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Patterns of Conflict Preceding the 1964 Riots

HARLEM AND BEDFORD-STUYVESANT

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Data on racial controversies involving New York's black and Puerto Rican population between 1960 and July 1964 were obtained from an analysis of New York *Times* articles. These data deal with "events" or exchanges between representatives of the city's minority populations and public officials or nonminority actors. An analysis of these exchanges for the four and one-half year period preceding the July riots reveals that violence followed unsuccessful efforts by minority actors to alter the behavior of nonminority and government actors toward them through peaceful and nonviolent strategies. This pattern of conflicts conforms to the general idea that mass violence by aggrieved groups or classes is more likely to occur when: (1) conventional channels for solving problems fail to resolve differences between groups; (2) nonviolent strategies fail to evoke positive responses from the targets of grievances; and/or (3) they have few strategies to choose among in order to make their case before the public. It also offers support for the "solidarity theories" of collective violence which link the genesis of violence to everyday political life, and specifies a connection between the frequency and intensity of conflictive actions.

This nation's experience with civil disorders during the 1960s inspired many persons to discuss the relation between peaceful nonviolent civil rights activities and violence. While it is widely assumed that such a connection exists, we have not yet identified what the form or extent of that connection is. The central question raised in this paper is whether the Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant riots of July 1964 were preceded by a pattern of conflict escalating between minority parties and their antagonists in which minority attempts to redress grievances and seek change were dealt with in an increasingly cooperative (and less disrup-

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tive) or noncooperative (and more disruptive) manner. To answer this question, data will be presented on the behavior of minority and majority/government groups involved in race-related issues in the city prior to the riots.

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS AND COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

In their studies of urban riots social scientists have tended to remove riots from the behavioral context in which they emerged, or have concentrated only on the "precipitating events" which instigated violence and the dynamics of rioting once violence had begun (Smelser, 1962; Wanderer, 1969; Quarantelli and Dynes, 1971; Fogelson, 1971; Morgan and Clark, 1973). Others have focused on the alleged attitudes or beliefs of individuals whose expectations were not being satisfied and as a result were more likely to participate in some act of collective violence (Gurr, 1970: 83; Davis, 1969: 690). The concept of "relative deprivation" is associated with this argument, but the absence of effective social control devices in cities to retard persons' aggressive impulses and the general malaise of minority individuals confined to inner city ghettos also were held to contribute to the willingness of minority persons to support rioting. The assumptions underlying much of this research would fit into what the Tillys have called "breakdown theories" of collective violence. In such theories mass violence is viewed as a regrettable but evanescent by-product of large-scale changes in society, such as industrialization or urbanization (Tillys, 1975: 4).

These theories do not seem to have much explanatory power for New York's experiences. The history of a city like New York is cluttered with episodes of mob action. Even a partial accounting of rioting in New York based on published and unpublished documents reveals well over 100 events between 1690 and 1969, some occurring during periods of rapid growth and others during periods of relative quiet (Leder, 1955; Matteson, 1890s; Headley, 1970; Davis, 1971; Horsmanden, 1971; Billington, 1964; Bridenbaugh, 1966; Champagne, 1967; Boyer, 1973; Asbury, 1928; McCague, 1968; Man, 1951; Gutman, 1965; Taft and Ross, 1970; Adams, 1966; Muraskin, 1972; Orlansky, 1943). The 1964 Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant riots were part of this tradition of collective violence in New York. It also should be noted that New York City is in no sense an exceptional case. Most United States cities have

rich histories of rioting. The 1964 Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant riots also appear to have shared an important trait with their predecessors which helps to refute a nagging corollary of "breakdown theories" that collective violence bears little or no logical or temporal relation to established patterns of behavior among groups. Far from occurring in a social void, these episodes of collective violence were closely tied to contests over political, economic, or social domination in the city, and sometimes with national issues and conflicts as well. The 1964 riots emerged from four and one-half years of bitter debates over civil rights issues. Getting their initial impetus from protests against racial discrimination in the South, civil rights activities directed against local problems emerged somewhat hesitantly. They accelerated rapidly, however, as minority representatives attempted to interject themselves into the city's decision-making process and were resisted by a variety of governmental and nongovernmental parties.

This interpretation is much closer to that offered in "solidarity theories" of collective violence (Tillys, 1975). According to their proponents, the social conditions which facilitate the emergence of collective violence are seen as being similar if not identical to those compelling groups to use "other kinds of collective action in pursuit of [their] common interest" (Tillys, 1975: 7). In fact, violence is seen as accompanying and complementing nonviolent efforts by groups to enter or resist being forced from centers of political and economic power. Access to such centers is viewed as being artificially restricted to only a few of the potential groups with real concerns and aspirations. As a result, when new contenders make bids for power, those parties currently holding power offer resistance to these encroachments, conflict ensues, and violence frequently occurs. Far from occurring outside of or against established political routines, however, these conflicts and the violence they breed are actually attempts to elaborate more conventional decision-making practices to cover unanticipated problems or to work out contradictions within the political system (Maier, 1974; Feagin and Hahn, 1973: 53; Tillys, 1975: 241).[1]

1. Some might question the applicability of this argument for all forms of mob action. Would it apply, for instance, to soccer riots or rioting at a rock concert? It might very well, assuming such activities were extensions of intergroup bickering outside of the specific context in question and that such bickering could be linked to the political power of the participants (Hobsbawm, 1959; Tillys, 1975: 289). Nevertheless, one must hold open the possibility that there are forms of mob action that would not be covered by this line of reasoning.

Particular emphasis has been placed on relations between proponents of change and social control agents prior to a violent outburst (Tillys, 1975). Mass violence frequently

One critical issue raised by proponents of "solidarity theories" concerns the timing of mob activities in relation to other ways of conducting public debates and engaging in conflict. Advocates of one position argue that aggrieved groups are more likely to use violence—and generally resort to more disruptive strategies—when: (1) they begin experiencing some success (i.e., their opponents become more cooperative and less antagonistic) and seek to punish their opponents for past injustices or solidify their control over some newly acquired resource; or (2) following some setbacks after a string of successes (Eisenger, 1973; Gamson, 1975). Proponents of a second perspective argue that groups with grievances are more likely to adopt more disruptive strategies—including violence—as less disruptive strategies are shown to be ineffective in encouraging their opponents to behave more responsibly to complaints (Tillys, 1975; Sears and McConahay, 1973; Maier, 1974). These hypothetical patterns of conflict escalation are summarized below:

Hypothesis 1. Disruptiveness and violence followed success.

Increases in minority disruptiveness (and decreases in more cooperative acts) coincided with their opponents' increasing cooperativeness (and declining hostility) to minority initiatives.

Hypothesis 2. Disruptiveness and violence followed some setbacks after early successes.

Increases in minority disruptiveness (and decreases in more cooperative acts) coincided with their opponents' return to less cooperative (and more antagonistic) actions, after some initial advances in more cooperative actions and declines in disruptive actions by minority opponents.

Hypothesis 3: Disruptiveness and violence followed failure.

Increases in minority disruptiveness (and decreases in more cooperative acts) coincided with their opponents' increasing use of more antagonistic and less cooperative actions.[2]

follows a clash between peaceful demonstrators and social control agents who are intent on dispersing the protesters. This happened on many occasions during the 1960s. In fact, the 1964 riots in New York City got their impetus from the killing of a black youngster by a police officer, and the subsequent clash of police with blacks who were demonstrating outside of the officer's precinct headquarters. What followed was nearly a week of running battles with police, looting and arson in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant. As important as the fights with police immediately preceding the riot may have been in generating mass violence, however, they probably would not have been sufficient to start a riot had they not followed four and one-half years of intense racial conflicts in the city.

Research on community conflict tends to support this approach and indicates the importance of existing intergroup relations and organizational agendas in setting the tone and direction of controversies (Coleman, 1957; Gamson, 1966; Lipsky, 1970; Crain, Katz, and Rosenthal, 1969). In recent years this perspective has even begun to find its way into studies of collective violence and its relations to other modes of conflict and competition between groups (Oberschall, 1973; Tillys, 1975; Gamson, 1975; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977).

It is difficult to conceive of ghetto riots during the 1960s occurring after a series of successful efforts to reduce housing discrimination, disparities in educational offerings, and the like. Nevertheless, the pattern of conflict described in Hypothesis 1 has been offered as a possible explanation for other types of violent outbursts and should not be arbitrarily discounted (Gamson, 1975; Tillys, 1975). Antiabolitionist riots (Richards, 1970) or Ku Klux Klan terrorism (Trelease, 1972) would satisfy some assumptions underlying Hypothesis 1 (e.g., the initiators have mobilized defenses of some prerogative they view as their own), but clearly not others (e.g., that the aspiring group is only now coming into power). Hypothesis 2 might be more attractive to observers of con-

2. Several additional points need to be made. First, no case study can hope to determine which of these perspectives is actually correct; not for riots during the sixties and certainly not for riots during other periods of history in other nations. What one can do, however, is to identify which perspective helps us understand best the conflicts preceding the Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant riots and to hope that subsequent analyses of other riots will clear up ambiguities and errors in the present analysis. Second, as stated, these alternative views of violent conflict imply that the occurrence of mob action would have no effect on subsequent conflicts or the chances of violence in the future. In reality, just the opposite is probably true; but in the absence of longitudinal data on conflicts before and after serveral episodes of collective violence, our theories of violent conflict will stay in their present form. Third, while relations between groups or "classes" may be a critical determinant of the chance that one or more of them will use violence against the others, one should not overlook the importance of a group's or class's internal relations as a determinant of its behavior toward other parties (Gamson, 1975; Mills, 1962). In this paper, however, we will only be considering patterns of actions between sets of actors as a possible determinant of the likelihood that some party will turn to violence in order to instigate or resist social change.

There is one final point. Each of the models of violent conflict referred to above is derived from the observed or anticipated behavior of individual groups, or refers to the behavior of numerous parties as if it were consciously coordinated. For instance, in this paper one finds references to groups "turning" or resorting to violence under certain conditions. Such references are not intended to imply that a rational decision-making process involving many groups is taking place. There are at least two reasons for this. First, while there are some forms of collective violence like terrorism which tend to be based on a calculated choice by some party, a rational decision-making approach would ignore or obscure the majority of collective violent events in which the participants do

temporary riots if only because it offers some familiar parallels with theories of "relative deprivation," based as they are on the premise that people rebel when their fortunes decline (or they are perceived as declining). In no way, however, is this hypothesis intended to serve as a proxy for "relative deprivation" theories. Proponents of Hypothesis 3 might expect the opponents of aggrieved groups to waver for a time between piecemeal reforms and strict codes of social control—thereby contributing to changing perceptions of their intent—but there should be a longer, more pronounced trend away from concessions and toward antagonistic actions (Tillys, 1975; Maier, 1972). These ideas will be considered in greater detail below.

RACIAL CONFLICTS IN NEW YORK, 1960-JULY 1964

It has been argued that ideas associated with "solidarity theories" of collective violence would be more useful in helping one understand the genesis of the 1964 Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant riots than would "breakdown theories" of violence. To defend this position and to determine whether the riots followed a successful or unsuccessful series of efforts by minority actors to redress their grievances peacefully, a brief account of the main conflicts preceding the riot will be offered. It will show how between 1960 and 1962 minority actors tried to expand the scope and frequency of their involvement in local affairs by relying upon a combination of conventional and nonconventional, but generally peaceful, techniques for influencing the public agenda of New York City. It also will catalogue the rapid deterioration of relations between themselves and nonminority and government parties beginning in the spring of 1963. At that point civil rights activists intensified their campaigns against continued racial segregation in jobs, housing, and education, and began to abandon more conventional strategies for gaining recognition of minority concerns. Their opponents resisted these encroachments, and eventually violence broke out between them. The analytical narrative, in turn, will help to demonstrate that the pattern of conflict escalation preceding the riots (Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 and 2) cannot be viewed as an artifact of a host of small, unrelated actions undertaken by anonymous strangers in behalf of their own exotic causes.

Actually, the major parties to New York's racial conflicts probably were quite aware of one another's existence in 1960 for there had been some race-related debates during the previous decade through which a number of minority, nonminority, and government representatives would have come to know each other (Ravitch, 1974; Sexton, 1965). In any case the three years between 1960 and 1962 provided many groups and leaders on both sides of any civil rights issue with a chance to become better acquainted with their opponents' respective strategies and policy positions. During that period minority groups experimented with a variety of tactics—including nonviolent demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes—in relatively small dosages, while trying to maintain good channels of communication with government and nonminority leaders.

It became apparent, however, that this approach would not lead to significant reforms. For instance, early in 1961 a state court ruled that protests initiated by several civil rights groups against local liquor stores accused of discriminatory hiring practices were illegal. The effort to expand minority employment and acquire more minority

not know in advance that violence will occur. This certainly appears to have been the case for many of the riots in the United States during the 1960s which emerged out of what was at first a peaceful demonstration or a confrontation between a police officer and one or more citizens. Second, to make such an argument tenable one would have to specify not only how and when these groups actually communicated with one another, but also that their members understood the long- and short-run consequences of their actions. While a process of communication is alluded to in the present paper, albeit at a fairly abstract level, no attempt can or will be made to attribute such understanding to the actors in question. The behavior of nearly 700 different groups or their representatives analyzed here is summarized in much the same way as one would describe changes in the strategies of two basketball teams as they jockey for advantageous positions on the court, gain or lose momentum, and eventually succeed or fail.

The attitudes, beliefs, or motives of the parties, while undoubtedly important to them at the time, are quite irrelevant for us insofar as they were not publicly expressed and recorded. What matters is how patterns in their behavior developed, the direction those patterns took, and whether such patterns make sense to us as observers given our understanding of conflict and history; not whether the initiators of those actions did or even could understand the implications of their collective behavior (Mills, 1959). This is a distinctly sociological approach to the study of episodic forms of collective action like riots. To argue that some forms of collective action, like a demonstration, news conference, or court proceeding, are planned or at least emerge as a result of some calculated strategy while others, like some instances of mob action, are not, is to miss the point. All forms of collective action can make sense to an observer who can show their determinate relation to each other over a long period of time. Hence, the conditions under which violence does or does not occur can be understood through its relation to other forms of collective action, viewed together over time, and without or even in spite of the participants' alleged knowledge of the larger pattern to which their behavior has contributed.

business through private channels had been dealt a serious defeat. Further attempts to help blacks get more jobs through nonviolent tactics with businesses that did not have government contracts either yielded symbolic victories only or were effectively terminated with help from the courts. Similarly, once the energies of rent strike organizations were directed toward court fights in 1964, the ability of these groups to sustain concerted mass action was severely curtailed. The effect of both cases was to close off an accepted channel for resolving private grievances in the public sector. Subsequent actions by civil rights activists would become increasingly focused on the government itself as efforts to work through or around other established political routines and public institutions also proved ineffective. Hence, the failure to resolve employment and housing grievances in the private arena with the assistance of government agencies would contribute to the politicization of racial conflicts in the city as the decade wore on and new issues emerged.

The relationship between the civil rights movement in the South and the genesis of local racial controversies in the 1960s is striking. Here again, initial efforts by activists in the city took the form of nonviolent protests against private businesses. Both the NAACP and CORE participated in these activities at different times in 1960, but it is important to note that these demonstrations were not initiated because of local grievances. Rather, they were undertaken against chain stores like Woolworths and S. H. Kress Department Stores, which had Southern affiliates that discriminated against blacks. In the spring of 1963, the protest activities were expanded to other stores with Southern counterparts and a boycott was called, but it never materialized.

Much of the momentum local civil rights groups achieved in raising sensitive issues of concern to city residents can be traced to these early efforts by the same groups to cope with and generate concern for the plight of Southern blacks. Such activities were important not only because they helped to identify similar problems within the city, but also because they provided an opportunity for local groups to develop ties among themselves and strategies for instigating reforms on a local level. This concrescence extended beyond the more established civil rights organizations and into the ranks of avowed extremist groups like the Black Muslims. Still, for the time being at least, the effect of local civil rights activity on behalf of racial justice in the South was to postpone rather than encourage efforts to ameliorate the conditions faced by most blacks and Puerto Ricans living in the city.

School desegregation was one of the issues where this inactivity on local problems had important consequences. The lack of initiative shown by the board of education had stimulated the Parents' Workshop for Equality to call for a boycott on the first day of classes in September of 1960. In order to avoid that action, however, Superintendent of Schools Theobald initiated a policy of permitting minority students to transfer to predominantly white schools. This removed any immediate threat of a boycott and some of the more active parents from the controversy for a while, but neither those parents nor the board of education had begun to confront the fundamental problems facing most minority children.

Action in the areas of urban renewal and poor housing also was slow in coming, despite the fair amount of civil rights activity dedicated to these issues. Civil rights pressure against bad housing conditions had not been particularly annoying to either building owners or public officials during this period. Considerable attention had been paid to legislative efforts at both the local and state levels, but civil rights groups' patience had not been significantly rewarded. Even in the area of urban renewal, where minority activists had been able to increase the amount of low- and middle-class housing that would be built, little construction was actually completed until 1965 and 1966.

The acceleration of civil rights activity in 1963 and 1964 (see Table 1) followed three years of studied indolence by government officials and a concerted effort by business and civic leaders to ignore pleas by both minority and government actors to respond to black and Puerto Rican needs. While local officials had struggled to acquire the authority they said would be needed to cope with the city's problems, minority activists had tested established channels for seeking reforms as well as direct action techniques for drawing public attention to their demands. Neither had brought significant results.

Charges of inaction were hurled against civic and government leaders in the spring and early summer of 1963 in relation to job opportunities, school desegregation, and bad housing conditions. While official requests for continued discussion and study of the issues were not rejected by civil rights groups, they were no longer a sufficient inducement to postpone mass action. Picketing, already in progress against local stores whose Southern branches discriminated, was rapidly expanded to cover other businesses and building sites whose owners were accused of discriminatory hiring practices. The accelera-

tion of civil rights activity and the inclusion of more provocative strategies, like blocking roads surrounding construction sites, led to the arrest of over 600 demonstrators in June and July, as they resisted and occasionally clashed with police trying to reopen those roads. An agreement to end the protests and reduce job discrimination that had been worked out with the help of Governor Rockefeller quickly fell through, and after a summer of intense but relatively peaceful civil rights activity, minority activists had little to show for their trouble.

The momentum that had been achieved in civil rights activities during the summer of 1963 was not lost, though, when the attention of the city turned to slum conditions in the fall of that year. A rent strike which had been threatened in June of 1963 became a reality in September, and grew throughout the winter of 1964. The strike began to wane in the spring, however, because of court decisions that legitimated the rent strike and drew activists into the long and complex judicial process, which might give them legal victories but no program or funds to combat bad housing conditions. This also removed considerable pressure from officials to find solutions to minority demands.

The confrontation over the authority of government officials to make and enforce policies affecting minority citizens emerged most fully in controversies over school desegregation and police brutality in 1964. The question of integrated educational facilties had never really gone away despite every effort by school officials to avoid it. Two boycotts of public schools—the first a good deal larger than the second—occurred in February and March of 1964. They left some civil rights groups in the city at odds with one another and shattered any hope of arriving at a compromise solution to the desegregation issue with school officials.

The situation in the city worsened as local civil rights groups accelerated their campaign against police practices during the spring of 1964. Protests against the police department and efforts by community groups to institute a police-civilian review board to investigate charges of police brutality failed to provoke officials into any action that might relieve the anxiety of minority citizens over police practices. Continued rebukes by city officials to requests to establish a board finally spurred the NAACP, CORE, Puerto Rican Committee for Civil Rights, and Workers' Defense League to set up their own civilian review board in May of 1964 (for further details, see Shapiro and Sullivan's (1964) discussion of minority protests against police practices and how they escalated into more hostile confrontations).

Relations between police and minority citizens had deteriorated to such an extent that any significant incident could have led to a serious outburst. The shooting and subsequent death of a black youth by an off-duty police officer in July was just such an incident. It provided the spark that set off the first riot in a major American city during the 1960s.[3]

THE NEW YORK CITY DATA SET

As the brief discussion of the conflicts preceding the 1964 riots is presented, there appears to be a demonstrable deterioration in relations among the parties involved in civil rights controversies.

But those events chosen to highlight the process of conflict may not have represented the development of the controversies fairly. There is a need to verify the apparent shift from conventional and nonviolent techniques to more disruptive actions by minority parties in relation to the continued disregard by nonminority and government actors to minority demands, and thereby confirm Hypothesis 3 over 1 and 2.

To examine the process of conflict escalation preceding New York's riots, information on racial controversies was collected by analyzing the content of every news story involving representatives of the city's

3. It appears that minority actors made a serious effort to widen their involvement in public affairs between 1960 and the July 1964 riot. Even more striking, however, is the decided shift in their attention to issues over which public officials had more direct decision-making responsibility (these data are not shown). In the months preceding the riot, minority actors expanded their interest in educational and social control problems when compared to the previous years. This shift is even more dramatic with regard to social control issues. There were corresponding decreases in the attention paid to economic and housing issues; areas in which public officials had already demonstrated an unwillingness and/or inability to act on behalf of minority citizens. During this period there was little significant effort by minority actors to concern themselves with political, health, and welfare issues, or the rather amorphous goal of "equal opportunity" in private and public institutions.

There is considerable correspondence between the types of issues raised by nonminority and government actors and those raised by minority representatives. The decreased attention paid to housing issues in 1963 complements the smaller emphasis placed on such issues by minority actors during that year, as did the reduced interest in economic issues in 1964. Alternatively, nonminority and government concern over economic issues in 1963, and social control and educational issues in 1964 mirror the attention paid to such issues by minority actors during those years. As was also the case for minority actors, nonminority and government actors put comparatively little effort into political, health and welfare, and equal opportunity issues during this period when dealing with their antagonists. The continuity that was apparent in the issues groups considered was repeated in the types of parties, and in many instances the particular groups, involved in these controversies (these data are not shown).

black and Puerto Rican populations, issues they were concerned about, or actions directed toward them by other parties that appeared in the New York *Times* between 1960 and the July 1964 riots. Each story was viewed as containing one or more events in which a particular actor did or said something to some other party regarding a specific issue. The actors in these events had to be groups (which could range from very informal collectivities of persons who might be responding to a specific situation, to very formal and highly bureaucratized organizations) or the representatives of groups. Nearly 700 actors were identified during this period, and were placed into one of three general categories or classes or actors: (1) minority (including government officials serving exclusively minority populations); (2) government; and (3) nonminority (any actor not specifically related to a minority constituency or governmental office).[4] In addition to this information, each action taken by a party was ranked according to an 11 point scale, ranging from very cooperative to very uncooperative actions. The categories in the activity scale are: (1) merging, consolidating, or creating a new agency or group; (2) making alliances between existing offices or groups; (3) aiding; (4) making agreements; (5) a verbal compliment; (6) nonevaluative verbal or physical actions; (7) an uncomplimentary statement; (8) physical actions interfering with normal activities, i.e., protests, such as sit-ins and marches; (9) acts interfering with normal activities of the target so as to force at least a temporary stoppage of objectionable practices, e.g., economic boycotts and the arrest of protesters; (10) acts that have all the attributes of those in category 9 but which are also in clear violation of the law, a clearer threat to the public at large, or a response to such a threat by officials, e.g., disruption of public transportation systems and police raids; and (11) acts of violence or which formally dissolve heretofore legally sanctioned relations, organizations, or offices, e.g., a court declaration of membership in an organization as illegal.

Both the coding procedures and data were submitted to a series of tests and found to offer a reliable record of events related to civil rights issues in the city for the period in question. Six persons coded three

4. Activities initiated by Puerto Rican groups were not omitted from the present analysis for two reasons. First, there were not many of them, and many events initiated by civil rights groups did have the support and cooperation of Puerto Rican persons. Second, later on in the decade Puerto Rican groups became much more involved in local civil rights activities as representatives of a distinct population. Thus, while the 1964 riots were predominately black affairs, subsequent riots did see more involvement by Puerto Ricans.

articles of varying complexity according to the rules in the codebook. The percentage of correct decisions they made ranged from 90.5% to 96.7%. A reliability check also was made on their ability to place different activities in one of the 11 categories of the activity scale. Tau was used as the measure of how much agreement there was among the coders, and their scores ranged from .9692 to .9951 (a score of +1.0 would equal total agreement). Compared to reliability checks made on other sets of events data, these scores are very high. Percentages for correct decisions of 80% or better are considered good (Sloan, 1975; Herman et al., 1973).

Users of events data prefer to use multiple sources to insure that they do not overlook any story (Azar, 1970). However, the larger question is not so much how many events or stories one misses by not consulting other papers, but whether those stories which are not sampled deal with a particular issue, actor, or type of behavior whose absence constitutes a source of bias in one's data. To check out this possibility for the sample of New York *Times* articles, a random sample of 17 dates between 1960 and July 1964 and the *Times*'s reporting of race-related stories was compared to that of the *Daily News* and *Herald Tribune.* The *News* stories focused on criminal behavior and only the most violent events related to racial problems, stories which composed no more than 5% of the stories sampled in this reliability check of the *Times* and only 1% of the events studied in this research. Of the 47 stories found in both papers on the dates in question the New York *Times* had 42 (89.4%), while the *Herald Tribune* had 23 (48.9). The *Herald Tribune* had five stories that were not found in the *Times* (10.6%), but the *Times* had 19 stories not reported in the *Herald Tribune* (40.4%). The types of actors and actions in the five *Herald Tribune* stories did not differ markedly from those which the sample of events drawn from the *Times* typically covered.

Neighborhood newspapers or those appealing to black or Puerto Rican citizens were not used as a source of data or as part of a reliability check for the New York *Times.* Such "community newspapers" tend to appeal to a comparatively narrow set of interests, and would not be as likely to cover events initiated by actors outside of the group served by the paper. Community newspapers also tend to be more partisan in their selection of activities to cover in a story. It is more likely, for instance, that stories about different civil rights groups would cover those groups' positive achievements rather than problems they caused (Bowers, 1967; Janowitz, 1967; Olien, Donohue, and Tichenor,

1968; Paletz, Reichert and McIntyre, 1971; Stone and Morrison, 1976). To check on whether the New York *Times* stories might have appealed to "a narrow set of interests" an analysis was made of who got stories about themselves in the paper, the types of activities they were portrayed as having engaged in, and the pages of the paper on which those stories appeared. There was no consistent pattern that might reveal a bias in the reporting of any particular type of party or action in any section of the paper, either at the outset of the decade or as controversies intensified and the month of the riots approached.

However reliable an accounting of race-related activities in the New York *Times* (or any newspaper) was, the issue of its validity as an indicator of behavior remains essentially unanswered. The fact is that one has no independent set of observations about these events—save other news reports—against which one could judge the accuracy of the newspaper stories.[5] There has been research on the press, though, that would tend to support at least this set of events data as a valid measure of what was going on in civil rights controversies in New York. The most important points are these:

(1) New York is a media center with various media representatives competing for stories. Their number includes many nonlocal journalists, a condition which Molotch and Lester (1975: 259) urged other social scientists to consider before studying a particular community's reporting practices. A competitive network of news reporting should help to minimize errors in stories of conflict and help make the continuous monitoring of conflicts easier to accomplish (Danzger, 1975).[6]

5. There is some indirect corroboration, however. The pattern of conflict escalation preceding the 1964 New York riots as revealed in the *Times*'s stories covaries with records of complaints about discriminatory practices made by New York residents to the City Commission on Human Rights. These records showed that 269 complaints were filed in 1960, 256 in 1961, 235 in 1962, 207 in 1963, and 259 in 1964. Complaints tended to decline as the percentage of "disruptive" activities initiated by minority related groups increased, but complaints increased markedly in 1964 when protests, boycotts, and strikes by blacks and Puerto Ricans dropped sharply. The wishes of at least some persons with grievances apparently were either satisfied by others' efforts or their own when civil rights activities expanded, but were left unfulfilled when organized, aggressive civil rights activities dropped off in 1964.

6. It does not, however, guarantee one of a complete record. There is an abrupt and unfortunate break in the present record of racial conflicts due to a newspaper strike, which shut down New York's daily newspapers from the end of December 1962 to the end of March 1963. Luckily, it was not until May or June of 1963 that civil rights activities really accelerated, and little of significance appears to have transpired during the strike period. For the purposes of this paper, therefore, that period is simply omitted from all analyses.

(2) There appears to be far less chance of inaccurate or incomplete reporting in a community that has experienced some publicity for its conflicts (Danzger, 1975), a condition the New York case easily satisfies.
(3) Most civil rights activities constituted "continuing news," and "as a series of stories on the same subject . . . over a period of time" they helped news organizations to regulate their own efforts and cover more of the related stories (Tuchman, 1973: 123; Danzger, 1975: 577).[7]
(4) Information based on the "hard facts" surrounding a story (i.e., "Who did what to whom?") have not been shown to be distorted (Danzger, 1975: 577). The present data set is derived only from information gathered by asking that question.[8]
(5) The structure of politics in New York City encouraged interest groups to arouse or dampen public support of various issues through the press (Sayre and Kaufman, 1960: 73-74, 559, 610-617; Lipsky, 1970).

For these reasons, then, the collection of events obtained from New York *Times*'s stories was viewed as both a reliable and valid indicator of race-related controversies in the city during the 1960-July 1964 period. These data are examined in the next section of the paper.

PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR

The criterion for success or failure in minority efforts to evoke more favorable actions from nonminority and government parties involves changes in the categories of action referred to earlier. In most instances the 11-point scale will not be disaggregated into its separate categories, but generally collapsed into three broader categories: (1) disruptive actions (categories 8-11 in the scale); (2) communicative actions (categories 5-7 in the scale); and (3) cooperative actions (categories 1-4 in the scale). Three alternative hypotheses regarding the timing of minority

7. Nevertheless, one should exercise considerable caution before turning to any newspaper or set of newspapers to analyze community conflicts. They rarely have an opportunity to report on strategy sessions that precede public declarations and actions by partisan groups. The omission of such activities from the public record poses a grave problem for students of collective behavior interested in "the assembling process" or "how individuals come together in time and space to participate collectively in often large-scale events" (Snyder, 1976: 288; Wilson and Orum, 1976).

8. Newspaper stories also should not be used to collect information about how participants in community conflicts *really* perceived, believed, or felt about a given event. This information is not only difficult to code but also of dubious validity, if only because a public utterance may be part of a calculated strategy to create the impression that the speaker actually believes what he is saying. In addition, the way a person's words are characterized in a news story may be subject to the discretion of editors and reporters (Danzger, 1975).

group violence in relation to majority group responses to calls for change have been proposed. In each case, minority group behavior is thought to move through two distinct stages: (1) a reliance on more conventional and nonviolent strategies to provoke changes in majority group behavior; and (2) the adoption of progressively more disruptive forms of action coupled with a relative deemphasis on more conventional forms of political activity. Looking at the present activity scale, one would expect to find three things occurring in minority behavior as the time of the riots approached: (1) a decreasing reliance on cooperative and communicative actions (categories 1-7); (2) the growing use and eventual abandonment of nonviolent acts of protest and noncooperation (categories 8-9); and (3) the adoption of more disruptive types of action (categories 10-11) as nonviolent protests and noncooperative actions fell into disuse.

In each hypothesis it is the behavior of the majority group representatives that is predicted to be different. Hypothesis 1 predicts that as the time of the riots approached there would be: (1) significant increases in cooperative and communicative actions directed toward minority representatives (categories 1-7); and (2) significant decreases in disruptive behavior initiated toward minority actors (categories 8-11). Hypothesis 2 predicts: (1) an initial significant increase in cooperative and communicative actions, followed by a reversal in that pattern; and (2) at least no significant increase in disruptive action initially (perhaps some clear decreases) followed by a reversal in that pattern as minority activists increased their pressure. Hypothesis 3 predicts: (1) no significant increases in cooperative or communicative actions early in the decade (and maybe some significant decreases); and (2) significant increases in disruptive behavior as the July 1964 riots approached.

Data relevant to these hypotheses are presented in Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 and 2. Table 1 indicates the frequency and percentage distributions of the various types of behavior from which the z scores in Table 2 were computed and whose fluctuations have been plotted in the figures.[9] The magnitude of that change is reflected in the size of the z

9. While the intensity of these separate episodes of mob action may be an important consideration to some people, we have no way of controlling for the size of the group initiating violence or the amount of damage resulting from its behavior. In fact, the only measures of intensity one can develop for this type of activity or any other is the number of distinct groups involved in the activity or the number of times that activity occurred during any given period of time.

Aggregating the data by year (and I might add into larger categories of action as well) did not hide substantively important changes in the patterns of conflict identified

score, and the likelihood that such a change could have occurred by chance is indicated by the value of p noted below each z score. For the purposes of this paper, only changes that were likely to have occurred by chance less than five times in 100 were considered to be significant.

It is clear from an examination of Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 and 2 that the pattern of conflict escalation by minority actors holds fairly close to what was anticipated. During the four and one-half years preceding the riots there was an absolute increase in all types of action. Inasmuch as minority interest groups had at best an uneven record in securing political clout for their constituents (Sayre and Kaufman, 1960), any sign that new ground was being broken could be viewed as a positive development. However promising such contacts may have been for long-term race relations in the city, the short-term consequences were less favorable. Students of international relations have

in Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 and 2. This argument is based on two points. First, I did not analyze these data by larger time periods until I had looked at smaller time intervals and convinced myself that there were no major substantive differences in the findings when I aggregated the time intervals into years. Furthermore, when the data were broken down into monthly intervals, many of the cell frequencies and sample sizes were much too small to work with in any reliable fashion. Hence, at least part of the aggregation was done out of necessity. Second, what I was concerned with were the general tendencies in the behavior of both sets of actors over the four and one-half year period. For this reason I decided to aggregate at a level that permitted me to summarize the basic trends in behavior without damaging the credibility of the data set by tossing out its natural variation.

The curves which are revealed in this analysis are not distorted by the fact that the last interval is not a full year or the absence of data from the newspaper strike period. The purpose of using proportions and percentages is that they enable one to standardize his observations so that it does not make any difference what lengths of period are used. Were one to rely on raw frequencies, then it could be argued that the resulting patterns were affected by the unequal time intervals; but not when one uses percentages. For any given time period, the third proportion is known given the other two because the sum of the proportions must add to 1.0.

The z scores were based on a test of differences between proportions for each category of action for consecutive time periods. There are two ways of computing the test for differences between proportions. One of them is based on the fact that one knows the population proportion, the other is based on estimated values of the proportion. In instances when the population proportion is not known it is a common procedure to use a pooled estimate of that proportion (Anderson and Zelditch, 1968: 207-210). The latter procedure was used in the present analysis.

$$z = \frac{\text{Proportion Time}_2 - \text{Proportion Time}_1}{\sqrt{\text{Total Proportion (1 - total proportion)} \left(1/N_{\text{Time}_1} + 1/N_{\text{Time}_2}\right)}}$$

noted the correlation between marked increases in the frequency of contacts between states and a tendency for these initiatives to take on—at least in the short run—a more disruptive form (Azar, 1970; Sloan, 1975). The same pattern seemed to emerge in the behavior of minority activists during this period.

There were no significant increases in cooperative actions by minority actors after 1962, and a significant decrease once civil rights controversies heated up in 1963 (see Table 2 and Figure 1). After 1961 the proportion of minority-initiated acts of communication with majority group representatives showed significant decreases. There was a significant increase in such actions in 1964, but upon closer analysis this rise could be attributed entirely to "uncomplimentary statements" (category 7; these data are not shown). As such it revealed another dimension of the deteriorating relations between minority and majority representatives in the months preceding the riots, rather than a promise of better contacts between them. Had the increase been attributed to complimentary statements or last-minute efforts to resolve sensitive issues through negotiations, then a good argument could have been made that this part of the prediction had not been supported.

This statistic is used to compare observations from independently drawn samples. Clearly this assumption is being violated in the present research. However, assuming, as we do for the purpose of this research, that P_1 and P_2 tend to increase and decrease together over long periods of time, then the two proportions are positively correlated. Using this assumption, it can be shown that the z statistic is conservative in the sense that some statistically significant differences may not be detected. What this assumption requires us to say statistically when it is corroborated is that the p value may be a bit stronger than that which is reported in the table. Conversely, when the assumption is not corroborated, i.e., when behavior time$_2$ has changed its direction from what it was at time$_1$, then the p value may be a bit too large. Nevertheless, all the findings in the present analysis are sufficiently significant to be reported in the tables as important changes in the behavior of one or the other set of actors.

The patterns of behavior identified by the proportions tests could be seriously affected by small sample sizes across time for each set of actors. The same might also be said if the cell frequencies in each table were too small. However, both the sample sizes and cell frequencies are sufficiently large and in no way invalidate the findings based on the tests of differences between proportions.

The reader is reminded that actions initiated by either minority or nonminority and government actors toward one another need not have been reciprocated. It is not necessarily the case, for instance, that ten cooperative actions initiated by minority actors toward their opponents would have been responded to in a comparable manner. Indeed, the lack of symmetry in their behavior toward one another probably contributed to the escalation of racial controversies and the eventual genesis of mass violence. What is summarized in these tables are the accumulated actions of many minority roups toward the same and different nonminority and government parties, and the latter's responses to minority actions. It is the overall pattern in their accumulated actions which is represented in the tables and figures.

TABLE 1
Actions Initiated Between Minority, Nonminority and Government Actors Between 1960 and July 1964

	1960	*1961*	*1962*	*1963*	*Jan.-July 1964*	*N*
Minority Actors Toward Nonminority and Government Actors:						
Disruptive Acts	17 (23.9%)	16 (19.5%)	40 (37.0%)	547 (62.0%)	188 (35.3%)	808
Communicative Acts	42 (59.1)	59 (71.9)	49 (45.4)	267 (30.3)	295 (55.4)	712
Cooperative Acts	12 (16.9)	7 (8.5)	19 (17.6)	68 (7.7)	49 (9.2)	155
Totals	71 (99.9%)	82 (99.9%)	108 (100%)	882 (100%)	532 (99.9%)	1,675
Nonminority and Government Actors Toward Minority Actors:						
Disruptive Acts	5 (2.76%)	9 (6.8%)	6 (3.4%)	72 (13.3%)	102 (19.3%)	194
Communicative Acts	115 (64.3)	80 (60.6)	102 (57.3)	314 (58.0)	250 (47.4)	861
Cooperative Acts	59 (32.9)	43 (32.5)	70 (39.2)	155 (28.6)	175 (33.0)	502
Totals	179 (99.96%)	132 (99.9%)	178 (99.9%)	541 (99.9%)	527 (99.7%)	1,557

The pattern in minority-initiated acts of disruption conforms nicely with what was predicted until one reaches the period just before the riots. Instead of the curve for disruptive actions continuing to rise as was expected, it dropped precipitously in the months preceding the riots (see Figure 1). When a distinction is made between "more disruptive" and "less disruptive" acts, however, it is clear what happened (see Figure 2). It was not until 1962 that minority activists significantly increased their use of disruptive strategies, but this rise can be attributed only to nonviolent protests, economic boycotts, and the like. Indeed, at the height of the debates in 1963 more disruptive types of direct action (e.g., the disruption of transportation routes or violence) were virtually extinguished as a form of political expression in the city. Acts of protest and noncooperation dominated the conduct of civil rights contro-

TABLE 2
Significant Changes in Behavior Between Minority, Nonminority and Government Actors Between 1960 and July 1964

	1960 and 1961	*1961 and 1962*	*1962 and 1963*	*1963 and Jan.-July 1964*
Minority Actors Toward Nonminority and Government Actors:				
Disruptive Acts	not significant	z = 2.624 p < .001	z = 4.987 p < .001	z = −9.728 p < .001
Communicative Acts	z = 1.666 p < .05	z = −3.66 p < .001	z = −3.177 p < .01	z = 9.373 p < .001
Cooperative Acts	not significant	z = 2.10 p < .05	z = −4.024 p < .001	not significant
Nonminority and Government Actors Toward Minority Actors:				
Disruptive Acts	z = 1.692 p < .05	not significant	z = 3.637 p < .001	z = 2.675 p < .01
Communicative Acts	not significant	not significant	not significant	z = −3.47 p < .001
Cooperative Acts	not significant	not significant	z = −2.66 p < .01	not significant

versies at that time. The decline in disruptive actions apparent in 1964 was accounted for by a significant decrease in the use of those same acts of protest and noncooperation. But this decrease masked an important—in fact the first significant—rise in the use of more disruptive direct action strategies by minority actors. It was at the tail end of this seven-month period that the riots occurred.

Although the initial use and subsequent abandonment of nonviolent acts of protest and noncooperation were predicted along with the ascension of more disruptive—even violent—forms of direct action, the acute reversal in the overall proportion of disruptive actions was quite unexpected. It points out the importance of distinguishing between the frequency and intensity of contentious acts when mapping the process of conflict escalation in any given setting. Ordinarily, this distinction is not made in the literature, and the hypotheses reflect the idea that *both* the frequency and intensity of such events should covary as conflicts escalate (or deescalate). This clearly did not occur in the present case. The severity and speed at which nonviolent acts of protest

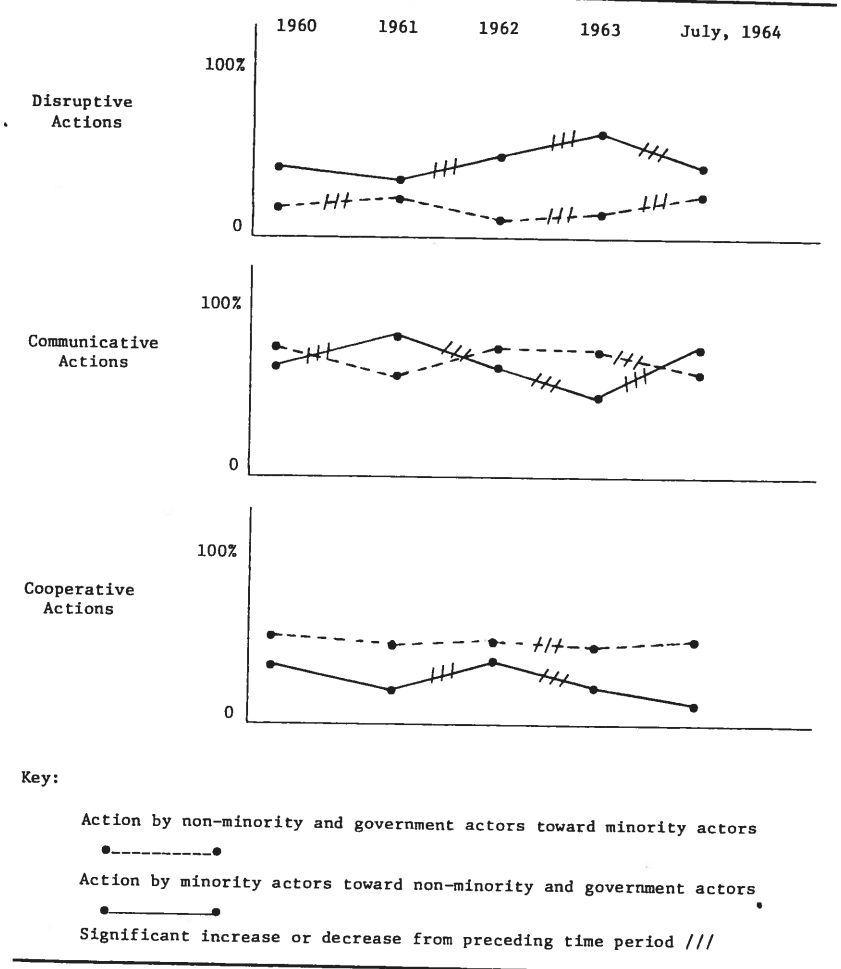

Figure 1: Percentages of different types of action initiated by nonminority, government, and minority actors toward each other between January 1960 and July 1964 (percentages taken from Tables 1 and 2)

in particular were dropped from the current repertoire of civil rights activists (following a massive display of protest activity coordinated with a boycott of the school system in February 1964) could have served as a warning of the impending crisis about to overtake the city's civil rights movement.

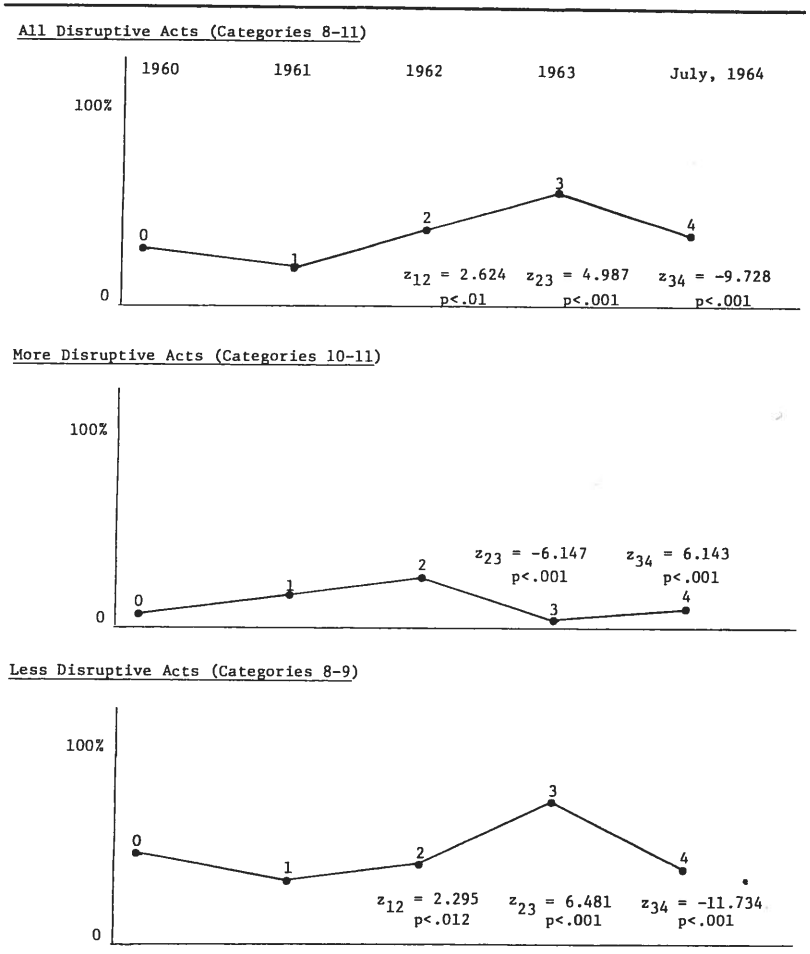

Figure 2: Percentages of different types of disruptive actions initiated by minority actors toward nonminority and government actors between January 1960 and July 1964.

The record of majority group behavior during this period comes closest to that predicted in Hypothesis 3 (i.e., that minority group disruptiveness increased as majority group representatives failed to become significantly more cooperative and communicative and less hostile toward minority initiatives). There were marked increases in nonminority and government actions toward minority representatives

as controversies expanded and intensified in 1963 and 1964, just as the rate of minority activity had picked up. As in the case of their minority antagonists, the behavior of nonminority and government parties included cooperative, communicative and disruptive actions. A significant pattern of "nonresponsiveness" emerges, however, once the relative attention paid to alternative strategies for managing minority initiatives is reviewed.

There were no significant increases in majority group cooperativeness and communication with minority representatives at any point during the period in question (see Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 1). In fact, there were two notable decreases. There was a marked decline in efforts to communicate with minority representatives during the critical seven months preceding the riots, and an equally important tapering off of cooperative actions in 1963 when so much attention by minority activists was being paid to comparatively peaceful nonviolent acts of civil disorder. The absence of any dramatic (and statistically significant) increases in such behavior was predicted only from Hypothesis 3. At no point did nonminority and government actors appear to steal the initiative from minority activists and offer compelling reasons for them to stop their assaults upon the city's economic and political establishment.

The use of disruptive actions by majority group representatives was important, given the relative inattention paid to undertaking sweeping reforms. Nonminority and government "disruptiveness" toward minority actors showed its first significant increase in 1961 (see Table 2 and Figure 1), a full year before minority activists markedly expanded their own use of "disruptive" strategies. Moreover, the level of unfriendly action by superordinate parties showed no significant decrease in 1962 and rose consistently after that. Most of this action took the form of police and court responses to minority protests, boycotts, strikes, and the like. As such it was placed in the most extreme categories of the activity scale (acts which impose or imply some heavy legal sanctions). Virtually absent from the behavioral repertoire of nonminority and government actors were activities that would have fallen somewhere between verbal condemnations for minority positions (category 7) and the more contentious postures they tended to adopt (these data are not shown). For the most part, they had little comparable to minority protests and acts of noncooperation to use against activists. In effect, they were compelled to overreact to minority initiatives, even when these actions were nonviolent, orderly, and comparatively small. The

reliance on social control measures to contain minority activism and the absence of many inducements nonminority and government actors could withdraw, or at least threaten to end (categories 8 and 9), undoubtedly contributed to the willingness of minority activists to escalate their attacks. This was particularly evident late in 1963 and early 1964. When the nonviolent protests against job discrimination failed to extract meaningful concessions from business or government leaders, minority dissidents were arrested in large numbers, and rent strikers were either dragged or lured into court.

The substantial rise in civil rights activity that occurred in 1963 and 1964 also can be attributed to the unwillingness or inability of nonminority and government actors to offer more tangible incentives to minority activists. More critical perhaps was the lack of initiative shown by nonminority and government actors in putting forth programs, reforms, review boards, and the like (i.e., cooperative acts, categories 1-4) to consider and act on minority grievances. There was no significant increase in such activity between 1960 and 1962; a period, it will be recalled, in which activists had yet to begin pushing or otherwise bullying majority group leaders into making wide-ranging concessions. Thus, when activists initiated large-scale protests, boycotts, and strikes in 1963, nonminority and government actors responded to these usually peaceful actions by significantly curtailing cooperative actions on their part. A late and slight effort to change this pattern in 1964 was neither practically nor statistically significant (see Tables 1 and 2).

What one finds on the part of nonminority and government actors, then, is both a lack of demonstrable progress toward accommodating existing decision-making routines and priorities to minority demands for political recognition, and a growing dependence on social control strategies for avoiding or rejecting such demands as not legitimate. The connection between these two trends must have been apparent to minority activists. More critical perhaps was the lack of initiative disruptive strategies only after it was clear that their opponents would not respond positively to less stridently presented demands. It might be noted that more detailed analyses of these trends, involving smaller time periods of specific classes of actions, reveal some additional minutiae about these conflicts, but offer no significant insights into the pattern of conflict escalation beyond those already presented.

SUMMARY

The 1964 Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant riots followed four and one-half years of efforts by civil rights activists to provoke changes in public policies through generally nonviolent strategies. Their inability to force nonminority and government actors to alter their behavior toward minority citizens undoubtedly helped to accelerate racial conflicts in the city and the adoption of progressively more disruptive tactics. Yet it was not until nonviolent strategies had been shown to be ineffective that the tendency to use very aggressive tactics and even violence increased.

It is difficult to completely assess the impact of the national civil rights movement on New York's racial controversies from the current analysis. However, it is known that local civil rights activities got an early boost from protests against local stores with Southern branches, and were further energized by the 1963 march on Washington which many New Yorkers participated in. It was only when the euphoria of that event melted before the hard realities of de facto segregation in the city that local civil rights controversies heated up in 1963.

The present case study cannot offer a conclusive test of the present hypotheses on conflict escalation, but offers support to "solidarity" theories of conflict and collective violence in several ways. First, episodes of collective racial violence in New York were found to occur in conjunction with other strategies designed to give minority representatives greater recognition in matters of public policy affecting their welfare. They did not occur with great regularity or in a random fashion. Second, the appearance of violence in relation to other collective actions was linked to the way the city's decision-making system generated public policies and created opportunities for racial conflict, and the introduction of less standardized ways of amending the public agenda. Finally, there was nothing inherently radical or feckless about many of the attempts by civil rights supporters to influence the process of decision-making or the content of policies in the city. In fact, the conduct of minority groups can be seen as an attempt to elaborate and extend existing political routines to accommodate new participants and agendas, rather than to overthrow the existing system of decision-making. The violence accompanying these conflicts, therefore, fell into the great American tradition of using mob action for rather conservative purposes, and as a means of last resort when existing institutions

cannot or will not adapt to new political realities or unanticipated problems (Maier, 1972; Brown, 1975).

Finally, it was discovered that our ideas on how conflicts escalate probably should be modified so that the frequency and severity of disruptive activities are distinguished from one another. The frequency of disruptive actions immediately preceding the riot dropped markedly. However, those disruptive actions which did occur tended to be far more severe than their predecessors. This was an important finding, because it clearly revealed the onset of a new and more dramatic level of conflict. People interested in conflict intervention and conflict resolution may be able to find interesting parallels between this pattern of escalation and patterns of escalation apparent in other types of controversies, such as labor disputes and school desegregation.

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