the own lives, including discrimination, poverty, and the draft. They became interested in the movement to change society to benefit themselves and others who faced similar conditions.

Thus three primary factors found in individuals becoming political activists are political efficacy, political mistrust, and a sense of injustice. These 3 factors correspond closely to the three aspects identified by Piven and Cloward in the change in consciousness necessary for a social movement to occur. Piven and Cloward identify efficacy, loss of system legitimacy (similar to governmental mistrust) and "the assertion of rights" (similar

to the sense of injustice (See chapter 3, page 84). ²⁴⁷ They will be discussed in the examples described later in the chapter.

Two Steps in Becoming a Political Activist

Can specific steps be identified in the process of becoming a radical activist? Can they be measured in any way?

*Finding: The respondents went through two basic steps in becoming activists: (1) A first activist experience, and (2) A decision to become an activist.*²⁴⁸

As far as the author knows, these two steps are an original contribution to the analysis of individuals becoming activists.

(1) The first activist experience

All of the respondents recalled the first time they acted politically, for example, marching in their first demonstration or giving a speech or challenging authority. These initial political activities were coded from each transcript. The respondents deemed their earliest forays into the political world as an important part of their political life histories, and often gave vivid descriptions of them. They were activist experiences because the respondents *did* something, in contrast to their early memories where the respondents were usually passive observers.

²⁴⁷ Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements, pp.3-4.

²⁴⁸ The only exceptions are two respondents, among the youngest, who had not yet taken the second step of deciding to become activists at the time of the interviews.

(2) The decision to become an activist

Participating in one or several events, however, is not the same as deciding to be an activist as a life focus. The decision to become an activist in an on-going basis is similar in some respects to a career choice. It is a choice to focus one's efforts, and participate in weekly, and often daily, activities. But for the respondents, it was usually an unpaid career, and often part of the decision involved getting jobs in poverty programs, factories, or hospitals where they could carry out their activism.

Deciding to become an activist was central to a process of identity formation for these individuals. It meant becoming known as a person who was trying to change society. They wanted to do something significant with their lives, defining themselves as trying to change society. As one respondent (R5) stated, "When I grew up, I knew that I wanted change. Anytime I saw any opportunities for this to happen, I would try to engage myself." Another (R45) recalled that she would participate in marches, demonstrations, and boycotts "because I felt like I was doing something good... something that would help somebody else." A third (R9) put it this way: "Some day I am going to die. I want to feel good about myself. Whether I've had any influence or not, at least I have done the best I could."

"Becoming an activist" is defined as making political involvement a regular part of one's life. On the activism scale, 31 respondents (62%) were at level 7 ("active at least 2 times a week") or level 8 ("active more than 4 times a week") when they decided to make activism a life focus; 17 (34%) were at level 6

("periodic involvement in campaigns").

Coding the Steps and Quantitative Measures:

In the interviews, the respondents were asked general questions about how they became politically involved, with no direct questions about specific steps. Later, in the course of transcribing the interviews, I noticed a pattern and described it as a "first activist experience" followed (either immediately or years later) by a "decision to become an activist." The excerpt from the beginning of the transcript below illustrates how the steps are coded. Respondent 32 is a white female born in North Carolina in 1951:

Q: What influenced you to become an activist?

R : I remember being minimally aware of the civil rights movement. I remember one of our neighbors being arrested and my mother taking food to her in jail... [coded as "earliest memory"].

I remember the War in Vietnam when I was in sixth and seventh grade, and going on anti-war vigils... [coded as "step 1: first activist experiences"].

I became really active my first year of college. In 1969, I went to my first anti-war demonstration in Washington D.C., where we were tear-gassed. I got a sense of being in a national movement of dissent... In the spring of '70, Cambodia was bombed, and students were murdered at Kent State and Jackson State. I thought "how can I stay in school? How does this help stop the war?" School seemed so removed, such a privileged place to be. I decided to drop out of school. I wanted to be a full time activist... [coded "step 2: decision to become an activist"]

Her earliest memory is fuzzy in terms of her age at the time, but she remembers her mother's support for a civil rights activist (earliest memories are discussed in Chapter 7). She clearly recollected her first activist experiences, participating in a vigil against the War in Vietnam in the sixth and seventh grades. With this information, her approximate age (12) and the

year of these experiences (1963) can be estimated. She is more exact about her decision to become an activist, which took place in 1970 when she was 19.

Based on this process, the approximate age and date of R32's two steps can be quantified; the same can be done for all 50 respondents. The chart on the following two pages graphs the years of birth, first activist experience and decision to become an activist for the respondents. (It also indicates the "decision to be a communist," which is discussed separately in chapter 9).

As the chart reveals, for most respondents the 2 steps are separated by several years. For 11 individuals, however, the first experience and the decision to focus one's life on activism occurred almost simultaneously. In these cases, when both steps took place in the same year, they are considered "coinciding steps" and are graphed with a distinctive notation. The 11 individuals whose steps to activism coincided came from family traditions that were apolitical or less active. Their first activist experience was transforming, in that it greatly inspired them and led to an immediate increase in political commitment and involvement. These respondents included both blacks and whites and males and females. But the largest group, 5 of the 11, were black females. A typical example is R11, from the fearful childhood in South Carolina, whose participation in civil rights marches gave her "a taste of freedom," and who changed her life, becoming an activist, and who "never wanted to revert back."

Figure 8.1
Graph of Steps in Political Development

including years of birth, first activist experience,
 and decisions to become activist and communist
 for each respondent

Notations:

steps:

- . Respondent's year of birth
- a Respondent's first activist experience
- 0 Respondent's decision to become an activist
- * Respondent's decision to become a communist

coinsiding steps:

- @ first activist experience and decision to be activist
- 0* decision to become activist and become communist
- @* first activist experience, decision to become an activist, and decision to become a communist all coincide

time line (horizontal):

1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980

respondents (vertical):

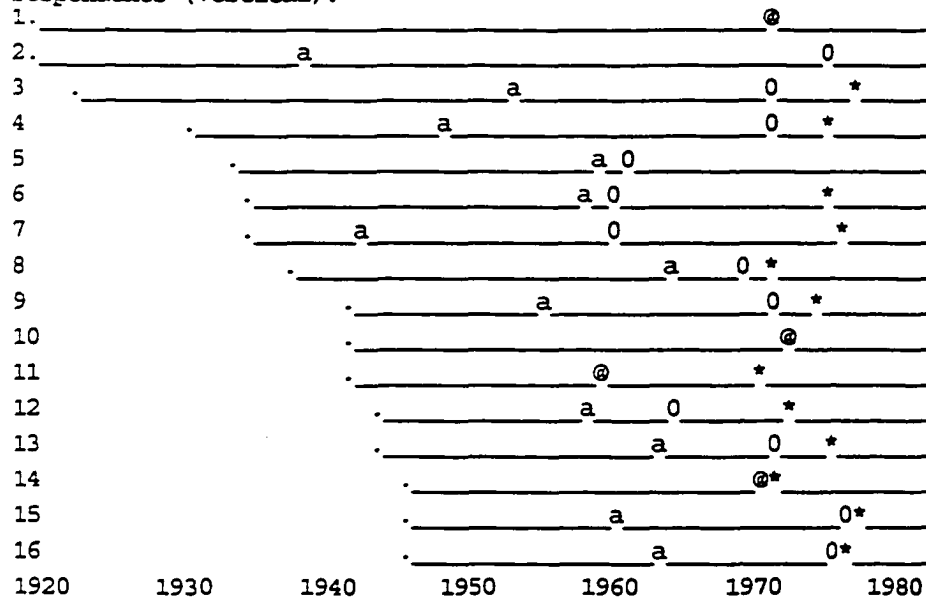


Figure 8.1 (cont.)

1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
17			a			0*
18				a	0*	
19				a	0	*
20					a	0*
21					a0	*
22				a		0*
23					a 0	*
24					@	*
25					a	0*
26						0
27					a	0
28					@	*
29					a	0*
30				a	0	*
31					a	0 *
32				a	0	*
33				a	0	*
34				a		0 *
35					a	0*
36					@	*
37					@	*
38					a	0 *
39						a0*
40					@	*
41						@*
42				a	0	*
43					a	0 *
44						a 0
45						@
46						@
47						a
48					a	0
49						a 0
50						a
1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980

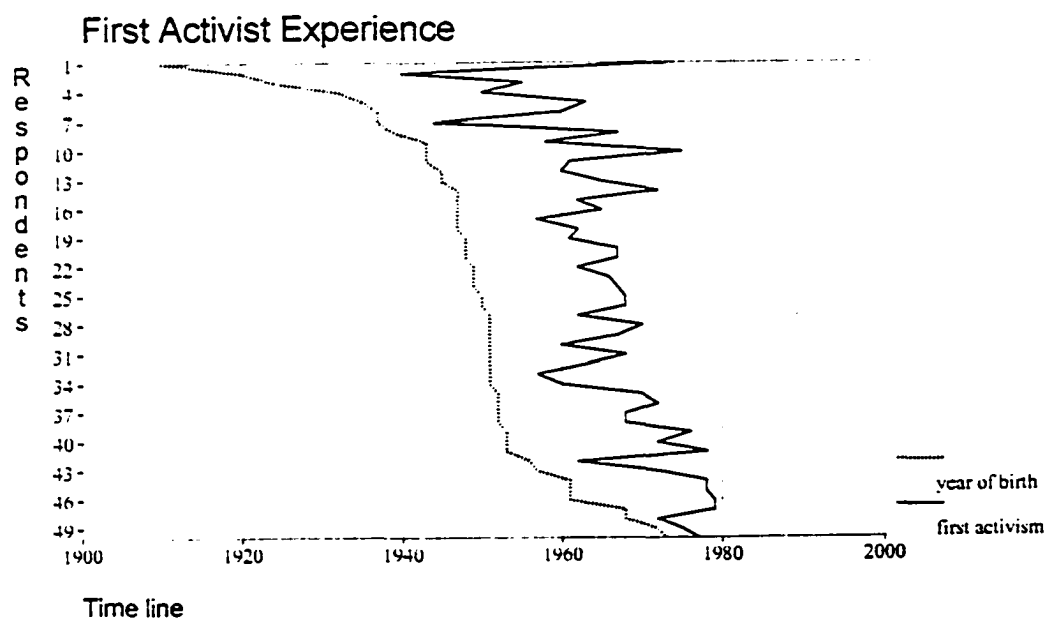
Careful inspection of the chart indicates that 2 people did not make the decision to become activists. Respondents 47 and 50, who were in their early 20s when interviewed, had not decided at that point to become activists. (They, along with 9 others, did not become communists either, which is discussed in detail in chapter 9.)

Patterns in the Steps to Political Activism

On the following pages, a series of graphs plot the data on the dates and ages of the respondents when they took the two steps to becoming activists. The data is the same as that in the chart on the preceding 2 pages, but here it is condensed to show patterns. Figure 8:2, below, shows the birth dates and the first activist experiences.

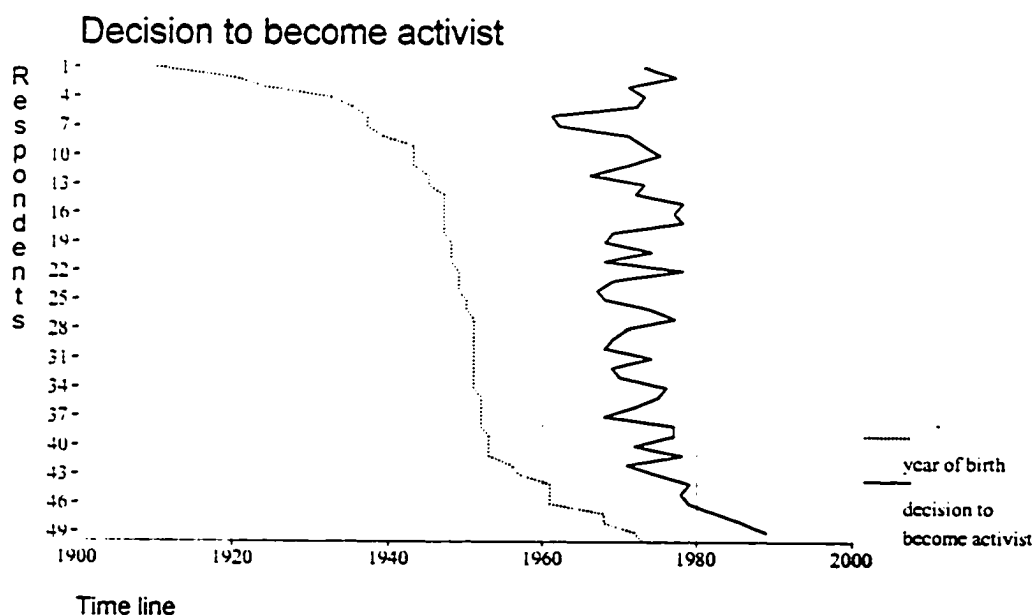
The dotted line on Figure 8.2 runs through the birth dates of the respondents; the earliest birth date is 1910 (at the top of the graph) to the most recent birth date in 1973 (at the bottom of the graph). The solid line runs through the first activist experiences, zig-zagging from 1940 to the late 1970s. The line indicates the scattered ages of the respondents for these initial experiences. However, two thirds of these initial political acts occurred between 1960 and 1972, corresponding with the social movements.

Figure 8.2



The next graph, Figure 8:3, below, shows the birth dates and the decisions to become activists. A solid line indicates the dates of the decisions to become activists. These decisions take place during a more restricted time period than the first activist experiences shown in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8:3



The graph illustrates that earliest decision to become an activist occurred in 1961, but the vast majority of these decisions took place from the 1968 to 1975. This pattern clearly indicates the impact of the social movements. By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, the social movements had been going on long enough to provide the opportunity for individuals to become activists as a life-focus during these years. By the late 1970s, the formation of a communist organization enabled some respondents to become activists (which will be discussed in the next chapter).

The two graphs below are scatter graphs. Figure 8.4 plots the first activist experience for each respondent according to age. The graph shows that step 1 corresponds to adolescence. Thirty-one (more than half) of the respondents had their first activist experience during their teen years; while 9 had their first involvement before age 10, and 8 after age 20.

Figure 8.4

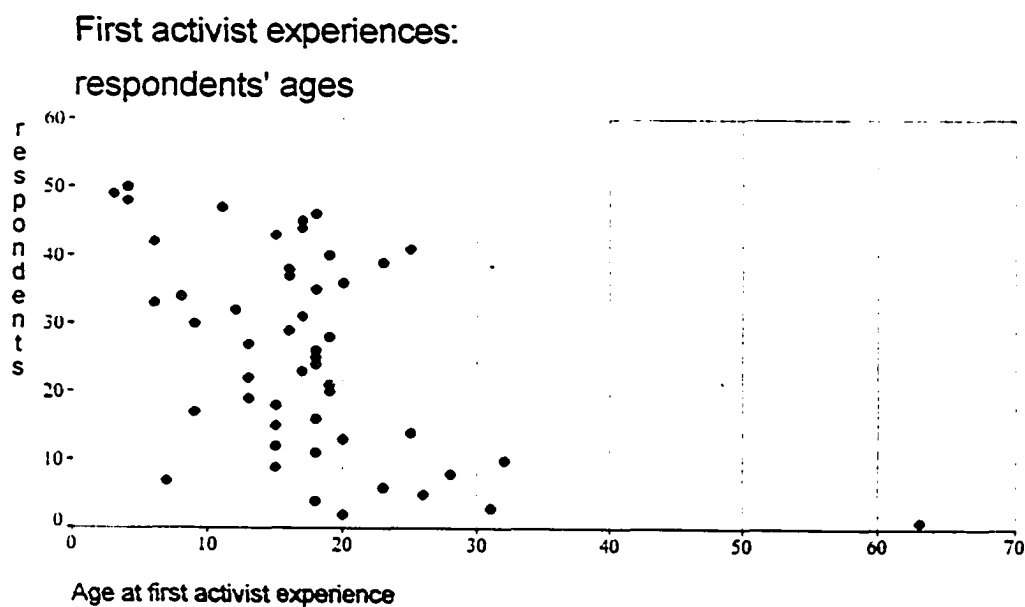
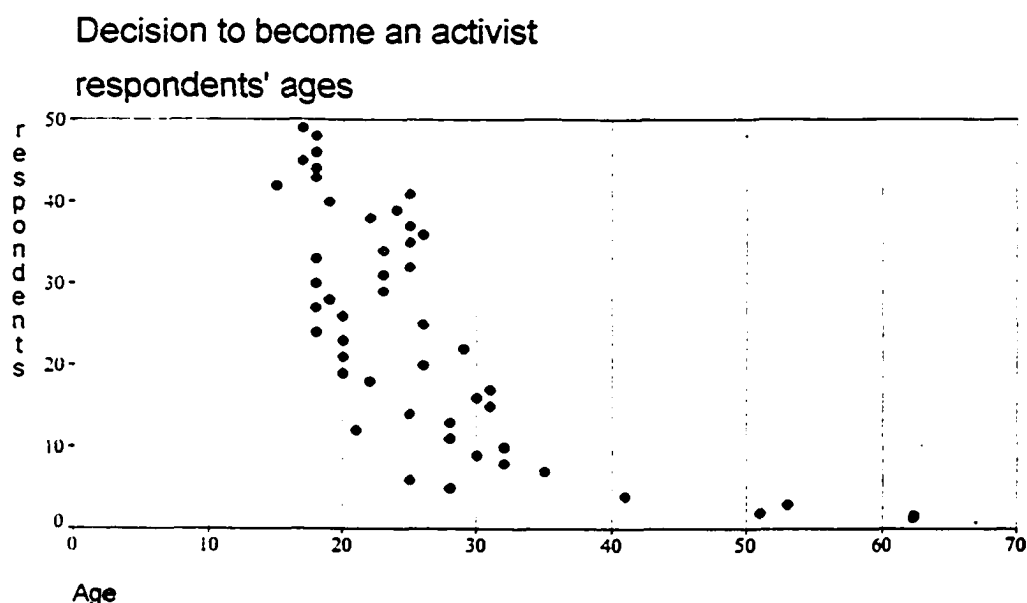


Figure 8:5 shows step 2 on a scattergram.²⁴⁹ It indicates that the decision to become an activist was made during early adulthood. For most it occurred during a more restricted age period, from the late teens through the twenties for most respondents. The exceptions are the oldest respondents, several in their 50s, and one in her 60s.

Figure 8.5



²⁴⁹ Note: due to the quirks of the computer program (SPSS-WIN) used in these 2 scatter graphs, the "y" axis goes from youngest respondent at the top to oldest at the bottom; in the preceding graphs (8.2 and 8.3), the oldest respondents are at the top, and the youngest at the bottom.

Step 1: First Activist Experiences:

Examples from the Transcripts

The average age of the respondents in their first political involvement was 17 and the year was 1967. Usually the respondents described their first activist experiences in great detail. The nature of the respondents' first activist experiences can be divided into three categories: 1) collective protests 2) individual actions involving more traditional politics, and 3) intense and/or dangerous actions. Each is described below:

1. Collective Protests:

Finding: Two-thirds of the respondents (33 people) approximately half white, half black, entered politics through participating in collective protests, including sit-ins, boycotts, and marches which characterized the protest movements.

The most common experience, described by 20 respondents, was participating in a single event. For example, a white respondent (R31) organized a picket against a segregated country club in his town, which got television coverage, and increased his sense of political efficacy.

For 14 others, the first experience involved a more protracted participation in a school, community or work place struggle, that included a wider variety of tactics over a longer period of time. For example, R37 was among the first blacks to integrate a high school in North Carolina. Her first activist experience involved sit-in protesting discriminatory treatment of

a black athlete in her school. During the sit-in, the administration threatened the students with expulsion, but then the parents retaliated by threatening the school with a law suit. Finally, a compromise around the athlete was worked out and no one faced any reprisals.

Another black respondent, R27, and his school mates protested the beating of one of their classmates by a teacher. Although it began with just the respondent and a few classmates, the issue became community-wide, resulting in sanctions against (but not dismissal of) of the teacher.

A white respondent (R24) became a senior in high school and captain of the cheerleading squad, when her all-white high school merged with an all-black high school in 1967. The racial make-up of the cheerleading squad became an emotional issue, but she proposed that the squad include all the black and all the white cheerleaders, and led the implementation of this policy.

2. Individual and More Traditional Political Actions:

Finding: Seven respondents, 6 of them white, became initially involved as individuals, usually in more traditional political activity.

Two (R30 and R34) gave speeches to their grade-school classmates about voting for Kennedy in 1960; in both cases, the majority of their classmates were supporting Nixon. Respondent 30 describes his experience:

In the 4th grade, it was the Kennedy-Nixon election, and we had debates, and I represented Kennedy, as both my parents did. (There was always a lot of talking about politics in my family. We were a pretty politically literate household.)

The debate was a classic. The majority of the kids

were from pro-Nixon homes. This was Indiana, a very strong Republican territory. A real pretty blond girl was for Nixon, and she played it to the kids, saying something like "if Nixon is elected, we'll have summer vacation all year long." I was real straight, and stated that Kennedy would reduce missiles (or whatever it was my parents had told me meant Kennedy was better). Guess who lost that debate?

Another respondent, R9, wrote a letter to the local paper after his synagogue was bombed in the 1950s when he was a teenager. R35 filed for Conscientious Objector status on his 18th birthday in 1970, instead of signing up for the draft. Two additional respondents participated in anti-poverty programs, one as a volunteer (R18) and the other (R16) as a client.

For these respondents, their first actions were more politically traditional. Nevertheless, they were responding to changing times.

3. Intense and/or Dangerous Actions:

Finding: Ten respondents' first activist experiences involved challenges to the prevailing authority, characterized by their intensity and/or danger. Eight of the 10 respondents in this category are black.

Many of these incidents are described in Chapter 5. Respondent 2 resisted the Ku Klux Klan in an armed confrontation in South Carolina in the 1940s. Three young blacks in three separate incidents defied segregation at great personal risk; one was beaten up (R12), the other jailed (R6), and the third faced (R22) no reprisals to his great surprise.

Respondent 38 played cat and mouse with the National Guard in the 1960s. He described his first political experience:

After Martin Luther King was assassinated... I can remember the National Guard was patrolling my neighborhood, my black neighborhood. I remember my father and my mother saying that we had to be in at a certain hour, that we couldn't be outside.

Me and my cousins and some friends in the neighborhood, we were kind of curious, so we slipped out at night, and we watched the National Guards patrolling the neighborhood. We said, "well, these guys are not doing anything, so let's give them something to do." So we started messing with the National Guards, like play stuff. Then they started responding, but we knew our neighborhood, so they couldn't catch us. But then we said we better cool it out.

Two respondents protested conditions in the factories where they worked. A black respondent (R4) confronted her supervisor in 1950 and was immediately fired. A white respondent (R39) organized a walk-out in his factory in 1974 to protest forced overtime, and he, too, was fired. As he recalled:

I ended up getting a job in a small little mill. I was working in the packing department that had two shifts where the rest of the plant had three. So to make up for the other departments having three, we were forced to work overtime. We got together, the other workers and myself in that department, and we decided that we didn't want to work all this overtime. We didn't mind once in a while, but it was every Friday and Saturday night we had to work until everything was packed up, and we were tired of it. We didn't feel it was fair.

So we complained about that, and they gave us lip service, but that was as far as it went. I thought it would be a good idea if we all just left on Friday, at the regular time. They wouldn't fire us all if we all stuck together. Everybody agree, so we did that. But unfortunately, I was wrong, and the next day, Saturday, when we went to work, we were called into personnel and they fired us all.

I felt bad because it was my idea, and I never meant for anybody to get fired. We were all young, single, but you don't want to lose your job. One thing that really made me feel good was that none of the workers looked at me and said "hey, this is your fault." [Instead] they said they didn't want to work for that kind of company anyway, and "to hell with it."

Two young girls, one black and one white, had intense first activist experiences where they challenged the prevailing

authority. Both are described in detail by the respondents in chapter 7. R7 acted out against a man for cheating her out of a hot dog; R33 defied her mother (the prevailing authority for a child of 7) by refusing to help with the housework while her brothers were allowed to play. In contrast to typical socialization of young girls to be passive, described by Erikson,²⁵⁰ these girls were already demonstrating themselves to be fighters in childhood.

Age and the First Activist Experience:

Though most respondents were teenagers, the range of ages during the first activist experiences extended from 3 to 63 years old. The respondents who were the youngest recalled being toddlers they first accompanied their activist parents. A "child of the movement," R49's participation began as she learned to walk. She said:

Demonstrations? All of us went to D.C., and different places. Mom and Dad always told us why we were going... what the problem was, and why they were protesting...

I was always a Daddy's girl. So if Daddy was going, I would try my best to be hooked on to his knee. I remember several marches... when I had my little sign and was screaming and hollering, too. I probably looked a little stupid, here I was screaming about unemployment or equal rights or whatever, at everyone's hip.

On the other end of the age spectrum is the oldest respondent, a woman from South Carolina born around 1910 to a sharecropping family. She migrated to Greensboro in the 1950s, becoming politically involved for the first time in the early 1970s, when she joined the campaign to free the "Wilmington 10."

²⁵⁰ Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W.W. Norton, 1959).

(The Wilmington 10 were a group of young activists who were jailed for years following the false accusation of burning down a building. Rev. Ben Chavis, now head of the NAACP, was one of the Wilmington 10.) Respondent 1 remembered how she decided to become involved:

They arrested those boys, the Wilmington 10, and that's when I got interested in the movement. I was coming home alone and I heard a song about what they was trying to free these boys. They hadn't did anything wrong.... So that's when I got interested in this movement. That's when I joined. And I kept it up.....

After a life time of no political involvement, she joined a protest movement. Perhaps loneliness was part of the reason; certainly the plight of the Wilmington 10 touched her deeply. She is a clear example that people have the potential to become politically active at any point in their lives, regardless of background and family traditions.

Why were some respondents younger, some older, in their first activist experience? Family political traditions are significant in explaining the variations in age among the respondents.

The bar graph below shows the average ages of the respondents from five different kinds of political families. In this graph the 3 family traditions (liberal/left, conservative/right, and apolitical) are further subdivided into 5. The "liberal/left" category is divided into those families who were activists (n=17) and those who talked about politics (n=10). The "conservative/right" category is likewise divided into activists (n=4) and talkers (n=2). The apolitical category remains unchanged, since the parents in this category

neither talked about or participated in politics.

Figure 8:6

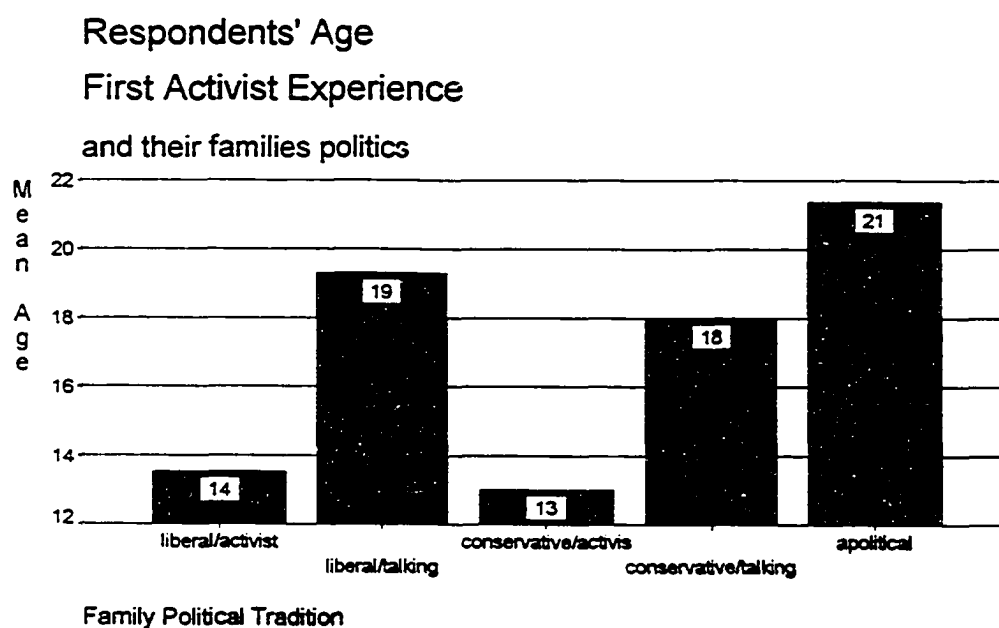


Figure 8.6 illustrates that the respondents who were youngest at their first activist experiences came from families that were politically active -- whether liberal or conservative. The average age for respondents from these families was 13 (for conservative activist parents) and 14 (for liberal and leftist-

activist parents). In contrast, the respondents from the families that talked about politics, whether from a liberal or conservative perspective, were 18 or 19, on average, before they first became involved. And individuals from apolitical families were even older, 21 years of age on average.

Parental Response to Respondents' First Activist Experiences:

What was the reaction of the parents to their offsprings' first political experience? The variation in response followed the different family political traditions, discussed below:

1. Liberal/Left Activist Parents:

These parents encouraged their offspring's political involvement. Often these initial political experiences involved the parents bringing their children with them to a demonstration. As R49 stated earlier in the chapter, if her daddy was demonstrating she would try her best to be "hooked to his knee."

2. Liberal Talking Parents:

Most liberal parents, who talked about politics and voted, supported their children's first involvement, although they did not take part in it. The respondents in this category are considerably older than their peers with activist parents (age 19 compared with age 14). Some had already moved away from home, and do not remember their parents responding to their first activist participation. R20, for example, was in college when she first participated in an anti-war protest. Her father had

died several years earlier, and she does not remember talking to her mother about her activism. But she did feel that she was acting in line with her family's teaching.

The one exception in this subgroup is R23, whose parents vigorously opposed his protest participation. R23's parents constantly talked about politics from a liberal perspective, they supported the Civil Rights Movement, but did not want their son involved. This was because R23's parents were survivors of Nazi Concentration camps during the Holocaust:

I grew up hearing my mothers stories about Hitler, and her experiences in concentration camps, and jumping off trains to escape the gas chambers.

My first demonstration was an anti-war demonstration led by Martin Luther King and Dr. Benjamin Spock, which marched on the UN, in 1965 or 1966, when I was first in college.

My parents were very opposed to my marching. In fact my mother offered to march in my place if I would stay home. They wanted me to be unobtrusive, a "grooah mensch" or "grey person" in Yiddish. They were afraid of dissent against the government. I remember arguing with them about the war, and they said "don't be so outspoken."

3. Right Wing Activist Parents:

Like the liberal and leftist parents, most of the right-wing activist parents supported their children's first activism. In one case, R17's first political experience was accompanying her father, a Klansman, to a Klan rally! Three other cases involved the respondents getting involved in liberal activities, independent of their families. For example, in junior high school, R18 joined a political awareness club under the guidance of a liberal-activist teacher. R reported:

My parents thought it was fine. They had the attitude of noblesse oblige, that "we have a lot and it is our duty to help others who are less fortunate." My mother (a Reagan

Republican back when he was just a governor) always did a lot of volunteer work with the Society for the Blind.

This subgroup also has one exception. R33's parents opposed her first activism, which involved R33 refusing to do house work while her brothers played outside. Her parents also opposed her later political development, discussed later in this chapter.

4. Conservative-Talking Parents:

There are only 2 respondents in this sub-group, who are sisters with the same parents. Although they were 10 years apart, both had their first political experiences when they were 13. Both of these initial experiences were part of a larger rebellion against their family (who they eventually broke away from, which is discussed later in this chapter).

Thus the respondents from conservative family backgrounds (both activists and talkers) are split between those whose parents supported their first acts and those who opposed them. When these respondents approached the second step, that of deciding to become an activist as a life focus, all faced more opposition from their parents, as described later in the chapter.

5. Apolitical:

Most respondents from apolitical families moved away from home before their first activist involvement. As Graph 8.6 reveals, the respondents in this category were 21 years old, on average, during their initial political experience. They were young adults, and their parents response was not as big a factor

in their decisions as it was when they were smaller. Two respondents with apolitical parents remember their parents explicitly supporting their involvement, but most remember no response at all.

Several parents opposed their children's involvement, largely out of fear that political participation would result in bodily harm. R11's mother, for example, feared her daughter's protests would result in her "disappearing," something that had happened to other blacks that she knew in South Carolina.

Respondent 6 described her parents vigorous opposition to her involvement:

My parents were living in the dark They were those good God-fearing Christians. They didn't believe in nothing but going to church anyway, morning, noon, and night... They didn't inspire me for nothing.

R6's first activist experience was during the first Greensboro sit in 1960:

I was supposed to be going to Washington, and I was supposed to be at the train station, not downtown to Woolworth's [site of Greensboro's famous 1960 sit-in]. I went and stood and saw all this commotion there, they were spraying people, beating up folks, putting people in paddy wagons and cars, trucks, carrying them off to the county prison farm for women. I don't know how I got pushed into one of those paddy wagons, but I wound up down there at the prison. I had to call my grandmother, and tell her I was down there. And they had to come and get me.

After that I was forbidden to do anything unless my grandmother was with me.

R6 was inspired by her first activist experience. It offered a more meaningful alternative to her than her parents' life style. Since she was already over 18 at the time, she decided to move out of her parents house, and set up her own household, so that she could join the movement. She made the second step in the process of becoming a radical activist --

deciding to focus her life on activism.

**Step 2: The Decision to Become an Activist as a Life Focus:
Examples from the Transcripts**

The chart on pages (Figure 8.1) illustrates that there was usually a period of years between the first and second steps in becoming an activist. For 11 respondents (22%) the 2 steps coincided, but for the vast majority they were separated by a number of years. On average, respondents took 8 years after their first activist experience to decide to become activists.

Why did it take so long between steps? There are a number of reasons. Some respondents were young children during their first involvement, and it was a decade or so later before they were at a point in their life where they could make a commitment. Others were in their late teens or early 20s during the first step, but their lives were focused on other commitments (school, the military, marriage and child-rearing, to name a few). Some of the older respondents had initial political experiences before the social movements, and the social structure at that time provided no opportunities for them to pursue activism. Others took a while to develop a strong interest in becoming an activist.

A white respondent explained how she made this decision:

I had a very clear sense of what I *didn't* want to be. I didn't want to be middle-class living in the suburbs. But I had no idea of what I wanted to be. There was no obvious direction to go. That was during the time of hippies and communes, that never appealed to me. I wanted to be close to people, but I never saw the point of using a lot of

energy to not use technology. Then there were the women's consciousness groups, and I belonged to one, and getting pretty bored of it. It was nice at first, but then it became too focused on individual people's crises. It didn't do it for me.

I got more interested in sociology, taking the focus from the individual to society. The evolution into politics was the real application of what some of the issues in sociology. My main activism really came in Durham, when I first met [other respondents]. I was very conscious of things that were wrong, and wanted to do something about it, and I didn't have a particular agenda for myself that I had to hurry up and do. I think a lot of it also for me related to the social opportunities and people such as [specific respondents].

For other respondents, the decision was more of a crisis, as illustrated by Respondent 9, a white male who decided to become an activist in 1973 when he was 30 years old. From a poor background (and apolitical parents), he had managed to a college education, a Ph.D. in Math, and a professor job at University of North Carolina. But despite his achievements, he became increasingly dissatisfied with his career:

I was interested in becoming more active. The accumulation of years of watching things and not doing anything was beginning to get to me. [There] was an ethic evolving around progressive professors, the idea to somehow impart some of your values to your students or at least get some discussion going. That's very hard to do in a math class. It bothered me...

In 1973, political aspirations and personal problems converged as he and his wife separated. He recalled the night he made the decision:

It was Christmas eve, and I was by myself and depressed... I went to bed and had this nightmare. There was this pathological killer loose in the neighborhood, going from house to house and murdering everybody. Finally he came to my house and I kept trying to hide, and he kept finding me. Finally he had me cornered and was about to kill me. I was pleading for my life...

[I woke up with] the feeling that I was about to die, and I haven't done any of the things that I want to do, that I cared about. I really thought about it... and decided that at least I want to feel good about myself, whether I've had

any influence or not. At least I want to feel that I had done the best I could. That's really been my attitude ever since.

He quit his professor job and turn towards the precarious life of an activist.

The respondents indicated that two things were necessary for them to become activists as a life focus. They needed the individual desire to be an activist, plus the opportunity to become involved. I asked one respondent from a family of 10 children, why she, and not her siblings, became an activist. Childhood for her and her siblings took place in a climate of fear, because they were black, poor, living as share croppers. Her parents' goal in life was to educate their children so their offspring could escape the conditions that hampered their own lives. Most of her siblings managed to leave the countryside and get a college education. Several marched in Civil Rights demonstrations (her experience is described in chapter 7). But only two of the ten siblings (R11 and R5) became political activists. I asked R11 why she thought that she and her sister, rather than their other siblings, became involved.

After thinking for a few moments, R11 said, "I think it takes both inclination and opportunity." Some of her siblings had the opportunity, but not the inclination. For example, one of her brothers marched with her in Greensboro in 1961, but that was the extent of his involvement. Her older sister, in contrast, was inclined towards involvement, but lacked the opportunity for many years. Respondent 5 left home as a teenager to get married in the 1950s, and did not become politically involved until more than a decade later.

Thus, in R11's view, it took individual proclivity towards activism, a characteristic shared by the respondents. But also necessary was the social movements, providing opportunities for those with the inclination to become involved. The data from all the interviews backs up this analysis.

Parental versus Peer Influence in Deciding to Become an Activist

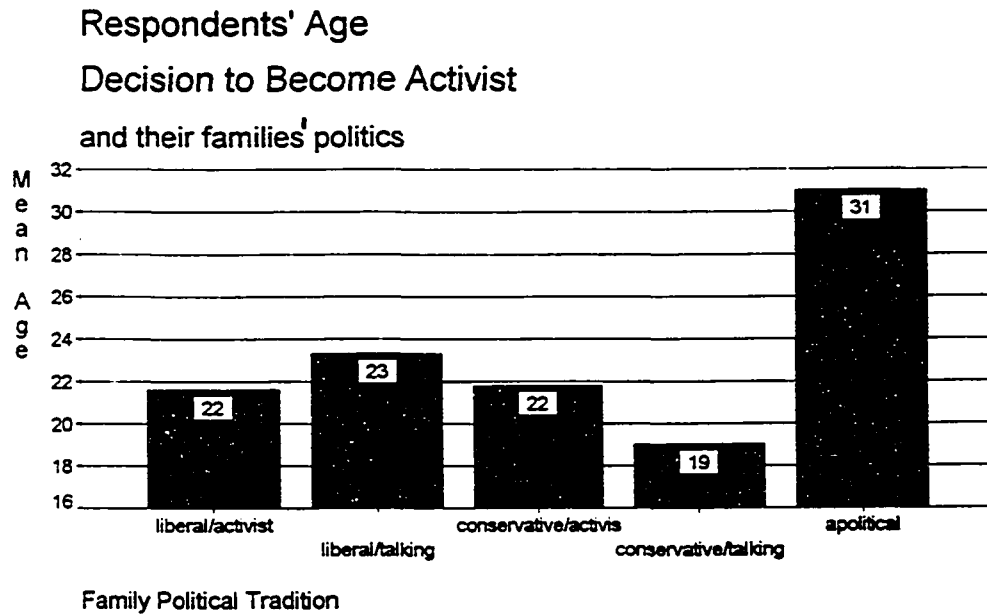
Parental influence diminished in the second step, compared to first activist experience. Only 2 respondents mentioned their parents as directly influencing their decision to become an activist. On the other hand, 37 (74%) mentioned the influence of peers.

This growth in the influence of peers can be understood in terms of normal psychological development. Beck charted the exposure of the average individual to the family and peers (see Figure 1.2). Note how during the late teens and early 20s, the time spent with parents drops off precipitously, while the time spent with peers grows in inverse proportion. Moreover, political activists have a proclivity towards group affiliation, according to Gergen.²⁵¹

The median age of the respondents at the time of the decision to become an activist was 25 and the median year was 1975. Graph 8.2, below, illustrates the ages of the respondents in the different family traditions when they decided to take this step.

²⁵¹ Gergen and Ulman, "Characterological Basis."

Figure 8.7



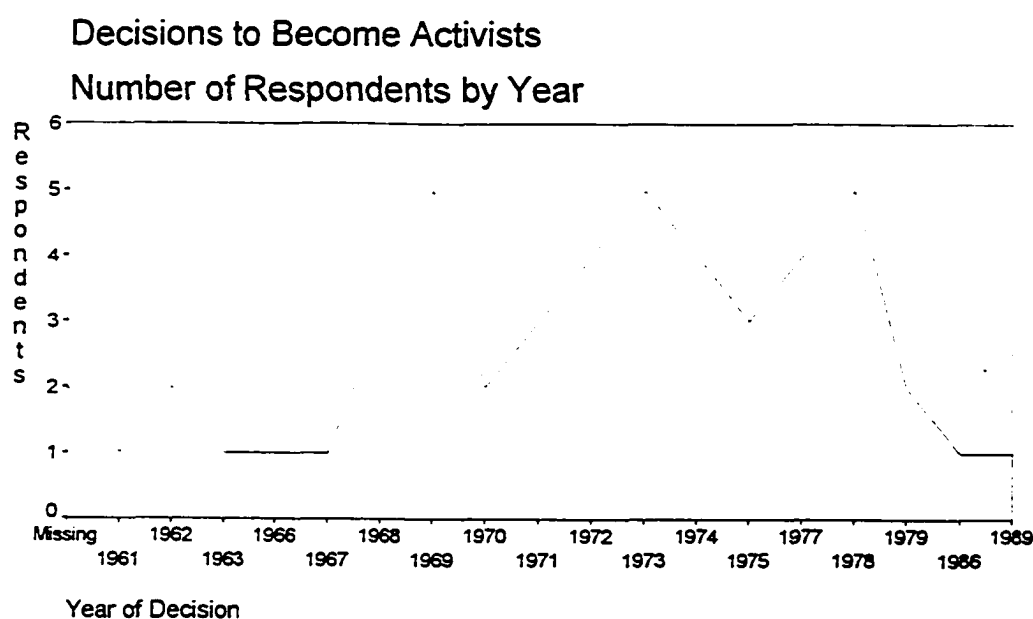
Comparing Figure 8.7 with 8.6 reveals that the ages varied significantly by family tradition for the first step, while there is much less variance for the second step. They were older during the second step, and more independent of their parents. Figure 8.7 still shows that there is still a considerable difference between respondents from apolitical families (31 years old on average) and all other types (between 19 and 23) when they decided to become activists. Thus family

political traditions seem less significant as a factor in the second step as they did in the first. On the other hand, the social movements and peer relationships appear to be more significant, which are elaborated below.

Impact of the Social Movements on the Decision to Become Activists:

Figure 8.8 below illustrates when the respondents made their decisions to become activists. As the graph shows, between the years 1968-78 the 38 respondents (76%) made decisions to become activists. The decisions to become activists can be divided into four groups chronologically: (1) the 1960s, (2) the early 1970s, (3) the later 1970s, and (4) the 1980s. Each category is discussed in the following pages.

Figure 8.8



1. The 1960s:

The first respondents to decide activism was their life focus were blacks coming of age in the early 1960s. They were part of the wave of young people responding to the sit-in movement in the South, described by Matthews and Prothro.²⁵²

One way some respondents became activists as a career was by getting "movement jobs." As new institutions formed in the context of the movement, several respondents were able to get

²⁵² Matthews and Prothro, New Southern Politics.

employment in them. R6 (whose "God-fearing" parents opposed her involvement in the 1960 Woolworth demonstrations) was able to become an activist by becoming a staff member of the Greensboro Poor People's Organization (GAPP), formed in the early 1960s:

I was a volunteer for a while. Then I got hired as a GAPP staff person, I reckon because I had more mouth than anybody.

I got really politically involved, going with people to Social Services [the name of the welfare department]. I would go with people because they were giving people a hard time. The ones who would be interviewing would always say "we can't do this" and "we can't do that".

A [sympathetic] social service person gave me a welfare manual and told me to study it. Every time different things [regulations] would come out, she would always send me copies. So I studied. I was called "expert" on welfare, [The social service workers] would tell us what we couldn't do, and I would tell them what they could do.

Another black respondent (#19) became part of a community organizing project, which she described:

There was this huge project in North Carolina, funded by the Ford Foundation, where black students were picked off all the different campuses and trained to be organizers and then sent all over the state. It was a wonderful project and everybody wanted to be in it.

After a series of interviews, I was one of the people chosen from my school to participate. That was really the turning point for me, because we learned how to organize, how to talk to people. We learned everything in that class. We got intensive training for three weeks and then we got sent to communities and we lived in the communities while we organized.

One of Respondent 19's supervisors in the project was another respondent. Such jobs enabled these respondents to become full-time activists, able to carry out their political interests and support themselves at the same time. But "movement jobs" were few and far between, often not lasting for long.

Most respondents had to support themselves through other means, and for some this affected their level of activism. R7, for example, who had protested the hot dog man at age 7, decided

to become an activist in the early 1960s. She stated:

I always wanted to do something, but didn't have a chance until the sixties. We started going to meetings about housing, trying to get the landlords to fix the housing... We went to the Housing Authority, and said we were not going to pay rent. We went to City Hall, to the City Council... We stayed busy all the time, trying to make things right.

R6' identity was as a movement activist, but since she never got a job compatible with activism, her level of activism remained episodic rather than regular (level 6 rather than level 7 or 8). Sometimes she was involved in campaigns for weeks on end; other times, months would go by without involvement, while she focused on feeding her family.

By the end of the 1960s, white respondents were deciding to become activists as well, motivated by civil rights and the growing anti-war movement. Like the blacks, they too were just reaching adulthood when they made their decisions to focus on social change. Several got "movement jobs," including 2 who met each other while being VISTA Volunteers(in Service to America). Another respondent described how she supported herself as an anti-war activist after she dropped out of college in 1970 (she is R32 who steps to activism are elaborated earlier in this chapter):

For the next three years I had odd jobs organizing. I went to Pennsylvania and worked with the Quakers. I was involved in the May Day demonstrations in DC, and got arrested (my first arrest) for civil disobedience. I was on my own, not hooked to any group. I kept thinking about how to stop the war, and no particular job or group fit. But working in Pennsylvania and later in Mississippi, I did feel that I was gaining an understanding of the big picture.

Then I worked for American Friends Service Committee on "Indo-China Summer" in rural southeast Ohio. I was hired to do peace education. I traveled to County Fairs, and encountered people who were different than I had worked with before. They were not blacks or white liberals, but

ordinary American whites, including veterans and people whose sons were in Vietnam. I began to realize how much the war was hurting American people... I began thinking about working people, not just blacks or students. I began to see that potentially millions could be for changes if they had information and understanding of what was going on.

Most of the respondents who decided to become activists in the 1960s were students, participating in both campus and community based activities. The men in particular faced a critical problem what to do about the draft and the prospect of being sent to fight in Vietnam. As Respondent 18 elaborated:

For me and a lot of kids, the fact of the draft, was something that forced us to come to terms with our views on a whole range of questions. Everything from our patriotism, our relationship to our friends and family, our relationship to the Vietnamese people, and other people in the world, our views on killing, death, dying. The draft made all of those things immediate and concrete. I think that pushed me and a whole generation of people. As the war escalated, our concerns escalated.

Rather than face the draft, he and 4 other respondents became Conscientious Objectors.

As the 1960s came to a close, 14 respondents, half of the black, half white, 8 female, 6 male, saw themselves as activists, their lives focused on social change. Through the course of the social movements, they gained a strong sense of political efficacy, while their trust of the government declined. Even more important in their eyes, they felt the society was unjust, and that wrongs should (and could) be made right. They felt that involvement in this process gave their lives meaning.

(2) The Early 1970s:

Between 1970 and 1975, 21 respondents made their decisions to become activists. During these years sentiment against the Vietnam War provided the biggest motivation. R28, son of pro-segregation Dixiecrats, recounted a dramatic description of how he became an activist:

I was in the Virginia Military Institute with the intention of going into the military. During my first year at VMI, May of 1970, they invaded Cambodia. [At the same time there] were the murder of students at Kent State and Jackson State.

I remember the day distinctly. VMI is adjacent to Washington University. I noticed students rallying around the issue -- U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the Vietnam War. There was a lot of tension that day.

I remember that night I was working guard duty. VMI thought the students were going to storm the VMI barracks at night. We were ordered to walk guard duty with fixed bayonets. Here I was walking the barracks, wondering "what am I going to do?" It confronted me with the dilemma of why am I doing this? What is going on here?

R28 had an identity crisis as described by Erikson.²⁵³ He continued in this transcript:

That summer, I read this book by Bonhoeffer which caused me to grapple with the Vietnam War, and what my stance should be as a Christian. I had grown up believing, but this made question that maybe I wasn't right, maybe I needed to take a different kind of stand. Here was this war and I couldn't participate, I couldn't continue down this road of going into the military. That was my turning point. Then I came to North Carolina and I became an activist.

In the space of six months, R32 broke with his family's political tradition, left the military academy, entered a liberal arts college, and joined the movement as an anti-war activist. His is a dramatic example of an abrupt change of life course, where both steps in becoming an activist coincided.

Most respondents took several years to decide to focus on

²⁵³ Erikson, Identity.

activism after they first got involved. For example, R8 second step, in the early 1970s, took place years after her first step. During this time her mistrust of the government grew:

For quite a few years I simply protested... Someone else organized an event, and I would go to it. I didn't attempt to take a leadership role. I was teaching philosophy.

The war got dirtier and uglier. Activism rose. I still had the airs of a professor. I saw myself as an observer while my students would get out in the streets and demonstrate. That didn't last very long.

In 1971, some of my students who were activists drew me into the "People's Peace Treaty," and I decided to go with them to Washington. We all got beaten up, maced, tear-gassed. I remember being in the Georgetown Prison. Each cell was overcrowded, because they had so many people. We were singing and chanting, and banging on the bars. We made a racket, but also we talked a lot about "what were we going to do when we get out of here? We're going to go back and tell people what kind of a government this is." It was very eye-opening.

This American government which I had trusted, which I thought was kind and gentle, was capable of doing those same brutal things that other governments did. Now I had a mission. I knew which side of the barricades I wanted to be on. I was against a government that was brutal. The worst thing was the War in Vietnam. I was very clear on what was right and wrong, and that I had to play a bigger role....

Based on her decision to become an activist she organized the Greensboro Peace Center, the main focus of her energy for several years.

In the 1970s, however, there was less money for "movement jobs." People had to scramble harder for funding, or find other jobs to support themselves. For example, R19, who had a community organizing position funded by Ford Foundation in the 1960s, found nothing like that available in the 1970s.

Meanwhile, she had gotten married and born two babies. Her husband was Executive Director of the Greensboro Association of Poor People, a lofty position which paid \$25 a week! With four mouths to feed, she got a job with the telephone company and

joined the union.

Most of the respondents who became activists in the early 1970s were young adults. But not all were young. In 1973, 3 of the 4 oldest respondents also decided to become activists. One was R1, who joined the Wilmington 10 protest, described earlier in this chapter. The other two were women whose family responsibilities kept them from involvement until they were middle-aged. R3 (white, born in 1924) and R4 (black, born in 1932) had their first taste of involvement in the 1950s, and both wanted to become involved when the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. But they each faced the opposition of their husbands along with the responsibility of raising their children. They did not become activists until the early 70s, two decades after their first involvement, and only after one had divorced and the other had overcome her husband's resistance.

In sum, 12 whites and 9 blacks became activists between 1970 and 1975, many motivated by opposition to the war combined with the Civil Rights Movement. Most were young adults, but several were older. The social movements were at their peak during these years, providing opportunities for those who wanted to become protest activists. Funding for movement jobs dried up, however, and people had to find other employment as a means of support. They tried to get jobs where their activism could focus on work place organizing.

(3) The Later 1970s:

By the mid 1970s, the social movements ebbed. The Vietnam War ended and the push for civil rights subsided. Movement institutions dismantled, and millions of protesters turned back to "normalcy." In this context, the respondents who had become activists in the sixties and early seventies became communists, a process which is the focus of the next chapter. In the late 1970s, these respondents recruited 11 additional respondents to activism with communist politics. Because this process is closely connected with becoming communists, it is discussed separately in Chapter 9.

(4) The 1980s:

When the 1980s opened, 4 respondents were still children, ages 7 to 12. (They are sons and daughters of other respondents.) When they were interviewed in 1991, two had decided to become activists. Both of them, 1 white, 1 black, exhibited strong identification with their parents.

R48 described his activities on campus on rape awareness, environmental issues, and in a Jewish organization, commenting. "It is important in the scheme of things that we as individuals make a small difference in things, and in groups make a collective effort." He feels motivated by his step-father who died in the Greensboro Massacre in 1979, stating "I feel like it is my duty, my obligation, to carry the torch."

Respondent 49, a natural leader, believes that it is "inevitable" that she will become politically active. She has a

strong activist tradition in her family, back to her grandfather, who was a local NAACP in the 1950s. The two other youngest respondents have not yet made this decision.

Activism and Adolescent Rebellion:

Finding: The vast majority of respondents charted their own political paths without a big battle against their parents. Thirty-seven respondents (74%) reported no rebellion against their parents. The other 13 (26%) reported rebelling against their parents as an important part of their political development.

Those who did rebel included individuals from all the family traditions, but the dynamics varied considerably within each group, as discussed below.

1. Apolitical Parents:

The vast majority of respondents from apolitical families did not reject them. Instead, as they became legal adults, they moved away from home, and then became politically involved. Most focused their rebellion against society, not against their parents. Only 2 respondents (R11 and R6) reported arguing with their parents over politics. In both cases, the respondents maintained ties with their families, but did not let this interfere with their activism.

2. Liberal Parents:

Five respondents from liberal homes reported arguments with their parents. For example, the union-organizer father of Respondent 34 argued with his daughter over his support for the Vietnam War. But these disagreements were settled fairly rapidly, with one exception.

The father on Respondent 31 was a high official in the CIA. R31 depicted his father as supportive of his initial civil rights activism in high school. But the Vietnam War was a different issue, and their arguments increased during R31's college years. After graduating from college, R31 decided to become an activist and break with his family:

I split with my family. It seemed like the right thing to do. It had basically happened already. The CIA was so terrible. I wrote a letter to my father, telling him I never wanted to see him again. I thought maybe my father would come down, try to argue me out of it. Instead he wrote me a distant-sounding letter. So I interpreted that as "he didn't care about me anyway."

He did not see his family again for many years. The break was painful, but R31 felt it was necessary, because he wanted to become a radical activist as the focus of his life.

3. Rebellion Against Conservative Parents:

Rejection of parental politics and authority was most dramatic for the respondents from conservative family backgrounds. Six out of 7 children of conservatives reported in detail their rebellion against their parents in the course of becoming activists. On the other hand, many continued to have

family ties with their parents, despite clear political differences.

Respondent 18 is from a wealthy family and describes his parents as "Reagan Republicans even before Reagan was President." They did support his first activism in the early 1960s because it involved volunteer work in poor communities (including a summer at an Indian reservation). But conflicts started developing, as an excerpt from his transcript reveals:

R18: In ninth grade I had started going out with a girl who was Catholic. My family was Episcopalian, from Connecticut, blue- blood Connecticut. After a couple of dates, my mother called me in and said, "you can't go out with Sharleen anymore."

I said "why?"

And she said, "because she's Catholic."

I said, "so what?"

And she said, "I don't want you marrying a Catholic." Which to me was absurd because I was only in ninth grade.

More importantly it launched me on a two year fight with my mother about prejudice. Basically that is when I fired my parents.

Q: You fired your parents?

R18: Yeah, and adopted other role models. Mostly I fired my mother.

Q: Was she aware you did that?

R18: I wouldn't have used that term back then. I would have just said I was fighting bitterly with my mother. But we both knew that there was no longer the kind of trust or sympathy between us. It wasn't a total, but it was a total break as far as me accepting any of her values, her cultural norms. It was so disturbing to me in this age of Civil Rights Movement that my parents would not be sympathetic...

So R18 "divorced" his parents (although he continued to live at home) and substituted a beloved social studies teacher as his activist role model.

Four respondents had more complete breaks with their parents as they entered adulthood. Two, R25 and R46, are sisters, ten

years apart, who both broke away from their pro-segregation family as they turned 18, each joining the "counter culture" to make their way in the world independent of their parents. A third, Respondent 29, from Mississippi, wanted to go to college, but not the one his parents wanted him to go to. As a result, he stated:

I had had a major break from my parents (although later we reconciled so that we could at least be friends). But from then on there was a real value difference. I was rebellious, really independent minded... So I moved out of the house, moved into this slum area, boarding house, surrounded by alcoholics, had a whole series of jobs. I got exposed to what life was like on the underside of Jackson, Mississippi.

Respondent 33 began rebelling against her parents as a small child, by refusing to help with housework while her brother played. When she went away to college, her resistance increased, as she explained:

[My parents] were trying to control me, telling me who I would see, what I would do, which was really crazy cause they weren't even there. The main clout they had over me was economic, they were paying my way... I did feel some obligation to them as long as they were paying my bills. I told them I was going to finish college, paying for it myself. I found this book on the rights of young people, and it mentioned something about becoming legally emancipated. So I went to a lawyer and became legally emancipated when I was 18...

However, she two reconciled with her parents on a personal level, so they are close, although politically they still are very far apart.

Two other respondents broke with right-wing family traditions without bitter fights with their parents. For example, R17, daughter of Klansman, reported some arguments with her father, but mainly just drifted away from her family as she

went through college and medical school. R28, son of Dixiecrat activists, also broke with a family legacy without a personal battle against his parents. He explained that on a personal level, his parents have always supported him, even though they disagreed with him politically.

In summary, for three-fourths of the respondents, rebellion against parental authority was not reported as a major factor in political development. For the 13 who did defy their parents, the degree of personal antagonism varied considerably. Most of those from conservative homes broke decisively with their parents' politics, although in most cases they maintained personal ties. The most total break came from a liberal home, where Respondent 31 broke all ties with his family because of his father's involvement with the CIA.

As a whole, the decisions to become political activists were less affected by family dynamics, than by the opportunities provided by the massive protest movements.

CHAPTER 9

BECOMING COMMUNISTS

A comprehensive analysis of communism in the 1970s is well beyond the scope of this research. Instead this chapter focuses on why respondents adopted communist politics. The first section briefly reviews the communist movement in the U.S. from its origin through the social movements of the 1960s-70s. The next section looks at the decision to become a communist as step three in the process of political development. The bulk of the chapter describes the paths of individual respondents to communism, including the formation of a black collective in Greensboro, a white collective in Durham, the merger of the two groups to form North Carolina branch of the Workers Viewpoint Organization, and the recruitment of 29 respondents to the multi-racial group. The chapter ends briefly describing the work of the Workers Viewpoint in the textile mills and hospitals in the late 1970s.

Why does an activist decide to become a communist? From the perspectives of the 1990s, becoming a Marxist-Leninist to enhance one's political activism seems far fetched. Over the last few years, communist governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have collapsed, their bankrupted economic systems throwing millions into dire poverty. The Chinese government's repression of the democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square revealed again

the brutality of a political system where power is concentrated in the hands of a few.

But twenty years ago, during the 1970s, communist politics was an attractive option for a number of activists, for several reasons. The United States government had no legitimacy in the eyes of these veterans of the social movements. In their view, U.S. imperialism was responsible for the Vietnam War; corrupt capitalist politics led to the Watergate scandal, as well as the continuing problems of racism, sexism, and poverty; capitalist economics resulted in runaway inflation and urban fiscal crises. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter gave a "Crisis in Confidence" speech over nation-wide TV. How much longer could this system last?

The U.S. appeared to be in crisis, and revolutionary movements were growing around the world. In 1973, the Communist Party of Vietnam, a tiny country, had defeated the greatest military power on earth. Reports coming out of China in the early 1970s, portrayed Mao Tse Tung's heroic "Long March," followed by a people's struggle to build socialism, with barefoot doctors and cultural revolution. (Of course there were negative reports as well; but in the early 1970s, following Nixon's visit, much of the media coverage was positive.) Leaders of African liberation movements in South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, and Nicaragua were increasingly embracing Marxism to help their struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

As all of this was happening in the 1970s, the American protest movements were ebbing. The demonstrations the respondents had grown up in, the campaigns which were the context

of their young adulthood, were attracting fewer and fewer people. But, in the minds of these activists, given the crises of capitalism, surely this lull was only temporary.

In these conditions, the respondents, and others like them around the country, hungered for revolutionary theory and organization. A decade of experience had firmly rooted political efficacy in them. They believed that the social movements had ushered in important democratic rights, but that basic economic issues still needed to be addressed. They were convinced that with organization and tactically sharp leadership, people could affect the government and other institutions, and bring greater changes. Marxism, the call to unite the downtrodden, provided a theory and a compelling, idealistic vision.

Klehr and Haynes write, "for a brief time in the 1970s, Maoist organizations were the fastest growing segment of the American communist movement." Veterans of the social movement were:

...convinced that the Chinese Communists had avoided the bureaucratic conservatism that had afflicted the Soviet Union, attracted by the revolutionary elan of the Red Guards and the Cultural Revolution, excited by visions of a people's guerrilla war, and able to romanticize the poverty and backwardness of China as signs of revolutionary purity.²⁵⁴

One of the pro-Chinese groups was the Workers Viewpoint Organization, which changed its name to the Communist Workers Party in 1979. It was this organization that the respondents

²⁵⁴ Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes. The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself (NY: Twayne Publishers, 1992). pp. 166-67.

joined, seeking away to find a theory and organizational support to continue their activism.

Communism in the United States

The US has always been considered by communists as the bastion of capitalism, "the belly of the beast." By 1900, industrial capitalism was growing in the U.S. by leaps and bounds. Many Americans benefitted from industrialism, but many others were exploited, uprooted, impoverished, or left by the wayside. Particularly hurt were the unskilled workers, immigrants, blacks, and women. Not only did they find the "American Dream" elusive, but these groups were also systematically excluded from the American Federation of Labor, the dominant labor organization during the early decades of this century. The AFL focused on getting a piece of the pie for its members only: the skilled trades and craftsmen who happened to be white, male, and American-born.

In 1905, some 200 socialists and trade unionists founded the Industrial Workers of the World, dedicated to building one big union of all workers, skilled and unskilled, of all races, genders, and nationalities. The preamble to their constitution made clear their opposition to capitalism:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace as long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people, and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world take possession of the earth and

the machinery of production and abolish the wage system.²⁵⁵

These activists, called the "Wobblies," led militant strikes from the Goldfield, Nevada, miners' strike (1906), to the Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike (1912), to the lumber workers strikes in the deep South (1912-13), to the Mesabi Range ironworkers' strike in 1916.²⁵⁶

The Wobblies inspired activists of their times and since:

The IWW soon became known for its revolutionary tactics of direct action, its dynamic leaders, and its inspiring songs and graphics. IWW membership rolls included workers of all occupations, skill levels, races, and national backgrounds... Not least among its accomplishments was the erosion of sexual, racial, and ethnic divisions within the working class.²⁵⁷

But some basic strategies of the Wobblies were controversial among trade unionists. The IWW refused to sign contracts. Using the strike as their tactic, they built "dual unions" at work places to challenge the existing union, but they were often unable to protect their members or leaders from persecution. After leading multiple strikes in the early decades, they were on the defensive during the s. One early Wobbly, William Z. Foster, later split from the IWW over trade union strategy. During World War I, Foster earned a national reputation leading organizing drives of unskilled immigrant and black workers in the meat-packing and steel industries.

In 1917, the Bolsheviks led by Lenin, seized state power in

²⁵⁵ Preamble to the IWW Constitution, in Mari Jo Buhle, et. al., eds., Encyclopedia of the American Left (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992) p. 355.

²⁵⁶ Joyce L. Kornbluh, "Industrial Workers of the World," in Buhle, ed., American Left, p. 356.

²⁵⁷ ibid., pp. 354-59.

Russia, and shook the world. The Leninist approach became a model for the revolutionary parties everywhere. American revolutionaries organized the Communist Party USA two years later, attracting many activists, including William Z. Foster. During the s, Foster organized the Trade Union Educational League, "the most important left opposition group within the AFL," laying the basis for the great union struggles of the 1930s which built the Congress of Industrial Unions. From 1932 to 1957, Foster rose to leadership of the CAUSA. ²⁵⁸

The first half of this century saw the high point of revolutionary activity in the U.S. Yet even during these years, these organizations never attracted more than a minority of trade unionists and political activists. Moreover, the Wobblies and the Communists faced bitter repression at every turn. Not only were strikers often arrested and beaten, but the government unleashed several campaigns to try to stop the revolutionary movement. In 1920, Attorney General Mitchell Palmer coordinated a series of mass arrests of 10,000 activists and supporters in a few weeks time. The Palmer Raids were characterized by no due process and frequent brutality. In the 1950s, the Senator from Wisconsin, Joe McCarthy, orchestrated a wave of repression that drove thousands from their jobs.²⁵⁹ Thus the U.S. government went to great lengths to destroy the revolutionary movement.

But despite the risks and hardships, activists continued to become communists. What motivated them? Vivian Gornick

²⁵⁸ James R. Barrett, "William Z. Foster," in Buhle, ed., American Left, p. 236.

²⁵⁹ Paul Buhle, "Red Scare" in Buhle, ed., American Left, pp. 646-48.

interviewed members and former members of the CPUSA during the 1970s, asking them to reflect on what motivated them to become communists.²⁶⁰ One person she interviewed was Selma Gardinsky, a Jewish New Yorker, whose father worked 15 hours a day as a laundryman to support his family. Gardinsky spoke of the revolutionary vision that motivated her in her day to day work as a communist:

You think making a revolution is all agony and ecstasy? It's not, it's mostly drudgery. Hard, disciplined, repetitive work that's boring and necessary. But what keeps you going is that 20 times a week something would happen-- out there in that lousy capitalist world or inside among your comrades -- and you'd *remember*. You'd remember why you were here, and what you were doing it all for, and it was like a shot of adrenalin coursing through your veins.

The world was all around you *all the time*. That was the tremendous thing about those times. The sense of *history* that you lived with daily. The sense of remaking the world. Every time I wrote a leaflet or marched on a picket line or went to a meeting, I was remaking the world....²⁶¹

By being a communist, Gardinsky felt she not only made history, and remade the world, but also transformed her family's place in it. She continued:

My father's bitter, forgotten life. I felt myself vindicating that life, and the millions of lives like his, pulling my father back inside the circle of the world, pulling him back off the edge of the map, because I was doing what I was doing. Because I was a Communist.²⁶²

For many activists, the process of becoming a communist, of studying Marxist theory, was an awakening. Dick Nikowsski, born

²⁶⁰ Vivian Gornick The Romance of American Communism (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

²⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁶² *ibid.*

a Polish Catholic, who became a communist and fought in the Spanish Civil War, . He described his discovery of communism and first days of studying Marx:

We really didn't feel the cold, the dirt, the misery of that place. We were on fire with politics. We talked Marxism day and night... It was air, bread, light, and warmth to us... that's the one thing almost all Communists share, the memory of what it was first like to read Marx, like fireworks exploding in your head, and the love you felt for the human intelligence.... God, I have never felt so free in my life as I did in those first days when I discovered Marx and the existence of my own mind at the same time -- in that cold, filthy apartment in Chicago.²⁶³

Based on her interviews of Gardinsky, Nikowsski, and other communists and former communists, Gornick concluded that the fundamental attraction becoming a communist was based on "the need to live a life of meaning... a need not of the flesh but of the spirit, a need having to do with the deepest definitions of what it is to be human."²⁶⁴

Of the many books by and about ex-communists, The God That Failed, edited by Richard Crossman is considered a classic. The book not only criticizes communism, but also portrays its attraction. Crossman writes:

The intellectual attraction of Marxism was that it exploded liberal fallacies -- which really were fallacies. It taught the bitter truth that progress is not automatic, that boom and slump are inherent in capitalism, that social injustice and racial discrimination are not cured merely by the passage of time, and that power politics cannot be 'abolished' but only used for good or bad ends.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ ibid., p.65.

²⁶⁴ ibid., p. 13.

²⁶⁵ Richard H. Crossman, ed. The God That Failed (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993), p. 5.

Moreover, Crossman recognized that communist parties provided a collective way to fight for one's principles:

...the idea of an active comradeship of struggle -- involving personal sacrifice and abolishing differences of class and race -- has a compulsive power in every Western democracy. ²⁶⁶

The God That Failed presents essays written by several ex-communists who focus on what motivated them to become involved. One of them, Richard Wright, the foremost African-American author of the 1940s, was born poor and black, in Mississippi in 1908. He came to Chicago in the early 1930s, wanting to write, but ended up daily just trying to eat in the Depression-torn city. Wright met some communists, and was invited to a meeting. After initial skepticism, he found himself impressed with the individuals he met. He came home with some literature, and described his reactions:

I lay on my bed and read the magazines and was amazed to find that there did exist in this world an organized search for the truth of the lives of the oppressed and the isolated.

When I had begged bread from the officials, I had wondered dimly if the outcasts could become united in action, though, and feeling. Now I knew. It was being done in one-sixth of the earth already. *The revolutionary words leaped from the printed page and struck me with tremendous force.* ²⁶⁷

Communism provided Richard Wright a perspective on the world around him, and a hope that change could come. Despite his initial skepticism, Wright identified with and embraced the cause. Based on his experiences with injustice and racism, he

²⁶⁶ ibid., p. 6.

²⁶⁷ Richard Wright in Crossman, ed., God That Failed, pp. 117-18 (emphasis added).

welcomed a theory that was "an organized search for the truth of the lives of the oppressed and isolated."

Wright joined the CPUSA in 1932 and was active in it until 1941; he officially resigned in 1944.²⁶⁸ Throughout these years he had many conflicts with party, because he was determined to write, but sometimes party directives called on him to do other work. Nevertheless, he always embraced the party's cause. Even as he was resigning, he told himself: "I'll be for them, even though they are not for me."²⁶⁹

The communists in the 1930s were not only engaged in intellectual exercises, but in many intense strikes as well, including the Loray Mill strike in Gastonia, North Carolina, in 1929. Brecher describes how the strike spread to mills throughout the area:

The strike began in North Carolina on Labor Day, September 3, 1934, when 65,000 workers walked out. That day National Guardsmen were ordered to guard 3 mills in South Carolina, where the strike was expected the next day. The workers not only quit work, but immediately formed "flying squadrons," which moved through the area closing non-striking mills.... The strike spread rapidly throughout the eastern seaboard; newspaper surveys reported 200,000 out on September 4 and 325,000 out the next day.²⁷⁰

In sum, the intellectual vistas opened up with Marxism, combined with practical organizing efforts led by dedicated communist leaders, attracted many activists at the grass roots. The CPUSA reached its height from 1930 through 1945, with over

²⁶⁸ Constance Webb, "Richard Wright," in Buehle American Left, pp. 861.

²⁶⁹ Richard Wright in Crossman, God That Failed, p. 159.

²⁷⁰ Jeremy Brecher. Strike! (San Francisco: South End Press, 1972), pp. 168-69.

100,000 members. But after World War II, the Cold War developed between the United States and Soviet Union, and the U.S. launched a campaign of repression against the CPUSA. McCarthyism was a "massive wave of political repression.... that not only helped destroy the American Communist Party as an effective political organization but also drove the Left out of American politics for more than a decade." ²⁷¹

Perhaps even more disastrous to the CPUSA were Krushchev's revelations about Stalin's wholesale slaughter of political dissidents. The CPUSA was always closely tied to the Soviet Union, and followed its leadership. The American Party's origin and growth in the 1920s-40s was based in large part on the inspiration of the Russian Revolution; its decline was also significantly tied to the events across the world. That the noble cause they embraced could be so betrayed by its idolized leader, who devoured his own, led to the disillusionment of many American activists.

By the 1960s, the American public was becoming more open to social change, and radical ideas. But the CPUSA, as an effective revolutionary organization, had collapsed. Klehr and Haynes write, "the American communist movement was in complete disarray as the 1960s began... The Communist Party was old tired and increasingly out of step with American life."²⁷²

During the early 1960s, neither Marxist ideas nor organizations played any significant role in the Civil Rights

²⁷¹ Ellen Schrecker, "McCarthyism," Buhle, American Left, p. 457.

²⁷² Klehr and Haynes, American Communist Movement, p.148.

Movement. As the social movements picked up steam, Marxist ideas were discussed, but the organizational forms were few.

Also during 1960s, the International Communist Movement divided between the between the Chinese and the Soviets. The Chinese Communists, just over one decade in power, portrayed themselves as the leaders of the Third World revolutions, and actively supported revolutionary groups, particularly in Africa. They denounced the Soviet Union as "revisionists" and called for the building of a new "anti-revisionist" movement.

In this situation an "Anti-revisionist Communist Movement" developed in the U.S., including many small pro-Chinese groups. By the late 1960s, anti-war activists in organizations such as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) debated communist ideas. Kehlir and Haynes write that these radical anti-war activists were:

...unsure about the usefulness of peaceful protest and the likelihood of stopping the war or the draft...they were looking for an all-embracing ideology to explain both what was happening in America and what to do about it. Marxism-Leninism was available as a tried and tested philosophy of revolution.²⁷³

From the perspective of many activists in the 1970s, Marxism-Leninism looked appealing. Communist parties in China and Vietnam had started small, but had grown and led revolutions. Perhaps in the U.S. there was hope.²⁷⁴

Even if a revolution seemed in the far distance, there was hope by activists in North Carolina that the spirit of the

²⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁷⁴ As a whole, the pro-Chinese groups were characterized by factional fighting and, in the 1980s, most disappeared.

Wobblies and the communist strike leaders of the 1930s could be emulated. That unorganized textile and hospital workers could be organized, that police brutality and racist murders could be opposed and prevented.

The Respondents and Communism

The 50 respondents in this research adopted communist politics in the course of the social movements in the 1970s. They had no direct ties, nor family connections, to CPUSA or past revolutionary groups. The only "red diaper babies" (the popular name given to children of communists or socialists) were the 7 respondents whose parents were also respondents.

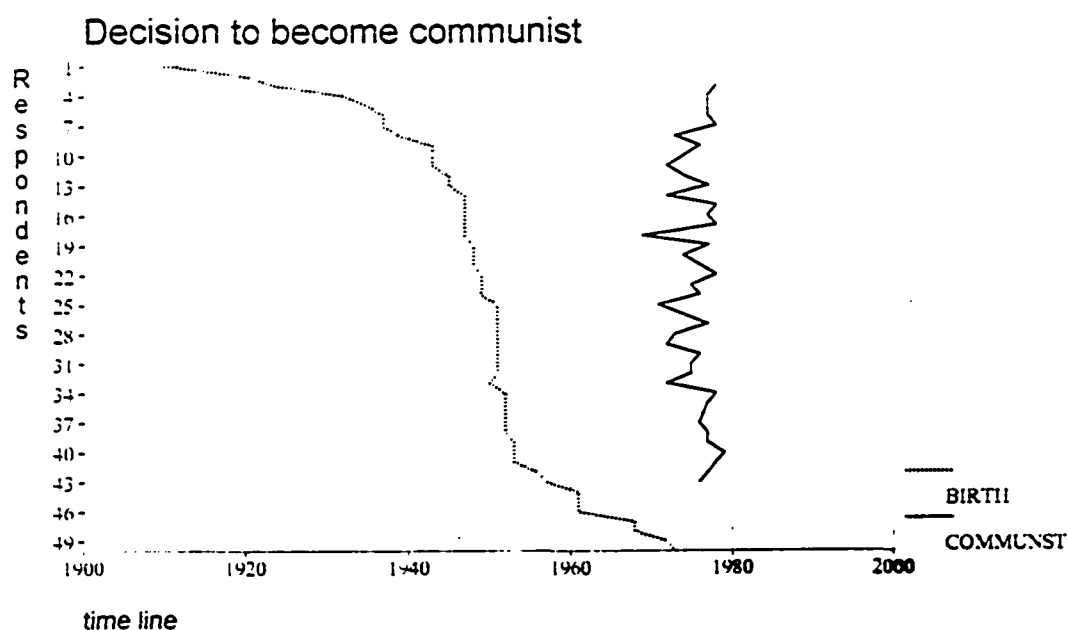
Like Richard Wright, Selma Gardinsky, and Dick Nikowsski, quoted earlier, the respondents were drawn to the communist vision of uniting working people of all races, genders, and ethnic backgrounds, into a struggle to make a better world. They studied Marxism because they believed that it provided the best understanding of reality and the clearest principles for organizing people.

The Lull in the Social Movements in the Mid-1970s:

The respondents decided to become communists as the social movements diminished during the 1970s. Figure 9.1, below, is a line graph, charting the birth dates of the respondents (the dotted line) and the years the respondents decided to become communists (the solid line). The graph below shows that these

individuals decided to become communists in the mid-1970s, mainly between 1976 and 1979.

Figure 9:1



One would think that a respite would lead to less commitment on the part of activist. For most protesters this was the case. For the respondents, however, the lull had the opposite effect.

Their strong political efficacy, combined with mistrust in the government, and a profound sense of injustice did not mitigate just because demonstrations mobilized fewer people. In fact, the lull encouraged them to seek out others who shared their views, and to develop a Marxist analysis that saw the system in a deepening crisis. Even if great numbers were not protesting at the time, the capitalist crisis would eventually lead to mass mobilizations. The respondents saw their role as preparing for such mobilizations in the future.

Deciding to become a communist took place in a much smaller range of time for the respondents, compared to the first 2 steps. Compare Figure 9.1, above, to Figures 8:2 and 8:3 (in Chapter 8) which plot steps 1 and 2 of the respondents political activism. Step 1, the respondents' first activist experiences, took place between 1940 and 1978, a period of almost 4 decades. Step 2, the respondents' decision to become activists occurred between 1961 and 1979, an 18 year span, corresponding roughly to the social movements. Step 3, the decision to become communists, however, took place over only a few years, in the mid 1970s, as the social movements ebbed.

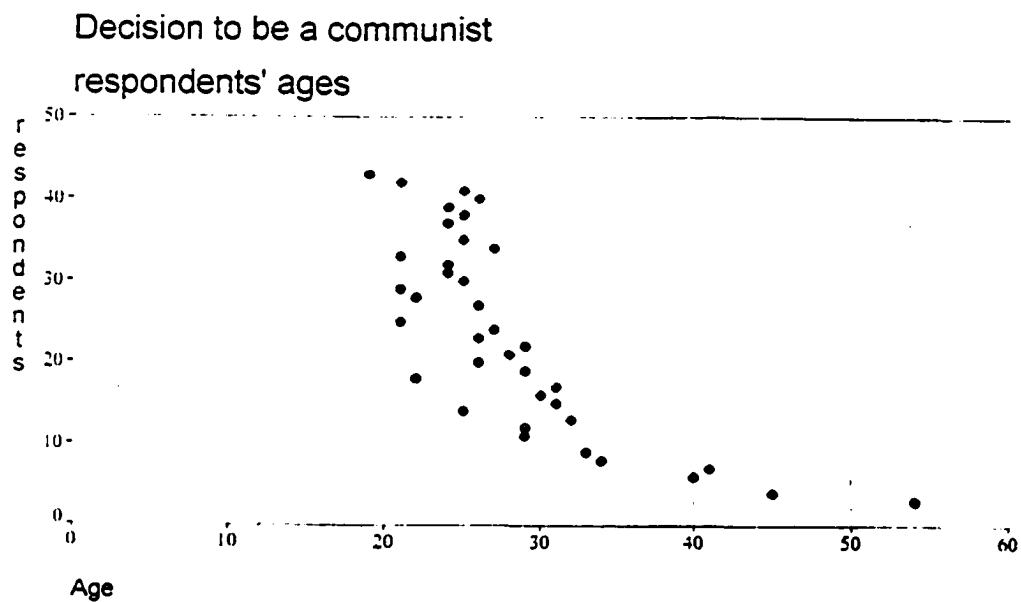
Graph 9.1 also indicates that some respondents did not become communists. Twelve respondents never took this step. They include the oldest respondents, and several other adults who worked with WVO but never joined it. They also include the 7 youngest respondents. Three of them were 18 years old in 1979, and studying Marxism with the WVO, but they never became members. And the youngest 4 respondents were mere children in 1979, and never decided to become communists. When they became adults, the

particular circumstances that lead their parents to become communists no longer existed.

The Respondents Became Communists during their Early Adulthood:

Figure 9.2 below is a scatter graph showing the respondents ages when they decided to become communists.

Figure 9.2

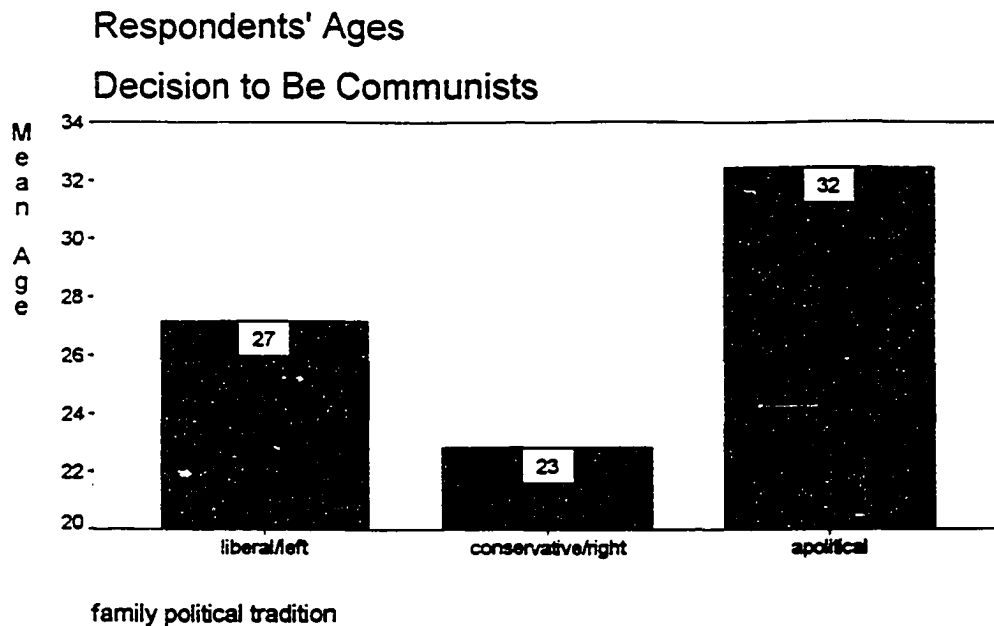


Most took the step of becoming a communist when they were in the 20s, with several in their 30s and only a few older than that. The graph illustrates that the decision to become a communist corresponded with early adulthood, a significant part of the respondents' perspective on how they wanted to focus their lives.

Family Political Traditions and Becoming Communists:

Graph 9:3 illustrates the ages of the respondents when they became communists relative to their family traditions.

Figure 9.3



The respondents from liberal to left family backgrounds became communists when they were 27 years old, on average. Their first activist experiences were as teenagers (Figure 8.2). They made their decisions to become activists in their early 20s. But they did not take the third step of becoming communists until five years later, on average. Their parents had supported their early activism, and their decisions to become activists as a life focus. But the parents had little to do with the third step, because the respondents were adults.

The respondents from apolitical homes were 32 years old, on average, when they decided to become communists. This was just one year after they had decided to become activists as a life focus. (As a group, they were older during the late 1970s, when the respondents were making these decisions.) For many of these respondents, the decision to become an activist coincided with the decision to adopt communist politics. In other words, joining a communist organization was a way of becoming an activist.

In a surprising finding, the respondents from conservative families were, on average, the youngest when they adopted communist politics. The children of conservatives were almost a decade younger than the apolitical group when they took this third step. They were children of the baby boom, for whom the social movements were a powerful socialization agent. They had the farthest to go in defining their politics across the political spectrum from their parents. As a group, they had the most significant rebellions against their parents, becoming communists to sharply define politics opposite their parents.

But the paths of the respondents from conservative backgrounds can not be understood simply as rebellion. The extensive excerpt from the interview with Respondent 33 indicates the complex process of becoming a communist.

Respondent 33, Born into a Conservative Family, Becomes a Communist:

R33's rebellion against her parents began when she was a child, protesting her mother making her wash dishes while her brothers played. She became a radical activist when she was 18 years old. But her evolution to communist politics took place over a considerable period of time, involving a complex process of study and experience in the social movements. She described the process:

When I was a young kid, my dad gave me a lot of reading material, anti-communist stuff from the John Birch Society, which I read and discussed with him... We had a lot of political discussions.

I also read the Communist Manifesto ... [and] had this big discussion with my dad, about how the ideals of communism were really noble, and I agreed with it on the ideal level, but not on the practical level because of the totalitarianism involved. (Which is interesting, because now -- in 1990 -- I have basically come around full circle.) I remember saying, "communism is actually Jesus Christ's principles, to each according to his need." My dad thought that was smart of me, but he drew the line about communism in practice, that it was a real tragedy.

At age 18, R33 went through a major battle with her parents, over the direction of life. As a result of this struggle, she dropped out of college, refusing to accept money for tuition from her parents, and she got married to a young man her parents considered an undesirable radical. While her husband went to

college, she got a job in Volunteers In Service to America (VISTA), trying to get poor people to sign up for welfare benefits. Once again, she started thinking about communism:

We tried to get everybody signed up for welfare. But then I realized -- "even if they get these benefits, they are still poor, living in grinding poverty. Getting on welfare isn't the goal. We need a complete restructuring of society." So I became interested in socialism as an answer.

When her husband finished college, it was time for her to go back to school. They moved to New York to take advantage of the public college system that they could afford to pay on their meager income. R33 stated:

I was looking for a university where I could learn about socialism, and combine socialism and feminism. I went to Westbury, on Long Island, which was an experimental college at that time. It was one third white, one third Puerto Rican, one third black. It was an incredibly beautiful campus, with two-thirds of the student body from Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. [There was] an incredible teaching faculty, who had come from all over the country to be involved in this progressive campus. Most of the white people were women (there were almost no white men) and the vast majority were feminist.

I started out in women's studies, but had a problem with their lack of a class analysis.... I had been in VISTA, I knew about classes. I was one of their little star pupils, and they appointed me to the student/ faculty curriculum development committee. But I kept saying "we need courses that deal with a class analysis. The women's studies program is all white -- why don't we attract the latino and black women to this program?"

[They] suggested that I go to another discipline -- politics and economics, which had third world professors. So I did. Other white students told me, "Oh they are really racists in those classes. If you're white, they will give you low grades just because you're white."

I said "I don't care." Actually I was afraid because I heard this from a lot of people. But, it was great -- it was the best thing I could've ever done! They were fantastic professors. I spent a whole year studying one book, Marx's book on Capital; I read all three volumes. I took a class on the Chinese Cultural Revolution. It was tremendous. The guy who taught it was kind of a mentor for me. I was just convinced that we needed to have a revolution in this country like China had done. There were some problems in the transfer of third world countries to U.S. [laugh] but I'm sure that could be overcome.

She had become a communist, but then what? She still had to decide what to do with her life. She continued:

By the time I graduated from there I was at a cross roads. I had planned to go into law. That was what I had talked about with my dad years before. It was either go to law school or be a revolutionary. A choice.

I decided to be a revolutionary. It wasn't a case -- like my parents thought -- that I got to know somebody and through my friendship with them I joined an organization. *I didn't know anybody, I had to find them.*

She and her husband (who followed her in becoming a communist) decided "to do an inventory of the whole communist movement in the country, to figure out which communist organization out there we wanted to join." They found people in North Carolina and became part of the Workers Viewpoint Organization.

In summary, the specific historical context is very important to the respondents in making the decision to become communists. The process can not be understood out of the context of the development of a communist organization in North Carolina in the mid to late 1970s, which is discussed below.

Becoming Communists:

The Respondents Build the Communist Workers Party in North Carolina

By the mid 1970s, all of the respondents were living and working in North Carolina; many had lived there for most, if not all, of these lives. North Carolina had a reputation as a "liberal" southern state, but the reality was quite different.

The state had among the lowest rate of unionized workers, manufacturing wages, and per capita incomes. Chafe wrote that North Carolina "combined a reputation for enlightenment and a social reality that was reactionary."²⁷⁵ Chafe also noted that North Carolina had a tradition of violence and repression against organizers.²⁷⁶

As the Vietnam War ended and the social movements lulled in the early 1970s, many activists went on to more traditional careers. But the respondents in this study, and others like them, had a strong sense of injustice combined with political efficacy and governmental mistrust. They were determined to continue their activism. One tactic was to get jobs in work places that were considered ripe for union organizing. This provided a clear focus of political work, and solved the problem of supporting oneself financially (poverty program jobs were quickly drying up). Four Cone textile mills and the Duke University Medical Center became the foci for many respondents in this study.

The Encyclopedia of the American Left succinctly summarizes these events involving the respondents:

In North Carolina, activists from both white and black left groups in Durham and Greensboro began organizing in textile mills and hospitals beginning in 1974. By 1977, these forces had been consolidated into the Workers

²⁷⁵ William H. Chafe. Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) p. 5.

²⁷⁶ Well known cases in North Carolina during the 1970s included the Wilmington 10, Charlotte 3 and Joan Little. For the Wilmington 10 see Paul Lubke Tar Heel Politics: Myths and Realities (Chapel Hill, University of NC Press, 1990) p. 113. For Joan Little, see Manning Marable Race Reform and Rebellion (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991) pp. 130-31.

Viewpoint Organization... In addition to gaining leadership in several local unions in North Carolina, [the WVO] organized support of six labor strikes across the state in 1978 and four in 1979.²⁷⁷

The pages below analyze how the respondents, in the course of these events, evolved from Civil Rights and Anti-War activists into communists. These individuals can be divided into the following categories based on their varied paths through this political process:

1) Four black respondents in Greensboro, in the context of the Black Movement, progressed from civil rights activists to black nationalists to Marxist-Leninists in the mid-1970s. By 1975 they had formed a collective in Greensboro focused on organizing in the textile mills.

2) In Durham, 50 miles away, 5 white respondents, from the anti-war, civil rights, and women's liberation movements, became socialists in the early 1970s, organizing themselves into a local collective. As they worked on unionizing Duke University Medical Center, they studied and then adopted Marxist-Leninist politics.

3) In 1976, these two local collectives, one black and one white, merged with each other and simultaneously joined the Workers Viewpoint Organization.

4) The formation of this multi-racial Marxist-Leninist group became a powerful magnet attracting 29 other respondents to join.

²⁷⁷ Jim Wrenn, "Greensboro Massacre" in Buhle, American Left, p. 280.

Each of these developments is discussed in the following pages.

1. Black Radicals in Greensboro: From Civil Rights to Black Nationalism to Marxism-Leninism:

Integrationism and nationalism have long coexisted as trends in the African-American community. Different historical conditions bring first one trend, then the other, to the forefront. The leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), from the mid-1950s through the mid-1960s, made integrationism the dominant ideology of the Civil Rights Movement. But even during this time Malcolm X nationalist call was respected by many.²⁷⁸

By 1965 the movement began to shift towards a more radical ideology. By this time Martin Luther King and the SCLC had been leading the Civil Rights Movement for a decade. Their leadership had brought many changes, but also unleashed a lot of anger, and expectations that more significant changes would come. Many younger blacks, growing up in the context of the movement, saw King as too middle-class and too middle-aged; they grew impatient with King's pacifist tactics. One young upstart who challenged King over the tactics of the movement was Stokely Carmichael. "We don't want integration," he said, "We want Black

²⁷⁸ James H. Cone. Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare. (New York: Orbis Books, 1991).

Power."²⁷⁹ His call for "Black Power" shocked white America.

The significance of Carmichael's challenge to the movement can be seen in the comments of one of the four original protesters in the 1960 Greensboro sit-in. Although his protest in 1960 had initiated the tidal wave of protest politics across the nation, he recognized the dramatic change in the movement in the mid sixties:

After 1965 it's a brand new day. New tactics had to be devised. I think the turning point in the movement was when Stokely [Carmichael] said we're just tired of turning the other cheek... And there are only three ways to get power. You can request it, demand it, or take it.²⁸⁰

Chafe chronicles the transition in Civilities and Civil Rights in the nation and in Greensboro, N.C.:

The late 1960s's were a fiery time in America. Black Panthers and Students for a Democratic Society tried to organize ghetto dwellers into a revolutionary phalanx to overthrow capitalism. Thousands of other young people, fed up with United States hypocrisy in Vietnam and the country's failure to solve problems of poverty and race at home, condemned "the system."...

In Greensboro many of the same forces were at work, nowhere more clearly in the relations between black and white. Black activists felt hemmed in and powerless before an intransigent opposition that was proficient in using sophisticated forms of obstruction to frustrate black demands...²⁸¹

From the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s a group of blacks in Greensboro developed from civil rights activists to black

²⁷⁹ Manning Marable. Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America 1945-1990 (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), p. . Note: A debate over tactics between King and Carmichael is vividly captured on video as the two argued over tactics in the midst of a protest march, coming under tear-gas assault of police in Eyes on the Prize Part II.

²⁸⁰ David Richmond, one of the four original students in the 1960 sit-in, quoted in Chafe, Civilities, p. 172.

²⁸¹ Chafe, Civilities, p. 172.

nationalists to communists. Four of them are respondents in this study. The one who elaborated this path most clearly is R12, who became an African-American leader in Greensboro in the mid-1960s, and still is a leader there today. Chafe describes Respondent 12 as "leading the new insurgency" in Greensboro, and extensively discusses this respondent's transition from defender of the philosophy of Martin Luther King to black nationalist.²⁸²

R12's motivation consistently has been to organize black people to fight for a more just society. Through his entire adult life he has lived in Greensboro, as he became a civil rights activist to a nationalist to a communist, and during the last decade, a Baptist Minister.²⁸³ Each transition has been thoughtful, deliberative. He stated, "my life has not been characterized by abrupt changes... Our orientation in all we did was helping other people."

R12's first involvement in the movement came in high school, and picked up again after he returned from military service and entered college in the mid-1960s. He decided that political activism would be the focus of his life, as "the Black Power Movement in North Carolina was beginning, part of a nationwide trend."

In college, he worked with a tutoring program organized by whites to help individual blacks to "make it" within the existing

²⁸² Chafe refers to Respondent 12 by his real name, of course. Although this respondent would not mind his name being used, other respondents requested anonymity. Chafe's interview of R12 in the early 1970s parallels mine, but in some areas Chafe's book goes into more detail.

²⁸³ See Chapter 11 for a discussion of this respondent's political beliefs and activities today.

system. R12 told Chafe, "A lot of the children I worked with asked for white tutors, which bothered me at a time when social consciousness of our own history as [African-American] people was rapidly on the rise." He began to see a larger significance:

The question of why we had to tutor in the first place was linked to what the school wasn't doing and what the society wasn't doing... like how could a kid read if the lighting in the house is not proper, and how can the light get proper if his father isn't making enough money... and [the questioning] went into the [social root of things]. And the more you raise those questions, the more the hypocrisy of the society starts to come out. ²⁸⁴

R12 and others became convinced that white leaders would respond to black needs only if the entire black community, from the poor to professional people, "joined hands to build and independent Black Power base from which to deal with the white community." ²⁸⁵ Thus he and others embarked on a journey that led from black nationalism to Marxism-Leninism.

R12 was a "master organizer," in the words of white city officials who opposed him. Chafe stated:

... he quickly earned the enmity, as well as the grudging respect, of his white foes... His eloquence in public, together with his effectiveness behind the scenes, made him a powerful threat to those seeking to keep the black community under control. ²⁸⁶

Just as civil rights spawned black nationalism, black nationalism spawned the development of Marxism-Leninism within the movement. The organization within the Black Power movement that introduced R12 to communism was the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). Marable describes the ALSC:

²⁸⁴ Chafe, Civilities, pp. 174-75.

²⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 176.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 177.

In 1972-73, the popularity of Pan-Africanism among broad segments of the black population was manifested in the activities of the nationalists' African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC). The ALSC was instrumental in sponsoring a series of popular mass demonstrations in the US which expressed support for African independence from colonial and apartheid rule, called "African Liberation Day".²⁸⁷

In 1972, 20,000 blacks marched in African Liberation Day in the nation's capital. The following year, over 100,000 participated.²⁸⁸

R12 stated that "In the context of the black nationalist structures, I met Marxists. [Among the] Africans that we met within ALSC, the most impressive ones were Marxists." These African's class analysis sharply differed from black nationalism's stress on cross-class, all black, unity. R12 disclosed that "Marxism versus black nationalism became a conflict within ALSC," a development Marable refers to as "the 'Great Debate' between black independent Marxist-Leninists and the narrow cultural nationalists." ²⁸⁹ The debate affected R12 profoundly, as he recounted: "Between 1972 and 1975 I went through a gradual fundamental change in my analysis from pan-Africanism to Marxism-Leninism."

R12 described a turning point:

In 1973, there was a major struggle at an ALSC conference in Frogmore, S.C, the same year ALSC had organized a demonstration of 50,000 in Washington D.C. The debate was between narrow nationalism and anti-imperialism, and the organization bordered on a split. We were part of this World Pan Africanist movement and had built a viable organization. [But] our group, had come to disagree with Stokely Carmichael. At a major conference in Washington 1974, attended by over 2000 people, we debated the road

²⁸⁷ Marable, Race, p. 134.

²⁸⁸ ibid.

²⁸⁹ ibid., p. 134.

forward.

Through all these discussions, we developed a nationalist Marxist perspective. We had a class analysis, but had not reconciled ourselves to work with whites. We did start working in factories.

R12 played a leadership role in the transition from black nationalism to Marxism-Leninism. But the other respondents in his group each had their own reasons, and their own process of development.

R4' curiosity about Marxism dated back to the late 1960s, before she met R12. She described how she first heard the word "communism," but did not learn what it meant until years later:

I went to a school when they had all these federal programs in the late '60s. We came across something called communism. We said "what is communism?" There were some Congressmen coming down from DC because they were the ones funding the program. Our instructor said, "when they come, ask them what communism is." When the Congressmen came in the room, someone said, "what is communism?" I remember it got quiet, and they never gave us an answer. They tried to laugh it off, you know how politicians can do. We never did know what communism was. I guess the Congressmen asked each other "What are they teaching the young folks there, them asking what communism is? We don't even want them to have those thoughts in their heads."

When the movement started studying Marxism, and I heard the word communism again, I said, "Well, Lord, I'm gonna find out what communism is."

After I started studying, I said, "no wonder they didn't want us to know what it was!" I thoroughly enjoyed the study of Marxism... When the day ever comes again, when I can stand up and sing the 'Internationale,' I'll be the one to lead it.

Marxism was something kept from the exploited. Her thirst for Marxism paralleled those like Richard Wright, who became a communist a generation earlier. She was drawn to "an organized search for the truth of the lives of the oppressed."²⁹⁰

Another respondent, R11, had her own strong motivation for

²⁹⁰ Richard Wright, God That Failed, p. 117..

studying Marxism. After a childhood filled with fear of white racists, she developed a strong sense of political efficacy from participating in the Civil Rights Movement. All this made her interested in "how the system operated." In school and college, she had been taught about American democracy, but what she experienced in her life was far from the textbook explanation. In the context of the movement, she looked into various ideas and groups.

R11 found Marxism particularly useful in her efforts to "understand white people." Her family had been terrorized by racist whites, and the white sheriff had done nothing about it. Moreover, the landowners who underpaid her sharecropping family were whites. For her, hating whites was based on concrete life experience. But then she was aware of whites who were poor and exploited as well. "I used to tell myself that they must not care, they had no get up and go." Studying Marxism explained to her that exploitation could happen to all races. "I started to see the greed of capitalism and the injustice to both black and white."

In addition, the Marxist concept that the government is not neutral, but is used by the capitalist class to keep control over working people, also coincided with her experience. Her first experience with government, was when she was 10 years old, and the county sheriff ignored the racist murder of her neighbor. She embraced the theory of Marxism because it helped explain the world she lived in.

R37, the youngest of this group, also had her own reasons as well, and her own history of activism back to junior high school.

She pointed out that in the argument between black nationalists and Marxist-Leninists, the nationalists "went into white collar positions; those that argued for Marxism-Leninism joined the proletariat." She had a college degree, but her life was devoted to social change, so, she explained, "I got a job working in Cone Mills."

These 4 respondents were part of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL), which had developed as the Marxist-Leninist wing of the African Liberation Support Committee. RWL talked about merging with various other communist groups, but collapsed as a national organization, torn asunder over whether and how to work with other groups, particularly one with whites in them. Eventually many local collectives from RWL joined the Workers Viewpoint.

The respondents in Greensboro focused on textile organizing in the Cone mills. Working in those same factories were white activists who had travelled a somewhat different path, but had ended up the same place -- in the textile mills as Marxist-Leninists.

2. White Radicals in Durham, N.C.: From Democratic-Socialists to Marxist-Leninists:

White radicals, like blacks, debated Marxist ideas within the social movements, and by the early 1970s there was much discussion of revolution. Most social movement scholars predicted the demise of such a movement. In 1970, Gurr wrote that despite the turmoil in some urban areas, a full-fledged

revolutionary movement would not develop in the US because radical populations and revolutionary groups were too isolated.²⁹¹ In 1973 Oberschall noted the increasing repression of the Black Panthers and other groups, and predicted that these radical organizations would be short-lived because they would be unable to mobilize resources as successfully as the more broad-based Civil Rights Movement.²⁹² Piven and Cloward were among the few scholars that supported the radical turn of the social movements, arguing that poor people could win more benefits through disruptive tactics.²⁹³

Far from the academic debate, the respondents grappled with the subsiding mass movements. But they did not see "abandoning the struggle" as an option. They felt that the lull in the movement was temporary, that "the capitalist system" was in crisis and tumultuous times lay ahead, bringing opportunities for massive mobilizations.

Respondent 8, a white woman active in the anti-war movement, is typical in how she was drawn to communist ideology:

I started moving more towards the left as I studied the causes of the war. When I started protesting, it was from sheer moral indignation. Later I learned about imperialism.... everyone was talking about imperialism in the late 60s and early 70s. I became more left, more communist.

[Becoming a communist] was very gradual. It was very painful to learn those things, to keep going over all that stuff in your mind. I kept thinking, "This analyzes what I see."

People would say "communism is danger, evil, don't go

²⁹¹ Gurr, Why Men Rebel, p. 343-44.

²⁹² Oberschall, Social Conflict, pp. 238-41.

²⁹³ Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven. The Politics of Turmoil: Essays on Poverty, Race, and the Urban Crisis (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

near it."

But I would say to myself "I think it is true. I'm going to follow it wherever it takes me."

She specifically refers to her strong sense of political efficacy as an important factor in her decision to become a communist. She stated,

We had the assumption that if society is wrong, if society is broken, that we can fix it, that we *should* fix it. No playing around here, you *change* it. The bias for direct action, the confidence, I think we all got that from the sixties.

She and other respondents were not only critical of the government, but also had a strong sense of political efficacy. They felt that, if organized, people could make radical political changes -- and that they were morally obligated to do so.

During the early 1970s, white radicals in Durham built an organizing collective that ultimately merged with the black collective in Greensboro. Five of these individuals are respondents, including two women and three men, all who had been active for a long time in the anti-war and civil rights movements.

The Durham collective focused on health care organizing. In the early seventies, there were plans to build several large health facilities in the city. Health care was becoming the dominant industry in Durham. But while the plans focused on state of the art technology, they minimized community health services. The health collective, including several doctors at Duke University Medical Center, mobilized people to change the plans. They built coalitions including both white and black working people.

Although the focus of their work was local organizing, the Durham collective followed national developments on the left. In 1971, they joined the New American Movement (NAM). NAM's organizational principle was that socialism was the "only possible basis for reconstructing American society;" and the group also emphasized "the centrality of feminism as a core approach that must be integrated into all political work."²⁹⁴ Connecting the issues of socialism, feminism, and anti-imperialism appealed to the respondents who were looking for a comprehensive approach to organizing.

The Durham collective fit easily into the new group, based on common movement backgrounds. But after a year or two, the respondents became frustrated with NAM's lackadaisical approach to organizing. In the Encyclopedia of the American Left, NAM founder, Michael Lerner wrote that

NAM emerged in a period of general decline in the Left in the 1970's and did not see itself as capable of attempting to stem that decline. It had no organizational ambitions to become well known outside the left, and its growth was largely confined to areas with high concentrations of former New Leftists.²⁹⁵

In contrast to the laid-back nature of many NAM members, the respondents were ambitious and impatient, seeking theories and organizational forms to continue to build a movement for radical social change. NAM's theory and the practical work of its members were of little or no help to the respondents in Durham. In this context, the respondents began studying the Leninist

²⁹⁴ Michael Lerner, "New American Movement," in Buhle, American Left, p. 515.

²⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 515.

party model.

The organizational principle of Marxism-Leninism is "democratic-centralism." Theoretically this means that issues are discussed within the group, but once the group makes a decision, everyone carries it out, even those who disagreed with the decision. Within a small organizing collective, democratic-centralism worked quite well, according to Respondent 29.²⁹⁶ He explained that the Durham collective had:

....unity of will, and that made us relatively more effective than any of the other groups around us at the time.... We had real discipline and were hard working. We really did have our act together, in terms of what we were trying to accomplish....

Democratic centralism for us meant we had a lot of meetings and a lot of participation. Everybody in the group participated, nobody felt left out. There was an effort to be inclusive, to bring people along, or to back off some things if there were some things people weren't that comfortable with.

The Durham collective debated with other New American Movement members the need to organize more vigorously and the need for Marxist-Leninist theory. Frustrated with the response, the collective left NAM. At the time, R29 felt that the main issue was commitment to organizing. He stated,

I took pride in being more dedicated. We weren't going to try to climb the social ladder. We were going to go and talk to the people that really have a stake in changing the system -- the workers.

For some respondents, the evolution to Marxism-Leninism meant breaking with a philosophy of non-violence. R32 had spent several years working with the Quakers in the Anti-war movement.

²⁹⁶ R29 eventually became quite critical of the democratic centralist organizational style in Workers Viewpoint Organization, discussed at the end of this chapter.

She explained why she became a Leninist:

My friends and I had been committed to non-violent social change, but we had many discussions about revolutionary struggles, the Vietnamese, the Chinese Revolution. I never saw non-violence as a fundamental strategy, but as an important tactic. I knew it would not work in countries like Vietnam, China, Cuba. The non-violent groups, the Quakers, AFSC, were very accessible and good to work with.

But the main question for me always was: *how do you make basic social change?*

Making fundamental social change was also the central concern for another respondent, R23. After years of grass roots organizing, the transition from socialism to Marxism-Leninism meant changing his orientation towards the government. He elucidated the reasons he became a communist:

As an activist I found out through experience that you could not depend on the government or on bureaucrats. Bureaucrats made promises, then stone-walled us, and finally let us down. This is how I learned that the state is not neutral. For example, in the County Hospital campaign, L.B. screwed us. He said he would help, and in return, we cancelled some of our tactics, we lost momentum. In any grassroots campaign, you must maintain a sharp focus and build up momentum. What this bureaucrat did was undermine the whole campaign.

A second reason I became a communist, a Leninist, was Lenin's single-minded focus on politics. It was a discipline I aspired to. The Leninist political party focused on politics -- not a part-time thing, but it called for a dedicated life.

This respondent's description of studying Lenin sounds similar to Dick Nikowsski, who became a communist in the 1930s, and stated "we were on fire with politics... that's the one thing almost all communists share, the memory of what it was first like to read Marx." ²⁹⁷ R23 shared this desire for total commitment. He asserted:

²⁹⁷ Gornick, Romance, p.65.

I read Lenin's Imperialism one time on a four hour bus trip to run a brown lung clinic in South Carolina; I was so into it, I don't think I looked up twice during that whole trip. Lenin wrote that around 1900, and I was surprised of the insight of that moldy old classic into the US 70 years later. [US imperialism in Vietnam, Africa, Latin America well understood in the movement at that time.] Behind it all were multi-national corporations, what Lenin called "trusts" in 1900.

Lenin mentions the tobacco trust. Guess who we were organizing against everyday? Duke Medical Center, built on tobacco money, build for profit... We were trying to get health care delivery that would meet the needs of poor and working people. Our enemy? The vast wealthy power brokers behind the scenes, who called the shots, determined what was built, all to increase their own profits. We never dealt with any of them directly, just their surrogates... and government officials who carried out their bidding. Who tried to derail what we were doing.

I got this sense that we truly were fighting the same enemy -- whether in Vietnam, China, Africa. Communism was a call to unity of all oppressed people, a practical matter...

Durham collective became a local unaffiliated Marxist-Leninist organization. But the respondents knew that they could not make much of a revolution by themselves, so they sought out national groups, looking for one to join.

3. The Greensboro and Durham Collectives Merge and Join the Workers Viewpoint Organization:

Only 50 miles separated Greensboro and Durham, North Carolina, but to merge into one organization the respondents had to overcome the great racial divide. They had grown up on different sides of segregation. Black and white activists had come together in Civil Rights marches, but the underlying tensions led the social movements to split along racial lines in the mid-1960s. The Black Power movement dominated younger black activists in North Carolina, and the anti-war and women's

movement were largely white. By the mid-1970s, these social movements had declined, but the tensions between the races had not.

By 1976 the two collectives each made up of dedicated activists with long histories in the social movements. Coming from different backgrounds, and different social movements, nevertheless each group had each adopted Marxist-Leninists politics. Moreover, some respondents were already working together inside the textile mills.

Respondent 32, from the Durham collective had moved to Greensboro in 1975, and gotten a job in a mill. He found himself working in the same place as members of the black collective. He recalled:

A lot of black radicals wouldn't even work with white people. Race relations were very tough back then. But our politics, our analysis of the class structure in this country, really did seem to solve that problem. We had a basis of unity -- that we could unite against the people who were exploiting all of us.

And here we are working at the same mill. There were all kinds of opportunities. [The black respondents] were really fine individuals. You felt like you were on to something when you're working with them.

In 1976, the two collectives started talking to each other. Both were studying polemics published by the Workers' Viewpoint Organization. Each group wrote a position paper demarcating their views of various issues. WVO leaders came to North Carolina, holding a forum to debate revolutionary politics. Following the forum, the two collectives decided to merge as part of the Workers Viewpoint Organization. R23 recounted:

We had been working in parallel with them for a while. I had heard about a black group in Greensboro moving towards Marxism-Leninism, but had never actually met any of them. Following the forum, there were lots of meetings with the Greensboro collective, huge amounts of time spent, basically

discussing our understanding of world history. We came to a high level of agreement. Our collectives merged, joining WVO at the same time. I remember going up to New York to a "Party Building Forum." It was basically a celebration of our joining WVO.

Shared communist politics enabled the black and white collectives to merge. Marxism-Leninism was an alternative to liberal politics which these activists felt belittled racism, classes, and economic oppression. It was also an alternative to black nationalism, which divided white from blacks.

4. The Multi-Racial Workers Viewpoint Organization Draws Black and White Activists to Communism:

The merger of the two collectives into a multi-racial communist organization attracted a number of revolutionary-minded activists in the area. Twenty-nine respondents (12 blacks, 17 whites) joined the Workers Viewpoint in North Carolina between 1977 and 1979.²⁹⁸

Many respondents stated that they will always cherish joining the Workers Viewpoint Organization. For example, R16 sees it as something that changed her life, from a convict to a constructive person. She started studying communism in an unusual place -- prison! Born to a very poor black family in Greensboro, she watched the 1960 sit-ins as a child on the side lines. As a teenager and young adult, she was aware of the

²⁹⁸ More individuals joined WVO, but they are not respondents in this study. Of the 50 respondents, 4 were part of the Greensboro collective, 5 the Durham collective, 29 joined WVO between 1977 and 1979, and 12 were never communists.

movement, but not very involved in it. Instead she ran with a crowd that got into drugs. And then she got caught and served 3 years in prison for drug possession. In jail she was placed in a pilot drug treatment program, directed by an activist minister, who introduced her to communism. She recounted that:

We started reading Malcolm X, Franz Fanon, and Mao Tse Tung -- right there in prison. That stuff sunk in with me. It really did. I started reading more, I just had to know more. I started to get active within the prison, in political things that were of concern to the women, injustices that were going on.

When she got out of prison in 1977, R16 bumped in to R12, now the local Workers' Viewpoint leader in Greensboro, who she recognized from Civil Rights days.

He was talking about Workers Viewpoint... He invited me to a Worker's Viewpoint program at the Y, and I met a lot of people... I was listening and reading, and everything people were saying made so much sense. For me it was like blinders being taken off me. Everything started looking so different, I felt different, free...

R16 remembers going to New York City that spring for a Workers Viewpoint May Day demonstration, which she described in vivid detail:

I'll never forget May Day '77. I remember going up on the bus [of North Carolina WVO members] and being with all these people, blacks, whites, it was like a whole different experience. Just going on the bus, I knew I was with the right people. It was all this harmony, and people having a genuine interest in you.

Then when we got up there, it just blew my mind to see all these people Chinese people, Puerto Ricans, and blacks, marching through these different neighborhoods. Marching through a Puerto Rican neighborhood, somebody would be giving a speech in Spanish, and then we would go through another neighborhood and someone would take over the mike and be speaking in Chinese. The flags waving... it was so overwhelming. I could not believe that this was really happening, everyone saying "comrade." We had just a wonderful time.

After that May Day, I felt like this is where I was supposed to be, no doubt about it...

That's when I made the decision, about what I'm going

to be doing for the rest of my life. I was going to be involved in some kind of organizing. To me Workers Viewpoint was the best thing that ever happened to me. It really was.

Back in Greensboro, she joined WVO. She asserted, "the organization on a local level started really coming together. People, black and white, were always trying to figure things out. We started doing lots of work in the mills..."

Many WVO members got job working in the textile mills. Some fit in easily with the workers there, but others did not. One who stood out was Bill Sampson.²⁹⁹ With his middle-class upbringing and graduate school education, Bill did not look like the average mill worker. R27 was working in the mill when Bill got hired. He described his co-workers first impressions of Bill as he entered his assigned position in the dye house:

"Hey," my co-worker said to me, "that must be the new guy... Man, he's walking like he's tired already. What's he going to do when he gets down in the dye house?"

We introduced ourselves. Bill had these little wire-rimmed glasses. Certain people look like they can be mill workers. He didn't have the look. He looked like he should have been in an office, somewhere at the front desk. He had his big boots, but he looked like he was having a hard time walking in those heavy steel-toes.

R27 was working the hot dirty job in the dye house to support his wife and child. He and Bill were close in age, but very different in background. R27 was from a black working-class family, and had been unable to complete his college education because the money ran out. Despite his initial skepticism, R27 came to love Bill "like a brother." They talked at length about

²⁹⁹ Bill Sampson was one of the 5 people killed on November 3, 1979.

politics. R27 welcomed the discussion; involved in civil rights activities as a teenager, he was eager to become an activist once again. Bill talked about why he was a communist. R27 remembered:

Bill started bringing me Workers Viewpoint newspapers, but it wasn't the papers that won me over to Workers Viewpoint. It was meeting the people.... Bill took me to meetings and programs and people's homes.

After a couple of months, I said "this thing sounds so great, why is isn't it put out in the whole Greensboro? Everyone should know about socialism -- sounds better than this system we're involved in now."

That's when I got involved in the study groups. It became even more interesting, helping me to understand. I always knew there were rich people ruling things, but to understanding capitalism, the ruling class, the workers.

R27 felt that studying Marxism as a science helped him become a better activist:

Learning about this science really helped me, putting things in a good perspective, understanding how things worked, and how workers kept fighting among themselves, and how the bourgeoisie didn't want black and white workers to come together.

I became really active in the mill. I would go into the management office to tell them about some problem. I wasn't just telling the Man he was a white devil, cheating black workers, because there were white workers in the mill that were affected the same way as the blacks. I was representing all of them, black and white. I had this understanding, this Marxism, and it helped us, and I felt good about it.

When Bill was killed, he and R27 were running for President and Vice President of their union local. "We were doing a lot of good stuff," he concluded; "people really liked us, respected us."

Between 1977 and 1979, 29 respondents joined the North Carolina branch of the Workers Viewpoint Organization. Thirteen were recruited in the context of grass roots trade union and community work, including R27 and R16 quoted above. Eight

were unaffiliated leftists, and 7 others already considered themselves communists.

An example of the unaffiliated leftists is R21, a young white man from a working-class family, who dropped out of college because of financial problems and the draw of the anti-war movement. After the war was over he was living and working in Chapel Hill, N.C., where he met friends in Workers Viewpoint. He related how he got involved:

It was an easy group to fall in with. People were intelligent, not elitist, and the group was multi-racial. I felt appreciated for being a working-class person, part of a movement with noble goals.

There were some things that made R uncomfortable, however, particularly the revolutionary language. He reported:

I did have a problem with the rhetoric. I didn't like the WVO newspaper, or selling it in front of factories or the hospital. I remember Cesar³⁰⁰ telling me about the concept of the "advanced worker," that the politics in the paper was not designed to be attractive to average workers, but that more interested workers would buy the paper and might become involved. This made sense to me.

"Advanced workers" were those individuals who were interested in politics and either already actively involved, or who wanted to become involved. Workers Viewpoint members would befriend such an individual, and then find out if he or she was interested in studying Marxism. R41, a young white woman working at Duke Hospital, described her introduction to communism:

I met _____³⁰¹, who I really liked and respected. One night she came over to my house, and we were just talking, and she said something to the effect of "well that's why I'm

³⁰⁰ Cesar Cauce was one of the 5 people killed on November 3, 1979.

³⁰¹ A WVO member who was not a respondent.

a communist." It was like she hit me.

I went "What? What do you mean you're a communist?" And she told me that she was in this organization and what being a communist meant, and I was fascinated!

This was my first experience with Marxism in my life. I didn't even know who Marx was, except for a little blurb in the history books. She asked me if I would like to join a study group, and I said yes I did.

For R41, like many of the respondents, the decision to become a communist involved many factors, including intellectual curiosity, a desire to make fundamental changes, and genuine affection for the WV members. For R41, who was in her early twenties, it also involved making a decision about the direction of her life. She disclosed:

It was a crossroads in my life. What was I going to do with the rest of my life? Was I going to go to college? Or was I going to try to better my job within Duke? I had a working-class job, where I would never make any money. I was in a crossroads in my life, trying to figure it out. When she came along with this idea of a study group, I was wide open to it, because I wasn't set in what I wanted to do.

Becoming a communist gave her life direction. R41 continued, describing the study group:

She started giving me articles to read. I loved it, I loved the ideas, I loved the discussion. I loved going to a place to discuss this stuff with other people who were working people.

Some respondents stressed the intellectual aspect of their decision. R13's politics were already communist, but he was unaffiliated with any group. He had recently moved to North Carolina, and described how joined WVO (in his case he liked the revolutionary language):

I went to a "Free the Wilmington 10" demonstration. Workers Viewpoint people were passing out a leaflet. It was the most militant outspoken kind of leaflet. I thought, "this sounds kind of interesting... let me check these folks

out."

Other respondents stressed the personal side of their reason for joining. For example, R7 had been fighting the system since as a 7 year old she confronted the hot dog man for cheating her; she had been a civil rights activist since the early 1960s. She knew R23 since the Durham health care organizing campaigns in the early 1970s. Although he was a New York Jewish doctor and she was a poor black woman from North Carolina, she decided to become a communist because she felt that R23 was family. She explained:

What really made me want to do something about the system was when they took [my friend who was an old lady] Miss Cary to the hospital. She was real sick, and they rushed her to the hospital. But everyone at Duke Hospital was so busy, and they just overlooked her because she had no money, and no insurance. But then [R23] told them at the emergency room that some one should see her, raising his voice, and looking mad. He made them give her health care.

When Miss Cary came home, and told me that "[R23] really stood up for me. I wouldn't trade nothing for that college boy." Miss Cary talked about that for years and years and years!

And this did something to me. And everything that [R23] got into, I would get into. Workers Viewpoint and everything.

Three respondents left a competing communist group, the Progressive Labor Party, to join WVO. Two stated that they switched organizations because they thought Workers Viewpoint was organizing more successfully, particularly in its trade union work. A third added:

I liked the people in WVO. Many were highly educated. I wondered, why would they jeopardize their careers to work in the mills? I remember Jim Waller,³⁰² who was a doctor, saying that he didn't want to just nurse the wound, but to cure the disease so that it would not occur again. He said that was why we shouldn't just try to patch capitalism up,

³⁰² Jim Waller was one of the 5 people killed on November 3, 1979.

but to replace it altogether with socialism.

I realized that for these WVO people, politics was deep, deeper than money.

Thus the respondents joining the Workers Viewpoint Organization included those who already considered themselves communists, unaffiliated leftists, and individuals in factories and communities that were looking for ways to become active.

Workers Viewpoint Organization in North Carolina: 1977-1979

For three years, the Workers Viewpoint members discussed politics and organized together. The respondents were energetic and inspired, feeling that the work they were doing was important.

Along with the 50 respondents in this study, the 5 people who were killed in 1979, Sandi Smith, Cesar Cauce, Mike Nathan, Bill Sampson, and Jim Waller, were deeply involved in the work. Sandi Smith chaired a union organizing campaign pressing for collective bargaining in Cone's Revolution Textile Mill. Cesar Cauce and Mike Nathan worked in a union effort at the Duke University Medical Center.

In the textile mills where unions already existed, WVO members sought to strengthen the unions and build up their members. North Carolina is a "right to work" state, meaning that a person can work in a unionized shop, without joining the union. Thus a factory could have 2000 workers but only 20 union members. At Cone's White Oak Textile Mill, Bill Sampson campaigned for

president of the local, along with others on his slate. ³⁰³

At Cone's Granite Finishing Mill in Haw River, union members elected Jim Waller President of the local. They looked to him because the Cone management repeatedly sped up the work. During the summer of 19878, the workers decided they could not tolerate it any longer, and under Jim's leadership, they walked off the job, shutting down the mill for several weeks. WV members and their friends organized strike support from many unions across the state.

During the summer of 1978, a strike wave broke out across North Carolina, from the dock workers on the Atlantic coastline to the sanitation workers in Asheville. WVO members helped build support in many places, enabling workers from different factories to support each other.

Workers Viewpoint members waged other campaigns as well, including a broad-based, statewide campaign to stop a proposed competency test in the public schools, because it discriminated against black students. A murder of a black by a racist shop keeper in a rural town in eastern North Carolina resulted in another sustained protest, that brought some degree of justice to the bereaved family.

Trade unionism and community organizing characterized the practical work of the WVO. As discussed in Chapter 3, Marsh categorizes protest political behavior (see diagram on page 74), differentiating conventional politics (voting, lobbying) on one side, from revolutionary behavior (guerrilla warfare, etc.) on

³⁰³ There are files of the National Labor Relations Board that document some of the union work of the respondents.

the other. In between is the "unorthodox political protest behavior" that became so widespread in the 1960s, which he divides into 4 thresholds.³⁰⁴ The work of the WVO in North Carolina between 1977 and 1979 falls in the first three thresholds, including the tactics of petitions, lawful demonstrations, slogans, boycotts, and unofficial strikes. The Workers Viewpoint had a revolutionary vision, but the actual work of these communists is characterized by protest activities popularized in the 1960s.

Workers Viewpoint Organization become the Communist Workers Party

In 1979, the Workers Viewpoint leadership in New York City pushed for the organization to be more militant and more openly communist. They proposed that the name of the organization be changed to the Communist Workers Party, to help assume its place as the "vanguard party of the working class." They feared that trade unions might be organized and strengthened, community campaigns won, but what about the revolutionary organization? They directed people to focus more on recruitment and public discussion of communism.

Ideas such as these had been discussed for years. There had always been tension between doing practical work and communist education. Respondents vigorously debated the proposals. R23, the Workers Viewpoint leader in Durham, supported the proposals:

I was for the changes. As the open communist spokesman since we joined in 1976, it was my job to explain our vision of racial justice and economic equality. I

³⁰⁴ Marsh in Dalton, Citizen Politics, p. 64.

thought we needed more people being more open about our politics.

Others disagreed. R16, who had discovered communism in jail and by 1979 was a seasoned and dedicated member, explained that the debate over the name change "was a big turmoil for me:"

As long as it was Workers Viewpoint, it was like safe; it was respectable. But when this whole debate came on about going openly communist, I felt like we wasn't doing the right thing. I just felt like we should have stayed Workers Viewpoint. Once you said you were a communist, you just isolated yourself from everybody. It was so hard to convince people that you stood for the same things you did when you were Workers Viewpoint. A lot of people said "couldn't you just not say that word."

In 1979, R became increasingly critical of the way democratic-centralism functioned in the organization. It was no longer a local collective debating an issue and carrying out a majority decision. Now there were directives from the center in New York with which he vehemently disagreed. "By '79," he stated, "I think that somebody in New York was beginning to go off the deep end, thinking that this little group WVO was somehow far greater than it was; they just got to be megalomaniacs about the thing."

A respondent in her early 20s joined the WVO just before it changed its name. She was a "child of the movement" who had grown up in the Civil Rights Movement, marching alongside her activist mother. Her activism continued through all the political changes, from black nationalism to Marxism-Leninism. She expressed her feelings:

They called it Communist Workers Party. Whatever they want to call it, we still was working for the people, struggling for the people. There was a misunderstanding about what communist was -- that word just killed the whole struggle.

We had some good people whose hearts were really in doing what they was doing. But it was just the wrong word. People never understand the word communist. I think it would've still been going on -- if it had a different name.

On October 19, 1979, the Workers Viewpoint Organization ceremoniously changed its name. It held a "Founding Convention" for the Communist Workers Party in New York City attended by delegates from all over the country. Leaders predicted the imminent demise of the United States political system, and the need for a revolutionary organization to lead the American people in building a more just society. Members were to be bold, militant, articulating their visions of communism.

Before the North Carolina contingent could figure out what this meant for their day to day work, they were faced with a catastrophe no one expected. Two weeks after the birth of the Communist Workers Party, the respondents faced the Greensboro Massacre.

CHAPTER 10

THE GREENSBORO MASSACRE: NOVEMBER 3, 1979

As the Civil Rights Movement rolled through the South, the Ku Klux Klan seemed to disappear for a few years. But as the social movements declined in the 1970s, the Klan grew, tripling its estimated membership between 1971 and 1980.³⁰⁵ David Duke, a major leader of the revival, played on white fears of civil rights achievements, repeatedly stating:

White people today are becoming a second-class citizens' group in our own country. We are losing our rights all the way across the board. White people face massive discrimination in employment opportunities, in scholarship opportunities in school, in promotion in industry, in college entrance admittance.³⁰⁶

In the years 1978-79 alone, Klan membership increased 25%.³⁰⁷ Thus the Greensboro Massacre, on November 3, 1979, occurred in the context of significantly increased Klan activity. Wrenn writes:

The CWP's anti-Klan rally was organized in the context of an upsurge of Klan and racist violence that swept across

³⁰⁵ Marable, Race, p. 174.

³⁰⁶ Wyn Craig Wade. The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) p. 369.

³⁰⁷ ibid., p. 376.

the Piedmont South during 1978-89. Blacks organized armed self-defense patrols against the Klan in Tupelo, Mississippi, Decatur, Alabama, and China Grove, North Carolina.³⁰⁸

Armed self-defense patrols represented more militant tactics by anti-Klan activists, compared to the typical protests using the methods of Martin Luther King, Jr. Armed self-defense was not new, however. R2, for example, had participated in such resistance to the Klan in 1940 in Greenville, S.C. (see Chapter 8). And in some localities with black majorities, weapons in the hands of African-Americans played an important role in the course of gaining civil rights.³⁰⁹

During its hundred year history, the Ku Klux Klan often concentrated its efforts in the Piedmont region of the South, the industrial belt, where blacks have been in the minority of populace.³¹⁰ (In contrast, in the coastal plains where most of the old plantations were located, there are many areas where blacks are the majority of the population.) Geographically the Piedmont includes the foothills between the Atlantic coastal plains and the Appalachian mountains, running from central Virginia down through the central Carolinas and Georgia, and northern Alabama and Mississippi.

The upsurge of Klan activity in 1979 once again occurred in the towns and cities in the Piedmont, including Decatur, Tupelo, China Grove, and Greensboro.

³⁰⁸ James Wrenn, "The Greensboro Massacre," in Buehle, American Left, p.280.

³⁰⁹ Greene, Waiting for Sheetrock, pp. 202.

³¹⁰ Chalmers, Hooded Americanism.

The first 1979 Klan violence occurred in Decatur, Alabama. In May, a jury convicted a retarded black male for raping 3 white females. The young man had the mental capacity of a 3 year old, and was physically incapable of committing a rape, facts which did not appear to influence the southern judicial system.³¹¹

On May 26, 1979, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) organized a march to the court house to protest the convictions. Several blocks from their destination, the African-Americans were met by 100 armed Klansmen chanting "white power!" A small contingent of police tried to separate the two groups. As fights broke out, a number of Klansmen ran to their cars, pulled out guns and started shooting.³¹²

Five people were wounded, 3 of them black marchers and 2 of them Klansmen. The police shot one of the Klansmen; the other was wounded by Curtis Robinson, an African-American who fired his gun when a Klansman attacked Robinson's car with his wife and 5 children in it. In a pattern all too typical, no Klansmen were even charged with attempted murder for the wounding of 3 blacks. But Robinson, in protecting his family, was indicted and convicted of shooting a member of the Klan.³¹³

The incident in Decatur infuriated people, typifying the continued subjugation of blacks in the South. The judicial system turned a blind eye to white violence against blacks, while it convicted blacks for the most transparent reasons. Many criticized the leadership the Southern Christian Leadership

³¹¹ Wade, Fiery Cross, p. 377.

³¹² ibid.

³¹³ ibid., p.378.

Conference, chiding them for their tactics of unarmed passive resistance, and calling for armed self-defense in dealing with the Ku Klux Klan. People organized armed patrols in Decatur, Alabama, and Tupelo, Mississippi.³¹⁴

Klan activity increased in North Carolina in 1979 as well, at the same time as several major union drives got underway. As the least unionized state in the country (although it had among the largest numbers of industrial workers), and ranking 48th in per capita wages paid to production workers,³¹⁵ the state was ripe for organizing efforts. Workers seemed restive, and a strike wave had passed through the state during the summer of 1978 (see Chapter 9).

In 1979, several major unionizing campaigns appeared to be making headway, including the American Clothing and Textile Workers Unions (ACTWU) drive at J.P. Stevens in eastern North Carolina, and the Teamsters in the western part of the state.³¹⁶

The top management of J.P. Stevens, and other companies faced with union drives, waged vigorous anti-union efforts. They relied on the tried and true tactic of dividing employees along racial lines. Increasing Klan activity in the state helped them drive a wedge between black and white workers.

³¹⁴ Wrenn, in Buehle, American Left, p.280.

³¹⁵ Chafe, Civilities, p.5. Also in Wade, Fiery Cross, pp. 378-79.

³¹⁶ The Workers Viewpoint was only minimally involved in these campaigns, continuing to focus on Cone Textile Mills and Duke University Medical Center.

The Anti-Klan Campaign:

In the late spring of 1979, the North Carolina WVO began an anti-Klan campaign. R23 explained the conception of the plan:

The Klan had this reputation of invincibility. For over a century they had terrorized blacks, Jews, and anyone else who opposed them. In 1979, the public presence of the Klan started picking up in North Carolina, after being dormant for a while. The Klan was able to attract attention because nobody would oppose them. People were too afraid of them.

As communists, we saw ourselves as tribunes of the people. How could you be a tribune of the people in the South and not vigorously oppose the Klan? If we were serious, we had to face our fear and boldly confront the Klan.

I felt strongly that we were trying to do the right thing (and I still feel that way). My parents were the only members of their families to survive fascism in Poland during World War II. Fascists must be fought head on.

Respondents traveled to Decatur, Alabama in June, where they participated in the massive protests led by the SCLC (described above). More significantly, they met with the armed patrols. Blacks had organized these patrols independently (and against the will of the SCLC), using them to try to protect the black community through the tactic of armed self defense.

In late June, 1979, Klansmen in North Carolina, passed out leaflets advertising a showing of "Birth of a Nation," a movie long used by the KKK for recruitment.³¹⁷ The movie was to be shown at white-only public community center in China Grove, a hamlet just outside Kannapolis, home the largest concentration of textile mills in the state. (And not far from Gastonia, site of the famous textile strike of the 1930s.)

R12 and R23 drove down to China Grove to meet with residents

³¹⁷ John Hope Franklin, "The Birth of a Nation: Propaganda as History," in J.H. Franklin, Race and History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) pp. 10-23..

of the black community. R23 described the meeting:

People were very angry. There were two clear views. The preachers (following SCLC tactics) wanted to hold an anti-Klan protest far away from the community center to avoid a confrontation at all cost. The others, some of them Vietnam Vets, didn't want a demonstration at all, they just wanted to just blow up the community center! There were no ideas between these two extremes. We proposed a middle plan -- to militantly confront the Klan. And that's what we did.

On July 8, 1979, the KKK assembled at the China Grove community center to show "Birth of a Nation." But as the movie started, an angry group of demonstrators, black and white, marched right up to the center. As R23 remembers,

The confrontation was very intense. A multi-racial group, including blacks from the China Grove, and blacks and whites from Workers Viewpoint Organization, marched right up into the Klan's face, shouting "Down with the Klan," "Death to the Klan".

The Klan was standing on the porch of the community center, with Nazi insignia, and confederate flags flying. They were heavily armed, which we were not prepared for. We had some shotguns, but they were back in our cars.

We really had not prepared for anything but a shouting match. Fortunately, that day, the police did their job. They got the Klan to retreat inside the building.

We stood there chanting. Someone tore down their confederate flags, and lit them on fire. We chanted as the Klan's symbol of the slave south went up in smoke. Then we marched back into the black community. We took our shotguns out of our cars for symbolic display of armed self defense.

R23 felt that the China Grove confrontation was a resounding success:

We had humiliated the Klan. The demonstration was covered on state-wide TV. We thought it would impede the Klan's ability to organize. We were puncturing the Klan's invincibility, which would help the unions continue to organize, and prevent the companies from using racism to drive a wedge between black and white workers.

The Klan, however, used this incident to justify their murder of 5 people in Greensboro four months later.

Murder of any individual, including a Klansman, was the furthest thing from the respondents' minds. WVO's goal was to prevent the Klan from terrorizing people. The respondents hated the Klan and everything it stood for. But for all the militant "Death to the Klan" rhetoric, the respondents had no thoughts of actual violence, no ideas of physically hurting anyone.

In the months leading up to November, 1979, the respondents do remember discussing the anti-Klan campaign. Many were enthusiastic about it. Several black respondents reported that the China Grove confrontation made them decide to join the organization. R44 explained, "I saw the China Grove demonstration on television, and how the people had rallied against the Klan, and I thought 'This is right! This is right!'" R36 had just moved back to her hometown of Durham after living several years in another state. She stated that after hearing about China Grove and reading newspaper accounts of it, "I realized that's where I needed to be... that's how I ended up in Greensboro [on Nov.3]."

R17 was deeply involved in the anti-Klan campaign. During her childhood, her father had been a member of the Klan; but since her early adulthood, she resolutely rejected these politics, becoming a country doctor who served mainly poor black people. By 1979 lived and worked in a rural county in North Carolina, where she became a communist. She described the anti-Klan campaign there:

It tapped people's sentiments. The Klan had a lot of history there and it had touched people's lives and they felt very strongly about it. It was certainly something you could organize people around, although a lot of people were scared. We became involved with very radical people (like R22) who had experience with the Klan.

R22 is a black man who has lived his entire life in the rural county where R17 now lived. He worked (and still works) in the local chicken processing factory, just as his parents did.

He described his view of the anti-Klan campaign:

I just loved it. I just loved it. Seemed like to me it was right on time. Should have been a long time ago. Seemed like to me we couldn't do enough. Then we started doing things leading up to the Greensboro march, putting out posters and passing out leaflets, and trying to get people to come, and telling them what it was all about. Trying to educate them on the Klan. A lot of people today don't know what the Klan's all about. They think its just a few little poor white people with sheets on. They don't realize the support it gets in the government.

R17 described of the local organizing just before

November 3:

We were really on a roll then. We had been doing a lot of work, and had a big presence in the county. People either hated us or thought we were great. We were certainly known, we were always on the front page of the local newspaper. We had led the first strike there ever, and the first civil rights march there since Reconstruction. Every black church knew us and we knew every black minister in the county.

During the anti-Klan campaign I think we were a little cocky locally. People knew we were tough. I remember driving around with [R22] in the middle of the night putting up posters on the doors of every known Klansman in the County!

... When November 3rd came, it never crossed my mind.... There were always campaigns. I never thought twice about it. I remember going to Greensboro with no thoughts -- it was just another demonstration.

Several members did not like the anti-Klan campaign, and were anxious for it to be over so they could refocus more energy on trade union organizing. R28, a white respondent who had worked in textile mills for over five years, strongly believed that the anti-Klan campaign detracted from the day to day union work. He stated:

I disagreed with the vision that the capitalism had become more brutal than ever, and was about to fall apart, and that in the process of falling apart, there were going to emerge various vortexes of influence. The fascist tendencies over here that would rally around the Klan. But where's everybody else going to go? Ha! they're going to go to WVO. That was the line. That justified why we had to jump out there and take on the Klan so that people will know that we're the good guys. I wanted to get back to business trying to build a rank and file, democratic union.

Another white respondent, also a unionist, did not share this view. R32 saw a connection between the anti-Klan campaign and the day to day work in the plant:

I hoped that [organizing against the Klan] would show us to be leadership in the struggle against racism, and be something we could talk about to workers in the mills. When the Klan was increasing its activity, we were not just talking abstractly, but leading opposition to them.

Members of WVO debated how to focus their energy, deciding to hold a march and educational conference on November 3, 1979, and then to refocus on trade union and community work. In mid-October, a delegation went to New York City to the convention where WVO changed its name to Communist Workers Party. Meanwhile preparation went on for the Nov 3 march.

Preparations for the November Anti-Klan Rally:

Organizers for the November 3rd rally planned the demonstration to be a militant one. Marchers would display posters and chant the most militant slogan they could: "Death to the Klan." They wanted to show that black and white people could unite and boldly denounce the KKK. As the spokesperson for the Communist Workers Party in Greensboro, and one of the primary organizers, R12 described his mindset in the weeks before the

rally:

That period just before November 3rd was the high point of the our work. We had just declared ourselves the Communist Workers Party, based on consolidating Marxist-Leninist collectives (such as ours in North Carolina) across the country. We were striving to represent the interests of the working class. We had great quality in our work.

But we had the problem of building the CWP as only one of many activities. We had the problem of being buried in coalitions with other groups when we took on various issues like the statewide competency test, police brutality, or trade union organizing. We were leading all of these coalitions, but people did not know we were communists. We wanted them to know we were communists and why.

In organizing the November 3rd demonstration, we did not invite other organizations. We just invited individuals. We wanted the Party to shine out, to galvanize the movement. We wanted to have a militant posture and a high profile, to attract people to join our ranks. That was our framework. We hoped for a large demonstration that would breathe and be alive with chants and a vibrant presence.

At the end of the march, there was going to be a conference with speeches from different trade unionists. I was going to give the Communist Workers Party speech. I had notes on it in my pocket. I was planning to talk about how the decay of capitalism was leading to the emergence of Klan and Nazi groups.

Forty-one of the respondents participated in the preparations for the rally, mainly distributing leaflets. Ten respondents reported that, at that time, they had criticisms of the campaign or felt some uneasiness, but they continued to participate anyway. Only 3 spoke out about their concerns. Even those with criticisms anticipated no more than a demonstration. R21's expectations were typical: "I hoped for a march, singing, chanting slogans. I didn't expect an encounter with the Klan. If anything, I expected problems with the police."

Respondents anticipated problems with the police because there had been many hassles obtaining a police permit for the rally. In mid-October, R12 applied for a parade permit from the

Greensboro Police Department. The police hassled him, stalled issuing the permit, and a respondent saw officers tearing down the fliers announcing the march. The main organizers, R12 from Greensboro, and R23 from Durham, held a press conference outside the Police Station, denouncing the police for failing to issue the permit, and charging them with complicity with the Klan.

The respondents had no idea that Klan-police complicity was occurring at that very moment, right under their noses. At the press conference on the police station steps, R23 recalled:

We noticed an unfamiliar man watching us. [R12] and I went over to talk to him. He told us he was a small businessman, a contractor. He said he 'couldn't believe there was still Klan in Greensboro in this day and age.'

I thought that was strange, because a small businessman has to be sharp to survive, and would probably be aware of the highly-publicized Klan.

The "unfamiliar man" was Edward Dawson, a member of the Klan since 1964, who had been a paid informer for the police department for several years. Posing as an bystander, he was actually obtaining a copy of the police permit for the November 3rd rally. At the same time that the police issued a parade permit to the CWP, they gave a copy of it to a member of the Klan.³¹⁸

The permit specified that the police would provide security for the march, but that the anti-Klan demonstrators must carry no weapons, open or concealed. The permit indicated the time and date of the rally, and the route of the march through Greensboro.

³¹⁸ The police admitted this in their own report. See "An Administrative Report of the Anti-Klan Rally, Greensboro, N.C., November 3, 1979," William E. Swing, Chief of Police, Greensboro Police Department, November 19, 1979.

It also indicated where the march would initially assemble.³¹⁹ Thus, through the police department, the Klan learned the plans for the demonstration, and that the protesters could not be armed without violating the permit and facing arrest. The police, however, never told the respondents that they had given the Klan a copy of the permit.³²⁰

Unknown to the respondents, Edward Dawson actively organized a coalition of Klansmen and Nazis to attack the November 3rd rally. Wade summarizes Dawson's activities in October, 1979:

Dawson began a vigorous campaign to entice scattered Klan groups in the Greensboro area to attend the rally.... On Oct.31, Dawson informed the police that Klansmen would be coming to the rally heavily armed. On the morning of the rally... he repeated this information to the police and added that Klansmen had carefully studied the demonstrators' parade route.³²¹

Despite Dawson's reports to the police, the police never informed the respondents of any of these activities. Dawson, the "unfamiliar man" on the police department steps, was a distant memory for R23. But on November 3rd, R23 recognized Edward Dawson in the lead car of the Klan-Nazi caravan as it drove into attack the demonstration.

Dawson was not the only government agent involved in the November 3rd confrontation. Bernard Butkovich, an undercover agent for the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, infiltrated a small Nazi group in the Winston-Salem area. Wade

³¹⁹ The police permit listed Morningside housing project as the assembly point. The posters advertising the march listed Windsor Community Center, a half mile away.

³²⁰ Greensboro Police Report on Anti-Klan Rally.

³²¹ Wade, Fiery Cross, p. 380.

summarizes Butkovich's activities in the weeks prior to the demonstration:

Like Dawson, Butkovich attended planning sessions of Klansmen and Nazis prior to the November 3 rally and strongly urged Klansmen to attack the communists...

Butkovich had worked to form an alliance between scattered Klan and Nazi groups. This was in marked contrast to FBI Cointelpro tactics, aimed at dividing Klansmen into bickering sects -- not towards increasing their unity. Butkovich did even stranger things. He urged members to stockpile weapons and buy equipment that converted semiautomatic rifles into fully automatic weapons. He offered to procure illegal explosives, including hand grenades.³²²

Meanwhile, CWP members were totally in the dark about the plans to attack their demonstration. They thought that the main problem they would face at the rally was direct, overt police harassment. North Carolina law specified that one could carry a weapon so long as it was not concealed. But the police permit specified that the anti-Klan demonstrators could not be armed, whether open or concealed.

R2, who had confronted the Klan almost 40 years earlier in Greenville, S.C., proposed a plan to protect the demonstrators. He and R24 went down to the housing project and got permission from some residents to have armed defenders stand on their front porches to protect the demonstrators. R2 explained:

If you go after the Klan, you would most certainly, sooner or later, get hurt. Because the Klan is an organization that has kilt more people and gotten away with it. The times had not changed too much [from the 1940s]. I was not going to go down there [to the demonstration] defenseless.³²³

³²² *ibid.*

³²³ Despite his concern about the danger of the Klan, R2 was surprised by the attack on November 3. He stated:
 "I would never have thought that they would come out in the day time. They was night-riders. They would do all this stuff

The lead organizers turned down R2's plan. After all, the housing project was only 1 of 2 the assembly points, and they were planning to march all the way through town. How could R2's proposal protect the marches along the whole route? The organizers did discuss the possibility of attack. R23 recalled:

I remember during the planning, having some discussion about possible sniper attacks. Bill Sampson walked along the parade route looking for where we might be most vulnerable. No one ever thought we would be most vulnerable before the march even started.

Ultimately, the CWP organizers decided to go along with the police policy as specified on the permit. The demonstrators would be basically unarmed and rely on police protection. No one in the police department informed any respondents of the information they knew. In the dark about the activities of Edward Dawson and Bernard Butkovich, the organizers did not think the Klan would come at all. As a result, the assessment of the march organizers was, in the words of R12:

We did not expect the Klan and Nazis. We did not think they would ride into our territory, into a black neighborhood in Greensboro. I thought any problem would come from the police.

Instead the police stayed away, and let the Klan attack us.

And only a few anti-Klan marchers had small handguns, which turned out to be useless in the barrage of gun fire they faced....

at night under hoods."

November 3, 1979:

The march was scheduled to begin at noon. By 11:00 A.M. respondents started assembling and preparing to march at two meeting places, a half a mile apart. Half the respondents gathered at Windsor Community Center, specified on the posters, a better known location and an easier place to assemble. The other half met at Morningside Homes Housing Project, specified on the police permit.

At Morningside, R31 strummed his guitar and led a group of children and adults singing folk and protest songs. Cesar Cauce unloaded posters from a pick up truck. Mike Nathan readied first aid supplies. Several TV station crews arrived and set up their equipment. Around 11:15 Sandi Smith arrived, and asked "Where are the police?" Usually before a demonstration, the assembly point would be swarming with police....

Suddenly, with no warning, a caravan of cars, displaying confederate flags, approached the corner where the marchers were assembling. The cars were packed with people who yelled "Here's the Klan!" and "Nigger!" and "Kike!" There were no police there to separate the two groups. The police had been pulled out of the area and told to go to lunch.³²⁴

The diagram below shows the corner of Everitt Street and Carver Drive where the attack took place. The demonstrators were assembling in this area, when the caravan of Klan and Nazis drove from left to right down Everitt Street. Words were exchanged, the caravan stopped, some Klansmen got into fist fights with demonstrators. Then a Klansman in a car at the front

³²⁴ Greensboro Police Report on Anti-Klan Rally.

of the caravan leaned his body out of the car and pointed a long-barrelled handgun in the air and fires.

Figure 10.1

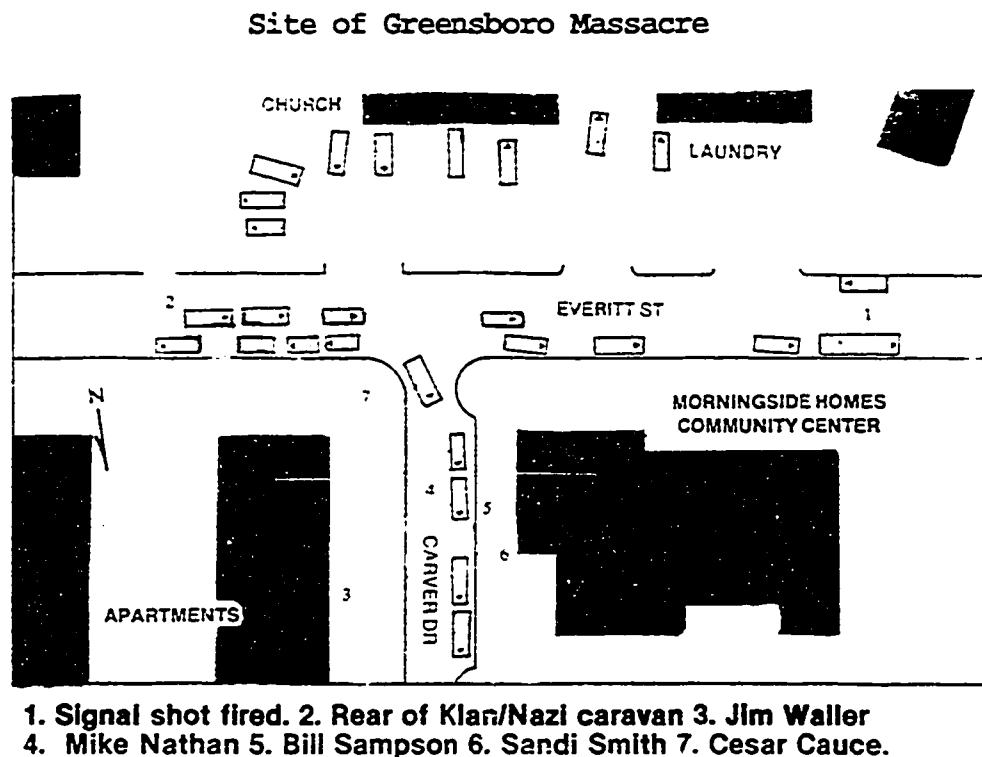


Diagram from Paul C. Bermanzohn and Sally A. Bermanzohn, The True Story of the Greensboro Massacre (New York: Cesar Cauce, 1980).

The number 1 on the diagram indicates that this first shot occurred further up Everitt, away from the intersection with Carver Drive. The fleeing demonstrators ran away from the shot, back towards Carver Drive and into the housing project. But the Klan and Nazis with the shotguns and semi-automatic weapons were in the back cars (labelled "2" on the diagram). They shot people

as they were running away from the first shot, or were trying to protect the other demonstrators. Numbers 3-7 indicate where Jim Waller, Sandi Smith, Cesar Cauce, Mike Nathan, and Bill Sampson were mortally wounded.

The TV cameras recorded the entire event as it unfolded.³²⁵ Wyn C. Wade, author of the Klan history, The Fiery Cross, summarized what he saw reviewing the videotape:

As the tape begins, adults and children are singing to guitar accompaniment. The camera pans to the right revealing a caravan of nine, older-model, dented cars. (Ed Dawson is in the lead car, directing the caravan of out-of-town Klan and Nazis). As CWP leaders stare at the caravan, they realize the cars contain the enemy. Verbal insults are exchanged. Demonstrators begin chanting, "Death to the Klan!" A group of demonstrators crowd around the lead cars and pummel them with bare fists and placard sticks. The cars stop. Klansmen and Nazis get out and begin a heated exchange with demonstrators. Some of the men on each side get into stick fights. All the cars in the caravan have stopped now. Klansmen calmly walk to the trunks of the rear cars, open them, and take out and distribute rifles and handguns. A shot rings out, and demonstrators run for cover. Armed Klansmen walk about, carefully select victims, fire and reload. Someone seems to be directing their fire. The gunmen do not bother to take cover or to look behind them. They seem like casual participants at a skeet shoot. One of them methodically pumps bullets into the body of a fallen protestor. Another shoots with a lit cigarette dangling from his mouth. Five protestors lie on the ground dead or dying. Another is shot in the head and will survive, severely paralyzed. Eight others lie injured. The gunman calmly pack their weapons in the cars and slowly drive off.³²⁶

Only 88 seconds elapsed between the first and last shots. Eighty-eight seconds that caught the respondents totally by surprise, and changed their lives forever. In their interviews, 10 years later, most respondent described their experience,

³²⁵ The TV cameras generated hours of video coverage by the 5 stations present. An edited video of that day is available for viewing.

³²⁶ Wade, Fiery Cross, pp. 380-81 (emphasis added).

although several still found it too painful to talk about. Below are some of the descriptions.

R12, CWP spokesperson in Greensboro and a major organizer of the anti-Klan rally, recalled:

The caravan drove into where we were beginning to assemble. We started to chant at them. Then Klansmen jumped out. I was near a man with a stick and a knife. Someone handed me a stick to defend myself. We sparred for a minute or two. He managed to stab me in the arm. Then I heard shooting, but I did not see people getting shot. I ducked, then ran across the street.

I knew immediately that we had been set up. There was no question in my mind. I had dealt with the police to get the permit for the march in the previous weeks. There has been all kinds of hassles. When that caravan came up, suddenly I knew that the police had known that the Klan was coming, and they had stayed away on purpose.

R23, CWP spokesperson in Durham, and the other main organizer for the rally, remembered:

When the shooting started, I ran back into the housing project with many other people. As I ran, I looked back and saw Cesar Cauce fighting off three or four Klansmen with only a stick. I started to run back towards him to help him.

That's when I got shot. I was not aware of being shot. It felt like someone had knocked me down. I was lying there and couldn't get up. I didn't know why, but I couldn't do anything.

R23 had been shot in the head and arm. Later that day he underwent 5 hours of brain surgery, followed by three months in the hospital and rehabilitation center. He is still partially paralyzed.

R28 was wounded trying to help Mike Nathan, who had been fatally shot. R28 recalled what went through his mind as he decided to brave the gunfire to assist his wounded friend:

It's a moment of a truth -- what are going to do in a situation like that? Are you just going to think of yourself or are you going to respond to your friends and the other people who were there? I always struggled to have the courage to do what needs to be done, although many times I

feel I'm a person with a lot of weaknesses.

I remember realizing we were under attack, and stopping to see what other people were doing. I saw people moving forward to meet the attack. It gave me real courage and me some leadership. I ran across the street to where some Klansmen were struggling with Jim Waller. I got involved in that fight and was thrown on the ground. Then I realized they had guns and they started shooting, and I ran behind a car. I saw [R25] and [R43] trying to pull [R37] out of the gun fire, behind the car, and she had been shot in the back, and was bleeding. I saw [R23] across the street waving a stick, and that gave me courage too.

Then I looked out and saw Mike lying there in the street. My reaction was "I need to go to Mike." I was perfectly aware that they were shooting, the bullets were flying. I realized I took a chance by going out in the street to get him, but I couldn't do otherwise.

I said "you got to go to Mike. You can't stand by and see Mike bleed."

As he went to help Mike Nathan, R28 was shot. He continues his description:

I was still conscious. I crawled back behind the car, waiting for the shooting to stop, knowing that I was bleeding from the head. I could feel that I had lost my teeth. It felt like forever for the action to stop, and the police and rescue squad to get there.

It wasn't til I went over to the hospital that I realized the extent of my injuries. I was hit nine places. I had two wounds to my head, but the most serious was the one to my chest, that grazed my lungs. That caused me a lot of problems during the first couple of days, and I didn't know if I was going to make it or not. But I did and was lucky enough not to have any permanent injury.

I was hit nine places, anyone of which could have killed me. Bill and Sandi were hit with the same kind of shot, and they were hit one time and died. I don't know what to do with that. It just happened....

Five people did not survive. One was Sandi Smith, who was standing at the corner of Carver and Everitt, when the Klan arrived. When the Klansmen first jumped out of the cars, one of them hit Sandi with a stick on the back of her head. Nevertheless she still had the presence of mind to start herding people to shelter. R33 stood next to Sandi as all this took place. She recalled:

Sandi saved my life... I was disoriented and didn't know which way to go. Sandi had just been severely bashed in the head, yet she could think better than I could in that situation. She was herding children out of the street, and saw me standing there disoriented, and she grabbed my arm, and said, "go!" and pointed a way to cover. As I ran for cover, I was shot, but not seriously. At her urging, I cleared out of that spot, not five seconds too soon. I could have been killed or much more seriously wounded, except for what Sandi did.

Sandi and R33 huddled together on a porch just out of the line of fire. But then Sandi looked around the corner of the building, and was shot right between the eyes.

In the interviews, the most vivid account of the attack was that of R25, who was not wounded herself, but was surrounded by those who were being shot. More than most respondents, she seemed to relive the entire experience during the interview, portraying her feelings and actions. The sense of disbelief she described is mentioned by several others. Like others, she also explains how she tried to cope with being caught in such a situation. Below is a lengthy excerpt from her transcript, depicting her memory from the beginning of the attack until the point when the police finally arrived on the scene:

I never ever, in my heart of hearts, expected any Klansmen or Nazis to come... Then the caravan of Klansmen came through, driving by, giving us the finger, shouting stuff. I said, "who are those people?" People around me said, "those are Klans." They were all unkept fellows.

Then the shooting began. I heard a gunshot. All of a sudden, it was unreal. I was completely unprepared. I didn't know it was going to happen, didn't expect it to happen, didn't think it could happen.

I didn't know it was a gunshot, I thought it was a back fire. Someone else in the crowd remarked that it was a gunshot. I just stood there, dumb-founded. I tripped backwards over [R37]. She was eight months pregnant, and had gotten sprayed with bird shot. She had fallen against the car door, and it had cut her head. I still wasn't aware that anyone could or would be shot. [R43] was there with me, and the firing was beginning, and all I could think of was to get behind something. [R43] said, "this is [R37], and

she's been shot, and we need to get her out of the way."

I said, "Oh, Okay." One of us held her head, and one had her feet, and we pulled her back behind a station wagon. And then the firing became very very rapid. It seemed to last a very long time. We were all hovering behind the station wagon, and it was being purposely shot at.

I had [R37] in my lap, leaning over her belly as best I could. I was afraid that the baby would get shot. She was talking to me. She was saying "I've been shot, I've been shot."

I was just talking to her, patting her head in the middle of all this, saying "I know you've been shot. I'm going to take care of you. Just wait. I'm listening really hard for when the shooting stops, and I'm going to run and get an ambulance. Don't worry. Everybody's going to be OK."

And then Mike Nathan got shot right beside that car. [R28], my boyfriend, somehow ended up behind me, and saw Mike, and crawled out to pull Mike back. He was shot by the same person that had shot Mike. And then he was behind me saying, "I've been shot, I've been shot."

Then to my right Sandi Smith and [R33] were on that side porch. And [R33's] screaming, "Sandi's been shot, Sandi's been shot."

What I was thinking at that moment, other than trying to be very reassuring and caring -- what is the most important thing for me to do? The only thing I could figure out was that I need to listen really hard for when the shooting stopped, and run and call an ambulance. (Also, it is kind of funny now, I was thinking in rapid succession of every single country in the world, of where you could go and live, where there wouldn't been any violence. That this was horrible. I was just terrified).

I centered on this one thing -- to listen for when the shooting stopped and get an ambulance. It quieted down, and I asked the people around me, "do you think the shooting has stopped?"

Everyone was moaning, not able to answer me. I said, "well I'm going to call that the last shot," and I ran all the way across the housing project.

There was a man in his pajamas standing behind his screen door, watching the whole thing. Everybody's doors were shut. He saw me coming up there, and he opened the door for me. I said, "can I use your phone?" He let me in.

I sat down -- and I couldn't remember where I was. So I called up 911, and I didn't know where I was, I didn't know where to tell the ambulances to come. I had to stop and ask the man "where are we?" He said "Morningside Homes." All I could tell the operator is "many people have been shot."

Then I thanked this man, and left his apartment, and went outside. People were out from their hiding places, and were walking around. So I started walking around too. Everything seemed in slow motion...

There were people lying around. Somehow I had forgotten that people were shot, or I knew it the way one

recognizes a symbol. I knew it symbolically, but I didn't really know it.

I went on the porch where Sandi was, and I saw Sandi. And she had that neat clean little hole right between her eyes. And she was dead. I've never seen anybody so gone, so away from themselves. I looked, and I couldn't figure out who it was....

And the next person I saw was Mike. I stood over him, and I didn't know who he was. I said, "Who is this, who is this?" Somebody said, "I think it is Mike Nathan." And then I saw that it was Mike.

Then I looked up and there was Cesar lying there dead, and Jim. Oh, and I saw Bill. I went from Sandi to Bill to Mike. It was like I didn't know them (although I knew them all so well).

Then someone came and told me to come and take care of [R28], my boyfriend. He was lying on the ground. I sat down, propped him up, and started waiting for the ambulances to arrive. He was just bleeding everywhere. We didn't have any idea that he was shot so badly. His teeth were shot out. I said, "we can find your teeth." 'Cause all I could think of to do was to not let him know that there is anything wrong. To make a joke. So I did that.

Then some people were running around, saying "the Klan and Nazis did this," and they were somehow able to speak. Eventually the ambulances came. And the cops came -- and arrested some of our people, and beat up [R12].

Where had the cops been? What hadn't they been protecting the march as their own permit specified they would? The role of the police became the focus of the civil rights suit filed by the respondents. That case found Greensboro police officers, the Klan-police informer Dawson, and four Klan-Nazi gunmen liable for wrongful death.³²⁷ In brief, the police were aware of the Klan-Nazi plan to attack the anti-Klan demonstrators, monitored the entire event as it unfolded, and directed police officers to stay out of the area while the attack happened, by sending them to

³²⁷ See G. Flint Taylor, "Waller v. Butkovich: Lessons in Strategy and Tenacity for Civil Rights Litigation," Police Misconduct and Civil Rights Laws Report 1 no. 13 (Jan.-Feb. 1986). See also Michael Parenti, and Carolyn Kazdin, "The Untold Story of the Greensboro Massacre," Monthly Review 33, (1981-82).

lunch at 11:00.³²⁸ Another officer in the area on an unrelated matter was told to clear the area.³²⁹

The police did not arrive at the corner of Carver and Everitt until the last car in the Klan-Nazi caravan was driving off. The police stopped this car and arrested those inside.

Then the police finally arrived at the site where stunned demonstrators were tending to the wounded and dying. They found R39, kneeling next to the body of Cesar Cauce. (Cesar was a big burly man, who is clearly seen in the videotape, on the corner of Carver and Everitt, swinging a stick to fend off several Klansmen, as demonstrators retreat into the housing project. The videotape also captures a Klansman wielding two long-barrelled pistols shooting Cesar at point blank range.)

The police arrested R39 because he had a pistol in his hand. The gun belonged to Bill Sampson, one of the few armed demonstrators. When the Klan and Nazis opened fire, Bill took cover behind a car, and fired his gun at the attackers. But the Klansmen had more and superior weapons, and shot Bill right in the heart. In his last act, he gave his pistol to R39, asking him to "keep shooting" to defend the demonstrators.

R39 describes his experience:

I was like dazed and confused. I had just seen people close to me killed in front of me. Others wounded real bad. I, myself, was shot in the leg. I was trying to do something to help, but there's not much I could do. I knew Cesar was dead, because I remember looking in his mouth, and it was just filled with blood. There was no way he could be alive. I knew Bill was hurt real bad. I knew Jim was hurt,

³²⁸ Greensboro Police Report on Anti-Klan Rally.

³²⁹ Affidavit by former Greensboro police officer April Wise, corroborated by CB operator Martha Skelton, who also heard the command to "clear the area," before the shooting started.

but not how bad. I didn't know what to do. It was too strange.

I didn't realize that the cops had finally showed up. I got arrested, they put me in a car. I was sitting there, it seemed like forever. Then I'm in jail and can't even talk to anybody, or get a hold of anyone to see what's happening. I wasn't clear on who got killed, or even if the battle was over.

The police also arrested R12, even though he was unarmed and bleeding in the arm from the stab wound inflicted by a Klansman.

R12 remembers:

After the shooting stopped and the caravan pulled away, I saw Jim Waller lying on the ground. I went to him, and he died in my arms. His wife [R8] came up to us. I got up and started to say some stuff about who was responsible for this attack, about the collaboration of the police and the Klan. The police -- who had just gotten there -- arrested me and [R11].

At the hospital, the doctors sewed up my arm. Then the police took me to the station. There I was interrogated by the FBI and Greensboro police. I refused to speak. The agent said that my name was on the lips of every Klansman in the state, that my life was over, and that I needed to talk to them. I refused to speak. They threatened to rip my bandages off. Finally they took me to a jail cell.

I stayed up all night, trying to figure out what had happened. I didn't know who was dead, except Jim. I didn't know who was alive.

The next morning a lawyer, got me out of jail. He told the judge that I was not a "danger to the community." There were a bunch of reporters when I got out of jail. I told them we had been set up.

Very few of the demonstrators were armed. One who was stated, "I fired at them after I had already been shot at. I was bleeding all around my feet. My life was being threatened. I wasn't seeking out anybody, I was trying to keep them from coming any closer." Nevertheless, the media labeled the incident a "shoot out between extremist groups."

But eye witnesses dispute this view. For example, Jim Waters, cameraman WFMY, Greensboro, who shot much of the video of the incident, stated: "Some say it was a shootout, but to me it

was a complete massacre." Ed Boyd, WTVD, Durham, also witnessed the incident: "It wasn't any shootout. It was a military execution. It was like in the cowboy movies when they corner you in a box canyon."³³⁰

Loss

As dark descended over Greensboro on November 3, 1979, 3 young women tried to fathom life without their husbands. Another stood over a hospital bed where her husband was dying, realizing their 8 month old baby would never know her father. Another young woman, 9 months pregnant, prayed that her baby would be alright (and her prayers were answered: 2 weeks later her healthy baby was born). Two other respondents lay in hospital beds, beginning a slow recovery from critical injuries; one would be partially paralyzed for life.

The other demonstrators huddled together, still in a state of shock, trying to console each other, trying to figure out if it was safe to go home. That morning they thought they were attending just another demonstration. R36 declared, "It was just a protest. It was as if I was standing down there at the police department, protesting brutality, and somebody came by and killed me 'cause I was protesting."

The most profound reaction to November 3 for most respondents, was the loss of their five friends. As R16 explained:

³³⁰ "Some Say it was a Shootout," Greensboro Record, April 20, 1982, in Wade, Fiery Cross, p. 381.

Of everything we did over the years -- and we did a lot of stuff -- but of all the accomplishments and all the problems, more than anything else, I just feel that loss. I want them 5 people back. I do. I want them back so bad.

I always think about the things they did, the little things. Not just being good organizers, but just the human side of them. They were just the best.

In 1981, after the Klan and Nazi gunmen were acquitted in the first trial (discussed in the following pages), William Chafe wrote an epilogue to his book on the history of civil rights in Greensboro:

On November 3, 1979, Greensboro became the site once again of confrontation and violence....

[T]he slayings of November 1979 and the acquittal of November 1980 are part of Greensboro's -- and America's -- continuing history of race relations. Whatever its errors of ideology, style, and politics, the CWP sought to address issues of class and race, which were a direct legacy of Greensboro's past. The problems of poor housing, ghetto poverty, and manipulation of racial divisions to forestall worker unity all reflected the institutional and structural racism that the civil rights movement of the 1960's was unable to alter, either in Greensboro itself or in America generally....

If nothing else, events surrounding the Klan slayings and trials demonstrate how profound the gap between black and white remains in our society, how different are the definitions of reality, and how powerful is the legacy of the past. Our abiding national dilemma continues. So too does the struggle to overcome it.³³¹

1980-1985: Trials of the Klan and Nazis

For 6 years following the Greensboro Massacre, the respondents attempted to prosecute the Klan and Nazi murderers in 3 trials. A detailed account of the trials is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The pages that follow are only a brief

³³¹ Chafe, "Epilogue for the Paperback Edition," Civilities, pp. 251-54.

summary of events. (This section will be expanded into a full chapter in the book growing out of this dissertation.) First is a description of the intense anti-communism which immediately followed the massacre; it is followed by an outline of the 3 trials, and, finally, the demise of the CWP as a national organization.

The Vilification of the CWP:

The media's response to the Greensboro Massacre is described in a report issued by the Institute for Southern Studies, entitled "The Third of November." At first the response was appropriate:

The initial reaction in Greensboro was shock and outrage; the Sunday morning newspapers were filled with descriptions of the shooting and with unanswered questions about how it all happened.³³²

Within days, however, the media shifted the blame shifted to the CWP. The Institute report continues:

But, almost immediately, the fact of the five murders, the deaths of five human beings began to be obscured, as the victim's ideology and tactics -- rather than the actions of the Klan, Nazis or police -- increasingly became the main objects of public scrutiny...

By November 6, the Greensboro papers had begun to follow the lead of the Police Department by soft-pedaling the motives of the Klan, and attributing the violence to the communist victims.... The Klan was described as no longer opposing blacks, just communists.³³³

The media quickly transformed the massacre of demonstrators

³³² Institute for Southern Studies, "The Third of November," 1981, Durham, N.C., p. 14.

³³³ *ibid.*

into a "shoot out between extremist groups." Five factors contributed to this transformation: (1) the attempt by the Greensboro Police Department to deflect blame for their failure to protect the demonstrators, (2) the denial by Greensboro city leaders of any responsibility for the deaths, (3) the possibility of a higher level conspiracy against the local CWP's effort to organize black and white workers into trade unions, (4) the open communism and militant rhetoric of the CWP, and (5) the tendency of society to blame powerless victims for their plight. These are briefly discussed below:

(1) The Greensboro Police Department Deflects Blame:

Two weeks after the murders, the Greensboro Police Department released their own report, which stated that "the police officers assigned to the march performed their duty in a professional and responsible manner." The same report admits communication between the police and Klan leader and police agent Dawson, and the fact that police officers were sent to lunch, despite their knowledge of the caravan approaching the demonstrators.³³⁴ Nevertheless, the report states that "there was insufficient probable cause to stop and/or arrest the members of the [Klan/Nazi] caravan."

Six years later, however, a jury in the respondent's civil rights suit, found officers liable.

³³⁴

Greensboro Police Report on Anti-Klan Rally.

(2) Greensboro City Leaders Deny Responsibility:

City officials denied any responsibility for what had happened. Chafe explains that:

Greensboro's white leaders insisted that the violence had nothing to do with Greensboro itself. Race relations in the city were good, they said. This was simply a case of an enlightened community being victimized by 2 extremist groups...³³⁵

In addition, the Human Relations Council (HRC), stated that "the police and the citizens of the community in which this incident occurred were the victims."³³⁶

The Institute for Southern Studies explained the HRC's role:

Rather than facilitate a peaceful airing of grievances, they discouraged the need for citizen involvement and acted as public relations agents for the city and state.... Continually projecting the image of outsiders, professional leftists and communist agitators, the HRC followed the official pattern of obscuring Greensboro's indigenous racism and legitimate concern for its elimination.³³⁷

(3) Was there a higher level conspiracy to attack the CWP?

The victims knew immediately that they had been set up by the police, and they claimed that higher levels of government must have been involved as well. Parenti and Kazdin presented some evidence for CWP's claim:

Four elements were necessary to carry out the massacre: (1) gunmen, (2) weapons, (3) information about the rally, and (4) effective organization and ambush tactics. Government agents helped provide all four.

³³⁵ Chafe, Civilities, p. 251.

³³⁶ Institute for Southern Studies, p. 16.

³³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

Indeed, had it not been for their efforts, the ambush could not have occurred...³³⁸

Bernard Butkovich, an agent for the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, worked for several months as Nazi party member to form alliance between Klan and Nazi groups in North Carolina, called the United Racist Front.

... during the trial, Nazi party members charged that Butkovich suggested buying equipment to convert firearms into automatic weapons, offered to obtain illegal weapons for them, including grenades and explosives and offered to burn down one of their houses and put the blame on the CWP. They further charged that he offered to hide the fugitives from the November 3rd attack on a farm in Ohio.³³⁹

Gorrel Pierce, a North Carolina Klan leader, stated that Butkovich:

...helped plan the ambush against the CWP demonstrators, devising the strategy of firing a single shot to scatter the crowd, followed by an attack with automatic weapons. None of these charges has been refuted or denied by the B.A.T.F.. A B.A.T.F. investigation in to [Butkovich's] activities concluded that he 'acted within the guidelines' established for undercover agents.³⁴⁰

Another government agent, Edward Dawson, was an informer for both the Greensboro Police Department, as well as the F.B.I. In the weeks before the massacre, Dawson traveled around NC recruiting for the November 3 rally. A Klan defendant told local paper, "We'd never have come to Greensboro if it wasn't for Ed Dawson berating us." The Klan defendants testified in the trial

³³⁸ Michael Parenti and Carolyn Kazdin: "The Untold Story of the Greensboro Massacre," Monthly Review 33 (November 1981) p. 42.

³³⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

³⁴⁰ *ibid.*

that Dawson played the principal role in organizing the Nazi-Klan caravan for the attack. He was in the lead car of the caravan on November 3, and can be seen on the videotape. ³⁴¹

Parenti and Kazdin pointed out that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms was involved in other civil rights violations in North Carolina, including the cases of the Wilmington 10 and the Charlotte 3. Moreover, the FBI was implicated in the killing Viola Liuzzo in 1965. In connection to the Greensboro case, the authors asked:

Why did the police insist the CWP be unarmed? Why did the police inform Dawson, a known Klansman, of the location on the permit? Why didn't they tell the CWP organizers that the Klan was so informed? And why did they allow the heavily armed Nazi-Klan caravan to go to a rally of ostensibly unarmed people? ³⁴²

Their questions have never been answered.

(4) CWP's Open Communism and Militant Rhetoric:

The attempts of the police department and the city leaders to deflect the blame onto the victims was clearly aided by the CWP's openly communist politics and militancy.

Communism, the theory that had enabled the black and white respondents to unite across the racial divide in North Carolina, also became the instrument that helped to isolate them from public support when they desperately needed it. CWP members wanted to openly talk about their vision of a better life for people, the need to radically change society so there would be

³⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁴² *ibid.* p. 44.

racial and economic justice. But following the Greensboro Massacre, the public's view of the CWP was not shaped by the respondents' vision of a good society. Instead it was dominated by anti-communism, nurtured in the United States for decades during the Cold War.

R12, the Greensboro CWP spokesman, had been recognized as a black leader in the city for 15 years. His strength had always been to bring different groups together in coalition around incidents of police brutality and other issues. But in the week following the murders, a mass meeting by the NAACP was suddenly called off. R12 stated:

I couldn't bring people together. People in the black community were suspicious of my communist friends. "Someone else is calling the shots," they said. The weight of anti-communism knocked out our initiative.

This is further discussed in the following chapter.

(5) The Tendency of Society to Blame Powerless Victims for their Plight:

The isolation of the respondents was further compounded by the tendency of the public to scapegoat the powerless. This is a phenomenon studied by scholars in groups such as European Jews before World War II, and in poor American blacks. According to Symonds, "society has strange attitudes towards victims... One is the primitive fear of contamination by the unlucky victim. The result ... is to isolate or exclude the victim."³⁴³ Ryan calls

³⁴³ M. Symonds, "Victims of Violence: Psychological Effects and Aftereffects," American Journal of Psychoanalysis vol 35, p. 20.

the tendency to blame the victim, "an ideal, almost painless, evasion" by the public.³⁴⁴

Many respondents talked about feeling like outcasts after the murders (which will be discussed more in Chapter 11). R24 described why she thought they were scapegoated, even by people who were politically progressive:

November 3rd scared people, it scared people bad. We saw that most clearly by how people on the left responded. Some of them almost acted like a lynch mob against us, wanting to hang us for holding the November 3rd demonstration. They felt like we had brought the Klan down on our heads, and therefore on their heads, too. They had a knee-jerk reaction. It was out of fear and differences with us, but mostly out of fear.

Over the next few years, the respondents became painfully aware of their errors. R24 explained:

Our mistake was that we were in a tunnel-vision of revolution, taking to the streets, being "bad" and "bold." This didn't do any good. It blinded us to what was going on inside the Klan, and it made it easy for them to set us up....

But she emphatically added:

I am, by no means, letting the Klan and Nazis off the hook for killing us. It was their responsibility. We have to take some responsibility, however, for being there that day in the manner that we got there. And that's been the hardest thing to deal with.

CWP clearly made mistakes, both before and after November 3. But they were mistakes, not crimes.

The Klan and Nazis, in contrast, committed crimes; they murdered 5 people. The government's main interests should have been the prosecution of the murderers. Instead, the respondents,

³⁴⁴ William Ryan, Blaming the Victim, (New York: Vintage Books, 1971) p. 9.

the victims of the crimes, were persecuted.

First Trial: All White Jury in State Trial Acquits the Klan and Nazis

Anti-communism reached its height in 1980, during the first trial. District Attorney Schlosser's job was to prosecute the Klan and Nazis on behalf of the state. Instead, according to Parenti and Kazdin, he "seemed more intent on denouncing communism." ³⁴⁵ Before the trial began, the D.A. stated "I'm a Vietnam veteran, ... and you know who I was fighting there." He further observed that most people in Greensboro thought "the communists got about what they deserved." ³⁴⁶

During jury selection, the D.A. proceeded to eliminate all blacks and other people of color, as well as any politically progressive white people:

Schlosser made certain that the jurors who were selected shared his anti-communism, asking each if they agreed that communists "are against everything we stand for here in America, aren't they?" But he exerted little effort at challenging Klan and Nazi sympathizers, accepting a friend and neighbor of Klansman Joe Grady as a juror, along with Octavio Manduley, the eventual jury foreman, an anti-communist Cuban emigre who said he thought the Klan was a patriotic group. A Greensboro police sergeant was chosen as an alternate. ³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ Parenti and Kazdin, "Untold Story," p. 45.

³⁴⁶ *ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 47. Elizabeth Wheaton also notes the anti-communist composition of this jury. See Wheaton, Codename: Greenkil (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1987) p. 207)

Meanwhile, the Klan and Nazis fingered Dawson as a police informer, and Butkovich as a B.A.T.F. agent. But they were never called to testify in the trial. Kazdin and Parenti explain why:

Meeting privately in the judge's chamber, both the prosecution and the lawyers for the Klan and Nazis agreed not to call Butkovich or Dawson as witnesses. However, the [Klan] defense attorneys were given the opportunity to interview them. Thus the state avoided having to expose the two informants as major conspirators in the murder.³⁴⁸

CWP Refuses to Cooperate During the First Trial

Given the anti-communism of the D.A. who was supposed to be acting in their interests, what were the victims to do? Not only had the D.A. clearly proven his bias against their political views, he also indicted 6 demonstrators for "inciting to riot" on November 3, charges which were dropped after the first trial ended.

Should the respondents cooperate with the prosecution? Or try to expose the biased nature of the whole proceeding? The respondents chose the later, following a the tradition established by other radicals, including the Berrigan brothers during the Anti-War Movement.

On the first day of the trial, in August, 1980, 2 of the widows stood up in the court and denounced the proceedings. They were each jailed for 30 days for contempt of court.

Another respondent was subpoenaed. On the witness stand, he refused to answer questions. The judge threatened to charge him with contempt of court. He replied, "I have nothing but contempt

³⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 48.

for this court." He too served 30 days in jail.

On November 17, 1980, the jury acquitted all the Klan and Nazi gunmen.

Many people were outraged by the "not guilty" verdict. They had seen the videotape over and over on TV, where the Klan and Nazi gunmen calmly and carefully shot the demonstrators. Even those who did not like the CWP, thought that the Klan and Nazis were responsible for cold-blooded murder. R24 described the public response:

After the first trial and acquittal, many churches and other groups said "we can't let this happen... If these people get killed, and murderers go scot free, what's going to happen to the rest of us?" So that changed things dramatically.

Second Trial: All White Jury in Federal Trial Acquits Klan and Nazis

The public pressure pushed the government officials to proceed with a federal criminal trial in 1984. This time the federal prosecutors were sympathetic to the victims they were representing, and the respondents fully cooperated. But the end result was the same: an all white jury acquitted the Klan and Nazi's of all charges.

R24 explained why this happened:

We felt like it was a real victory to get that trial.... But I was very disappointed with trial, because the Justice Department picked a very narrow part of the Civil Rights statute to go after the Klan and Nazis. Someone way up in the Justice Department wouldn't let them bring in the involvement of the B.A.T.F. and F.B.I.

Going into the trial, I felt like the two prosecutors, Daniel Bell and Norma Jean Flannigan, really did believe us and wanted to convict the Klan and Nazis. But they were

ham- strung by how the Justice Department made them carry out the trial. They had to fight it from the perspective that the Klan and Nazis had gone to "disrupt this integrated march." The Klan's defense was effective; they said "we could go next door to the homecoming march to do that."

The not guilty verdict was still a shock -- that people could sit on that jury, see that videotape, and still let those guys go.

Third Trial: Civil Rights Trial Results in Partial Victory

A year after the murders, the respondents filed their own civil rights suit against not only the Klan and Nazis who shot them, but also against the agents and officials of the Greensboro Police Department, the F.B.I., and the B.A.T.F. for a conspiracy to violate the civil rights of those murdered and injured.

The suit finally came to trial in 1985. For the first time, the jury was not all white, but included one black man.

The suit was made possible by the efforts of 2 of the widows (R24 and R34) and others, who built the Greensboro Justice Fund (GJF) to raise money for the case. With no wealthy benefactors, the respondents had to start from scratch to build a fundraising apparatus, based on direct mail appeals to hundreds of thousands of people.

The GJF took initiative in educating the public about the need to combat the hate crimes of the Klan and Nazis. A fund raising appeal, written by the Reverend Philip Zwerling, a Unitarian minister and friend of Bill Sampson, stated:

One of the most important cases in the history of American civil rights is in the courts right now. The case is pivotal in the struggle against the alarming spread of right-wing violence, the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazi

movement in America.³⁴⁹

R34, in another appeal, wrote:

I cannot sit back and do nothing, knowing that there are KKK and Nazi gatherings at which children are being taught to hate blacks, Jews and Catholics. I cannot sit back and do nothing knowing that the men who murdered my husband and 4 other people are getting away scot free. I cannot rest easy knowing that government agents are involved in making these despicable things happen.³⁵⁰

The GJF raised money and hired lawyers, fund-raisers, writers and other experts, who worked at subsistence wages. Over the years R24 and R34 took turns as Fund director. Both provided leadership on a day to day basis. R24 explained why the case was so important:

The civil rights trial was the first time that we could present the whole case. It was hard. The court system in the South seemed tied to the old master-slave relationship. In this situation, how do you put the police and government on trial?

In the course of building the Greensboro Justice Fund, the respondents broke out of the isolation they had endured during the first year after the murders. They built a broad-based coalition of support, including endorsement for the civil rights suit from the Congressional Black Caucus, National Council of Churches, the American Civil Liberties Union, Operation PUSH, and the Presbyterian Church, among others.

Before the third trial started, R24 recalled:

We had already politically won so much. We had turned around the tendency of people to blame us for the murders. We scored a lot of victories about who was responsible for Nov. 3rd, turning a spot light on right wing hate violence.

³⁴⁹ Letter from the Greensboro Justice Fund, 1981.

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*

But still I wanted to win the trial, I wanted a jury to say "these people are guilty."

In the third trial, the respondents finally won a partial victory. The commanding police officer, a police detective, the informer Dawson, and 5 Klan and Nazi gunmen were found liable for wrongful death of Michael Nathan, the one murdered demonstrator who was not a member of the CWP. The 4 others who died were communists, apparently the reason the jury decided their civil rights had not been violated.

G. Flint Taylor, one of the lawyers for the plaintiffs, wrote an article on the case. He stated that after the trial:

Subsequent interviews with jurors revealed that the verdict reflected deep differences between them. The black foreman and the white woman originally from New England strongly supported a verdict on the civil rights conspiracy in favor of most of the plaintiffs and against the BATF provocateur and several of the police and federal defendants. They also favored substantial damage awards.

The southern white faction, however, wanted a narrow verdict or none at all. They were unable to put their anti-communism and racism aside. They feared the reaction in their communities to a verdict for the plaintiffs and focused on the plaintiffs' rhetoric and the alleged possession of a gun or the firing of one in self defense as reasons to deny liability.³⁵¹

When the verdict came down, R24 and R34 both felt horrible. The jury awarded R34 \$350,000 for the death of her husband while the others got nothing. Why was one life worth more than the others? they asked. But R24, stated, "ten minutes later, we decided it really was a victory."

³⁵¹ G. Flint Taylor, "Waller v. Butkovitch: Lessons in Strategy and Tenacity for Civil Rights Litigators," Police Misconduct and Civil Rights Law Report, vol 1. no. 13, Jan./Feb. 1986, pp. 151-52).

On November 6, 1985, the City of Greensboro paid \$351,500 to estate of Mike Nathan. The Greensboro Justice Fund used the money to pay their lawyers and other staff who had worked at subsistence for several years. The remaining money was divided among all the plaintiffs, many of whom donated it the Greensboro Justice Fund. In the years since the trials, the GJF has continued to raise money to support individuals and groups fighting racist violence in the South.

The Demise of the Communist Workers Party

Between 1980 and 1985, while the respondents worked on the 3 trials in North Carolina, the CWP, centered in New York City, went through many changes. First, it broke away from Maoist politics, criticizing the "third world" strategy of its past politics, and recognizing that building socialism would be a more protracted struggle.³⁵² Several years later, the leadership decided to reject communism all together, and to change the whole organization into the "New Democratic Movement." But in the process of this transition, the organization began falling apart. By the end of the 1980s, it no longer existed.

In 1990, the respondents talked about the impact of the 3 trials and the demise of the CWP on their lives and their politics. Their views are the subject of the next chapter.

³⁵² Jerry Tung, The Socialist Road: Character of Revolution in the U.S. and Problems of Socialism in the Soviet Union and China (New York: Cesar Cauce Publishers, 1981).

CHAPTER 11

A DECADE LATER

Political terror "involves physical violence perpetuated against a victim," writes Irving L. Horowitz. "But unlike random forms of violence, political terror seeks a political outcome... [such as] the elimination 'undesirables.'" ³⁵³ The Greensboro Massacre was carried out by America's century-old indigenous terrorists, the Ku Klux Klan, in coalition with American Nazis.

What is the effect of a terrorist attack on the politics of the victims? How did the respondents react to the Greensboro Massacre? How did they cope? Looking back a decade later, were they able to recover? How did the massacre affect their beliefs, their activism, their overall well-being?

This chapter focuses on the respondents during the decade after November 3, 1979. The first section reviews the scholarly literature on trauma and political socialization, identifying several hypotheses concerning the affect of political terror on socialization. Next, is an examination of the experience of the 4 women who were widowed, including extensive excerpts from their transcripts. The third section analyzes age and the impact of trauma, comparing the 7 youngest respondents (who were 18 and

³⁵³ Irving Louis Horowitz, "The Texture of Terrorism: Socialization, Routinization, and Integration," in Sigel, ed., Adulthood, p.387.

under in 1979) and the 7 oldest respondents. Next is a discussion of the respondents who were wounded, noting the wide variety of responses, particularly in terms of political activism. The final section summarizes the evolution of political beliefs and activist involvement for the entire group in the decade following the massacre.

The Need for Research on Political Trauma and Political Socialization

Horowitz calls the study of terrorism's impact on the politics of its victims the "*terra incognita* in the field of political socialization research."³⁵⁴ He reviews the literature, finding that most of what is known of the political impact on the victims comes not from research, but from psychiatric case histories, journalistic accounts, personal memoirs, biographies, or works of fiction. He states "the very tentativeness of this discussion of terrorism's impact on victims and bystanders attests to the need for research in this area."³⁵⁵

Three hypotheses of 3 scholars on the impact of trauma on political development are considered below. Horowitz proposes that even brief exposure to terror could result in long term political changes. Roberta Sigel suggests that the power of early learning could help mitigate the long term impact of the trauma. Robert Jay Lifton's research that some survivors become more involved, some less after the crisis is over. Finally I

³⁵⁴ Horowitz, in Sigel, Adulthood, p. 407.

³⁵⁵ ibid.

suggest, based on this research, that the age of the survivor is an important factor; particularly younger individuals going through their identity stage of development, appear to be profoundly affected over the long run.

Horowitz hypothesizes that "even brief exposure to terrorism could lead to lasting political reorientations." He states that "the boundary line between psychological states and political dispositions is ... an extremely fine one." Terrorist attacks, even of short duration, can have "long-lasting psychological consequences, such as reoccurring attacks of anxiety and depression," and "could have the potential to restructure one's political orientation." In addition, there is a tendency of society to "blame the victim," based on some primitive fear reaction, and leading to isolation or ostracization of victims.³⁵⁶

Horowitz notes the identification of "Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome" (PTSS) as an important concept for understanding the psychological response of people who have experienced violence. This syndrome was identified in GIs returning from the Vietnam War, where their reoccurring memories "often shatter the victim's perception of living in an orderly, meaningful world." This can destabilize earlier socialization long after actual victimization has ceased.³⁵⁷

Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome has been studied in non-combat populations as well. North et.al. studied the survivors

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 402.

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 403.

of a mass shooting at a cafeteria in Texas in 1991.³⁵⁸ In addition, Jeffrey Jay, a psychologist, wrote about his experience as a therapist for Vietnam veterans and as well as for recent victims of violence. He stresses that PTSS is "characterized by the traumatized person's sense of a horrible disruption in his or her relationship with the world." The victim has a "need to understand and account for the terror, and to communicate to other people the unacceptable knowledge that the ordinary world can become suddenly dangerous and randomly cruel."³⁵⁹

Roberta Sigel focuses on the long term political effects of trauma on political learning. She writes that "natural disasters, war, or terror ... all are events which tear men and women from their customary moorings and constitute a break with the past..." The trauma can dramatically affect:

...people who previously considered that the world is predictable and fair as long as they play the game by the rules to which they had been socialized. Suddenly, who perishes and who survives becomes unpredictable and irrational.³⁶⁰

She goes on to ask:

...what happens once the ordeal is over? Can individuals resume earlier life-patterns and recapture their previous identities without too much stress and trauma, or will the terrorized self be incorporated into the former identity, thereby affecting social and political behaviors long after the ordeal is over?

... Surely no stronger test case for the primacy of earlier socialization experiences could be devised than an observation of humans' behavior in crisis situations of

³⁵⁸ Carol S. North, M.D., et.al., "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Survivors of a Mass Shooting," American Journal of Psychiatry 151:1 (January, 1994) pp. 82-88.

³⁵⁹ Jeffrey Jay, "Terrible Knowledge," Networker (November-December, 1991) pp. 18-30.

³⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 379-80.

great stress and of their behavior once the crisis has passed.³⁶¹

Thus, according to Sigel's, the power of early learning could mitigate the impact of the traumas belief on the individual, helping the individual weather the impact of the trauma. Sigel stressed that individuals respond in a wide variety of ways, and that "the coping mechanism and with it the recovery process vary widely by cultures and are reflective of earlier socialization patterns." In studies of natural disasters, researchers have found that individual's reactions "seem to vary with the nature of the community and the culture prevailing in it." ³⁶²

Robert Jay Lifton has done pioneering work in analyzing the survivors of the Holocaust and Hiroshima. A protege of Erik Erikson, he studies the psychological effects of the individual survivors of traumatic historic events. He identified "survivor guilt" as a common response of those who lived while others around them were killed. Lifton states that survivor guilt revolves around the question, "why did I survive, while he, she, or they died?" It includes the feelings of helplessness of the

³⁶¹ Roberta Sigel, "Introduction: Coping with Traumatic Events," in Sigel, ed. Political Learning in Adulthood, op.cit., p. 379, emphasis added. Sigel also outlines some of the short-term effects of trauma:

...fear seems to be the first all-pervasive reaction, generally followed... by a sense of disbelief or denial (this can't be true, this can't happen to me) and a sense of general disorientation or dislocation... Fear, disbelief, and disorientation, are all apparent in the accounts of the respondents during the massacre itself (see Chapter 10).

³⁶² *ibid.*, pp. 380-81.

survivors in trying to prevent the incident, or save the victims.³⁶³

Lifton found that some survivors became more involved following the trauma, motivated by what he called "animating survivor guilt." Others, however, withdrew from social life, plagued by "static survivor guilt." Lifton also described the phenomenon of "numbing," as the "incapacity to feel or confront certain kinds of experience."³⁶⁴ This afflicts not only survivors, but other members of society not directly affected by the tragedy, who are unable to deal with the experience of survivors.

The findings of this research project, illustrated on the following pages, support several of the hypotheses of these scholars. Horowitz's view, that a brief encounter with terror can have profound long-term effects, is found in some of the respondents, for whom the massacre led to permanent changes in their political orientations. On the other hand, the hypothesis of Sigel, that prior socialization can help mitigate the long term impact of the change, is supported in that a majority of the respondents overcame the traumatic incident and continued their activism.

There are many examples in the following pages of survivor guilt, as defined by Lifton, including guilt that led to more activism, as well as to less. There are also a few examples of numbing, of individuals incapable of dealing with their feeling

³⁶³ Robert Jay Lifton. Survivors of Hiroshima (New York: Basic Books, 1982), pp. 236-37.

³⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 240.

about the trauma.

Analyzing 50 individuals response to a single traumatic episode provides an opportunity to see what factors were significant in maintaining activism or withdrawing from politics. The major factor found in this research was the age of the respondents. The majority of the respondents maintained their activism, in spite of great difficulties, through the decade following the massacre. The younger respondents, however, particularly those still in their identity stage of development, were more likely to have withdrawn from politics. In the words of Sigel, they seem to have incorporated "the terrorized self ... into [their] former identity, thereby affecting social and political behaviors long after the ordeal is over." ³⁶⁵

The pages below are a look at the response of 50 individuals to the Greensboro Massacre, based on interviews that took place a decade later. Based on extensive quotations from the respondents, it is an analysis of individual response to the trauma, and the evolution of political beliefs and levels of activism over 10 years.

The Widows

The Greensboro Massacre left 4 women widows, all of them respondents in this study. They were each participating in the demonstration when their husbands were killed. In their interviews 10 years later, they described the pain they had endured. Extensive excerpts from their transcripts are included

³⁶⁵ Sigel, Adulthood, p.379.

below.

Three of the widows are white, 1 black. Two grew up in middle-class families, 2 in working-class homes. All 4 grew up in liberal families that talked about politics. All 4 women became political activists several years or more before the massacre.

In the year following the murders, all the widows were active, participating in demonstrations and other forms of protest. During the first trial which acquitted the Klan and Nazis (described in the previous chapter), the two youngest widows denounced the proceedings, and spent 30 days in jail for "contempt of court." The response of the widows illustrates Sigel's point about the influence of earlier socialization and the immediate social context.

After the first year, 3 widows continued their activism. On the other hand, the youngest widow, only 24 when her husband was killed, increasingly withdrew from activism. Her interview, describing her difficulty coping with her husband's death, suggests that her young age might have been an important factor in her withdrawal. The other 3 widows (who were 28, 30, and 40 at the time of the massacre), suffered tremendously, but their sense of themselves as individuals in society did not seem as profoundly affected.

Below are extensive excerpts from the interviews with each widow.

Respondent 24: Catapulted to Leadership:

R24 became an activist as a senior in high school in 1968, when under a court order enforcing integration, her all-white high school merged with a neighboring black high school. R24 was the captain of the white cheer leading squad, and she led a successful campaign to combine the black and white squads. Since 1968 she had been active in issues ranging from women's studies to welfare rights to building a union in a textile mill.

In 1979, at age 30, R became a widow. She describes her immediate response: "On Nov. 3rd I felt like my whole world had shattered. I loved my husband. He meant the world to me."

She was infuriated by the media's tendency to blame CWP for the massacre, and involvement in the protests helped her cope with the situation:

We were being blamed for the whole thing. I was so angry, nothing could stop me. No one could stop me. I never hesitated for a minute.

If there had not been such a struggle following the murders, I think it would have been more difficult. Instantly, there was something to do -- for 6 years. I couldn't withdraw. I wanted to find some justice, some understanding, and an end to the scape goating. I also didn't want this to happen to anyone else. I had a personal and political need to fight this to the end. To build a legacy, to turn it into something good, something that reflected the dream of the five who died.

Overnight, R24 became a leader:

I was catapulted immediately into national prominence because I became a spokesperson. Two days after the murders, my grand parents in San Diego see me on TV. Who I was completely changed overnight. All of a sudden I was this widow having to speak to the world, having to bear my pain for all to see.

She reported that she got more involved, and more radical as a result of the massacre:

Not only did I lose Bill, who I loved more than life itself, but the government (at least the local police and

several government agents) had been involved in killing him. We had the best intentions to make this a better society. But those forces out there will use any means possible to prevent us.

She got personal support from her close political friends and her family. Her slain husband's family were also supportive:

Bill's family didn't like communism, but they knew what had happened that day. They didn't like the way the press covered it and they knew that the government was involved in it. They believed in Bill.

She continued the description of her political involvement:

During the first year, it was mainly revenge and anger that kept me going. Almost everything was a positive experience in the sense that we were whittling away at the untruths that were being told. Everything we did was to expose the truth. Unfortunately we didn't have a lot of means to do it. Some people didn't like some of our tactics. There are some things we could have done differently. But we didn't have a lot of choice. After the first year, Respondent 24 and others built the Greensboro Justice Fund, which raised money for the civil rights suit. They hired a team of dedicated lawyers and other activists to pursue the cases. She reported that the strong friendships developed through several years of trials sustained her.

During the trials, R24 fell in love and remarried. In the midst of the final trial, she was thrilled to find out she was pregnant. But she also found the end of the trials personally difficult:

I felt like a pit opened up and I fell through. The victory was bittersweet. And the legal team split up. We were so burned out. And I was tired -- I was two months pregnant.

Then I would come home, and my husband would want me to be relieved that everything was over with. Like I should be a whole different person, and I wasn't.

R24 decided to wait before seeking out therapy. She explained:

When I was pregnant, my husband and I decided I should not go into therapy until after the baby was born. To unleash all of that while I was pregnant it was bad enough that the baby had to go through the trial in-utero.

During those months I felt like a butterfly before it hatches, like a cocoon, nurturing myself. Everything went into just being with this baby. Then when the baby was 6 months old, I found my therapist, and started dealing with Bill's death, and those years of being scapegoated, and having to sit next to the Klan and Nazis in trials.

R24 refocused her life on her new baby, her new husband, and therapy. But she also continued her activism. When I interviewed her in 1989, she was still directing the Greensboro Justice Fund, and organizing the 10th year commemoration. Since then she got a job as the director of a large day care center, a career she finds combines employment with her interests in advocacy of issues important to women and children. As of 1994, she continued to enjoy her job, as well as her family life.

Respondent 34: Activism on Automatic Pilot

Respondent 34, along with R24, provided leadership to the trials and other political work following the Greensboro Massacre. She helped build the Greensboro Justice Fund, and was its director for many years.

In her interview, however, R34 stressed the emotional pain she endured. The massacre was not the first time she had lost a loved-one. When she was a teenager, both her father and her older sister had died. Her father, a union organizer for Greyhound bus drivers, left her a powerful legacy of political activism (see Chapter 6).

Then in 1979, at the age of 28, she had lost her husband,

and faced raising their 8 month old baby alone. R34 described her feelings:

I was devastated. I can't even describe how I felt. I still have this image walking down the road, and realizing that when I thought of myself, I thought of a body that had lost half of its limbs, and just have a bloody mass for the other half.

I was suicidal. I thought seriously of committing suicide, but decided I really couldn't because I had to take care of my daughter. It was just day to day, taking one minute at a time. Trying to make sure we got fed, and that the political meetings got done, and all that stuff.

R34 is an example of prior socialization as an activist enabling her to continue political work. She was in psychological pain, however, and she found it difficult to talk about her feelings:

I went through the whole six years of the trials, a lot of it, on automatic pilot. The conditions after November 3rd ... we were under such constant surveillance. It was a hard thing to do. Also because of the character of the organization that we worked in.

We didn't talk about how we were feeling. We just did the work. We had the view that personal things don't matter; it is not appropriate to talk about your feelings.

I thought that if I talked about my feelings, that I would fall apart, into one blubbering mass... If I fell apart, a whole bunch of others would fall apart too.

I just remember going out day after day, and knocking on doors, and giving speeches, and knowing that I was not a living human being, but knowing that I had to go out and do it. That was all there was to it.

I hated [giving speeches]. I was incredibly shy when it came to speaking in public. I had this ritual. I would write the speech, and then I would imagine that Michael was holding my hand and making fun of me, saying, "what's wrong with you?" I would go through this ritual every time. I would say to myself, "it doesn't matter, nothing can be worse than what it is now."

After the trials I went into therapy. I decided I wanted to use that time to sort things out, and come to some conclusions about my life. I'm not going to fall apart, this is not a crisis period. My crisis periods are all over, but now I want to put it together, and figure out what it all meant.

I talked about how guilty I felt. [The therapist] said to me "what would it have felt like if you were in an organization where you could have talked about how you felt? what would have happened? how would it have been

different?"

I thought about that for the first time. I think it would have been tremendously healing. I think it could have been done, in retrospect. Although the situation was bad, I think we could have done it among ourselves.

But then, as the interview progressed, R34 started recalling positive things about her involvement in the political work, including its therapeutic aspects:

What we were saying was right. The cops were responsible for killing of the 5. The only question was whether or not I would have the courage to get up and give the speech. I felt that I could do something, that people would listen to us. I'm glad the organization was there. Because I could not have done that myself. I didn't have the strength, the courage, the know-how, or the will to do that.

It was real cathartic too. I spent a lot of time thinking about the Klansmen, hours in my kitchen, scrubbing the floor, thinking about the big Nazi. The frustration, the lack of justice, that it was important to act on the need for justice.

I'm not going to blame the organization for failing to be an outlet for what I was feeling and thinking, because I'm not sure I was able to express myself at that time. The organization gave me the sense that what I was doing was important. And without that I think I would have committed suicide.

It gave me a sense that my work was important, and it was. By making me interface with the world, it gave me a sense of reality that was important. I came in contact with people, and helped plan stuff, and came to understand in my head and my heart what it means to fit your own personal grief into a larger movement. I understood that whole concept that single drops make a mighty stream.

Her introspection has made her recognize philosophically why activism is so important to her:

I think that what political activism is about ultimately about is understanding how your life fits into the social context, and what you can do in life whatever the circumstances you find yourself in. What it means to be part of making things better than they were before. I met so many people who were struggling to make things better even in great difficulty. We never got justice in Greensboro, but in the balance of things, we personally got a lot. And maybe that is what is important.

At this point in the interview, I asked, "in terms of your own healing, what helped in that process?" R34 continued:

It is all a process, and it never does really end. I still feel like I am going through it. Everyday I figure something new.

The first year was learning that I would survive. That was an important part of the process, because I didn't think I would live, and I didn't want to live either. Then there was a certain point after about 3 years, when for the first time I felt like I wanted some happiness.

I don't know what made me come to feel like a whole person again. Part of it was time. Part of it was going through the process. I would literally talk to Mike. For a long time I was so angry, I would yell. There was so much anger, and I couldn't control it. I was alone, there was nobody to take it out on. In retrospect, I can see myself now, and I have nothing but pity for myself. If I had met me as a patient today, I would have said, "that poor woman."

The interview took place in January, 1990, during a time of transition for R34. Her daughter, almost 11 years old by now, closely resembled the father she never knew. R34 had remarried, and hoped to have more children with her new husband. Just a few months before the interview, the family had moved away from North Carolina. R34 immediately found work as physician, in a job she described as "being a country doctor for poor people." Only a few months after settling into a new state, R34 already was finding activist opportunities. She stated that she believes she will always be politically active. In 1994, R34 continued to enjoy her job, her family, and country living.

Respondent 8: A Commitment to Struggle for Peace and Justice

This respondent was 40 years old, when her husband was killed. They had been married just under a year. It was her second marriage, and her teenage children were just getting close

to their new step-father. (One of her children is also a respondent; see discussion of R48 later in this chapter.) R8 had become an anti-war activist in the early 1970s, and activism has been the focus of her life ever since.

R8 continued her activism following the massacre, participating in demonstrations, and working with the press during the trials. She continued living in Greensboro until 1988, when she moved away to begin a new life in Milwaukee. I interviewed her when she was visiting in Greensboro to take part in the 10th anniversary commemorations of the massacre. I asked her about her memories. She said:

It is hard to talk about it. I never want to live through something like that again. I felt like my life was over.

The TV videotape [taken during and just after the massacre] picked up my saying "long live the Communist Workers Party" and "we will have socialist revolution." But the next thing I said was "I can't go on living without Jim."

I really felt like I couldn't go on living. For at least a year, it was a matter of a total indifference to me whether I lived or died. Some of the things I did were risky, because I didn't care about my own life. All the luster was out of it.

It was difficult being under siege, being a persona non grata. It was difficult dealing with all those lies in the press. It still is.

It is an experience being back here. I really feel like I am in Klan country, an area that coddles the Klan, that loves the Klan. They could get rid of the Klan if they wanted to, but they don't want to. I'm glad I moved away; I should have moved sooner.

But R8 also had positive memories of those years:

One thing about experiencing Nov. 3rd. As difficult and painful as that time was, throughout that period we responded in a collective way. We had a solid organization. People cared for one another. We shared not only a world view, but also a compassionate view towards helping one another. I never think of my response as a personal one, or myself as a heroine. Whatever I did right, whatever stands I took, was enabled because behind me was this force of a whole collectivity, of people caring for one another, of

standing for values. That's what I credit for getting through that period. That's what really countered the pain. Having people you knew you could rely on, that you knew would die for one another.

She described her memories of the trials:

The trials were exhausting. I can't imagine what the lawyers and the people in the Greensboro Justice Fund went through, because I was peripheral to that whole thing. My head would be spinning just from an hour or two of that stuff. The perversions that you go through just to see that justice is not done. I thought what I was doing was much easier -- just doing the press work. It was easy compared to dealing with the state and the courtroom.

At the time I didn't see our civil rights suit as such a victory. Immediately after there was an incredible let down feeling. The one of the most galling things was that the only death they recognized was the one person who wasn't officially a party member at the time he was killed.

I came to realize later that the civil rights suit really was a victory. You have to measure it against the uphill struggle that it took to get there. I don't think we could have tried harder or done better. The lawyers did a superb job, so did the Justice Fund. It was a victory. A recognition that vindicated us to a great degree compared to all the slander that had gone on before.

I had a very strong experience after that trial was over. It was not relief. Instead suddenly my life had no center or meaning to it. It was drab and dull as dishwater. I felt like I was not doing anything meaningful anymore. I got so used to being in the trenches, so used to being under attack, to being needed. ("You have to get that leaflet out!") Suddenly no one was making demands on me, no one in the press was attacking me. I could do what I want... go back to teaching, what ever, with nobody breathing down my back.

Suddenly I was yearning to be back in a dangerous situation, back in a situation where I was needed. Life seemed dull. I had the sense that I had passed my best days. It's only the last year or so that I feel mostly over it.

I asked if she had found anything else in her new home that had given her that sense of closeness she experienced with her friends in Greensboro. She responded:

I never have, not since moving to Milwaukee last year. I have tried to have a social life. I have made a few friends. I invite them to my house, and I get invited to dinner with them. But it is very difficult for me to feel close to people who I haven't shared this with. It's almost

as if in order to get close to me, they have to participate in some way with my experience.

Throughout her whole ordeal, R8's politics have remained remarkably stable, despite her personal pain. She stated:

Once I made the commitment in 1971 to struggle for peace and justice, I remained a full time political activist from '71 through '85.

The only time I have slowed down in terms of political activity is in the last few years, since the end of the civil rights suit. I still take on political commitments, but I'm expressing it differently. I haven't marched for a couple of years. Now I give some money, and do a little. It's not that I think differently or care less, but there are other things that I am focused on. One thing is I want to do is to write this book about the Greensboro Massacre. That's very political, but its not like marching.

In the 5 years since this interview, R8 remarried and, with her new husband, has taken on a new life focus: organic farming. She continues to work on her book on the massacre, and feels overall content. A few months ago she became a proud grandmother.

R43: "I feel Personality-less"

The youngest widow was only 24 years old when her husband of was killed. They had met in 1977, and married only 6 months before the massacre. In 2 interviews, the first in December, 1989, and the second in June, 1994, R43 described how her husband's untimely death affected her political evolution.

Like the other widows, R43 had been a political activist for a long time before her husband Cesar was killed, in her case, for 6 years, since her freshman year in college. The murder of her

husband fundamentally jarred R43's politics. "My political outlook began to shift almost immediately," she stated. She realized that she was not a radical, that she not longer agreed with revolutionary ideology. In 1994, she summarized her political views:

I don't hate America. I was born in Panama, not the U.S., and I don't feel the anger that many African-Americans feel. I feel like I can have a life here. I do believe that there are problems in this country, and that I must struggle for justice.

R43's political transformation was extremely difficult in the months and years following the massacre. She explained, "I felt like I couldn't admit my changing views and remain loyal" to her murdered husband. She described the intense group pressure to remain actively involved in avenging the death of the 5 people. At first she continued her activism, giving many speeches to various groups. During the first trial, she stood up in the court, denouncing the proceedings, knowing that as a result she would be jailed for 30 days. She found serving time a horrendous experience, and determined that henceforth she would "stay out of trouble."

Increasingly, she withdrew from the group. Though she continued working, she explained, "I didn't want to go to bed at night; I watched TV all the time and didn't get any sleep." The media portrayal of the CWP started to affect R43. She explained:

Basically I always felt proud to be part of the North Carolina collective. It was such a stellar group of people, all with a long history of activism. It was an impressive bunch.

But the newspaper reports kept talking about all these criticisms, and I started believing some of it. And then I felt like a traitor for believing it.

I couldn't continue the activism, the fightback

campaign, the work on the trials. I didn't feel it any more. I thought the state had set us up, but that we were easy to be set up. It was easy for them to get us and the Klan together.

For years I have felt guilty about leaving the fight back campaign. I knew I couldn't [continue being active], but I felt very guilty about stopping.

Two years after the murders, R43 moved out of the state.

Several years later she remarried and had a baby. But then her marriage broke up, which she was still reeling from during her interview in 1989.

In the 1989 interview, R43 appeared in in great pain and in confusion about her feelings, seeming almost numb to them. One of the characteristics of survivors is "numbing," which Lifton describes as "an incapacity to feel or confront certain kinds of experience."³⁶⁶ R43 told me she felt "personality-less." I asked what she meant. She said that often she feels like "nothing is there." She went on:

I definitely have trouble with feelings. My friend that lives down the street from me says that as far as she's concerned, I have never dealt with Cesar's death.

I don't miss him like really miss him. I miss him for selfish reasons. I miss him because he's not here, I miss him because he's not here to keep me company, I miss him because I liked him and because he was smart. I miss him because I didn't have to rely on my own intelligence because I had his. He was smart, a lot smarter than I. I miss him because he had a lot of respect. And I don't have to worry about getting my own respect as long as he is there. And I could just bask in the attention he got from other people. I miss him because he provided protection for me and I don't have to provide my own. But I don't hurt when I think about Cesar. I cry sometimes but very seldom. And I think there is something wrong with that.

When I tell people about what happened, it is not difficult for me to talk about it. When I have to bring it up, I feel like I am more concerned about other people's reaction than my own. The last time I was talking about it with someone, I was talking to my choir director. I was

³⁶⁶ Robert J. Lifton, "The Concept of Survivor," in Lifton, The Future of Immortality and Other Essays for a Nuclear Age (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p. 240.

telling him about it and he was shocked.

I was telling him "listen before I go on, I just want to tell you I am OK. This happened a very long time ago and I have dealt with all my feelings. It doesn't bother me to talk about it. It usually has more impact on the person I'm telling it to, than it has on me."

So I am more concerned about how other people react to it than my own reaction. I don't think my reaction is normal, I don't think it ever was. I think there are a lot of feelings that I am not dealing with about it. I attribute that to not having my own sense of self, of personality. I don't know. That's not real clear. You have to be a real person to feel or miss someone in the first place...

I am such a shell, with nothing inside. Maybe you have to be empty to fill up with something new.

Perhaps R43's young age had something to do with how profoundly she was affected by the murder of her husband. At age 24, she was just approaching the end of her identity phase of psychological development, which extends from adolescence approximately through age 25. As described by Erikson, during these years, an individual develops his or her sense of self in relationship to the world.³⁶⁷

In the second interview, almost 5 years later, R43 appeared much happier, and had gained more perspective on her experience. She explained:

Since the [1989] interview, I have developed an appreciation of my own inner strengths. I feel like I do have something to offer people, to offer friends, that I can be loyal and committed to people and to causes...

She was in the process of moving to a new city to take an exciting new job. She and her son (now an adolescent) see the move as a great adventure.

R43 was more politically involved in 1994 than she reported 5 years earlier. In the first interview, she stated that she was

³⁶⁷ Erikson, Identity.

not involved politically at all, that her job and raising her son took up all her time. In the second interview, she described her active involvement in the PTA at her son's school. She also feels that she carries out her political values in her job, which involves providing housing for low and moderate income people. The impact of the massacre, however, still lingers on her politics. As she explained, "I will not adhere to anything too strongly, and that is a direct result of the Greensboro massacre."

Age and the Impact of Trauma on Politics

The interviews of the widows suggests that younger respondents may be more affected by the traumatic experience, in terms of their sense of self. The interviews with the youngest respondents, those who were 18 or younger in 1979, also indicate that the young respondents were more profoundly traumatized.

This section describes the 7 youngest respondents, including excerpts from their interviews, and then compares them to the 7 oldest respondents.

The 18 year olds:

Three respondents, all girls, 2 of them black, 1 white, were 18 at the time of the massacre. During the year or 2 before the massacre, they had all decided to become political activists. Each was encouraged by a relative who was involved in CWP, including one mother, one older brother and one older sister (all

3 are also respondents in this study). The three young respondents each described their activities prior to the murders, and then how November 3 brought a sudden end to their involvement.

R44, a black teenager growing up in a poor neighborhood, followed in the footsteps of her older brother in becoming an activist. She described her feelings leaving Greensboro the evening after the massacre:

[I was] coming out of that city, as an 18 year-old realizing that there was no safety, realizing that I'm in a country where my life at any time can be taken, not knowing what the future can hold, not knowing if there was any hope at all..

The Klan gunned people down. They hate blacks, Hispanics, and Jews, but they killed Caucasians, too. The Klan didn't just hate the races of people, they hated justice...

R46, a white teenager, had rebelled against her pro-segregation parents, and come to live with her older sister. There she, too, became an activist. In her interview, she stated that she still had a lot of anger:

I was just a kid. I had just turned 18. It was like a dream the whole time it was happening. It was the weirdest thing, the most horrible thing, I've ever been through in my life... My memory is very vague. Even right after it happened, it was very vague. I guess my mind protected myself.

To know the government was there to that extent. Even though I was politically active, and against the way the government did things, I still thought that if the government just knew that it was wrong, they would fix it. If enough people stood up and said something was wrong, they would fix it. I had the sense the system was wrong, the way they do things is wrong, but my God, would they kill people? Would they kill people? To them I guess, we were just faceless activists.

R 45, a young black woman, 18 at the time of the massacre, seemed still traumatized, even 10 years later. From a poor

family, R45's mother was active in the CWP. R45 loved becoming involved herself, describing in detail the issues she had worked on, and the demonstrations she had attended. But then she stated:

The last demonstration I went to was Greensboro, my last experience of protesting. I was geared up for that, all pumped up and ready.

Instead of a demonstration, she found a massacre. She continued:

It was like the whole world had fell. To know that people could come and kill people with no respect, no sense of caring for human life. It was really devastating, and frightening. It made you want to go crawl in a hole. To get just slain down for trying to stand up for human rights.

And afterwards, I went into a shell myself. I was scared. I still had this rebel feeling, I wanted to go out there and say "you can't do this to people." I still want to do the things I did before, but there's a lot of fear, knowing that someone out there doesn't want you to have your rights or to be happy.

A decade later, all 3 respondents, now in their late 20s, were married and had children. But only one (R44) was politically involved, in very mainstream issues and school activities involving her children. The other two respondents had no involvement, and no sense of political efficacy. Their activist identity was just in the process of forming when they experienced the massacre, and in 2 cases it seems to have been wiped out by the trauma.

The Youngest Respondents:

Four respondents were even younger during the massacre. Two were 11, one 7, and one 6 at the time; 3 are black, 1 white.

They saw the Klan and Nazi caravan drive up, and ran for cover. They had not decided to become activists, but were attending the demonstration with their parents. Until the massacre, all 4 reported that they had enjoyed the participating in political activity with their parents.

All these respondents exhibited symptoms of trauma, such as night mares, depression, and fear of loud noises, that have been studied in children who have witness violence in the community.³⁶⁸

R48, who was 11, lost his step father on November 3 (his mother is R8, described on previous pages in this chapter). Jim had gone out of his way to befriend his step son, and R48 said he was beginning to trust Jim, when suddenly he was killed. He thinks that has made him hesitate to trust others even 10 years later.

R48's memory of the day of the massacre is a "big blur," but he did remember the difficulty of the following years:

For the next year, my cleanliness and my hygiene were terrible. I barely passed my subjects in school. It took me a long time to realize that I was in a state of shock, or whatever it was.

For a long time, I didn't want to watch TV. I couldn't figure it out, what in the world wrong with me? I'm twelve years old and didn't watch TV -- am I sick? Ma was having the same thing with her recorder playing. She said that it was a pleasure thing, we both felt guilty for having pleasure. For her it was recorder, for me it was TV.

Years later, as a college student, R48 became an activist. He felt like he wanted to carry on the tradition of his

³⁶⁸ See Elizabeth A. Simpson, "How Community Violence Affects Children, Parents, and Practitioners," Public Welfare, Fall 1992, pp. 26-30.

stepfather. He explained:

A big thing for me is communication. Clear communication can prevent or solve so many problems, and miscommunication can start so many problems. In rape awareness, one of the issues I am involved in, we talk about stereotyping and conditioning. What is communicated so often is stereotypes. I want to help unravel that, and get people thinking in different ways, and offer alternatives.

R47 was also 11 at the time of the massacre, attending the demonstration with his mother (R11) and younger sister (R50). He remembers being afraid for a long time after the massacre:

I kept hearing loud noises and I kept waking up... It had a big impact on me because I wasn't no more than eleven. It really scared me, shook me up real bad.

At school, some other children reflected the scape goating going on in the media, blaming his mother and other respondents for the massacre. R47 stated:

Sometimes some kids would come up with the old funny statement, "Why did your mom, and all those people that she hang with, try to get those people killed?" It bothered me. It bothered me because they didn't understand. If they only knew the whole story.

As a rebellious teenager, R47 got involved in criminal activity, burglarizing homes. At age 16, he was caught, tried for 6 counts of burglary, and sentence to jail for life.³⁶⁹ I interviewed him in jail 6 years later. I asked him whether he thought there was any connection between his experience on November 3 and his criminal activity. He responded:

I can't or won't sit here and try to justify myself by saying "November 3rd is what caused me to be in here," because that would be totally wrong. But it may have had some effect on the way I thought about things. I believe it did have a little to do with my thinking pattern. At the

³⁶⁹ Many respondents feel that his sentence was so severe in retaliation against his mother's political involvement.

time I was doing my crimes, I was thinking, "hey, I'm 16 years old, I've never been in trouble. If they catch me, they can't do but so much to me." They didn't do nothing to the Klan, and they killed some people.

R49 was only 7 years old during the massacre. Her father, R12, was the main CWP leader in Greensboro, and she feared not only for her own life, but that of her father as well. She had classic symptoms suffered by children who are victims of violence, including constant fear and nightmares. After the massacre she stated:

I was always scared, didn't want to be left alone, because I knew there was a group of people that hated my Daddy. I had a lot of nightmares.

At school it was not good at all. The teachers were scared, like "oh my God, I have to teach this child, this child is in my class, and maybe someone going to come in here in the classroom and get her." Basically we were outcasts for a while. People were so scared, and for all I knew, they had a reason to be scared of me. I felt rejected. One of my closest friends, her mother told her, she could not see me, she was not supposed to go to my house. I could not go to hers. We were not supposed to talk on the phone. It hurt both of us. We were seven, eight years old, at that age when best friends mean everything.

R49 said that what got her through those years was her friendships with the other young respondents. Her parents were also there for her as well as some other adults, including a custodian at her school who looked out for her.

The youngest respondent, R50, who was only 6 at the time of the massacre, also reported great difficulty.

I remember not going to school for a very long time. My brother and I would play outside. I remember some guys in a car rode by. They could have been in the Klan or just could have been teenagers playing. They had one of those smoke bombs, like the kind you sell in a fire cracker store, and they lit it and threw it at us! It was harmless, but my Mom said, "I don't want you all to be separated from me." So we didn't go to school for a very long time. I remember having to go back and I didn't know what was going on in school.

After that there were no more marches it seemed like

to me. Everything had died down. Even today, I was thinking, did those people die for nothing? But they used to have meetings all the time. I used to enjoy going to those with my Mom. But there is nothing no more. To me it seems like they died for nothing. If I had died that way I wouldn't want no one to stop, but to keep fighting for some justice.

But she herself does not want to be an activist, and does not have a sense of political efficacy. Of the 4 youngest respondents, all with parents who are also respondents in this study (and who are all still active), only 2 are activists around issues in their schools.

Two other youth who were at the demonstration that day refused to be interviewed. Their relatives described them as being severely traumatized. One has a great fear of being in crowds and of loud noises. Thus in a number of cases, the impact of the trauma greatly outweighed these young respondents early socialization.

In contrast, the oldest 7 respondents were not nearly as traumatized by the incident. Demographically, the youngest 7 and oldest 7 are roughly matched in terms of race, gender and social class. (The youngest 7 include 5 blacks and 2 whites; 5 females and 2 males; 5 working-class and 2 middle-class people. The oldest 7 include 6 blacks and 1 white; 6 females and 1 male; 6 working-class and 1 middle-class person.) The major differences are age (the mean age for the young ones was 13; for the older ones the mid 50s).

Another difference between the youngest 7 respondents and the oldest 7 respondents was family political traditions. Most of the youngest group had parents who were also political activists and respondents. The oldest group, with only one

exception came from apolitical homes. Yet the oldest group had been socialized by the protest movements, dating back almost 2 decades. They had a political perspective developed through years of experience that made them better equipped to handle the trauma in 1979.

In the interviews, the oldest respondents indicated that they were not affected by the massacre as much as the young ones. A decade later, all still had a sense of political efficacy (compared to only 3 out of 7 of the youngest). Several were still politically active, and several others wanted to be but their health was slowing them down to some extent. Their political beliefs were little changed from 10 years earlier.

One respondent, a white woman in her 60s at the time of the interview, was deeply disturbed by the massacre. But she ended her interview, stating that she felt good about her role in protesting the murders:

It's been a wonderful life. It has all been of one piece, including November 3rd, and how it affected me and what I was able to do after it. I have been blessed....

Another respondent, R7, also looked back over her life and felt positive. She remembered the fear that others had after the murders. But she stated, "it didn't scare me, because I thought, those 5 gave their lives, and little me ain't going to be a chicken." She paused, and then reflected on her whole life:

I just won't be afraid. If you're going to die, die doing something the best you can do. I feel that in my life, I have did my part trying to get things straight in this world.

This is in sharp contrast to her daughter, 18 years old in

1979, who stated that she "wanted to crawl in a hole... I was scared... I went into a shell." Truly, it seems age makes a difference in the impact of trauma.

The Wounded

Eight people were wounded on November 3, 1979. They nearly lost their lives, receiving bullet wounds and in one case a stab wound. They were right next to their friends who died; in some cases, their friends died in their arms.

All 8 of the wounded are respondents in this study. A decade after the massacre, they described their memories of that day, and the evolution of their political beliefs and activism over the next 10 years. Each has a unique story, that together illustrate the multiplicity of factors in their individual responses to trauma, and the evolution of their politics.

As the descriptions below indicate, these respondents were deeply affected by the massacre. However, as a group, they were not as traumatized as the youngest 8 respondents, discussed in the previous section. The 8 who were wounded ranged in age from 26 to 36 years old, and had completed their identity stage at the time of the massacre. Age is not a significant factor in their varied responses to the trauma.

The wounded respondents were all very involved politically before the massacre; all were level 8 on the activism scale. They included the 2 main organizers of the November 3 rally, both spokesmen for the CWP (R23 from Durham, R12 from Greensboro). The other 6 were full time activists who had been involved with

the CWP for several years.

After the murders, the wounded respondents varied significantly in their subsequent political activism. Half continued to be as involved as before, 2 pulled back quite a bit, and 2 dropped out completely. During the following decade, they also diverged in the evolution of their beliefs, although to a lesser extent. The most significant factor in terms of immediately pulling back from political involvement was parenthood. Six of the 8 wounded were the parents of small children (for 3 respondents, the children were still in utero at the time of the massacre). Two-thirds of respondents pulled back significantly or completely immediately following the murders.

Other demographic factors, including race, gender, and social class during childhood, do not appear to be significant in terms of the response to the trauma. Two of the respondents wounded are black and 6 white; 2 are female and 6 are males; the 8 are evenly split between working-class and middle-class family backgrounds. The largest demographic category includes 5 white males.

Going through the respondents political development after 1979, we see that while much changed, for most, their basic values have remained.

R23: Shot in the Head; Partially Paralyzed

R23 was critically wounded, shot twice in the head and once in the arm, and permanently paralyzed on the left side of his body. On November 3, his wounds appeared so serious, that many

respondents feared he, like the other 5, would die. He underwent 5 hours of brain surgery, and remained in critical condition for the following week. Then he was transferred to a rehabilitation unit, where he spent 2 months learning how to cope with only 1 functioning hand, and relearning how to walk.

His wounds affected him like a stroke. Fortunately his ability to speak was intact. For a long time he had difficulty with time and space relations, but over time this improved. For a year and a half he needed a cane to walk.

From a full-time political organizer, who supported his family through working part time as a doctor, R23 suddenly became an invalid with no job, and no means of support for his wife and children. (His wife had recently left her job because she was pregnant with their second child.) Six months after the wound, R23 was deemed "permanently and totally disabled" by the Social Security Administration and began receiving disability checks.

But R23 had other plans. He knew that even if he recovered his full mental functions, he could no longer practice general medicine because he no longer had use of his left hand. So he decided to return to psychiatry, which did not require the use of 2 hands. A year and a half after the massacre, he entered a psychiatry residency program. Today he is a research psychiatrist who directs a day treatment hospital. In his interview, R23 said that "the process of recovery involved mainly physical and professional reintegration with society."

After he got out of the hospital, and began to recover, R23 was as active as he could be given his physical limitations. He stated,

Fighting back was my main concern. I didn't feel like we had any options. It was not a time for fear or questioning, but a time to be uncompromising, to close rank.

I remember going to the February 2, 1980, demonstration, and to church meetings and other group meetings. I was very sick, in a wheel chair. I needed a lot of help just getting there. But it was exhilarating to be fighting back, kind of a dizzy excitement. I became a spokesperson. People would listen to me who wouldn't listen before. Suddenly I was endowed with the ability to make people listen just because I had been shot.

During the 6 years following the murders, R23 participated in the trials, testifying several times. He also went on a speaking tour across the country. But following the trials, his political activism diminished. During his interview in 1989, he stated, "now my energy goes into family and work. It is rewarding in a quieter way. But not nearly as exciting."

When discussing politics, he appeared burned out, unclear on what he thought, stating:

I no longer have any central political beliefs. They have gone through a "devolution" not an "evolution." I no longer have single animating ideals. It was not just the impact of November 3rd, not getting shot, not any particular event. It has been a whole chain of events.

Lost was the strong sense of political efficacy he had in the past. He commented:

Why am I less active? My efforts don't amount to much. They can make an impact, but not a lasting effect. The appeal of running around, writing a press release, and then fighting for years afterwards about what the press release meant -- that has lost its appeal for me.

He went on to say that he felt no affinity with any political groups, but only "like a vaguely progressive guy."

Five years later, in 1994, he stated that he has become a

"crusader for the mentally ill," whom he describes as "among society's most oppressed groups." His preferred method, however, is to scientifically study treatment approaches to rehabilitate the mentally ill, helping them to integrate with society. He sees this work as a continuation of both his earlier political values and his own struggle to rehabilitate.

R12: Still a Full Time Activist, with a Different Philosophical Framework:

R12 has been recognized as a leader in Greensboro since the 1965.³⁷⁰ Thirty years later, in the 1990s, his activism continues to be at the highest level. He still has a class analysis of society, and the issues that he sees as important have remained the same. However, his philosophical framework has changed, as he explains below.

On November 3, during the attack by the Klan and Nazis, R12 was stabbed in the arm by a Klansman. After the caravan drove away, R12 started speaking to the crowd gathering at the scene. He stated that the cops were responsible, that they had allowed the Klan to come in and attack the demonstrators. While he was talking, the police finally arrived, and their first act was not to give chase to the fleeing assailants, but to arrest R12 and several other demonstrators. He describes what happened in police custody and through the next week:

³⁷⁰ Chafe, Civilities, Chapters 6, 7, and 8. .

After doctors sewed up my arm, the police took me to the station. There I was interrogated by the FBI and Greensboro police. I refused to speak. The agents said that my name was on the lips of every Klansman in the state, that my life was over, and that I needed to talk to them. I refused to speak. They threatened to rip my bandages off. Finally they took me to a jail cell.

I stayed up all night, trying to figure out what had happened. I didn't know who was dead, except Jim. I didn't know who was alive.

The next morning a lawyer got me out of jail. He told the judge that I was not a "danger to the community." There were a bunch of reporters when I got out of jail. I told them it had been a set up.

The next few days, I got no sleep. Greensboro was really tense, we all felt threatened. We didn't know what would happen next. My family moved out of our house.

The next week there was intense confrontation on all levels. The NAACP was supposed to hold a mass meeting, but their office was vandalized. Some blamed it on CWP, which of course, was ridiculous. The United Front [the potential coalition of support] crumbled around us. If we could have held the meeting, we could have organized a response. But the weight of anti-communist propaganda knocked out our initiative.

R12 explained how his politics began to evolve during the following weeks and months:

I had great difficulty in my own thinking. I was loyal to the black community but that pulled against my party [CWP] loyalty. I lived between two worlds, those of "my people" in the community and "my people" in the organization.

I couldn't bring people together. That was the main thing that bothered me. In the past I was always able to do that. Ten years before, in 1969, when a cop killed a student at A&T [a black college in Greensboro], I brought people together, in spite of intense police pressure.

But in 1979 there was an additional factor. People in the black community were suspicious of my communist friends. "Someone else is calling the shots," they said. They called on me to break ranks. But not a single person broke ranks. I think people should be commended for doing what they could under those circumstances.

In the interview, I asked, "with the benefit of hindsight, now ten years later, looking back, would you have done anything differently?" R12 responded:

In many ways that is unanswerable. My philosophical

view has changed. My thinking then was from a different analysis than it is today.

Based on my analysis then, I believe, in retrospect, that we did underestimate the danger of the Klan. Based on the evidence, we should have made a better estimation of the danger of the Klan. But given our push, within our framework at that time, we needed to promote boldness, and not be afraid.

I asked for him to explain the philosophical changes he had gone through since 1979. He went on:

My life has not been characterized by abrupt changes. What was precious and sacred in all we did before and after Nov. 3rd was helping other people. Whatever the criticism of what we did, our orientation was towards helping people.

What changed for me is the concept of "restriction," the way we understood the class analysis of Marxism-Leninism. We viewed those who opposed us, who opposed what we wanted to do, as needing to be restricted. We thought that, as we moved to develop society, to help people in general, that certain people needed to be locked up, restricted. We held out little possibility for their transformation.

Now, I still have a class view of society, of the profit motive driving the system. But I have changed in how I see moving towards the good society. I think all people have the potential for good and bad.

It's how people view each other. The other side sees us as "the bad" and we see them as "the bad." If we occupy the same territory, then conflict is inevitable.

I see the potential for transformation within all human beings. Perhaps it is not there for everyone, but that is my world view -- to seek for it in everyone.

I believe that the strongest power in the world is authentic love, which can and does alter people. So my orientation is not to crush the person, but to open avenues to transform them. I oppose the damage that they might be doing. But I distinguish between the behavior and the potential, the essence of the person.

I see it in religious terms as well. Jesus to me is the concentrated expression of authentic love. We all share some of his love, and we have the potential to receive and share more. His love does not exist without sharing.

The advertisements for the military are "be all that you can be," and then they teach you how to kill people. I believe we should be all we can be in helping others be all they can be. The greatest personalities in history were those who shared; the least personalities were those who built walls and fences.

I respect the work of Whitehead, a British physicist and philosopher who has a scientific world view. He calls it "process theology." What is actual is events, occurrences, not things. Things are the slow rate of

events. Reality is a process, the continuum in all that lives. God is continually coming, a pervasive power. This is consistent with a scientific view of reality. It can salvage theology from feudal archaic ideas. Process theology is influencing black theology today. It is a healthy trend. It is different from Marxism in that it does not negate things.

I asked how he came to develop this different framework. He continued:

After November 3rd, my life hit rock bottom. I had no job, no money, and a strange sort of respect from many people. I was compelled to think.

I revisited my childhood faith. I had been critical of preachers in the earlier days of the movement. I didn't respect their behavior, and therefore their beliefs. I had tied God and preachers and the church too closely together.

In 1984, I determined to myself that materialism was too limited if seen as an ultimate. I came to an understanding of Jesus that helped me understand the world. He had the most thorough-going concern about the betterment of others. I wanted to be that kind of person. I no longer wanted to dismiss whole categories of people.

I went to ministers I respected and asked them if they really believed in God.

I joined the church to be part of my people, part of my community. It was a faith venture. I had not drawn any conclusions, only rejected some of my past beliefs.

R12 went back to North Carolina A&T to finish the undergraduate degree he had abandoned to join the movement, and graduated in 1986. Then he went to seminary. He described his continuing political evolution:

I spent three years searching for an understanding of ultimacy. I studied hermeneutics. I struggled with my professors over Marxism, seeing if they could punch holes in it. I found religious scientists like Whitehead who sought reconciliation between science, evolution, and theology.

I have dismissed absolute certainty, and am now comfortable with relative certainty. For me, my beliefs have to be useful in the field, in the world.

I am still an activist. I was president of the student government in seminary.

When he finished at the seminary he moved back to Greensboro, where his activism has continued as a minister. I

asked, "how do you see the possibility of social change? are you more hopeful, less hopeful than you were in the 1970s?" He stated:

My view has gone up and down. But now I am more hopeful. During this century, there has been great progress and massive problems -- all the wars. And there are Christian theorists justifying wars! No one knows how to stop war. It is not abstract, it is something to undertake immediately.

Here in the US many feel a sense of hopelessness. The drug problem seems like that, like masses of flesh waiting to die. I see the need to bring people together, to get the walls out of the way. It is not only a few economic reforms, but also a different kind of healing.

Next I asked about the potential for racial justice. He stated:

I have difficulty with the view that "racism has gotten worse." On the surface, things have changed, the laws and some of the myths. Now society is working on problems that are deeper, problems that have always been there but were ignored. Many people are fatalistic, seeing it as an impossible struggle. But I don't see it that way.

Finally I asked if he felt affinity with any political parties or organizations? He stated:

I feel affinity with the left, with socialists, with the movement. It's just that I don't want what's wrong with people to define me. I want to relate to what is right with people.

Despite R12's change in philosophy, his core beliefs -- in the need to organize for racial and economic justice -- have remained in tact. These were the beliefs that made him an activist in the 1960s. They continue to be the foundation of his beliefs today.

R28: Still in the Factory and Part of the Workers Struggle for Justice

R28 was shot trying to help the mortally wounded Mike Nathan. He received 9 bullet wounds, including 2 to the head and 1 that entered his chest and grazed his lungs. He said that immediately after November 3, he feared more attacks from the Klan, "especially when I was in the hospital. I felt like I had to sleep with one eye open all the time." ³⁷¹

But he recovered quickly from his wounds, and was able to get a job in a factory in the eastern part of North Carolina, a job he held for most of the next decade.

R28's political activism has been consistent before and since 1979. Born into a pro-segregation, Dixiecrat family, he went through a political transformation in 1970 (see page), dropping out of the Virginia Military Institute, and joining the anti-war movement. Even though he got a college degree, he has worked in factories his entire adult life.

R28 participated in the trials, testifying in 2 of them. He stated, "it was very important that we won the last trial, that we were able to convince a jury to hold Greensboro police officers and the Klan liable."

But he is critical of other respondents for "abandoning the workers struggle." He explains:

During the course of the trials, I saw folks began to lose their connection with the grassroots, with the movement that we were involved in.... People [the respondents] are all over the map politically. The grass roots people say "Where is everybody?" The workers movement still needs you, the issues are still there.

³⁷¹ 19 respondents reported fearing attacks in the period immediately following the massacre.

Asked about his current political activity, he explained,

My efforts go into building a strong local union, and into struggles in the black community in area where I live. I find support to carry on through seeing people making a strong union stand. As long as people struggle for justice, that gives me strength.

It is very important to me to live up to commitments I made. I think it is especially important for me, since I come from a racist white middle-class background. Workers question whether you are actually going to do what you say you're going to do. [Consistency] is important for people's hopes for change.

Many other respondents said that they felt their commitment to social change was important, and an important reason for their continuing activism. But R28 was the only respondent who stated criticized other respondents for not continuing to work in factories. He was also the only one of the wounded respondents who was not married at the time, and at the time of his interview 10 years later he still did not have children.

I asked, "how has November 3rd affected you? Do you feel like you've been through a process of recovery?" R28 replied:

It has deepened my understanding of what happens when you take up a campaign against injustice, against the status quo.... I think it is a class question in how people have reacted to November 3rd and how people have recovered.... I see that people in other countries experiences like this everyday, and they continue to move.

Thus R28's view is that, among the respondents, the more working- class survivors recovered and continued to be part of the struggle, while the more middle-class survivors abandoned the grass roots. But careful analysis finds that, if one isolates the issue of class background, the opposite is true (discussed later in chapter).

In fact, sometimes the more working class respondents "abandoned" the struggle soonest, because they felt the pressures of economic survival for themselves and their families. R39 is a case in point.

R39: Time to Start a New Life

When the caravan attacked, R39 was standing with Bill Sampson, his best friend. When the Klansmen started shooting, Bill took his pistol out and shot back. A Klansman shot Bill in the chest, mortally wounding him. As he was dying, he handed R39 the gun. After the Klan and Nazis left and the police arrived on the scene, R39 still had the gun in his hand. Police arrested him for possession of a weapon. In jail, he could not reach his wife (another respondent) to bail him out. His mother got him out. Two days later, when he reported to work at the textile mill where he and Bill worked, he was fired for being arrested at the demonstration.³⁷²

R39's problems were compounded by the fact that his wife (R20) was pregnant, and no longer employed. Moreover, when R39 got new jobs in the next few months, he repeatedly got fired as his employers found out who he was. His wife reported:

When I had the baby, he was unemployed because of November 3rd. He was couldn't get a job anywhere. Then he finally got a job at the local science fair. He's an excellent worker, and was taking care of all the animals. They all loved him. One day somebody connected up his name -- and he couldn't work there anymore. It was terrible. We're not talking about a career, but just a job.

³⁷² Six respondents reported being fired as a result of the massacre; 3 others said that their jobs were threatened.

She went on to talk about how the massacre affected her in the months that followed:

The most significant thing probably in getting us out of politics were two things: Nov. 3rd and having a baby. It just got to be too exhausting. It was too hard ... there was no end to the suffering.

In January, [1980], I had my baby. I'm not a worrier, but I can remember coming home from the hospital, and (I don't know if this was post-partum hormones) being absolutely frightened that somebody was going to come and kill my baby. At that time, we weren't sure we could walk out of our apartments. We weren't sure if we went down the street, somebody wasn't going to kill us. We could never understand how [the massacre] could have happened. Maybe it could happen again. We were terrorized. We lost all perception of what was reasonable and unreasonable because that whole situation was unreasonable. It never made sense. We never ever expected it.

Once you lose the vision, that this is the right thing to do and its going to go someplace... It just didn't work. Then it was too hard just surviving. So we became less and less involved, and then we requested formally to leave. Everybody [in CWP] was nice, and good to us.

This couple had been activists for a number of years. But the Greensboro Massacre ended that activism. R39 summarized his reasons:

November 3rd -- the people I was very close to getting killed... and then I was feeling so helpless, and so frustrated. I felt alone, I was scared too... At the same time my wife was pregnant. Here I was a poor worker, out of work, worrying about going to jail.

From that point I felt like it was time to start figuring out what I was going to do for myself. I remember thinking, I have a kid on the way, I'm probably going to be in jail.³⁷³ It's not good. I thought maybe its time to make some changes, time to move and start another new life.

From that point on, I just try to work and suffer through it. Politically I don't get involved with trying to change things anymore. My view is maybe if I can figure out some way of saving up my money so I can build a log cabin in a mountain. Just live up there and the hell with everything and everybody.

³⁷³ R39 and 5 other demonstrators (including R12 and R11 and 2 others who were not interviewed) were indicted for "inciting to riot" on November 3, 1979. The charges were dropped in November, 1980, just after the first trial concluded.

R39 and R20 moved out of state, where they have reestablished themselves. They now have 2 children and an active family life. Except for voting, they are politically inactive.

This couple made critical life decisions together, a factor emphasized by the Bennington studies, and true of other respondents as well. ³⁷⁴

R37: Eight Months Pregnant, Shot in the Back:

R37 was within two weeks of her delivery date of her first child, when she was shot in the back by the Klan on November 3. Fortunately she had been sprayed with bird shot, which resulted in only superficial wounds. The baby, large and healthy, was born right on time.

R37 pulled back from her political involvement to focus on motherhood, but she did not drop out entirely. She had become an activist when she was in junior high school (in a sit-in with other black students) and she still sees activism as an important part of her life. She participated in the trials pertaining to November 3rd and other activities. During the trials she bore her second child. Her marriage, to a man who was not politically involved, dissolved during these years.

When I interviewed her in 1989, she was working on her doctorate in education, and still involved in political activities with a mainstream civil rights focus. She summarized her process of recovery:

³⁷⁴ The importance of one's spouse in one's adult political development is discussed in Newcomb, Persistence and Change.

You just go through it. You just go through it. I think one of the good things, that made me able to come through it, was the strength and the love and the friendship, the fellowship, the comraderie of the group. We talk about it now in terms of families and all kinds of other names but it's still the same thing. The glue was good. The glue was good beforehand, and that allowed the healing process, aided the healing process afterwards.

R33: "I Can't Die, I have a Baby"

The other woman wounded on November 3, ran for cover with Sandi Smith, when she, too, was shot in the back of her legs. Fortunately the wounds, from buck shot, were not serious. As she was running, she kept thinking of her 18 month old child: "I can't die, I can't die, I have a baby."

She had been an activist for a decade (her process of breaking with her parent's right-wing background is detailed in Chapter 8. But as a new mother, she had made another commitment. For her, the Greensboro Massacre suddenly made the 2 commitments in complete contradiction to each other.

All I could think of after that, is what matters to me in life? My baby. That was it. From that moment on I had no desire. I knew I didn't want to be part of this.

I was extremely depressed, extremely, profoundly, after Greensboro. Bill had been killed... Jim ... Sandi... people I was really close to. I nearly died myself. I had no heart in it.

She and her husband (R29) dropped out of the CWP almost immediately, although they continued some of their friendships, and participated in the trials. They eventually moved out of state, and after they got themselves established economically, R29 once again became politically involved.

When I interviewed her in her new home in 1990, she talked

about her renewed activism, and the difficulty in balancing political work and parenthood:

I made new friends here through solidarity work against U.S. imperialism in Central America. And that was good. I met a lot of people that were really fine people, and I think we did a lot of good work here in this community.

As time went on, I went back to nursing school, and I had a second child. The demands of being a mother made it harder for me to be involved politically. It was tough. I just didn't have the energy.

I've always kept up some level of activism. Right now I'm working full time and have two kids at very disparate ages, 3 and 12. They each have different kind of energies and attentions, because they are at such different ages. I feel I have less time than ever to be politically active, but I still am a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Actually I'm the local chairperson.

R9: "I Became More Active"

Some respondents became more active following November 3, even those with children. R9 is an example. Like several other respondents, R9 was shot while trying to help the very pregnant R37. Fortunately, he was hit with bird shot and the wounds were superficial.

The following months were very difficult for him, his wife, and their 3 children. For a few weeks they were afraid to live in their house. Police and F.B.I. agents came to the house, and there was evidence they broke into it. The F.B.I. also visited his work place, and informed his boss about his politics. To his surprise and good fortune, he was not fired.

Despite the difficulty, both R9 and his wife (R19) became even more involved with CWP than they had been in the past. They lived in Durham, where the leadership (R23) was incapacitated,

and 2 activists (Cesar and Mike) had been killed. They stepped forward to help fill the vacuum. He stated that he felt like he was more needed, and his work more appreciated by others in the organization.

R9 stated in his interview a decade later, "the thing on my mind was surviving, staying alive, and also continuing to carry out some kind of political work." He and his wife continued to be politically active throughout the 6 years of trials. In 1986, they moved out of state, so his wife could go to law school. Today they both are still actively involved.

R9 grew up in an apolitical, working-class Jewish family. He excelled at school, becoming a Ph.D. in Math. But he found being a professor unfulfilling, and left it to become an activist when he was 30 years old (see Chapter 8). In his interview, he reflected on his current political beliefs:

I still want to change the world. I'm not quite so sure I know how to do it, but I still consider myself a Marxist. One thing that's really changed for me, is that in 1979 we had a very definite analysis that we could fit everything into, a framework. It was more than just Marxism, it was a particular application of Marxism. I certainly couldn't say I have that now. I wish I did.

His wife's politics also remain relatively unchanged. She grew up in a working-class black family, that talked about politics. She summarized the stability of her politics:

On November 3, 1979, I was a Socialist and today I'm a Socialist. A lot of people I know have rejected socialism, but that doesn't make sense in my life. I probably do things differently now, I don't talk about [politics] as freely. I know socialism won't happen in my life time. But capitalism is still bad. I can be a lawyer for 50 more years and it won't matter.

I'm black and I'm a woman, and nobody cares about me or my kids.... I'm a little more cautious, but my politics are the same.

R31: "I Felt like a Soldier at my Post"

Despite superficial bird shot wounds, R31 continued to politically active since the murders. He stated:

Through that whole time, I felt like a soldier at my post. I remember having breakfast with my friends before the funeral march. They said "don't go." I said I have to. I'm not about to turn away. It's hard to accept deaths, the threat to my life, but I asked for involvement...

During the first trial, they called on me to testify. We had all decided not to participate, so I refused to testify. I got 30 days in jail for contempt of court.

I was proud of being a revolutionary. When I was in jail I got letters, some from other people I didn't even know. Other prisoners treated me with kid gloves. Even the jailers showed respect and were willing to listen. Jail was like a vacation to me... I didn't have to work so hard, and my job was secure.

I had no sense of career at that time. I was a ambulance driver at Durham County Hospital. They let me take leave time while I was in jail.

Just a month before the massacre, R31 had gotten married to another respondent (R41). During the trials, they had 2 children. Several years later, their marriage dissolved. R41 stated:

[Following the massacre] I had a weak sense of any need for emotional support. I was in an advanced state of denial. Who needs emotional support? We were all plugging away, working together. There was so much pressure, but we kept on.... [More recently] I've been putting a lot of time into therapy, trying to deal with marriage problems.

I asked about the evolution of his beliefs over the last decade. He explained:

There has been lots of reassessment over the last 10 years. First [in CWP] there was collective discussion about the Soviet Union. What is socialism? Is the Soviet Union "imperialist"?

I realized that we had been trying to make a third world revolution in the first world. It was our mistake. I was proud that we discussed it, criticized ourselves. I

felt good about our transition to New Democratic Movement, that we did not disband ourselves.

Some people thought we ran too hard. For me, I thought we did our best, we tried. But now it was time to try something else.

I asked about his current activism:

I don't do very much. I go to very few meetings [of a local liberal activist group]. I'm back to thinking, to reading the paper. I expect to get more involved in the future, but based on my own needs as well as the world's needs. Meanwhile I am developing my skills, my career. I am in a graduate program in library science.

I like political involvement. The question is how to do it well, with being a father, having a family.

Finally, I asked how he saw the possibility for social change. Was he more hopeful now or less hopeful? He stated:

I have two views. In one sense the 1960s were like a successful second American Revolution. Things are really different now. Even Ronald Reagan couldn't turn back the way society had become multi-cultural. But a lot more work needs to be done on economic empowerment.

On the other hand, I am worried. Things are changing so fast -- the population growth, greenhouse effect, AIDS. These could lead to disaster.

A Decade Later: Patterns in Political Activism and the Evolution of Political Beliefs

The 1980s were a decade of profound change for the respondents. The massacre forced them to reassess their commitment to personal involvement in making political change. By the mid 1980s, the Communist Workers Party began to disintegrate as a national organization, further contributing to changes in belief and activism for a number of respondents. In the nation as a whole, Reaganism dominated the political landscape, and

social movements on the left of the spectrum diminished.

In the interviews, each respondent described her or his unique political evolution. The earlier sections of this chapter have focused on the stories of widows, the children, and the wounded. This section, however, looks at the respondents as a whole after the massacre, analyzing their patterns in activism and belief.

The death of 5 people, the wounding of 8, the survivors' fear that there might be further Klan attacks, provided abundant reasons for the respondents to abandon their political activism. Indeed, 17 respondents pulled back right away, including the 7 who were still children, and 5 adults who never considered themselves communists. Five others, including 2 wounded respondents and their spouses, also stopped their political activism posthaste.

Most respondents continued their activism. Thirty-three (66%) reported taking part in protests during the year after the murders. Twenty-four (48%) stated that their involvement was equal or greater after the murders than before.

But continued activism was not easy. In the days and weeks following the massacre, many respondents faced further harassment: 15 (30%) reported that they were followed by police, and 4 said that the F.B.I. came to their homes or to their jobs. In addition, many respondents faced economic reprisals: 6 were fired from their jobs, and 3 left their jobs because of physical and emotional problems. Three more reported their jobs were threatened. Those fired had to cope with finding new means of putting bread on the table. Nineteen said that they

feared further attacks, which even if not actualized, were none-the less disconcerting. Sixteen respondents (32%) moved out of the homes, either temporarily (for fear of attacks), or permanently (to relocate to find employment).

Maslow describes a hierarchy of individual and personal needs. He describes the highest level as "self actualization," which accurately describes many of the respondents.³⁷⁵ However following the massacre, those who lost spouses or jobs or had to relocate, were suddenly thrust back to the lowest level, that of focusing on survival. The fact that so many respondents continued their activism despite the difficult conditions, indicates the strength of their activist identities and life styles.

R32 is an example of a respondent who became more involved after the massacre. She assumed a leadership role, trying to fill the shoes of those who had fallen. She had "animating survivor's guilt," as described by Lifton, that pushed her to increase her activism. A decade later, she recalled her feelings at the time:

It had been an extraordinary event. Nothing would ever be the same. I felt dead, like it was the end of the world. As one of the people alive, I felt a huge responsibility. But I also felt alone, overwhelmed, numb and hollow, in a nightmare... I said that we should be brave, but I didn't feel brave.

And here it is 10 years later. It feels like yesterday.

Even though most respondents continued to be active right after the murders, one by one they pulled back over the next decade. During the years of trials, 10 respondents, individuals

³⁷⁵ Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper, 1954).

who had been very active, part of the stable core of the CWP, pulled back. R21 explained his reasons for continuing to be active for several years after the murders, and then pulling back:

I-- we -- all just kept going. I went through the motions, but I lacked enthusiasm. There were so many questions. The way we became vilified, the enemy in the press. I felt outcast, isolated. In my gut, I thought some things we were doing were not right, but I was unable to make a cogent argument. The way we operated, you were allowed to discuss differences, but the line was already consolidated at the top...

Gradually I took a more critical approach... I think that I remained involved as long as I did because of my social relationships... I finally stopped going to meetings.

The personal ties between the members of the group were mentioned by many as a reason they remained active, or found it difficult to leave. Many who left tried to maintain some ties with their friends in the organization. Others rekindled ties several years later.

The Impact of the Dissolution of the CWP on Respondents:

During the mid-1980s, the Communist Workers Party went through a transition to become the New Democratic Movement. Twenty-three respondents (46%) were still in the organization during this period. Although many respondents agreed with the changes politically, the changes were nonetheless disorienting. R35 described his reactions:

We had called ourselves the Communist Workers Party... As time went on we understood that we were alienating ourselves by calling ourselves communists. People feared communism, even though there wasn't any material basis for

that fear, because there were no communists around that had ever hurt them. But it was a prejudice that people have in the United States. We decided to drop the word, and call ourselves something different, but carry out the same view.

Then it changed even more to say that we don't need to be communist at all. That we should just open things up... That the United States is real complex, and that there are lots of good people doing good things...

My view now is that I don't think [social change] is going to happen in any kind of organized fashion.. Its going to evolve rather than have a real big revolutionary change.

But in the process of CWP's changes, R35 pulled back. He explained:

I lost something there. I don't know what exactly it was... [but it involved] the sense of belonging to one particular thing, believing in it strongly. That was gone. So I sort of drifted away as time went on.

Other respondents felt like people in the organization abandoned them. In her interview, R6 was still angry about the situation. Still living in Greensboro where she was born, she was poor and knew she would always be poor. She wanted to be an activist, but felt like the group had abandoned their efforts to make social change:

After '79, everybody split and went their own direction. I very seldom see anybody. I don't know whether everybody got burnt out or scared.... People still got bad housing, and police brutality, and they still need unions. [But] nobody is doing nothing.

Others continued their own activism independently, and credit the organization for training them. R16 and R27 moved in the early 1980s to a city where they were the only CWP members. There they led a neighborhood of low-income people in a struggle for affordable housing that lasted for several years. R27 commented that the organization's demise did not affect them greatly:

We didn't know what happened in New York [CWP's organizational center]. To this day, I don't know what went wrong. We kept organizing regardless of what happened. CWP taught me how to organize, how to listen to people and bring them together, how to deal with different situations when they arise. It helped me organize my life. I used to hate white people for some of the things they had done. But joining the party made me understand who had oppressed us.

His wife, R16, agreed:

I regretted some of the things that happened, but not the organization. No matter what I do or where I go, it will always be a part of me. For me, the organization focused all my experiences. And I won't become unfocused.

Two widows, R24 and R34, had much to say about the CWP's demise. They both became more involved in CWP after their husbands' deaths, and successfully led the survivors' crusade for justice during the trials. In their interviews, they said that, in retrospect, they felt that the New York CWP leadership did not adequately deal with their own responsibility in pushing such militant and openly communist politics in 1979. When these leaders changed their political analysis, they did not admit that what they had done in the past was wrong, and was partly responsible for the tragedy. R34 explained that during the mid 1980s:

CWP leadership didn't want to consider the questions of guilt and anger on the part of the victims. They didn't want to hear us.... I think that they just aren't big enough people to hear the gravity of what was on people's minds, accept it, and sort it through.

R24 agreed, elaborating:

I think that if CWP had adequately summed up Greensboro after a couple of years, it could have made a more successful transition to the New Democratic Movement.

The CWP leaders in New York needed to analyze their own

errors as well as their strengths. Even though the organization changed to a new democratic politics in words, they did not change their leadership style. According to R24, they were "still operating as if they were underground in a third world country."

By the end of the decade the CWP had completely disintegrated. But most people had found other ways of continuing their political activism.

The Respondents in 1990:

By the time of the interviews, a decade after the massacre, all but a very few respondents reported that their political activism had substantially changed. Using information from the interviews, the respondents' levels of activism in 1979, before the massacre, can be compared with their activism level in 1990.

Before the massacre, the 50 respondents as a whole averaged a "level 7" on the activism scale (see Figure 4.3). This meant that on average, the respondents were involved politically 2 more times a week. Thirty-two respondents (64%) were at level 8 in 1979, meaning that they were active on a full time basis (more than 4 times a week).

In 1990, the level of activism had dropped almost 2 points, to a mean of 5.24. In other words, the average respondent belonged to a political organization and donated some time to it, but was not involved in politics on a regular basis. Eighteen respondents (36%) were no longer activists. They talked about politics (level 1) voted (level 2) and some donated money to

causes (level 3) or belonged to an organization (level 4). But they no longer put any time into political activity.

Two thirds of the respondents remained more politically involved, but many of them at a lower level. A third of them (17 people) were at level 6, meaning that they did get involved in campaigns periodically (involving candidates running for office or around particular issues). Five others were at level 7, active at least twice a week. Nine respondents (18%) were still at a level 8, involved on a full time basis. These were individuals who had managed to get jobs where they could carry out their activism (2 of these jobs were in factories, the others at a higher professional level).

The pattern of involvement was spread fairly evenly between blacks and whites, males and females. The factor that is most significant in explaining why some continued activism, while others did not, is social class. This analysis used two ways of measuring class. One was social class of the respondents' families during their childhood; the other is educational level in 1990. Of those 32 who were still politically active in 1990, half were from middle-class and half were from working-class backgrounds. But the 18 inactive respondents were overwhelmingly from backgrounds: 15 out of 18 (83%) inactive respondents came from working-class backgrounds.

The inactive respondents also tended to have less education. Of the 32 politically involved respondents, 21 had college or graduate degrees, compared to 11 who had not completed college. One reason the poorer respondents were less active in 1990 was because they had fewer options to be active while supporting

their families.

Many respondents reported that they focused most of their time on their families and jobs. At the time of the massacre, half the respondents had children. Over the course of the following decade, 17 more respondents became parents.³⁷⁶ Many respondents with young children reported that their parental responsibilities meant they were no longer regularly involved in political activities, but that they anticipated becoming more involved as their children grew older.

Concern about economic well-being pushed many respondents to go back to school. Since 1979, 9 reported that they had gone to college; 5 others had completed baccalaureate degrees that they had abandoned in the 1960s. In addition, 11 respondents had earned graduate degrees, including 3 doctorates, one each of divinity, medicine, and education, and 8 masters of public administration, business administration, library science, teaching, public health, and nursing. Many respondents used these degrees to get employment in helping professions, and to carry out their activist orientation.

In the interviews, 39 respondents stated they were currently employed, and the vast majority (84%) felt satisfied with their jobs. The other 11 were not in the labor force because they were in school, retired, or taking care of small children.

Evolution of beliefs:

³⁷⁶ At the time of the interviews, only 8 respondents had no children, including the youngest 4 who are now in their early 20s.

Political activism and political beliefs can be considered 2 different dimensions (see Chapter 5). Activism can be measured in the amount of time a person spends on political involvement. Beliefs, on the other hand, can be measured on a left-right political spectrum. One can have radical beliefs with no involvement; one can be very active based on beliefs at any point along the political spectrum.

The political beliefs of the respondents remained more stable than their level of activism. At the time of the interviews, a decade after the massacre, every respondent still believed that racism was still a serious problem in society, and that racial and economic justice were important goals for society to achieve. They still believed that masses of people needed organize to bring changes. These were core values that had motivated the respondents to become activists decades earlier.

Even the respondents who were no longer politically involved, still held these core beliefs. For example, 2 white male respondents R21 and R39, are among those no longer active. But both are still adamantly opposed to racism, becoming animated in the interviews as they described current racial problems.

The lifelong maintenance of core political values, established during adolescence and early adulthood, is consistent with Erikson's theory.³⁷⁷ Basic beliefs are connected to identity, and if firmly established during the identity period, they could be expected to remain fairly stable through the rest of life. Activism levels, on the other hand, involve more practical considerations, such as time to raise children, hold

³⁷⁷ Erikson, Identity.

down jobs, and pursue careers.

Based on their core beliefs, the respondents had developed a wide variety of specific political analyses. Twenty-one other respondents (42%) reported substantial changes in their politics. Ten people said they had developed a different philosophical frame work, many of them religious.³⁷⁸ Eleven described other changes, such as no longer thinking there would be a sudden revolution. Some said their radical views had "mellowed," or that they were more patient about social change. Twenty-one (42%) reported that their beliefs were basically the same as they were in 1979. But no one identified themselves as communist. Twelve said they considered themselves Marxists, socialists, or radicals. The others preferred not to use any labels. Some said that they were "less outspoken" about their views.

Eight others (16%) did not discuss their beliefs or reported they were unsure of what they thought.

The aspect of political beliefs most closely tied to activism was political efficacy, the belief that one's efforts make a difference politically. Forty-two respondents (84%) still had a sense of political efficacy. The other 8 had lost their sense of efficacy, and none of them were politically active. They included some of the most traumatized in the group, including 3 of the children and 5 who were wounded or related to those who were wounded.

In the interviews, I also asked the respondents about their

³⁷⁸ Twenty-one respondents (42%) reported religious involvement. The actual number may be higher than that, since 15 made no mention of religion (meaning they may be religious but did not talk about it in the interviews.)

hope for social change in the future. Twenty (40%) were hopeful. Fourteen (28%) had some hope, but also saw possibility of changes for the worse. Six (12%) had little hope for the future; they were also the respondents who reported losing their sense of political efficacy.

The strength of the activist identity in the majority of respondents is illustrated by their views on the possibility of their children becoming activists when they grow up. Twenty-four respondents, who all have young children, were asked: "Would you like your child(ren) to become activist(s)?" All but one said they would welcome and support their offsprings' becoming political activists.

In summary, the respondents had been through a decade of coping with their own political trauma, plus getting their lives back on course, and raising children. Yet most remained politically active. R24 concluded:

It's a hard world out there. Today there is no social movement like there was in the 60s and 70s. But there is an enduring struggle that goes on... And there will always be people will refuse to just lay down ...

That's at the heart of all of us who kept going over the years. Whatever we are doing with our lives today, we are not laying down.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation project has examined the political development of 50 people who joined the Civil Rights, Anti-War, and Women's Movements of the 1960-70s. By the late 1970s, most had adopted communist politics. On November 3, 1979, as they gathered to demonstrate against the Ku Klux Klan, they were attacked and massacred. Based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews, this study analyzes the impact of the protest movements and the massacre on the beliefs and behaviors of these individuals, who are now mostly middle-aged. It has examined the following questions:

1. Why did these individuals become radical activists? Do the respondents share common characteristics that could explain their leftist politics? If not, what did the respondents have in common?
2. Can a process of political learning for radical activists be identified? Can steps in this process be mapped?
3. How do events influence political learning? Is political socialization different during times of great upheavals than in relatively tranquil times?
4. Does the individual's age make a difference? Is the "identity" stage of adolescence and early adulthood a particularly important period for political learning? Are young people more liable to change their political orientations and/or

become activists during this time?

5. Besides the role of events, how do families affect the political socialization of radical activists? Are the radicals carrying on a family tradition? Are they rebelling against their families? Or are they incorporating some values and breaking with others?

The answers to these questions, suggested by my findings are summarized below.

Why Did These Individuals Become Radical Activists?

This research project reveals no simple answers to why the 50 respondents became radicals. These individuals did not share clear cut social characteristics that explain their leftist orientations. In fact, demographically the respondents are quite diverse. What they did share was the experience of the protest movements of the 1960s-70s, especially the Civil Rights Movement in the South.

The birth dates of the respondents cover a wide period of time, from the oldest born in 1910 to the youngest in 1973. The majority (70%), however, were born between 1940-56, growing up as part of the "protest generation." The older respondents joined the protest movements as well, as did the younger ones.

Two-thirds of the group grew up in the South, including almost all of the black respondents, and almost half of the whites (the rest from the Mid West and North East). By the 1970s, all the respondents were living in North Carolina.

Race is the biggest factor in the politicization of the

respondents of both races. Half of the respondents are black, half are white. Just this fact makes this study unusual, since previous research on the political socialization activists has rarely been done on inter-racial groups.³⁷⁹ The black respondents grew up in the South with the daily experience of racism. The older respondents who came of age in the rural South during segregation recalled especially bitter events: several witnessed brutal murders by the Ku Klux Klan. Racial injustice was mentioned by every black respondent as their most important motivation in becoming activists.

For the white respondents, race was also a major factor in their socialization. They did not bear the brunt of racism in their daily lives, but 88% of them described the Civil Rights Movement as a major factor in their political development.

Fifty-six percent of the respondents are female. As girls, these individuals tended to be more active and more aggressive than the prevailing norm for female children of the 1940s and 50s. Particular problems sometimes affected both black and white female respondents as adults. For example, two other women, one black, one white, were wives and mothers during the protest movements. Despite their desire to become involved, they were unable to for years because of the opposition of their husbands. All the respondents believed in equality of women, but the white female respondents of the baby boom cohort identified

³⁷⁹ On white activists see Flacks, "Liberated Generation;" Kenniston, Young Radicals; and Braungart and Braungart, "Life Course Development." On black activists see by Matthews and Prothro, New Southern Politics; and Orum, Black Students in Protest. On black, white, and Japanese male students from different universities, see Fendrich and Kraus, "Student Activism."

most closely with the women's movement, describing its importance to their political identity.

Opposition to the Vietnam War was also a major issue mentioned by 46% of the whole group. Five white male respondents applied for Conscientious Objector status to avoid being drafted.

Almost 2/3 of the respondents grew up in working-class or poor families, including nearly all the blacks and almost half the whites. The others grew up in middle-class homes. The diversity of these individuals in terms of social class in adulthood is indicated by their wide range of educational levels. At the time of the interviews in 1990, 38% of the respondents had graduate degrees, 14% had bachelor degrees, 22% had some college or trade school experience, and 26% had never gone to college. Many, both black and white, were the first members of their families to go to college.

No single family characteristic describes the respondents. They come from a wide variety of family sizes, from those where they were the only child to several huge families with 10 or more children. The respondents were fairly evenly distributed among oldest, youngest, and middle children. Most of their families were stable, a majority of them with both parents present in the home. The 10% who reported that their families were troubled are spread among differing racial, gender, and class groups. At the time of the interviews in 1990, all maintained ties to their parents, many of them very close.

One significant finding is that most respondents described developing a sense during their childhoods that they were part of a minority political group facing social barriers. All of the

black respondents became aware, as children, of discrimination against their race. In addition, most white respondents reported some sense of being in a political minority. All 7 respondents born into Jewish families reported that their Jewish identity was significant to their development. Several white female respondents grew up in families that discriminated against them based on gender; and others faced inequality in school. These respondents' early awareness of women's oppression laid the basis of their later radicalism. Growing up in poverty was cited by a number of respondents, both black and white, as important to their sense of identity.

Thus, for the majority of the respondents, the sense of being born into a disadvantaged group was an important factor in their development. They faced concrete problems in their own lives, including discrimination and poverty. They desired change to benefit themselves and others who faced social barriers.

Wide Diversity in Family Political Traditions:

Most interesting, from the standpoint of political socialization theory, is the wide diversity of political traditions among the respondents' parents. The political environments of the respondents' childhoods are extraordinarily diverse, ranging from families where the parents were communists to one where the father was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. Three broad categories of family traditions are identified:

1) Liberal to Left Wing Parents:

Slightly more than half the respondents (54%) grew up in homes where their families held liberal to leftist political views. During their childhoods, these respondents' parents talked about politics, and in some cases were actively involved in political causes. This group is equally divided between blacks and whites. The parents in this group included mainstream liberals who talked about politics, liberals who were activists, and communists who were also respondents in this study.

The childhood political socialization of this group is consistent with Flacks' thesis of carrying out values learned in the home.³⁸⁰ However, the structural-interactive model described by Renshon, Sigel, and Morris,³⁸¹ also provides explanatory power, because these individuals also responded to the environment around them, in most cases becoming far more radical than their parents.

2) Conservative to Right-Wing Parents:

There are 7 respondents (14%) whose parents' politics ranged from conservative to extremely right-wing. (The line between liberal and conservative parents is drawn between those who opposed segregation and those who advocated it.) All of these families were white, and all but one were middle-class, all but one from the South. Most of these parents not only talked from

³⁸⁰ Flacks, "Liberated Generation."

³⁸¹ Renshon, "Assumptive Frameworks;" Sigel, Political Learning in Adulthood; Morris, "Black Political Socialization."

a conservative viewpoint, but were also actively involved in organizations and causes. They included mainstream Republicans, pro-segregation Democrats (Dixiecrats), one father who advocated the views of the John Birch Society, and another who was a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

This category of respondents sharply contrasts with the findings of Flacks. Clearly, these individuals, by becoming communists were not "carrying out values learned in the home." Influenced by their parents, these respondents became interested in politics at an early age. But as they became adolescents and young adults, they developed their own sense of what was right and wrong, and broke with their parents views. In every case they rebelled against their families' politics, but maintained familial ties with them. To explain their political development, a model needs to include a structural-interactive approach, with elements of adolescent rebellion.

3) Apolitical Parents:

Sixteen respondents (32%) came from apolitical homes. Their parents did not discuss politics in the home, and did not participate politically. Only 2 respondents in this category reported that their parents ever voted, and in both these cases, the parents did not say who they voted for. This category is mutually exclusive from the previous 2 categories, because there is no way to determine where these parents fell on the right or the left of the political spectrum.

The respondents from apolitical families include 11 blacks and 5 whites. All 11 blacks were born in the South before 1950 to poor families. At that time, most blacks were denied the right to vote and were terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan as well. Fear was a reasonable response to the political environment, explaining why so many poor black families were apolitical. The apolitical families of the white respondents, in contrast, were not fearful, but simply lacked interest in politics. They included both working and middle-class families.

Like the previous category, this group also does not correspond to Flack's model. These respondents were not "carrying out values learned in the home," but were breaking with family traditions to become activists. A structural-interactive model appears more relevant to explain the development these respondents.³⁸²

Thus, 46% of the respondents, including all those born into apolitical, conservative, and right-wing families, do not fit the Flacks model of radical activists carrying out values learned in the home. The structural-interactive model is a better basis for understanding the political learning of these respondents.

Beginning from many different places within the social structure, the respondents became radical activists. Their myriad paths to involvement are the focus of this research. Why they became radical activists can only be understood by examining their process of development. As discussed below, I found that there were common steps in their process of political learning.

³⁸² Morris argues for this approach in "Black Political Socialization."

The Process of Political Learning for Radical Activists: Mapping the Steps

While there is a variety of starting points for the respondents' political lives, there are common elements in their process of development. Whether white or black, from liberal, right-wing, or conservative homes, all the respondents went through a radicalization process that often took a decade or more. This research identified 3 specific steps taken by the respondents in their political socialization.

Step 1: The First Activist Experience:

All of the respondents recalled the first time they acted politically, for example, marching in their first demonstration, giving a speech in a classroom, or challenging authority. The respondents deemed their earliest forays into the political world as an important part of their political life histories, and often gave vivid descriptions of them (see Chapter 8).

The respondents were 17 years old, on average, during their first activist experience. Many of these initial activist steps occurred during the 1960s, when the respondents participated in their first demonstrations. Their actions tended to be part of a collective protest, where they planned to participate in advance, and did not perceive much risk in their involvement. For those who came of age before the Civil Rights Movement, their first

activist experiences were usually individual protests against some form of injustice. Particularly for the black respondents in the segregated South, these actions involved risk. Several were physically beaten when they defied segregation, others were threatened, one was fired from her job.

Step 2: The Decision to Become a Political Activists:

Participating in one or several events, however, is not the same as deciding to be an activist as a life focus. "Becoming an activist" is defined here as making political involvement a regular part of one's life. The decision to become involved in an on-going basis is similar in some respects to a career choice. It is a choice to focus one's efforts, and participate in weekly, often daily, activities. But for the respondents, it was usually an unpaid career, and often part of the decision involved getting jobs in poverty programs, factories, or hospitals, where they could carry out their activism. The respondents were 25 years old, on average, when they took this step.

The respondents' accounts of becoming activists revealed that they felt political efficacy, political mistrust, in addition to a sharp sense of injustice.³⁸³ These factors combined in different ways for each individual. One white respondent, for example, inherited a strong sense of political efficacy from her liberal activist parents. The growth of political mistrust, on the other hand, took years to develop. She described how the

³⁸³ These factors are described by Gamson, "Political Trust," and Piven and Cloward, Poor People's Movements.

Vietnam war radicalized her, how she became "disillusioned with my country as being benign, benevolent, and moral." However, for a long time she "still held on to my faith in the political system... I still believed that the courts were for justice..." But through years of activism, including many law suits, she said she learned that "the courts were an evil part of an evil system; I knew how they were used to attack oppressed people."

A black respondent, in contrast, grew up with political mistrust, dating back to her childhood when she witnessed a racist murder, where the sheriff refused to intervene. A sense of injustice and political mistrust were always strong for her. But political efficacy, the belief that she could do something to change things, developed later with the advent of the Civil Rights Movement.

Step 3: Decision to Become a Communist:

Why does an activist decide to become a communist? Twenty years ago, during the 1970s, communist politics was an attractive option for some radical activists for several reasons. The U.S. government had no legitimacy in the eyes of these veterans of the social movements. Despite massive protest movements, they experienced racism, sexism, and poverty in their daily lives. Moreover, in their view, U.S. imperialism was responsible for the Vietnam War, corrupt capitalist politics led to the Watergate scandal, and capitalist economics resulted in runaway inflation and urban fiscal crises. President Carter even gave a "crisis of confidence" speech over nation-wide TV. How much longer, they

thought, could this system last?

The U.S. appeared in crisis, and revolutionary movements were growing around the world. In 1973, the Communist Party of Vietnam, a tiny country, had defeated the greatest military power on earth. Reports coming out of China in the early 1970s portrayed Mao Tse Tung's heroic "Long March," followed by a people's struggle to build socialism, with barefoot doctors and cultural revolution. Leaders of African liberation movements in South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau, and Nicaragua were increasingly embracing Marxism to help their struggles against colonialism and apartheid.

As all of this was happening in the 1970s, the American protest movements were ebbing. The demonstrations the respondents had grown up in, the campaigns which were the context of their young adulthood, were attracting fewer and fewer people. But, in the minds of these activists, given the crises of capitalism, surely this lull was only temporary.

In these conditions, the respondents, and others like them around the country, hungered for revolutionary theory and organization. A decade of experience had firmly rooted political efficacy in them. They believed that the social movements had ushered in important democratic rights, but that basic economic issues still needed to be addressed. They were convinced that with organization and tactically sharp leadership, people could make far more significant changes. Marxism, the call to unite the downtrodden, provided a theory and a compelling, idealistic vision.

Thirty-eight of the respondents (76%) became communists, many of them joining a small organization named the Communist Workers Party in the late 1970s. Their average age when they made this decision was 28. They had no direct ties, nor family connections, to the Communist Party USA. (The only respondents whose parents were communists were the children of respondents who adopted communism in the 1970s.) These individuals were drawn to the Marxist vision of uniting working people of all races, genders, and ethnic backgrounds into a struggle for a better world. They studied Marxism because they believed that it provided the best understanding of reality and the clearest principles for organizing people.

All the respondents were participating in the anti-Klan demonstration on November 3, 1979, when their five friends and loved ones were gunned down. Since that time, almost all the respondents report that they no longer consider themselves communists. Most, however, are still activists, and all still feel strongly about racial and economic justice.

Mapping the Steps:

The in depth interviews in this study describe how the process of becoming a political activist is an individual one. Respondents were influenced by events, peers, families, but ultimately each had to make their own decisions about how to devote their time and energy.

The 3 steps taken by this group of activists can be graphed for each respondent. Figures 12.1 and 12.2 are examples of 2

individuals. The vertical axis of these diagrams indicate the activism level of the individual over time. The horizontal is a time line beginning with the respondent's birth date.

Figure 12.1, below, depicts the political activism of Respondent 12, an African-American, born in 1945 in North Carolina. In childhood, R12 talked with his parents about politics, which placed him at activism level 1 in childhood. This respondent took "Step 1," his first activist experience, in 1960, when he refused to sit in the back of a segregated bus, and was beaten up as a result. He graduated from high school in 1963, and went into the military, where he only able to talk about politics. When he left the military, he entered North Carolina Agricultural and Technological College, a black school in Greensboro, where he became a student leader. Very quickly, he decided that protest activism would be the focus of his life. Thus he took "Step 2," becoming an activist. He became very involved in the emerging Black Power Movement, spending less and less time studying, and finally dropping out of school to focus full time on politics. Figure 12.1 shows his activism level moving from level 7 to 8 during these years.

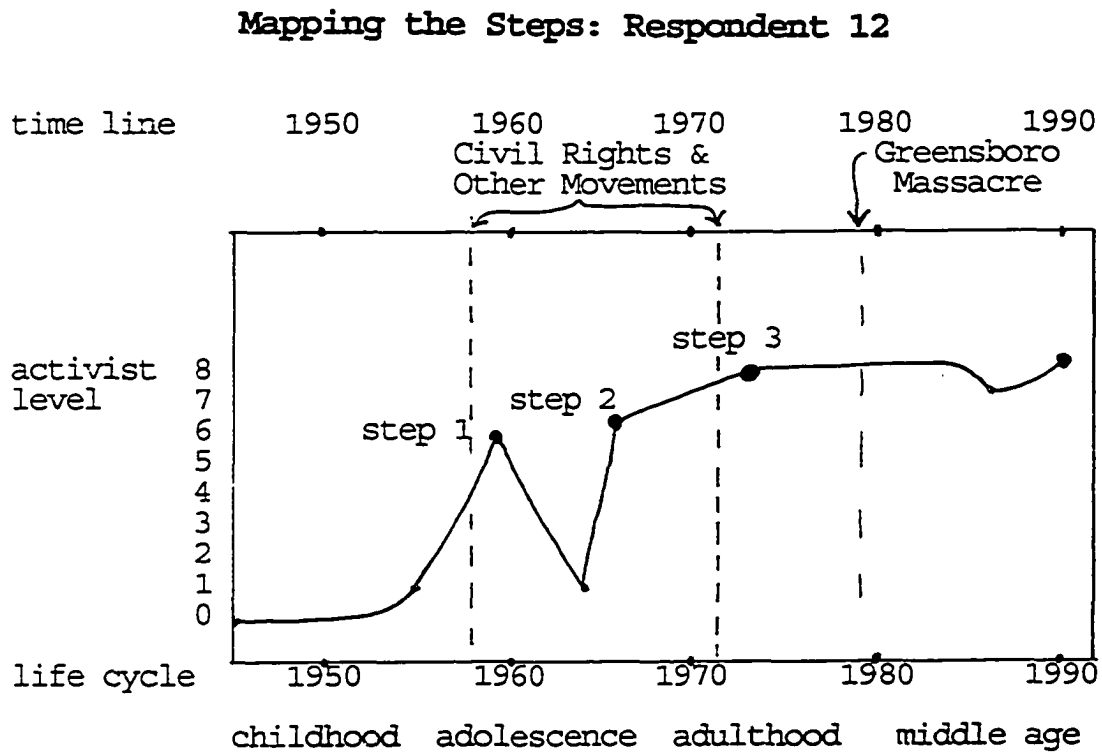
In the early 1970s, after years of involvement in the Black Liberation Movement, R12 developed a communist analysis, taking "Step 3." He was one of the founding members of the Communist Workers Party in North Carolina, and part of the local leadership. Throughout this time, his involvement consumed almost all of his waking hours.

In 1979, R12 was stabbed by a Klansman during the Greensboro Massacre. He remained very active during the trials of the Klan

and Nazis. Increasingly, he became interested in becoming a Baptist minister (see Chapter 11 for his description of this transition). He went back to college, and then to graduate school in divinity. For several years, while he was pursuing his studies, he was politically active several times a week as student government president. During this time, his activism dipped to level 7. Since he graduated and became a minister, he has returned to Greensboro and to his full time activism (level 8).

In sum, Respondent 12 came from a political family, who introduced him in early childhood to political discussion. The Civil Rights Movement encouraged him to defy segregation when he was 15 years old. He became a full-time activist in college, and his involvement level has been quite consistent since then, in spite of the massacre and pursuing a graduate degree.

Figure 12.1



Activist Levels:

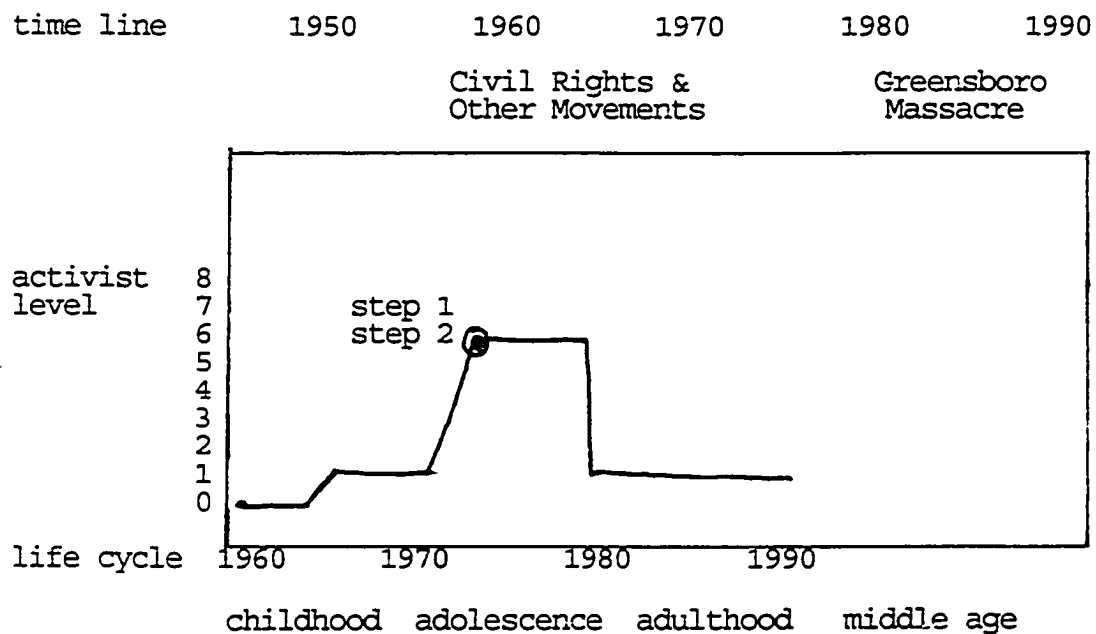
- 1 talks about politics
- 2 votes
- 3 donates money
- 4 member of organization
- 5 donates time
- 6 active in campaign
- 7 active up to 2X per week
- 8 active >4X per week

The second respondent used as an example for mapping political activism is Respondent 45. Graphed in Figure 12.2 below, R45 is also African-American, born in North Carolina, in 1961. As a child, she remembers talking about politics with her mother and older sister (who are both respondents). But her graph is quite different from R12's. She took Step 1, her first activist experience, in 1977, at the age of 16, when she got involved in political activities organized by the CWP. She reported that she thoroughly enjoyed her involvement, stating "I felt like I was doing something good... something that would help somebody else." She soon decided she wanted to be an activist. During this time her activism was at level 6, because she got involved in several different campaigns, but her involvement was not yet on a regular basis.

November 3, 1979, was an extremely traumatic experience for R45. If not for the massacre, this young woman might have become a life-long activist like her mother. Instead, November 3, 1979, was her last activist experience. She pulled out of politics completely, stating, "I felt like I went into a shell." When interviewed in 1991, she was still inactive, and did not even vote in elections.

Figure 12.2

Mapping the Steps: Respondent 45



- Activist Levels:
- 1 talks about politics
 - 2 votes
 - 3 donates money
 - 4 member of organization
 - 5 donates time
 - 6 active in campaign
 - 7 active up to 2X per week
 - 8 active >4X per week

Similar maps can be drawn for the other respondents as well. They are a quick way of looking at the level of activism over the life time, and the years and ages of respondents when they took the basic steps in becoming an activist. Step 1 and Step 2 could be tested in future research projects on other respondents whose political involvement is more mainstream, to see if these steps are important in the development of a wider range of activists.

The Impact of Events on Political Learning:

The respondents in this project were profoundly affected by historical circumstances, suggesting that events can greatly influence the political development of at least some individuals. This is in sharp contrast to the model of political socialization developed by Hyman and Easton, which ignores historical influences.³⁸⁴ The Hyman/Easton theory may describe socialization during relatively peaceful times, but is inadequate in explaining why some become activists during more tumultuous periods. During tranquil eras, parental influence goes unchallenged. During eventful times, the nature of political socialization may be different because influences outside the home may overpower those from parents. All respondents in this study described incidents outside their families that were significant in their political development.

³⁸⁴ Hyman, Political Socialization, and Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life.

The findings in this research are consistent with those of Jennings and Niemi's landmark Three Wave Study. Jennings and Niemi examined a random sample of a cohort that came of age during the late 1960s, interviewing both youth and their parents. They found that the respondents ranged from apolitical to very radical, and that the cohort, as a whole, diverged from their parents in being more active, further to the left, and more independent of mainstream American political parties.³⁸⁵ The entire cohort had been affected by the social protest movements.

Does Age Make a Difference?

These findings suggest not only that events affect people, but also that the age of the individuals plays a role in how the events affect them. This study indicates that Erikson's identity stage, running from adolescence through young adulthood, is an important concept for political socialization. Erikson explains that during this developmental stage, an individual searches for his or her sense of self relative to society. Erikson states, "the individual is much closer to the historical day than he is at earlier stages of childhood development."³⁸⁶

Jennings' research illustrates how historical events can vary in their impact on people in different generations. In an analysis of data from the 3 wave study, Jennings compared the political knowledge of the respondents who came of age during the

³⁸⁵ Jennings and Niemi, Political Character of Adolescence.

³⁸⁶ Erikson, Identity, p. 27.

late 1960s with their parents. The memory of the same events varied significantly between the older and younger groups.

Jennings explained:

Even when generations are passing through the same historical period, the elements of signal events that stick in their respective collective memories can differ due to the receptivity and vulnerability represented by their radically different locations in the life cycle... ³⁸⁷

Thus the social movements, experienced by both those coming of age at the time and their parents, affected each generation differently.

Beck and Jennings also reported that by the third wave of the study, when their research subjects were in their thirties, their political orientations had stabilized to some degree. ³⁸⁸

The findings in this research support the findings of the Three Wave Study in several ways. Many of the respondents in this study came of age during profound social change, and political participation gave their life meaning. On average, the respondents were 25 years old when they decided to become activists as a life focus. Deciding to become an activist meant becoming known as a person who was trying to change society. Many reported that they wanted to do something significant with their lives. As one respondent stated:

Some day I am going to die. I want to feel good about myself. Whether I've had any influence or not, at least I

³⁸⁷ M. Kent Jennings, "Political Knowledge Over Time and Across Generations," paper presented at the 1993 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 2-5, p. 20.

³⁸⁸ Paul A. Beck and M. Kent Jennings, "Family Traditions, Political Periods, and the Development of Partisan Orientations," Journal of Politics 53n3, 1991, pp. 742-63.

have done the best I could.

Moreover, the core beliefs developed by the respondents as they decided to become activist, persisted in their life. During the interviews in 1990, the respondents continued to believe strongly in the need for racial and economic justice. They still had serious criticisms of U.S. political and economic structures, and as a whole, felt that only through organizing massive numbers of people could significant changes be made. The vast majority reported that they were no longer communists, that they had "mellowed" some politically, but their core beliefs remained. The levels of activism at the time of the interviews varied far more than the political beliefs. But even those who were no longer active still felt intensely about their political views.

Finally, another finding in this study concerning the impact of events during the identity period, was the way in which the Greensboro Massacre seemed to affect the youngest respondents. The sense of self and political efficacy of those respondents just coming into adulthood seemed to be more profoundly (and negatively) influenced by the trauma of the massacre than the respondents who were in their late 20s and older.

The Influence of Social Movements

Outweighs Influence of Families

Finally, this study found that the social movements were the most powerful socializer for these respondents. Although families played the largest role in early learning, often profoundly affecting their offspring, over the long term, the

social movements had a more powerful impact.

How can one compare the influence of parents to the influence of the social movements? Depending on the family background, the experience of the social movements reinforced early learning in the home, or pulled the child in an opposite direction. In the liberal families, the learning in the family was reinforced by experience outside the home, in a pattern described by Flacks (1967). In the conservative homes, the respondents' parents were a powerful influence on their early childhood learning, but their later experience in society caused them to change the direction of their political beliefs and become leftists. In the apolitical families, the respondents broke with their parents' fear to become involved in the social movements.

In the apolitical and conservative families, the social movements were the stronger influence for the respondents, leading them to break with their families' political traditions. Even for the respondents from liberal homes, events pulled the respondents towards becoming more radical and more active than their parents.

Families introduce the political world to their offspring. This research found that the types of earliest political memories were largely determined by the respondents' parents' involvement. The children from politically-involved families (on both the right and the left), recalled their parents' activism as their earliest political recollections. In contrast, the earliest political memories of those from apolitical families all came from outside the home.

The more involved the parents, the sooner the respondents got involved politically. Step 1 for the children of activists, regardless of whether they were on the right or the left side of the political spectrum, happened during adolescence. On the other hand, the respondents from apolitical homes were already young adults when they first participated, with a mean age of 22. Step 2 and Step 3, however, were less affected by family political traditions. This is illustrated in Figures 12.3 and 12.4 on the following pages.

The chart (Figure 12.3) below includes data on the mean year and age of the respondents in the 3 steps, as well as their birth dates and level of activism in 1990. The respondents are divided into 3 different categories according to their parents' political traditions (liberal to left, conservative to right, and apolitical). ³⁸⁹

³⁸⁹ The 4 youngest respondents are left out of this chart because they are all the children of other respondents (in the liberal to left category), and their young ages skew the average dates of the political steps.

Figure 12.3

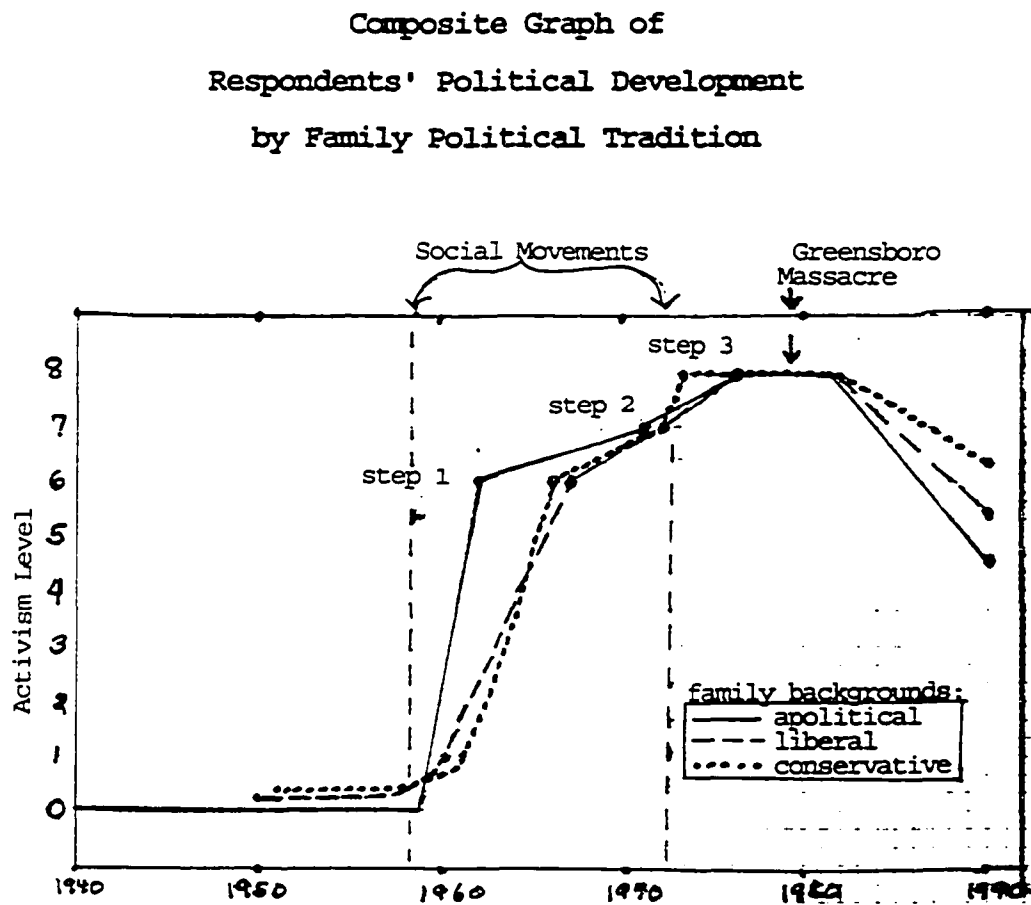
Chart: Family Traditions and Political Development

	Liberal family background (mean) n=23	Conservative family background (mean) n=7	Apolitical family background (mean) n=16
Birth	1950	1951	1940
step 1: first activism	1967 (17 years old)	1966 (14 years old)	1962 (22 years old)
step 2: decision to be activist	1972 (22 years old)	1972 (21 years old)	1971 (31 years old)
step 3: decision to be communist	1976 (26 years old)	1973 (22 years old)	1977 (32 years old)
activism level in 1990	5.5	6.3	4.8

Data from the chart are graphed in Figure 12.4. The graph shows the composite paths of the respondents divided according to the political traditions of their childhoods. The solid line represents the apolitical respondents. They were born earlier, on average, than the other respondents, and did not discuss politics in the home. The advent of the Civil Rights Movement abruptly broke this political pattern. The apolitical respondents took Step 1, their first political experience, in 1962, when they were 22 years old. They took the second step, deciding to become political activists, in 1971 when they were 31 years old on average. And in 1977, they took step 3, becoming communists, when they were on average 32 years old.

The respondents from liberal and conservative family backgrounds had paths that were strikingly similar. They were born during the baby boom (average birth date 1950), and had their first activist experience during the late 1960s when they were teenagers. They decided to become activists in 1972, when they were on average 22 years old. In Step 3, the respondents from conservative homes, became communists several years earlier than the other groups (mean = 1973) and at the youngest age (mean = 22 years old). The respondents from conservative backgrounds also tended to be slightly more active in 1990 than those in the other categories.

Figure 12.4



Overall, the paths of the respondents from the different family traditions are remarkably similar. All became extremely active in the context of the protest movements. As the graph indicates, they took Step 1 and Step 2 during the social movements, and then the third step, of becoming communists, as the social movements declined and they tried to maintain their activist commitment.

For these respondents, the social movements played the most decisive role. In 54% of the respondents, the social movements reinforced the liberal political learning in the home, and resulted in them becoming more involved and, in most cases, more radical than their parents. In 46%, the social movements contradicted the early learning in the family, and fundamentally changed the political orientation of the respondents. This includes 16 respondents (32% of total), who came from apolitical homes and broke with their apolitical parents. For 7 others (14% of the total), the social movements dramatically changed the direction of the conservative views they learned in the family.

In sum, political learning is a complex and personal process, especially for those who make it the center of their lives. Their commitments are influenced by many things, including families, peers, other role models, events outside the home, and their needs at different stages of their lives. For the 50 respondents of this study, the intersection of the protest movements and their coming of age profoundly influenced the courses of their lives.

Appendix

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. I am interested in how you became interested in politics and politically active. Remembering back as far as you can, what influenced you? Influences could include members of your family or other individuals, friends, church, school, events going on around you, books, TV, or anything else.
2. [Following respondents description of first activist involvement] How did your parents respond to your involvement? Did they support or oppose your activism? Were your parents politically active? what type of activities?
3. How did your political beliefs evolve? Please continue to tell me your personal history of activism.
4. How did you become interested in Workers Viewpoint Organization? [Note: this organization changed its name to Communist Workers Party in 1979.]
5. Is there anything you want to add before we get to November 3, 1979?
6. Please describe your personal experience -- what you saw, what you did, what you thought, and what you felt -- on November 3, 1979.
7. Tell me about your involvement after the murders? [ie. did you lose your job? did you fear for your safety? your family's safety? were you involved in the funeral march? in other demonstrations? in the three trials concerning the murders?] Politically were you more or less active than before the murders?
8. Looking back now, more than a decade later, how have your political beliefs changed or remained the same?
9. In your opinion, has society gotten better or worse since then? How do you see the possibility of social change? are you more hopeful or less hopeful now?
10. Are you politically active now? More active? less? or about the same as before the murders? What kinds of activities are you involved in? what organizations? are you a member or a leader?
11. How do you describe the Greensboro murders to your children? Would you like them to become politically active?

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