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ABSTRACT

BLACK LEADERSHIP IN AN URBAN SETTING

By

John Troy Williams

This dissertation is devoted to a study of black community leadership in a northern city. "Durant," a community of 200,000, is a major center of the automobile industry.

Using a social power frame of reference, black leaders were identified and their effectiveness gauged. Both the reputational and issue methods were used to provide the names of leaders. In the reputational approach, a modification of the Miller-Form Technique utilizing knowledgeable representatives representing five institutional sectors was used to provide the initial list of leaders. Black leaders mentioned most frequently were interviewed and asked to identify other important leaders. In the issue approach, names of leaders were obtained by examining four important issue-areas--education, open occupancy, police-black community relations and human relations.

The reputational approach yielded the names of twenty-eight leaders. The issue approach revealed nine leaders who were designated as top leaders. Seven of the issue leaders were among the most frequently nominated blacks on the reputational list. Two important issue leaders were not revealed by the reputational method. A knowledge of major issue-areas appeared to provide the most accurate approach to community leadership. However, the reputational method was useful in identifying secondary leaders who were not active in major issue-areas.

A typology of radical-liberal-moderate-conservative was used to categorize leadership styles. All the top leaders (issue leaders) were identified as liberals. The reputational list contained moderates and conservatives but no black leaders were identified as radicals. There were radical spokesmen in the community but they had limited constituencies.

Interviews with leaders were devoted to the general nature of the racial climate in Durant and focused on the leader's role in the issue-areas. The issue approach provided much material related to the effectiveness of black leaders and to the social power of the black community.

Ten propositions summarize the major findings. Where possible the results are related to other published studies. The use of both the reputational and the issue method to identify leaders appeared to be validated by

[illegible]

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the results. The theoretical approach to black leadership in terms of social power and conflict also appeared to be analytically meaningful. Results indicated that there was no single group of black leaders--no black "power structure" in the community. The leadership group tended to vary from issue to issue. The black community showed considerable ambivalence toward black leaders but tended to unite behind them on major issues. There was evidence that black leaders were beginning to receive a respectful hearing from some community elites and that blacks could occasionally unite with other groups to achieve limited goals. However, the black community remains relatively powerless to achieve major social and economic goals.

BLACK LEADERSHIP IN
AN URBAN SETTING

By

John Troy Williams

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

College of Social Science

1973

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals have contributed in various ways to this study. The members of the doctoral committee have been most helpful. Professor John Useem with his comprehensive knowledge of contemporary society and particular interest in social power; Professor Charles Press with his special competence in both community studies and political theory; and Professor Douglas Miller with his broad knowledge of American social history and special interest in Social Darwinism have corrected errors and sharpen the focus of this study. The author is particularly indebted to Professor James McKee, chairman of the committee. Without Professor McKee's knowledge and enthusiasm, it would have been impossible to finish this study. Professor McKee's interest in and concern for America's social problems and his warm regard for individual students have made his classes a special treat for hundreds of Michigan State students.

Many leaders in the black community assisted the author and he is deeply indebted to them. He sympathizes with those who have been deprived of the opportunity to exercise all the rights of citizenship and hopes that his documentation of this deprivation has not inadvertently

given offense to those who have been kind enough to help him with his research. The author is also grateful to the public officials and agency leaders in the white community who assisted him. It is good to know that a number of these white leaders are aware of the difficulties and problems that confront the black community and that they want to help.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to the librarian and the library staff of the "Durant" Journal and to the administration and staff of the "Durant" Public Library for having assisted him with this project. He also wishes to thank the staff and in particular the director, Dr. Richard Chapin, of the Michigan State University Library for the many kindnesses extended to him. He is grateful to Dean George Hawkins of Purdue University and to the administrative staff of the university library including Director Joseph Dagnese, deceased Director John Moriarty, Associate Director Oliver Dunn and Assistant Director Keith Dowden for a sabbatical and a leave of absence. He appreciates the sympathetic assistance received from Northern Illinois University Library Director Clyde Walton and Associate Director Katherine Walker. He is grateful for the encouragement given to him by his family, particularly his mother, Donna Williams. Finally, he is indebted to Mrs. Judy Spratling who typed the manuscript and helped to ferret out mistakes.

Needless to say, none of these individuals are responsible for errors in content or interpretation. The author alone is responsible for the final product.

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Figure 6

The figure consists of 18 small square plots arranged in two columns of nine. Each plot displays a different stage or configuration of a system, likely related to the mathematical models discussed in the text. The configurations range from simple, isolated points to complex, interconnected networks and fractal-like structures. The top-left plot shows a single point at the center. As one moves through the sequence, more points appear, some forming linear arrangements (horizontal and vertical), while others form more complex, branching or clustered shapes. The final plots in the sequence exhibit highly detailed, almost fractal patterns.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis devoted to black community leadership in a northern community is intended to be a modest addition to a rather limited corpus of academic studies devoted to black leadership. Prior to the 1960's, social scientists displayed little interest in most aspects of the black experience. Attempts to account for this indifference of the academic community to the black community has led to a variety of explanations. A sociologist has attributed this lack of interest to the current emphasis in his field on empiricism and professionalism,¹ while political scientists have found it related to their disciplines close ties with elite interests.² Whatever the cause, it is apparent that there is a real need for additional studies of the black community and its problems. With this in mind, this study of black leadership has been undertaken in the hope that

¹Everett C. Hughes, "Race Relations and the Sociological Imagination," American Sociological Review, XXVIII, No. 6 (Dec. 1963), pp. 879-890.

²David Easton, "The New Revolution in Political Science," American Political Science Review, LXII, No. 4, (Dec. 1969), p. 1059.

it might prove to be a contribution to the literature devoted to black leadership.

Before turning to leadership in the black community, it is useful to note that there are several unique sociological characteristics of the black community itself and that these unique characteristics undoubtedly affect the leadership styles and goals of black leaders. It is therefore, relevant to mention two of the more important characteristics. First, it should be noted that the black community is in reality a subcommunity.

It represents a separate growth within the framework of a larger community which is historically, culturally and self-consciously white . . . and represents in its institutional structure a weak and inferior imitation of the wider, essentially white community.³

The fact that the black community is a separate yet dependent part of the larger community has important implications for our study. Growing out of this dependency relationship is the fact that the black community is relatively powerless. Some writers have compared its relationship with the larger community to the relationship existing between an imperial power and a colonial possession. This, of course, means that the leaders of the black community have restricted chances of achieving important goals. This aspect will be examined in more detail in later chapters. A second

³Lewis Killian, "Community Structure and the Role of the Negro Leader-Agent," Sociological Inquiry, XXXV, No. 1, (Winter, 1965), p. 70.

important characteristic of the black subcommunity is known as involution. Denied the right to participate fully in the life of the larger community, the black citizen is forced to seek most of his satisfactions and goals within the boundaries of the segregated black community although these boundaries may be psychological or social rather than ecological or geographical.

This thesis which will focus on black leaders, will analyze leadership styles and will attempt to relate findings to other hypotheses developed in studies of black leadership. The first step in undertaking such a study is to review the pertinent literature with an eye to separating out significant problem areas and tentative conclusions. In some cases, theories, conceptualizations, typologies or models have been derived and it is useful to see if these can provide meaningful insights or assist one in ordering data, clarifying concepts or relating findings to earlier studies. A review of the previous literature is therefore in order.

A review of the literature devoted to case studies of black community leadership might conceivably be carried back to the 1920's when case studies of local communities like the Lynd's Middletown began to appear.^{4*} While these

⁴Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, Middletown . . . (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929).

*Two excellent annotated bibliographies devoted to community studies are: Charles Press, Main Street Politics:

early community studies were not limited to community leadership alone but dealt with all aspects of community life and culture, they did provide many insights into community leadership and leadership styles and served as models for later case studies of community leadership both black and white.

With the publication of Floyd Hunter's Community Power Structure, a new interest in the local community was engendered and was focused in particular on community leadership.⁵ Hunter's study helped to popularize the term "power structure" which became a part of the vocabulary of most literate people. Hunter's methodological approach of formulating lists of leaders based on reputed power was widely imitated by other researchers. Some social scientists criticized Hunter's technique pointing out that he offered no empirical evidence to indicate that his reputed leaders actually were playing leadership roles. A group of investigators at Yale University headed by Robert Dahl turned to the task of studying community leadership by investigating specific political decisions in order to discover who played significant leadership roles. Dahl's

Policy Making at the Local Level, (East Lansing Institute for Community Development, Michigan State University, 1962). And Willis D. Hawley and James H. Savara, The Study of Community Power: A Bibliographic Review, (Santa Barbara, California, American Bibliographic Center-Clio Press, 1972).

⁵Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

method of investigating issue-areas was reported in Who Governs? and was also widely imitated by others studying leadership in a variety of community settings.⁶

Recently investigators studying community-wide leadership have employed both the reputational and the issue-analysis (or decisional) approaches. Robert Presthus has used this dual approach to the study of community leadership in his study of two communities in New York state.⁷

Case studies of the black American have of course been appearing with increasing frequency. Most of the early studies did not focus specifically on black leadership, although some of them, like Myrdal's American Dilemma, devoted considerable attention to black leadership styles.

Myrdal, in his landmark work, published in 1943, found two types of black leaders. The accommodating leader, utilized by the blacks to gain favors from the white community, was by far the most prevalent type of black leader. Myrdal noted a second black leadership type--the protest leader. The protest leader was not as prevalent as the accommodating leader and was found principally in the urban North.

⁶Robert Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1961).

⁷Robert Presthus, Men at the Top (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

Recent studies of black leadership have noted the hostility and suspicion of many blacks toward black leaders. Myrdal saw evidence of this hostility in his day and explained it by pointing out that "the Negro hates the Negro role in American society, and the Negro leader, who acts out this role in public life becomes the symbol of what the Negro hates."⁸

The major study of black political leadership published prior to World War II was Gosnell's study of black leadership in Chicago.⁹ Gosnell concluded that blacks of the period did not get a great deal out of their political participation when rewards were weighed against black needs--shortage of jobs, poor housing, inadequate public services--but the machine did provide blacks with a number of jobs and white politicians did pay a certain amount of deference to black leaders and the black community. Unfortunately, black politicians during this period, because of their historic alliance with the Republican Party, were often found voting against political measures designed to help their constituents.

Floyd Hunter, in his study of community leadership in Atlanta, devoted some attention to black leader-

Harpe ⁸ Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York: Harp and Brothers, 1944), p. 774.

11- ⁹ Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians (Chicago: City of Chicago Press, 1935).

ship. Hunter found that the political resources of the black community were limited and concluded that "none of the leaders in the Negro community may operate in the same echelons of power as the top leaders in the total community"10

As if to make up for past neglect, there have been in recent years many volumes appearing in print devoted to blacks and the black experience and included among this growing corpus of literature have been a number of studies of black community leadership. Many of these studies had dealt with black leadership in the South.

In 1960, Elaine Burgess published a study of black leadership in Durham, North Carolina. Although Hunter had concluded that no blacks occupied top leadership positions in Atlanta, Burgess in her study of Durham found that some black leaders "hold positions of importance in the total community as well as in the subcommunity."11 Burgess believed that Negroes have made substantial gains in Durham and felt that "the ability of minority leaders to raise . . . issues to the level of controversy has become a real source of power."12

¹⁰Hunter, op. cit., p. 139.

¹¹M. Elaine Burgess, Negro Leadership in a Southern City (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), p. 76.

¹²Ibid., p. 193.

Burgess found that blacks tended to rank leaders in a fourfold classification: radical, liberal, moderate and conservative with the liberal leaders the most numerous.

Burgess found that aggressiveness was a must for the contemporary black leader if he was to have the support of his constituents. Burgess noted that the black "power structure" in Durham was fairly fluid. The leadership group was undergoing a process of constant change as new men assumed positions of organizational responsibility and as patterns of race relations changed.

Burgess found that there was a considerable amount of dissension among blacks over methods to be employed in achieving specific race goals. However, black leaders through a process of bargaining and compromise were able to achieve consensus and thus present a solid front to the white community.

Burgess concluded that neither personal characteristics, wealth, institutional position nor ideology is the basis for leadership within the subcommunity.

Rather a combination of these factors is vitally important for today's leaders. The position of the Negro is undergoing a continuous process of change. What we are attempting to understand is not a static phenomenon. Any model of power in the sub-community must be dynamic.¹³

¹³Ibid., p. 186.

Cothran and Phillips in their study of black leadership in Little Rock, published in 1961, noted two types of black leaders, the "accommodating" type leader and the "protesting" type. They found that the role of the "accommodating" type leader is rapidly becoming untenable. It has few adherents, today, and those who do survive are often subject to sanctions by the black community.

Cothran and Phillips found that while the "accommodating" type leader gains his prestige through acceptance and support by the white community, the "protesting" type gains his support by acceptance within the black community. Rejection of the "protesting" leader by the white community is important for it "[bestows] a certain charismatic quality on the victim and [tends] to leave no doubt in the minds of the Negro masses that the leader is more interested in their welfare than in personal aggrandizement."¹⁴

Cothran and Phillips found that black leaders have few power resources and that their greatest source of power is refusal to cooperate with the white community when there is evidence of segregation or discrimination.

¹⁴Tilman Cothran and William Phillips, Jr., "Negro Leadership in a Crisis Situation," Phylon, XXII, No. 2 (Summer, 1961), p. 118.

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important characteristic of the black subcommunity is known as involution. Denied the right to participate fully in the life of the larger community, the black citizen is forced to seek most of his satisfactions and goals within the boundaries of the segregated black community although these boundaries may be psychological or social rather than ecological or geographical.

This thesis which will focus on black leaders, will analyze leadership styles and will attempt to relate findings to other hypotheses developed in studies of black leadership. The first step in undertaking such a study is to review the pertinent literature with an eye to separating out significant problem areas and tentative conclusions. In some cases, theories, conceptualizations, typologies or models have been derived and it is useful to see if these can provide meaningful insights or assist one in ordering data, clarifying concepts or relating findings to earlier studies. A review of the previous literature is therefore in order.

A review of the literature devoted to case studies of black community leadership might conceivably be carried back to the 1920's when case studies of local communities like the Lynd's Middletown began to appear.^{4*} While these

⁴Robert S. Lynd and Helen M. Lynd, Middletown . . . (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929).

*Two excellent annotated bibliographies devoted to community studies are: Charles Press, Main Street Politics:

early community studies were not limited to community leadership alone but dealt with all aspects of community life and culture, they did provide many insights into community leadership and leadership styles and served as models for later case studies of community leadership both black and white.

With the publication of Floyd Hunter's Community Power Structure, a new interest in the local community was engendered and was focused in particular on community leadership.⁵ Hunter's study helped to popularize the term "power structure" which became a part of the vocabulary of most literate people. Hunter's methodological approach of formulating lists of leaders based on reputed power was widely imitated by other researchers. Some social scientists criticized Hunter's technique pointing out that he offered no empirical evidence to indicate that his reputed leaders actually were playing leadership roles. A group of investigators at Yale University headed by Robert Dahl turned to the task of studying community leadership by investigating specific political decisions in order to discover who played significant leadership roles. Dahl's

Policy Making at the Local Level, (East Lansing Institute for Community Development, Michigan State University, 1962). And Willis D. Hawley and James H. Savara, The Study of Community Power: A Bibliographic Review, (Santa Barbara, California, American Bibliographic Center-Clio Press, 1972).

⁵Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

method of investigating issue-areas was reported in Who Governs? and was also widely imitated by others studying leadership in a variety of community settings.⁶

Recently investigators studying community-wide leadership have employed both the reputational and the issue-analysis (or decisional) approaches. Robert Presthus has used this dual approach to the study of community leadership in his study of two communities in New York state.⁷

Case studies of the black American have of course been appearing with increasing frequency. Most of the early studies did not focus specifically on black leadership, although some of them, like Myrdal's American Dilemma, devoted considerable attention to black leadership styles.

Myrdal, in his landmark work, published in 1943, found two types of black leaders. The accommodating leader, utilized by the blacks to gain favors from the white community, was by far the most prevalent type of black leader. Myrdal noted a second black leadership type--the protest leader. The protest leader was not as prevalent as the accommodating leader and was found principally in the urban North.

⁶Robert Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1961).

⁷Robert Presthus, Men at the Top (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

Recent studies of black leadership have noted the hostility and suspicion of many blacks toward black leaders. Myrdal saw evidence of this hostility in his day and explained it by pointing out that "the Negro hates the Negro role in American society, and the Negro leader, who acts out this role in public life becomes the symbol of what the Negro hates."⁸

The major study of black political leadership published prior to World War II was Gosnell's study of black leadership in Chicago.⁹ Gosnell concluded that blacks of the period did not get a great deal out of their political participation when rewards were weighed against black needs--shortage of jobs, poor housing, inadequate public services--but the machine did provide blacks with a number of jobs and white politicians did pay a certain amount of deference to black leaders and the black community. Unfortunately, black politicians during this period, because of their historic alliance with the Republican Party, were often found voting against political measures designed to help their constituents.

Floyd Hunter, in his study of community leadership in Atlanta, devoted some attention to black leader-

⁸Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), p. 774.

⁹Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935).

ship. Hunter found that the political resources of the black community were limited and concluded that "none of the leaders in the Negro community may operate in the same echelons of power as the top leaders in the total community" ¹⁰

As if to make up for past neglect, there have been in recent years many volumes appearing in print devoted to blacks and the black experience and included among this growing corpus of literature have been a number of studies of black community leadership. Many of these studies had dealt with black leadership in the South.

In 1960, Elaine Burgess published a study of black leadership in Durham, North Carolina. Although Hunter had concluded that no blacks occupied top leadership positions in Atlanta, Burgess in her study of Durham found that some black leaders "hold positions of importance in the total community as well as in the subcommunity." ¹¹ Burgess believed that Negroes have made substantial gains in Durham and felt that "the ability of minority leaders to raise . . . issues to the level of controversy has become a real source of power." ¹²

¹⁰ Hunter, op. cit., p. 139.

¹¹ M. Elaine Burgess, Negro Leadership in a Southern City (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), p. 76.

¹² Ibid., p. 193.

Burgess found that blacks tended to rank leaders in a fourfold classification: radical, liberal, moderate and conservative with the liberal leaders the most numerous.

Burgess found that aggressiveness was a must for the contemporary black leader if he was to have the support of his constituents. Burgess noted that the black "power structure" in Durham was fairly fluid. The leadership group was undergoing a process of constant change as new men assumed positions of organizational responsibility and as patterns of race relations changed.

Burgess found that there was a considerable amount of dissension among blacks over methods to be employed in achieving specific race goals. However, black leaders through a process of bargaining and compromise were able to achieve consensus and thus present a solid front to the white community.

Burgess concluded that neither personal characteristics, wealth, institutional position nor ideology is the basis for leadership within the subcommunity.

Rather a combination of these factors is vitally important for today's leaders. The position of the Negro is undergoing a continuous process of change. What we are attempting to understand is not a static phenomenon. Any model of power in the sub-community must be dynamic.¹³

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¹⁴Tilman Cothran and William Phillips, Jr., "Negro Leadership in a Crisis Situation," Phylon, XXII, No. 2 (Summer, 1961), p. 118.

Thompson, in his 1963 study of black leadership in New Orleans reported conclusions that were comparable to those announced by Hunter. Thompson found that "no Negro in New Orleans holds membership or participates in powerful decision-making organizations." He went on to note, "insofar as the formulation or execution of policies and practices governing the civic, political, economic, educational, professional and cultured life of the community is concerned, Negroes are powerless."¹⁵

Thompson did find that the accommodating type of black leader had in some cases been replaced by a new more aggressive type of leader. Thompson categorized black leaders under three labels: "Uncle Tom," "Racial Diplomat," and "Race Man."

A characteristic noted by Thompson and singled out by other researchers is the concerted effort made by black leaders to keep internal conflicts over policy within the black community so that a united front may be presented to the larger community.

Thompson found no evidence that there was a single, monolithic, black, "power structure" for he noted,

No one individual, or group can be identified as the leader of the New Orleans Negro community. Instead, from the point of view of

¹⁵ Daniel C. Thompson, The Negro Leadership Class (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 165.

influence, we can identify several segments or classes in the Negro community. Each of these segments or classes produces its own leadership.¹⁶

In a 1963 study, Jack Walker found that in Atlanta there were two major black leadership categories--liberal and conservative. Walker noted that there was general agreement between the two sets of leaders regarding goals but that they tended to disagree over tactics. However, Walker found that both liberals and conservatives served important functions. The liberal leaders initiated conflicts with the wider community; the conservative leaders, utilizing their contacts with white elites, helped to resolve the conflicts.¹⁷

Killian and Grigg, in their 1964 study of the black leadership in Tallahassee, Florida, found that significant changes had occurred as a result of a bus strike. A new militant group of Negroes had become the acknowledged leaders of the black community. Killian and Grigg found that white leaders would have preferred to deal with the old accommodating black leaders but realized that they no longer had general support. The whites were realistic enough to recognize and to deal with the new more militant black leaders.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁷ Jack L. Walker, "Protest and Negotiation: A Case Study of Negro Leadership in Atlanta, Georgia," Midwest Journal of Political Science, Vol. 7, No. 2 (May, 1963), pp. 99-124.

Killian and Grigg found that viewing racial problems as conflict relationships provided a framework within which the two races could achieve a more realistic understanding of each other's problems. Such an approach also was conducive to achieving a more meaningful consensus between negotiating leaders.¹⁸

In Negro Political Leadership in the South, published in 1966, Everett Ladd described the more aggressive character of recent black leadership in two southern communities, Winston-Salem and Greenville. Ladd found that white leaders in these communities would have preferred dealing with the older, more deferential black leaders but recognizing that these men were no longer acceptable to the black community, they were willing to negotiate with the new leaders. Ladd noted that in some cases whites were even appointing these new black leaders as representatives of the black community to boards and commissions.

Ladd found that in the larger community success as a civic leader or as a business man could often be transferred by a candidate to the political arena. However, the same situation did not prevail in the black community. The fact that a black candidate had led a

¹⁸ Lewis M. Killian and Charles M. Grigg, Racial Crisis in America . . . (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

[illegible]

successful charitable fund drive or was a successful businessman was of only marginal interest to black voters. Black interest in their candidates focused on their acceptability as race leaders. Ladd explained this difference in attitude by pointing out that to the white community politics is often an area of only peripheral concern but to the Negro, politics can be vital, it can mean jobs, housing and access to the rights of full citizenship.

Ladd found certain difficulties involved in establishing typologies of race leaderships. He saw that leadership styles vary from time to time and place to place. Therefore, Ladd established a continuum relationship made up of three categories: conservative, moderate and militant and defined these categories not in terms of absolute means or goals, but rather in terms of the acceptability of these three leadership styles to whites and blacks. According to this definition, militants are always those who, regardless of place or time, are "in their rhetoric, goals, and means, less acceptable to . . . whites than are moderates who in turn are less acceptable than conservatives."¹⁹ Ladd found that this relative continuum of styles is one that actually

¹⁹ Everett C. Ladd, Jr., Negro Political Leadership in the South (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 150.

represents the way whites and blacks view black race leadership.

Noting that there are constant changes in most black leadership structures, Ladd offered the following explanation:

Operating from weak institutional and status positions, possessing few sanctions with which to secure the compliance of their followers, and dealing with issues which involve the deepest and most vital political interests of Negroes, race leaders are exceedingly vulnerable. Hence the fluidity potential of race leadership will remain high.²⁰

In 1971, Mack Jones published a study of black political leadership in a number of southern communities. Jones found that in the South, black officeholders cannot effect the priorities of the bodies on which they serve and have only limited success in gaining benefits for their community. Benefits achieved by black officeholders are the result of contacts and pressure exerted on administrative officials rather than through legislative action.²¹

Nelson, in a 1971 study of black leadership in a number of Alabama communities, found that there has been a recent tendency for black charismatic leaders to be replaced by black leaders who are specialists in problem

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 321-322.

²¹ Mach H. Jones, "Black Officeholders in Local Governments of the South: An Overview," Politics 1971, No. 2 (March, 1971), pp. 49-72.

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areas. The charismatic leader still plays a ritualistic role but negotiations between the black community and the larger community are conducted by the cadre of specialized leaders.²²

Studies of black leadership in the North and West produced findings that were similar to those generated by studies of black leadership in the South. However, there were several significant differences. Black leaders in the northern urban centers appeared to be more confused about goals and tactics. They also appeared to be less effective in achieving concrete benefits for their communities.

An early study of black leadership in the West was published in 1959 by Ernest Barth and Baha Abu-Laban. Barth and Abu-Laban found that in Pacific City, black leaders did not play important roles in community decision-making. For in Pacific City, blacks "hold positions of little importance to the community's institutional structures; their decisions have no serious ramifications for the larger community."²³ Unlike most other black sub-communities, several respondents claimed that in Pacific

²²Harold A. Nelson, "Leadership and Change in an Evolutionary Movement . . . ," Social Forces, Vol. 49, No. 3 (March, 1971), pp. 353-371.

²³Ernest Barth and Baha Abu-Laban, "Power Structure and the Negro Sub-Community," American Sociological Review, XXIV, No. 1 (February, 1959), p. 76.

City "most Negroes are not conscious of being members of a racial community as they are in many other cities."²⁴

Barth and Abu-Laban felt this was a reflection of the rather unique character of the black community in Pacific City and stressed the need for researchers to note the total community setting in any study of minority sub-communities.

James Wilson, in his study of black political leadership published in 1960, has described changes in the black leadership structure in Chicago over a period of years. Wilson noted that in the past black leaders were people of general prestige who were recognized as leaders because of their occupational or social position. Many of these early leaders were ministers or professional men. Today, Wilson finds that the new black leadership group contains a large number of leaders who are professionals associated with black voluntary organizations and these organizations (Urban League, NAACP) tend to supply the tone and rhetoric of black protest.

Wilson noted that the middle class which provides much of the black leadership today tends to support goals which at times may appear irrelevant to the ghetto Negro. Open occupancy which is a very meaningful issue to the upward-aspiring, middle-class Negro may only be of

²⁴Ibid.

peripheral interest to those blacks who are obligated to remain or prefer to remain in the ghetto.

Wilson found that there were many lines of division within the black community but noted that these divisions are rarely allowed to become public issues. He explained this unique cohesiveness by pointing out that,

almost all Negroes of any stature are dependent upon the Negro rank-and-file for power, income and status. . . . This dependence does not require the Negro entrepreneur always to act as if the interests of the Negro community were his goal. But it does require that the Negro leader not allow himself to be conspicuously or dramatically identified with a position or course of action at odds with the consensual interests of the race.²⁵

Wilson appears to support those who maintain that conflict is inevitable if blacks are to improve their status. He said:

Given the need for vigorous leadership, and given the magnitude of the problems and the relative lack of other forms of influence, it is difficult to see how Negroes can perform the protest function without utilizing tactics (such as racial appeals, extreme demands, and emotional rhetoric) that in different circumstances would be considered improper. It is inherently contradictory to look for "responsible" militants who will lead a "reasonable" protest movement. Conflict is inherent in social change, and the disadvantages which rise in proportion to the intensity of

²⁵ James Q. Wilson, Negro Politics . . . (New York: The Free Press, 1960), p. 306.

such conflict must simply be weighed as a cost against the value of the ends being served.²⁶

Pfautz, in his 1962 study of Providence, Rhode Island, also found that black community leaders were relatively powerless. Pfautz noted three types of leadership styles and categorized these as "integration" oriented, "segregation" oriented and "middle road."

Unlike other investigators, Pfautz found a fairly high degree of consensus among blacks regarding the leaders in the subcommunity. Pfautz concluded that in cities with a relatively small black population "there may be less of a gap between 'reputation' and 'behavior' in the case of Negro sub-community leaders."²⁷

James McKee, in his 1962 study of black leadership in Grand Rapids, found that leadership tended to be polarized around two organizations, the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP was primarily interested in "status" goals--the elimination of segregation--while the Urban League was primarily interested in "welfare" goals--issues that would provide Negroes with tangible material benefits. While the NAACP was more aggressive than the Urban League

²⁶ Ibid., p. 309.

²⁷ Harold Pfautz, "The Power Structure of the Negro Sub-Community: A Case Study and a Comparative View," Phylon, XXIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1962), 165.

in its attempts to achieve it's goals, a majority of the Negro leaders spoke more approvingly of the Urban League.

McKee found that the issues of major concern to the black community were those related to housing, jobs and education. Negroes were also quite concerned about juvenile delinquency and about police-black community relations.

McKee noted that Negro leadership in Grand Rapids is changing. Organized labor offers blacks the chance to develop leadership potential. Many of the new leaders are college educated professionals who can present the Negro case with skill. McKee found no monolithic black "power structure" in Grand Rapids. He reported,

Negroes, including Negro leaders, agree that no one person, or even one group of persons, can speak for or legitimately represent the Negro community. In that sense, there are no leaders of the Negro community. But there are numerous leaders in the Negro community.²⁸

Of particular significance was the fact that in Grand Rapids, in spite of the improved political skills of the Negro, black leaders remain relatively powerless. McKee summed up the situation by observing "leaders . . . have no ready access to the important centers of decision-

²⁸James McKee, Negro Leadership in Grand Rapids (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, Institute for Community Development, 1962), p. 2.

making in the community. They are leaders without power. . . .²⁹

Lee Bowman, in 1965, published a study of black leadership in a northern community of 200,000. Bowman found black leaders more concerned about business and professional advancement than with race-related goals. Most of the leadership in the black community was provided by black protest organizations. These organizations had an ideology that was a combination of militant and moderate views. Bowman found that black leaders who favored militant goals often failed to implement their views with action programs.³⁰

Kenneth Clark in his study, Dark Ghetto, published in 1965, gives an interesting description of an attempt by a group of important Harlem business and professional men to constitute themselves as a black "power structure" dedicated to assisting black public leaders who were occupying exposed positions. Unfortunately, this power group proved to be largely ineffective. Frequently, these self-constituted elites found that they were unable to influence decisions and since many in the group were

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Lee Bowman, "Racial Discrimination and Negro Leadership Problems: The Case of 'Northern Community,'" Social Forces, Vol. 44, No. 2 (December, 1965), pp. 173-186.

themselves officeholders, they found that they were also vulnerable to attacks from the larger community.³¹

John Strange, in his 1966 account of black political leadership in Philadelphia, concluded that black leaders in that city labored under a number of serious handicaps. Strange found that the black commitment to the Democratic party made it difficult for them to extract concessions from that party. Strange predicted that even when blacks in Philadelphia came to constitute more than half of the population of the city, they would find that the bureaucratization and professionalization of the government machinery would prevent any dramatic improvement in the black condition.³²

Lee Sloan investigated the black leadership structure in Pontiac, Michigan and reported the results in his 1967 doctoral dissertation. Sloan used the reputational approach to identify important black leaders. He then conducted open-ended interviews with these black leaders and with leaders from the larger community.

Undoubtedly, one of Sloan's most significant observations was that "a basic characteristic of Negro

³¹Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto . . . (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 186-189.

³²John H. Strange, "Racial Segregation in the Metropolis," in Metropolitan Politics (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966), pp. 41-52.

community leadership is its relative powerlessness."³³ He went on to observe; "many of the problems of Negro leadership stem directly from the fact the Negro leaders must operate from a weak base of power."³⁴ The powerlessness of black leadership, Sloan found, led to demands by the black subcommunity for greater militancy and made the black leaders extremely vulnerable.

Harry Scoble, in a 1967 study of black leadership in Los Angeles, notes that since the Watts Riot, leadership in that community has become increasingly specialized and fragmented. Scoble finds that there are fewer demonstrations and that blacks have turned to welfare goals and self-help programs. Scoble finds that black leaders press for concessions from the larger community and white elites appear to be responding to these demands but this responsiveness is "more verbal and visible than . . . substantive."³⁵ Scoble finds that in Los Angeles the current weakness of labor unions and of the Democratic party--traditional allies of the black community--has served to handicap black leaders in their attempts to achieve new goals.

³³Lee Sloan, "Negro Community Leadership in a Northern City," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1967), p. 228.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Harry M. Scoble, Negro Politics in Los Angeles (Los Angeles, Institute of Government and Public Affairs, U.C.L.A., 1967), p. 24.

In a study published in 1968, Harold Baron found that blacks in Cook County "hold less than one percent of the effective power in the Chicago metropolitan area."³⁶ Baron found that black political leaders had failed to give effective support to such vital issues as urban renewal and education and had accepted instead the traditional political patronage rewards. Thus it appeared that they had forfeited the opportunity to gain concessions for their black constituents.

In his 1969 study of San Francisco, Young found that the militancy of protest leaders had forced black political leaders to be more aggressive in their actions vis á vis the wider community. Black politicians realize that they must work with black protest leaders or risk defeat at the polls. Wilson in several of his studies has noted the prevalence of middle-class black leaders who frequently have limited rapport with the poor. However, Young found that in San Francisco the black leadership group is made up of individuals from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds and tha both groups of leaders appear to have good rapport with ghetto blacks.³⁷

³⁶Harold M. Baron, "Black Powerlessness in Chicago," Trans-action, Vol. 6, No. 1 (November, 1968), p. 33.

³⁷Richard Young, "The Impact of Protest Leadership on Negro Politicians in San Francisco," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March, 1969), pp. 94-111.

Palley in his study of black leadership in Newark-- a city with a black population of 54 percent--found among black leaders a tendency toward militancy and a sense of urgency regarding the need for rapid change. Black leaders showed a preference for radical and militant organizations. Black leaders rarely mentioned the Urban League and 60 percent of them viewed the NAACP with negative or hostile feelings. Palley found that among black leaders, age rather than economic status, education or occupation was the most reliable indicator of militancy or radicalism.³⁸

As we have noted, it is apparent that during the sixties there were regional variations in black leadership goals and in black leadership achievements. Southern black leaders appeared to be more successful than their northern counterparts in achieving racially-oriented goals. Northern black leaders appeared to be increasingly pessimistic about what the future might hold for them.

There have been a number of attempts to account for the regional difference in leadership effectiveness. Several investigators felt that southern black leaders were more effective because they had created superior organizations and had developed more effective leadership

³⁸Marian Palley et al, "Subcommunity Leadership in a Black Ghetto . . .," Urban Affairs Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 3 (March, 1970), pp. 291-312.

techniques. It was also noted that the goals of the two black leadership groups were sometimes quite different and because of this, the pattern of protest that achieved success in the South was not always appropriate in the North. In this connection, Clark notes: "patterns of litigation, legislation, and other forms of governmental action that seemed appropriate to the amelioration of the racially determined condition of the southern Negro are inappropriate to the predicament of the northern Negro. . . ."³⁹

Wilson finds that one important reason for leadership success in the South has been the clear-cut set of issues that faced the black community. Wilson in discussing the struggle in the South says:

The Negro community responded to what were regarded as manifest injustices and public outrages. Anti-Negro violence, police oppression, the denial of ordinary public services, and other oppressions represented specific causes. They tended to unify the Negro community. Few could doubt that there were injustices . . . Common decency seemed to demand a redress, and by simply calling attention to it in a forceful manner, some corrective action could be had. . . .⁴⁰

³⁹ Kenneth B. Clark, "The Negro and the Urban Crisis," in Agenda for the Nation, ed. Kermit Gordon. (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1968), p. 119.

⁴⁰ James Q. Wilson, "The Strategy of Protest: Problems of Negro Civic Action," Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September, 1961), p. 295.

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Wilson supports Clark's view that the problems facing the black community in the North and in the South have, until very recently, been characterized by some significant regional differences. In the North, the most significant problem-areas appeared to be economic and social rather than political or legal and black leaders experienced some difficulty in formulating specific race-advancement goals, related to these problem-areas. For in dealing with specific issues such as inadequate housing and unemployment, northern black leaders found it difficult to devise effective strategies because the problems themselves were so complex and the solutions so obscure.

Our brief resume of other leadership studies has served to indicate some of the problems and conclusions that have been pointed up by these studies and to present some of the conceptualizations related to black leadership that these studies have generated.

Briefly, we might note that most studies show that black leaders are becoming increasingly more aggressive in their leadership styles and goals. In a number of cases, there is a change in leadership type from ministers and professional men to leaders of voluntary organizations and labor unions. Black leaders who are most acceptable to the white community are often viewed with suspicion by the black community.

Several studies find a good deal of dissatisfaction or at least ambivalence in the black community toward black leaders. This is particularly true among ghetto blacks who feel that their needs are not served by middle-class, black leaders whose goals and life-styles are completely at variance with their own. Some investigators find that black leaders are effective, others do not, but most conclude that black leaders do not possess the requisite power to gain important goals for their black constituents.

Conceptualizations of black leadership have resulted in a number of descriptive typologies of leadership, the most prevalent having three categories that are labeled in various ways to indicate militant, moderate and conservative leadership styles. However, one study finds that leadership styles vary from time to time and place to place. Attempts are also made to correlate leadership styles with goals and with types of protest organizations. Finally, studies show that conflict is an essential ingredient of most successful protest activity which indicates clearly why a more aggressive style of leadership is demanded.

Building on previous studies, this thesis describes black leadership in a middle-sized industrial community and attempts to relate the results to earlier studies. Chapter V will contain a more detailed description of the methodological approach used in this thesis but here it is sufficient to note that the research was guided by these kinds

of questions: Who are the leaders in the black community? Do black leaders have ready access to important centers of decision-making within the larger community? Are there re-occurring changes in the make-up of the black leadership stratum? Do black leaders possess legitimacy in the sub-community? In the larger community? These types of questions related to leadership, power and conflict served as guide posts in our research. In attempting to answer these types of questions, the two conceptual tools of social power and conflict were found to be most useful. These concepts, described in later chapters, provided additional insights into leadership styles and goals during the course of this analysis of community leadership. However, before turning to these conceptual tools, let us focus on the community we will be concerned with in this study.

CHAPTER II

DURANT: THE COMMUNITY SETTING

In this chapter, we will be describing the community which we have identified with the pseudonym of Durant.* Durant is a middle-sized industrial community located in the Middle West. The city has had both its apologists and its detractors and indeed it is difficult to be ambivalent about the community. Durant's unofficial historian in a poem written on the fiftieth anniversary of Universal Motors paid tribute to the city in the following fashion: "Durant . . .--a good place and a time to be alive; we share the best the modern world has in it. A better place and time? There never was one."¹

Others have been less enthusiastic. A writer for Commonweal after visiting the city commented: "The grey-ness and the lack of hills, the factories and the used-car

*The pseudonym "Durant" has also been used in the footnotes documenting this study.

¹Clarence Young, "Big Crossing Place" (Durant, Hobbs Foundation, 1962), p. 4.

lots shroud whatever vitality and hope the land and the people once possessed."²

The bleakness of the city has also been described in rather vivid fashion in two novels by Catherine Brody, Nobody Starves³ and Cash Item.⁴ This image has also been evoked in a doctoral dissertation dealing with the community. The author, Peirce Lewis, describes the city in the following way:

Durant is a picture of drab uniformity.
 . . . The dozen blocks of the business district are distinguished by buildings which compensate for lack of beauty by an abundance of neon and imitation tile.

Lewis concluded that

Durant cannot escape its past; the scars of thirty years are too deeply etched across its face. No number of upper-middle-class ranch houses in the outskirts will obliterate square miles of ugly monotony. Nor can Durant escape what it is: a company town whose economic health hangs on the single thread of Universal Motor's sales.⁵

However, these contrasting laudatory and critical views do not necessarily provide one with a completely

²Phil Tracy, "Cold Night in Durant," Commonweal, XCI, No. 16 (January 23, 1970), p. 447.

³Catherine Brody, Nobody Starves (New York: Longman's Green and Co., 1932).

⁴Catherine Brody, Cash Item (New York: Longman's Green and Co., 1933).

⁵Peirce Lewis, "Geography in the Politics of Durant," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1958), pp. 20-29.

objective description of the community. Certainly there are many undesirable characteristics about the city. It is not physically attractive; it does not offer some of the special amenities and services found in many cities; and it has a number of major social problems. However, the community appears to offer other advantages. For whites from the South and from the rural areas of the state and for culturally deprived blacks, the community may represent the opportunity to achieve certain desired material and vocational goals. Middle-class business and professional men, too, may find that Durant offers ready opportunities for financial rewards with less competition from peer groups than might be encountered in more prestigious communities.

Early History of Durant

The recorded history of Durant begins when a fur trader settled in the area in 1819. The site was selected because it was the spot where the Durant River could easily be forded. Settlers from western New York were attracted to the region and Durant became the trading center of the whole area. In the 1860's and 1870's lumbering became one of the major industries in the state and for thirty years Durant was one of the state's major lumbering centers. Eventually, the stands of pine were depleted but by then the city was the flourishing center of the carriage

industry. By 1900, Durant was known as the "Vehicle City" and had an annual production of 150,000 wagons and carriages--twice as many as South Bend, its nearest competitor.

A number of the early entrepreneurs in the carriage business became interested in the automobile and soon several firms were established to manufacture cars. The relationship between the carriage manufacturers and the automobile manufacturers remained close for some time. The early automobile was in essence a carriage with a motor, and carriage manufacturers supplied the bodies, springs and wheels for these early cars.

In 1908 several of the struggling automobile companies were merged into a single corporation--Universal Motors. This company, destined to become the largest automobile manufacturer in the world, expanded until it had plants in many other communities but Durant remained its largest single manufacturing site.

Durant experienced a tremendous period of population growth during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The population increase, as shown in Table 1, was on a percentage basis, greater than that experienced during this period by its larger neighbor and rival manufacturing center, Detroit.

TABLE 1
COMPARATIVE POPULATION GROWTH
IN DURANT AND DETROIT

| Year | Durant Population | Durant Percent Increase | Detroit Population | Detroit Percent Increase |
|------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1900 | 13,103 | | 285,704 | |
| 1910 | 38,550 | 194.2 | 465,766 | 63.0 |
| 1920 | 91,599 | 137.6 | 993,678 | 113.3 |
| 1930 | 156,492 | 70.8 | 1,568,662 | 57.9 |
| 1940 | 151,543 | -3.2 | 1,623,452 | 3.5 |
| 1950 | 163,143 | 7.7 | 1,849,568 | 13.9 |
| 1960 | 196,940 | 20.7 | 1,670,144 | -9.7 |
| 1970 | 193,317 | -1.8 | 1,511,482 | -9.5 |

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, Number of Inhabitants. (Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 24-15.

Ethnic Backgrounds of Durant's Population

During Durant's boom period, agents employed by Universal Motors scoured the country recruiting workers and people poured into the city from other sections of the state; from adjacent states in the Middle West; from states in the Southeast and from foreign countries. Unlike other industrial centers, there was a heavier immigration from southern states while there was a correspondingly smaller influx of people from eastern and southern Europe. There were, however, a large number of immigrants

from Canada and from the British Isles. In Tables 2 and 3, the census statistics for Durant's ethnic antecedents are contrasted with those for Detroit to highlight some of the ethnic variations.

TABLE 2
ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS

| | Durant | Detroit |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Foreign Born | 5.4 | 12.1 |
| Natives of Foreign or Mixed Parentage | <u>13.4</u> | <u>20.1</u> |
| Foreign Stock | 18.4 | 32.1 |

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1960. General Social and Economic Characteristics. (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 24-179, 24-277.

TABLE 3
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

| | Durant | Percentage | Detroit | Percentage |
|------------------|---------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Total Population | 196,940 | | 1,670,144 | |
| Foreign Stock | 37,063 | | 537,446 | |
| U.K. | 4,939 | 13.3 | 46,493 | 8.6 |
| Canada | 10,534 | 28.3 | 98,803 | 18.3 |
| Poland | 3,143 | 8.4 | 106,739 | 19.8 |
| Italy | 1,438 | 3.9 | 47,689 | 8.9 |
| Germany | 3,402 | 9.2 | 54,256 | 10.1 |
| U.S.S.R. | 1,637 | 4.4 | 33,142 | 6.2 |

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1960. General Social and Economic Characteristics. (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 24-179, 24-277.

Many of the new residents tended to consider Durant as only a temporary place of residence and continued to maintain strong ties with their former home communities. When periods of slack employment developed in the automobile industry, they frequently returned to their old communities and remained there until employment was again available in Durant. This tended to give a certain transient quality to the community. It also resulted in rather limited involvement on the part of many of the auto workers in the on-going political life of the community. The result was that city government was largely dominated by the original residents of the city.

Blacks were not a numerically important segment of the city's population during its early period of industrial growth as is indicated in Table 4.

In the 1920's, blacks began to arrive in fairly large numbers. However, job opportunities for blacks in the automobile industry were still limited to janitorial and foundry employment. Following World War II, as Table 4 indicates, there was a substantial increase in black migration as many production-line jobs were made available to blacks. Moreover, the past decade, 1960-1970, has seen Durant's black population growing at a rate (58.7) that is larger than that experienced by Detroit.⁶

⁶U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population and Housing (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 24-11.

TABLE 4

BLACK POPULATION IN THE CITY OF
DURANT AND GOODRICH COUNTY

| Year | DURANT | | GOODRICH COUNTY | |
|------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Black Population | Percent of Total Population | Black Population | Percent of Total Population |
| 1910 | 397 | 1.0 | 416 | 0.6 |
| 1920 | 1,701 | 1.9 | 1,757 | 1.4 |
| 1930 | 5,725 | 3.7 | 5,825 | 2.8 |
| 1940 | 6,599 | 4.4 | 6,708 | 2.9 |
| 1950 | 13,906 | 8.5 | 14,277 | 5.3 |
| 1960 | 34,521 | 17.5 | 36,990 | 9.9 |
| 1970 | 54,237 | 28.1 | 60,338 | 13.6 |

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Census of Population. 1920, V. 2, pp. 66, 1344. 1940, V. 2, Part 3, pp. 785, 899. 1950, V. 2, Part 22, pp. 45, 46, 119, 173. 1960, V. 1, Part 24, pp. 36, 38, 62, 137. 1970 General Population Characteristics, pp. 79, 178. Negro Population in the United States: 1790-1915, p. 814. Negroes in the United States: 1920-1932, p. 749.

Durant's Economy and
Universal Motors

The economic life of Durant is dominated by its dependence on Universal Motors. A Federal Reserve Bank report notes: "Probably in no other city of comparable size in the United States has any single firm attained the industrial supremacy which Universal Motors has in Durant."⁷ This dominant position is clearly indicated

⁷ Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Growth and Prosperity in Five Midwestern Cities (Chicago, Federal Reserve Bank, 1955), p. 31.

in Table 5 which provides comparative employment statistics for Durant and for three other cities in the area. It shows that manufacturing and more specifically automobile manufacturing, dominates the economic life of the community to a much greater degree than is true of other communities.

The results of this type of economic domination are pervasive and far-reaching. Several of these results have been discussed in some detail in an economic report dealing with Durant and Goodrich County prepared by the Battelle Institute.⁸ The Battelle report indicates that communities like Durant that have economies dominated by a single industry experience the following problems:

- (1) They are particularly vulnerable to economic cycles and economic recessions.
- (2) They tend to have a slower economic growth than communities with a more varied economic base.
- (3) They experience difficulty in attracting new and varied economic enterprises because of the dominant position of their major industry.

⁸ Battelle Memorial Institute, Goodrich County Economic Conditions (Columbus, Ohio; Battelle Memorial Institute, 1969), pp. 1-8.

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TABLE 5
OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN SELECTED
MIDWESTERN COMMUNITIES

| | DURANT Number | SMA Percent | DETROIT Number | SMA Percent |
|--|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Total Employment | 142,926 | | 1,316,448 | |
| Employment in Manufacturing Industries | 77,466 | 54 | 565,064 | 42 |
| Employment in the Manufacture of Transportation Equipment | 61,689 | 43 | 165,867 | 13 |
| | SAGINAW Number | SMA Percent | LANSING Number | SMA Percent |
| Total Employment | 64,010 | | 95,741 | |
| Employment in Manufacturing Industries | 30,640 | 48 | 38,361 | 40 |
| Employment in the Manufacture of Transportation Equipment | 9,795 | 15 | 25,255* | 27.9* |

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.
County Business Patterns, 1970 (Washington, D.C.,
U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 141-144.

*1967 figures from the Battelle Memorial Institute,
Goodrich County Economic Conditions (Columbus, Ohio,
Battelle Memorial Institute, 1969), pp. 1-11, 1-12.

- (4) They frequently lack service-related enterprises--restaurants, hotels, and amusement and entertainment facilities--because of the inability of these enterprises to meet the wage standards in the community.
- (5) They are perceived as "factory towns" and this image, which has rather negative connotations for many people, may cause individuals and business organizations to view them as undesirable communities.

As the Battelle survey indicates, the economic domination by Universal Motors has had a noticeable impact on Durant. Because of the relatively high wage scales in the automobile industry, there are fewer people employed in white-collar positions in Durant than in communities of comparable size. This lack of white-collar employment is indicated in Table 6 which compares the percentage of white-collar employment in Durant with that of four other communities.

Some observers feel that this lack of a large middle class has produced a community that is not strongly oriented toward those cultural and intellectual amenities that are so typical of the upper middle-class life-style.

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TABLE 6
PERCENT OF EMPLOYED PERSONS IN
WHITE-COLLAR OCCUPATIONS

| Durant | Detroit | Grand Rapids | Lansing | Saginaw |
|--------|---------|--------------|---------|---------|
| 36.4 | 40.2 | 45.6 | 48.0 | 41.0 |

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1960, General Social and Economic Characteristics, pp. 24-181, 24-182.

Almost everyone in Durant is aware of the fact that when Universal Motors is having a successful year the whole community reflects this prosperity. The reason for this is twofold--the company is the major employer in the community, and the average hourly wage paid by Universal Motors and its suppliers is higher than the state and national average wages for comparable types of employment. Table 7 shows the high hourly earnings paid in Durant and compares them with the average earnings on the state and the national level for the same type of employment.

TABLE 7
AVERAGE HOURLY EARNINGS
Fourth Quarter, 1970

| | Durant | State | U.S. |
|---|--------|--------|--------|
| Manufacturing Employment | \$4.53 | \$4.16 | \$3.41 |
| Employment in the Mfg. of Transportation Equip. | 4.57 | 4.41 | 4.11 |

Source: Manpower Quarterly Review, V6 #4 and V7 #1 (joint issue) Second Series, 1971. pp. 21, 27, 31.

However, recently it has become apparent that employment at Universal Motors is not expanding at a rate sufficient to provide additional jobs for the metropolitan area's growing population. Indeed, as Table 8 indicates, the total number of employees at Universal Motors was smaller in 1970 than it was in 1956. This decrease in employment level is the result of certain production efficiencies achieved by the company.

TABLE 8
UNIVERSAL MOTORS' EMPLOYMENT
IN GOODRICH COUNTY

| Year | Universal Motors Employment | Percent Change |
|------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1956 | 74,434 | |
| 1958 | 56,612 | -23.9 |
| 1960 | 65,458 | +15.6 |
| 1962 | 66,546 | + 1.37 |
| 1964 | 67,317 | + 1.12 |
| 1967 | 72,649 | + 7.92 |
| 1970 | 60,526 | -16.69 |

Source: Figures provided by Universal Motors.

Unfortunately, Durant has grown so accustomed to depending on Universal Motors as its major source of employment that almost no effort has been made to attract new industry. The Battelle report indicates that there is no civic agency actively engaged in recruiting new industry

for Durant and that, in fact, there is only one organization, a utility company, that does any work of significance in this area. The report notes that the recruitment of new industry will require special efforts because the dominant role of Universal Motors and the community's high wage levels tend to discourage other industrial concerns from locating in Durant.

The United Automobile
Workers (U.A.W.)

The early history of Universal Motors was one of rather harsh paternalism toward its employees. This pattern of continuing paternalism was broken with the victory of the U.A.W. in the epoch-making, sit-down strike of 1937. The union victory was achieved only after a protracted struggle. This struggle was a difficult one because the union was confronted not only with a powerful industrial organization but also with its allies--the municipal authorities in Durant. At the time of the strike, the mayor was a Universal Motors' employee, the city manager had been a former plant division manager and the chief of police was a former company detective. During the course of the strike, the city police worked very closely with company officials.⁹

However, the involvement of both the governor of the state

⁹ Sidney Fine, Sit-Down . . . (Ann Arbor, Michigan, The *University of Michigan Press*, 1969), p. 108.

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1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 278: 1019-1024.

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and President Franklin Roosevelt probably helped to counter-balance corporate power and to assist labor in achieving an equitable settlement.

The successful termination of the strike was a significant milepost in the history of organized labor. For, encouraged by this victory, the CIO went on to organize unskilled labor in many additional industries. Since 1937, the UAW has continued to play an important role in the civic affairs of Durant. Although it does not actively support political tickets, the UAW keeps a watchful eye on political issues and will take a position if it feels its interests are involved. In a number of cases, the union has been instrumental in defeating issues which it felt might place in jeopardy its historic commitment to certain social and economic goals. Moreover, relations between the corporation and the union have been somewhat more amicable recently and this improved rapport allows some problems to be resolved before they evolve into political issues. Today, a representative from the Industrial Association and a union official meet periodically to discuss a wide range of political issues of mutual concern to management and labor.

Because of the rather conservative viewpoint of *many* union members regarding local issues, the union cannot *always* support issues at the local level with the same *fervor* that it shows at the national level. Union support

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of race-advancement issues appears to be viewed by many UAW members with a great deal of ambivalence.

Government and Politics

Durant has a non-partisan, council-manager form of municipal government. Councilmen are elected by wards. Following each election, the council selects one of its members to serve as mayor. The city manager is responsible to the council. His authority is rather limited. The council tends to select local citizens to fill the manager's post rather than professional managers with broad experience in the field.

Durant normally turns in democratic majorities for candidates on the state and national tickets. During the first three decades of this century, the city was a Republican stronghold. However, Republican control of the city was shattered in 1932. In that year, for the first time in their history, Durant and Goodrich County returned a majority for the Democratic presidential candidate. Four years later, Durant gave FDR a two-to-one majority. Today, the city continues to give solid support to most democrats on the state and national tickets.

Many of Durant's citizens suspect that a power structure made up of R. B. Hobbs, an early automotive entrepreneur, plus the current top echelon of Universal Motors' executives "runs the town." Undoubtedly the

company does become involved in issues that affect corporate interests but it appears that the rather conservative orientation of a majority of the city councilmen makes it unnecessary for economic elites to become deeply involved in local partisan politics.

Education

The most recent census figures that are available show that the educational median for Durant's citizens is higher than the medians for most comparable industrial communities in the area. Table 9 indicates some of these educational medians.

TABLE 9

MEDIAN SCHOOL YEARS COMPLETED
BY THOSE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS
OLD OR OLDER

| Durant | Detroit | Grand Rapids | Lansing | Saginaw |
|--------|---------|--------------|---------|---------|
| 10.5 | 10.3 | 9.9 | 10.6 | 9.6 |

Source: U.S. Census of Population 1970, General Social and Economic Characteristics, pp. 24-180, 24-371, 24-373, 24-375.

The racial distribution of students in the Durant school system is shown in Table 10.

The Durant Board of Education is the policy-making body for the Durant school system. Traditionally it has had more elite representation among its membership than

TABLE 10

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS IN THE DURANT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SEPTEMBER 1971

| SCHOOLS | Elementary Pupils | | | | | | | | | | TOTAL |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------|--------|---------|----------|---------|-----------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | AMERICAN INDIAN | | BLACKS | | ORIENTAL | | SPANISH SURNAME | | WHITE | | |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | |
| 43 | 20 | * | 11,206 | 42 | 38 | * | 455 | 2 | 14,957 | 56 | 26,676 |
| Junior High Pupils | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 6 | * | 4,044 | 42 | 18 | * | 178 | 2 | 5,397 | 56 | 9,643 |
| Senior High Pupils | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 4 | * | 3,747 | 42 | 16 | * | 122 | 1 | 5,028 | 56 | 8,917 |

*Less than 10%

Source: Durant Community Schools, Research and Testing Service, Durant Public Schools Racial Distribution (Durant, Durant Community Schools, 1971), pp. 1-2.

The black student percentage (42%) remains constant at all three levels.

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either the City Council or the County Commission. Citizens tend to feel that it represents the "power structure" and are suspicious of its close ties with the Hobbs' Foundation.

The Hobbs' Foundation

The Hobbs' Foundation with assets of approximately four hundred million dollars was endowed by C. B. Hobbs, an early automotive pioneer. The foundation channels most of its funds back into the community of Durant and because of its large endowment has a great impact on the community. The foundation provides a variety of educational, recreation and health services in Durant. Its educational programs have, in the past, received widespread publicity and acclaim. Recently, however, there has been mounting criticism of the foundation's activities. Critics believe that the foundation is, in effect, running the school system. Critics also note that, in spite of the fact that the foundation assists in underwriting a number of peripheral programs designed to enrich the educational process, the community's basic educational program remains deficient. As evidence of this deficiency, critics point to the failure of a significant number of Durant students to score well on national achievement tests. (School officials feel that this criticism is unfair since it fails to take into consideration the culturally deprived backgrounds of substantial segments of Durant's student

population.) Critics of the foundation also maintain that many of its recreational and service programs are oriented to middle-class needs and do not make any substantial contribution to the needs of those in the lower socio-economic strata. A recent community survey seems to at least partially corroborated this criticism.¹⁰

Education and Fine Arts Center

The contributions of Mr. Hobbs and of a number of other wealthy citizens have assisted in the creation of an Education and Fine Arts Center that provides outstanding physical facilities for educational programs. There is a community college with a number of fine buildings including a field house, a natatorium and a large library building. Mr. Hobbs has also provided a building for the Durant branch of a state university. The adjacent cultural center includes an art institute, a planetarium, a music institute, a museum of transportation, a public library and a theater for dramatic productions as well as an unusually fine auditorium for concerts. Few communities of comparable size can boast of such fine facilities devoted to education and the arts. Yet it appears that only a small segment of the community takes advantage of many of these resources.

¹⁰Institute of Community Services, Community Services in Durant, 1970.

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Churches and Religion

A survey of church membership was conducted in Goodrich County in 1963 by the Greater Durant Council of Churches. The total membership in Christian churches was 156,149, or approximately forty percent of the county's population. The largest single denomination was the Roman Catholic Church with 66,509 members. The membership in Durant's two synagogues is reported as 650 family units while the population of the Jewish community of greater Durant is recorded as 2,684. A rough approximation of religious affiliations is given in Table 11.

TABLE 11
CHURCH AFFILIATION

| Religious Affiliation | Percent of the Religious Community |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Roman Catholic | 40% |
| Jewish | 1.5* |
| Orthodox | .4 |
| Protestant | 58 |

*Durant Jewish Community Council. Oral report of current greater Durant Jewish population and church membership, November 30, 1971.

Source: Greater Durant Council of Churches. Goodrich County Church Membership Statistics (Durant Greater Durant Council of Churches, 1963), p. 1.

The figures are those reported for the entire county but they do provide a fairly accurate indication of religious affiliations for the metropolitan area since

most of the county's population is in or adjacent to the central city.

The number of individual churches and their denominational affiliation is indicated in Table 12.

The church census appears to validate the fact that there are large numbers of southerners in the city and its environs. For although the traditional Protestant denominations are well represented, the survey indicates that there are seventeen Pentecostal churches and many other Protestant churches with a distinctly pentecostal flavor including Nazarene (15 churches); Church of God (14 churches); Pilgrim Holiness (14 churches); Church of God in Christ (12 churches); and Assembly of God (11 churches). A number of the baptist churches also have a decidedly fundamentalist point of view and fifteen are affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Black Community in Durant

Complaints made by blacks about the lack of materials dealing with black history were brought forcefully home when an attempt was made to secure materials related to the history of the black community in Durant. Local histories of the city and the county completely ignore the contributions of blacks. The only printed history of Durant's black community is a small booklet

TABLE 12
CHURCHES IN GOODRICH COUNTY

| Denomination | Churches | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------|-------|
| | City | County | Total |
| Roman Catholic | 19 | 8 | 27 |
| Orthodox | 5 | | 5 |
| Hebrew | 2 | | 2 |
| Protestant | City County Total | | |
| Baptist | 76 | 20 | 96 |
| Methodist | 37 | 31 | 68 |
| Lutheran | 14 | 9 | 23 |
| Pentecostal | 16 | 1 | 17 |
| Presbyterian | 9 | 7 | 16 |
| Nazarene | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| Church of Christ | 8 | 6 | 14 |
| Church of God | 11 | 3 | 14 |
| Pilgrim Holiness | 9 | 5 | 14 |
| Church of God in Christ | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Assembly of God | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| Episcopal | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Jehovahs Witnesses | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Later Day Saints | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Spiritualists | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Seven Day Adventists | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| United Church of Christ | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Christian Scientist | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Evangelical United Bretheran | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Salvation Army | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| United Missionary | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Unitarian | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Others | 39 | 5 | 44 |
| | 277 | 113 | 390 |
| | 277 | 113 | 390 |
| Total = 303 121 424 | | | |

Source: Greater Durant Council of Churches, Goodrich County Church Membership Statistics, p. 2.

written by a local black teacher.¹¹ Black newspapers do not provide much additional information for they have appeared only sporadically and a good deal of their content is rather ephemeral.*

Blacks were not numerically important in this section of the country in the decades immediately following the War of Independence because slavery had been outlawed by the Northwest Ordinance. It was not until the abolition movement gained momentum that blacks began to arrive in the state in appreciable numbers. Because of its geographical location and because a number of its Quaker residents were leaders in the abolition movement, the state became an important link in the underground railroad that spirited former slaves into Canada. Hundreds of blacks passed through the state and some elected to remain. However, Durant was relatively untouched by the antislavery activity and the black population of the community remained minuscule.

It is reported that there were blacks in Durant in the 1830's, but their names and addresses were not recorded in order, it is said, to protect them from

¹¹Melvin E. Banner, A Short Negro History of Durant (Durant, 1964).

* Black newspapers listed in the catalog of the Durant Public Library include: Durant Brownsville News, 1939-1941; Durant Brownies News, 1942; Durant Spokesman, 1946-1947; 1971-; Durant Bronze Reporter, 1953-1963.

kidnappers who were regularly engaged in the practice of seizing runaway slaves and returning them to the South.

The earliest account of black life in Durant has been given by the daughter of the first black settler. She has described her early years in the community as pleasant, adding--"there was very little prejudice then."¹²

That the number of blacks remained small during the early decades of the communities existence is corroborated by the city directory of 1874-1875 which lists twenty-two black families in the community. Occupations were also listed and show that among black workers, there were ten barbers, eight laborers, one cook and one fish dealer.

By the turn of the century, the black population of Durant was still small and in 1910 it constituted only one percent of the population. There was only a modest increase in the number of black migrants coming into the community during the early boom days of the automobile industry for blacks were still barred from most factory jobs. However, blacks were permitted to hold jobs in the foundries for this type of work was considered too arduous for white workers. Following World War II, job opportunities in the automotive industry multiplied and blacks migrated to the city in large numbers.

¹²Banner, op. cit., p. 3.

The first group of blacks who came to the community settled in the southeast section of the city. These settlers were poor but not indigent. Later groups of blacks settled on the north side of the city near one of the major automotive plants. The blacks in this area were even poorer and possessed less education than those in the original south-side settlement. Durant's black historian reports a kind of early stereotyping of the black residents of these two areas. It appears that white women in the community preferred to employ south-side blacks as maids because they were felt to be more capable and efficient. Indeed, it is said that an early black organization, the Civic League, was formed to counteract this discrimination toward "north siders" and to assist black women from this area in obtaining employment.

The north side was also the residential area containing Italians, Poles and various slavic nationality groups and apparently there was some intermingling for Banner maintains: "It was nothing to hear a Negro child speaking Polish with Polish children."¹³

In the early 1930's, prior to the period when the UAW began to organize the auto industry, an attempt was made to organize Durant's black auto workers as part of an AFL affiliate. A number of blacks enrolled but the AFL

¹³Banner, op. cit., p. 10.

apparently had a change of heart about the idea and decided not to accept these new black members. The workers involved were understandably embittered by the experience. However, with the advent of the UAW, blacks were encouraged to join the union and eventually a few blacks were to fill top administrative positions in various UAW locals and in the regional office. A number of Durant's black political leaders received valuable leadership experience by running for and holding various offices in the UAW at an early stage of their careers.

The Black Community Today

Black Employment:

The latest census figures given in Table 13, show that black family income was higher in Durant than in most other comparable industrial communities in the area. The single exception was Detroit where black families had slightly higher incomes.

TABLE 13

BLACK FAMILY INCOME

| Durant | Detroit | Grand Rapids | Lansing | Saginaw |
|--------|---------|--------------|---------|---------|
| 9,218 | 9,368 | 7,340 | 8,734 | 8,293 |

Source: U.S. Census of Population 1970, General Social and Economic Characteristics, pp. 24-395, 24-397-24-399.

Employment of blacks at Universal Motors is governed by a quota system. The corporation does not release company-wide statistics for black employment but a black labor leader reports that company policy is to maintain black employment at a level that is commensurate with the percentage of blacks in Goodrich County. Thus, the black quota is smaller than it would be if it were based on the percentage of blacks in the city of Durant. However, the black labor leader-informant felt that the assigned quota was fairly acceptable since the corporation does draw its work force from the entire county.¹⁴

Black unemployment has always been a rather serious problem in Durant but during the past year it has reached critical proportions. This critical situation is underscored by recent unemployment figures given in Table 14.

TABLE 14

COMMUNITY UNEMPLOYMENT

| | Durant | Grand Rapids | Lansing | Saginaw |
|-----------------------|--------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| Total Unemployment | 8.3% | 6.5% | 5.8% | 5.7% |
| White Unemployment | 7.4 | 6.3 | 5.6 | 5.1 |
| Minority Unemployment | 14.8 | 11.5 | 10.0 | 10.4 |

Source: Employment Security Commission. Research and Statistics Division. Labor Market Analysis Section, Minority Group Information (Employment Security Commission, 1971), pp. 4,5,8,11.

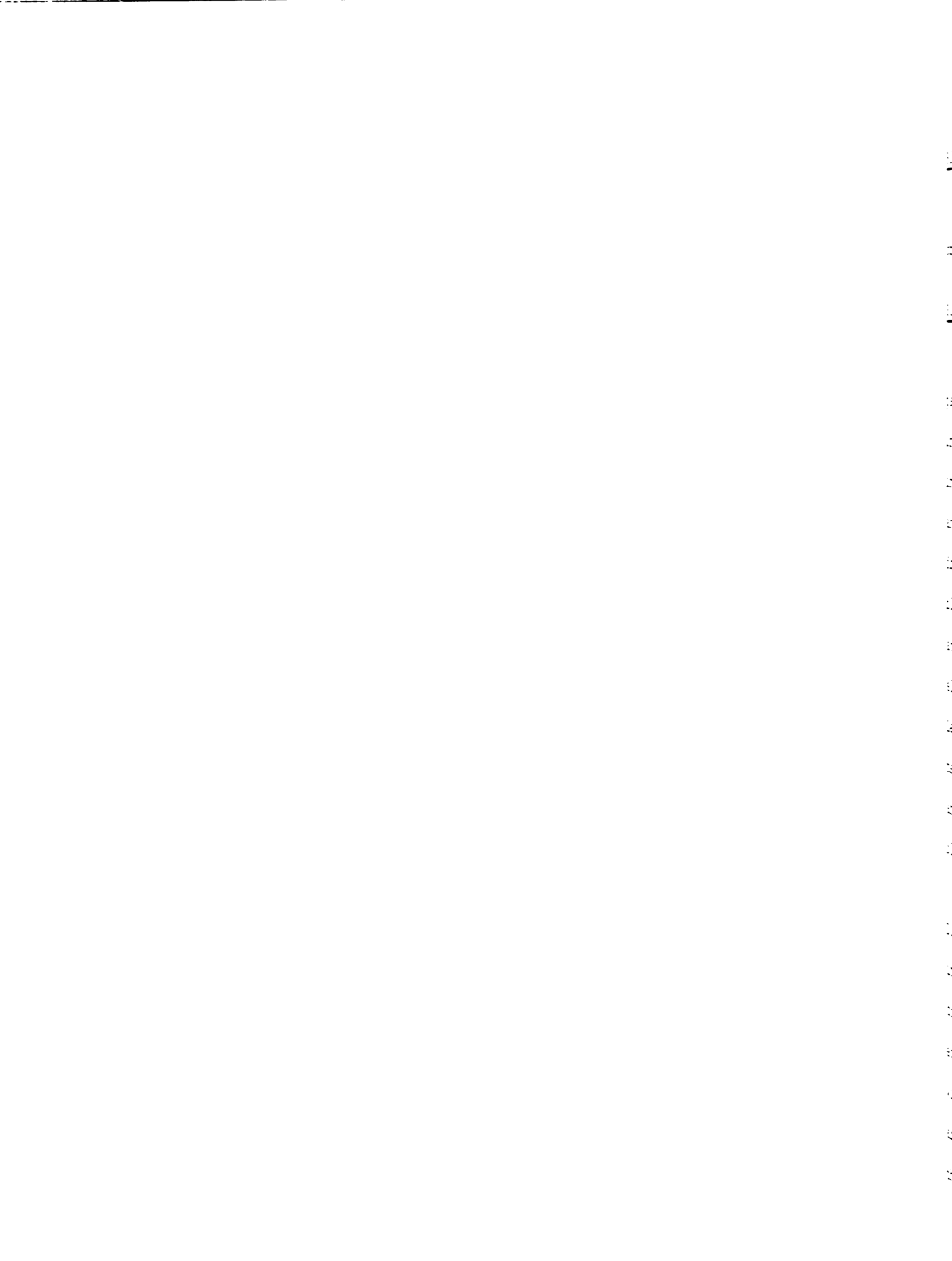
¹⁴Interview with Floyd Oldham, April 7, 1971.

The figures are given for total minority unemployment but this is a fair approximation of black unemployment since other minorities constitute only a small percentage of the total minority population.

The gravity of the problem of black unemployment is all too apparent. However, this important problem has not become a public issue in Durant. Bachrach and Baratz in their study of decision-making have indicated that significant issues sometimes never reach the public arena because of the ability of elites to prevent these problems from becoming public issues.¹⁵ Since unemployment undoubtedly does not have the relevancy for Durant's middle-class black leaders that it does for rank and file blacks, it is possible that black leaders have deliberately ignored it as a relevant political issue. However, an executive with the Durant Urban League who is deeply involved with the problem of black unemployment believes that the problem does not receive more attention as a major issue-area because it is not one that lends itself to political protest activity nor is it a political issue that can be dealt with in a meaningful way at the local level.¹⁶

¹⁵Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, "Two Faces of Power," American Political Science Review, LVI, No. 4 (December, 1962), pp. 947-952.

¹⁶Interview with Martin Brown, November 30, 1971.



Black Education

Will be discussed in detail in the chapter describing the issue-area of black education.

Black Social Institutions

Black institutions in Durant are generally comparable to those in other black communities. Deprivation in other areas has caused some blacks to become involved in clubs and societies with elaborate ceremony, ritual and organization. There has been a proliferation of these fraternities, societies, clubs and lodges in Durant's black community. However, black youths do not appear to attach as much importance to these organizations as their elders do. One black organization, the Civic Affairs League, includes a number of black business and professional men among its members. However, it does not appear to be an organization that represents and speaks for the total black community.

Churches are still important institutions in Durant's black community and their role has been discussed in several sections of this dissertation. In Durant, black churches run the gamut from well equipped structures with educated, articulate pastors to the storefront missions with itinerant preachers. As institutions, the churches are still important but their influence particularly with the young appears to be declining.

Black Housing

Many of Durant's citizens own their own homes. Blacks in the community have a higher percentage of home ownership than do blacks in Detroit. Nevertheless, the percentage of blacks owning homes in Durant is not as high as the percentage of homeowners in the white community as Table 15 shows.

TABLE 15
HOME OWNERSHIP

| | Durant Blacks | Detroit Blacks | Durant Whites |
|------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Own Homes | 8,440 | 98,514 | 33,576 |
| Rent Homes | 5,889 | 94,388 | 12,740 |

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of Census 1970 Census of Housing, General Housing Characteristics (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 24-20.

Perhaps an even more important facet of the housing problem is the physical condition of black housing. A recent survey conducted by the Durant Health Department underscores the fact that the housing conditions in black residential areas are less satisfactory than those existing in the predominantly white areas. Survey teams from the health department divided the city into nineteen neighborhoods and interviews were conducted to determine a number of environmental and social characteristics. Table 16

indicates the percentage of whites in these neighborhoods; the external and internal deterioration of the homes; the percentage of rented dwellings in each neighborhood and the number of families with incomes of less than \$4,000 a year in each neighborhood.

The table shows that although most of the black areas have high deterioration rates, neighborhood 15, a predominantly black area, has less deterioration than white neighborhoods 7 and 11. Neighborhood 15 is the older, more prosperous "south side" black area of the city that was described earlier. A comparison of this black neighborhood with white neighborhoods 7 and 11 shows that it also has a higher percentage of home ownership and a higher percentage of families making more than \$4,000 a year. The statistics show that black families, even in segregated neighborhoods, will strive to maintain and improve their neighborhood when given the requisite economic means and homes that are structurally sound.

However, the relative adequacy of housing in this one black neighborhood does not alter the fact that there is a real need to upgrade the housing in all low-income neighborhoods, white as well as black.

This brief description of Durant is intended to provide a setting for the research. As we have seen, Durant is a "factory town" that is largely dependent upon one industry for its economic prosperity. Durant's black

TABLE 16

NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE OF SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

| NEIGHBORHOODS | 14 | 16 | 19 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 3 | 7 |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Percent of White Residents | 100 | 100 | 100 | 99 | 98.4 | 97.5 | 97.4 | 97 |
| Exterior Deterioration | 4 | 12 | 7 | 25 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 35 |
| Interior Deterioration | 8 | 10 | 7 | 19 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 30 |
| Rented Dwellings | 0 | 22 | 27 | 23 | 12 | 18 | 13 | 41 |
| Family Income Less Than \$4,000/Year | 0 | 21.9 | 4.9 | 22.6 | 16.7 | 9.0 | 10.7 | 27.2 |
| | 18 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 15 | 5 | 8 |
| Percent of White Residents | 89.9 | 88.8 | 87.2 | 62.6 | 34.5 | 29.2 | 13.8 | 10 |
| Exterior Deterioration | 17 | 7 | 5 | 42 | 24 | 19 | 54 | 40 |
| Interior Deterioration | 12 | 3 | 6 | 38 | 18 | 16 | 43 | 40 |
| Rented Dwellings | 26 | 10 | 16 | 55 | 23 | 16 | 50 | 28 |
| Family Income Less Than \$4,000/Year | 10.6 | 11 | 6.8 | 26.7 | 22.8 | 8.1 | 23.9 | 18.6 |
| | | | | | | | | 34.6 |

Source: Durant City Health Department, Fourth Baseline Report (Durant, City Health Department, 1970), pp. 8-9.

community while profiting from the relatively high wages provided by Universal Motors faces the problems that are so prevalent in other black communities--discrimination, poor rapport with the police department, a high rate of unemployment, inadequate housing and deficient educational programs.

In succeeding chapters of this dissertation, we will be describing Durant's black leaders and how they have attempted to deal with significant issue-areas. However, before doing so, we would like to describe two conceptual tools--social power and conflict theory--that have proved useful to us in our analysis.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL POWER AND BLACK COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

One of the most fruitful approaches to the study of race relations is an analysis utilizing a power frame of reference. Blalock maintains "there can be no doubting the fact that racial discrimination is ultimately based on power relationships between a dominant and a subordinate group"¹ and Schermerhorn notes that "power relations set the basic frame within which acculturation, discrimination, prejudice, etc. do or do not take place" and adds that among social scientists there is "a convergence of agreement in its significance for the study of minorities."² Burgess finds that,

A current point of departure that is especially promising views majority-minority relations as an aspect of power relations. Explanations of prejudice and discrimination, of cooperation, accommodation, and conflict, can be found among other places, in the power arrangements of our society, for it is often the strategy of organized interest groups,

¹H. M. Blalock, Jr., "A Power Analysis of Racial Discrimination," Social Forces, XXXIX, No. 1 (October, 1960), p. 53.

²R. A. Schermerhorn, "Power as a Primary Concept in the Study of Minorities," Social Forces, XXXV, No. 1 (October, 1956), pp. 54-55.

rather than the normative system or the psychological dimensions of prejudice, that seems to control behavior.³

A power approach to the problems of race has been utilized by a number of social scientists including Robin Williams, George Simpson, J. Milton Yinger, Joseph S. Roucek, J. P. Lohman and D. C. Reitzes.⁴

Power is indeed an important concept in the study of race relations but as McKee has noted, "it has been difficult to make power an object of dispassionate study, so moral and ideological are the connotations long fixed to the term."⁵ A second difficulty connected with the use of social power as a conceptual tool is in arriving at an acceptable definition of the term. Some authors have defined power as control over others, but this definition is so broad as to be practically meaningless in its application. Power has often been conceptualized in terms of a power elite or a small group of individuals who hold positions of authority and who make and legitimize decisions. More recently an approach which views power in terms of pluralistic decision-making has been widely adopted.

³Burgess, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

⁵James B. McKee, Introduction to Sociology (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 456.

The pluralistic approach views power as shared by a variety of competing groups and decision-making as the process of achieving a sort of rough consensus among these groups. Those who are committed to a democratic ideology normally view pluralism as the most viable means of achieving representative democracy, although some critics question whether it is an operative process in contemporary America.

Pluralism as a means of achieving representative government has had a long list of proponents. Alexis de Tocqueville, in his book, Democracy in America saw, even in 1830, a trend toward centralization in society and advocated intermediate political units--in the case of the United States, local self-government--to serve as a countervailing force against the power of the state.⁶ Emile Durkheim also believed that intermediate units of government could serve as buffers against the omni-present power of the state.⁷ Several of the founding fathers including James Madison, major author of the U.S. Constitution, felt that the individual states would serve to protect citizens from federal encroachment.

⁶Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York: Vintage Books, 1954).

⁷Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society (New York: Free Press, 1960).

In our age, political scientists have developed new and meaningful approaches to pluralism by investigating the central place of influence in the political process, or as Laswell has put it "who gets what, when, how?" Turning from the rather static process of studying formal governmental institutions, these social scientists have concentrated on the task of examining the actual operational processes of on-going political systems. Studies by such men as V. O. Key, David Truman and Robert Dahl provide examples of the ways in which studies conceived within a pluralistic frame of reference can clarify the political process. In summary, we can say that the work of the pluralists has culminated in the widely held thesis that power is shared by many groups rather than monopolized by a group of ruling elites.

Critics of the pluralist position note that implicit in the belief of pluralism is the idea that interest groups, as such, are roughly equivalent in influence and thus are able to prevent one group or a small coalition of groups from dominating the decision-making process. This view, say critics, appears to ignore the many differences between interest groups in terms of numbers, resources, prestige and access.

Another group of scholars with parallel interests in the political process has arrived at a different set of conclusions regarding the determination of political

issues in the United States. Instead of finding group and party influence and access as the keys to determining "who gets what, when, how?" they find that an oligarchy of political elites is responsible, in the final analysis, for determining the outcome of most major political issues.

The orientation of this group has been influenced by the work of many earlier writers but three of the most important have been Mosca, Pareto and Micaels, all of whom have pointed out inadequacies in democratic societies and the need for ruling oligarchies or elites.

C. Wright Mills is probably the most prominent spokesman for these social scientists who maintain that a single group of elites or several groups of elites control the decision-making apparatus in our society. Mills believed that power in the United States is concentrated in military, business-industrial and governmental sectors and that there is increasing interdependence among these sectors resulting in a ruling power elite.⁸ Critics of the elite theorists have maintained that elitists never conclusively prove that an elite "community of interests" exists among top leaders in business, government and the military and that there are, in fact, many competing interest groups which cut across class lines.

⁸C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 3,4,7.

A position that might be described as intermediate has been taken by Galbraith with his conception of "countervailing power." Galbraith finds that decisions in today's societies are generated by organizational activity in the business, military and government spheres of influence. However, he believes that there are clashes of interest between these spheres of influence that prevent the emergence of a single elite with power to control the decision-making apparatus of the entire country.⁹

Our history of social power as a theoretical concept has necessarily been brief for our most pressing need is to define the term social power in terms of its use as a conceptual tool. As we have already pointed out, there are numerous working definitions of the term social power. Max Weber conceptualized power as naked force or might. However, this definition tends to conceal some significant processes in power relationships.¹⁰ Social power has also been identified with both wealth and social status. Undoubtedly there are connections but it is also necessary to note distinctions among the three. Indeed, some studies

⁹ John K. Galbraith, American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1952).

¹⁰ Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber . . . (New York: Oxford, 1946), p. 180.

indicate that social and economic elites may play only marginal roles in community decision-making.¹¹

E. A. Ross found a causal connection between power and prestige¹² but here again we can also point to studies revealing little or no connection between the two attributes.¹³ MacIver viewed social power "as the capacity to control the behavior of others." He defined authority as power that had been legitimized. We are indebted to him for recognizing that there are other loci of power besides those inherent in formal governmental structures.¹⁴ Lasswell viewed power as participation in the making of decisions and was cognizant of the fact that nongovernmental organizations and groups can and do influence decision-making.¹⁵

Bierstedt draws distinctions between power, prestige, influence and dominance. He develops three propositions related to power: "Power is latent force. Force is manifest power. Authority is institutional power."¹⁶

¹¹Dahl, op. cit., pp. 66, 72.

¹²Edward A. Ross, Social Control (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p. 78.

¹³Dahl, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁴Robert MacIver, The Web of Government (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947), p. 87.

¹⁵Harold D. Lasswell, The Analysis of Political Behaviour (London: Routledge and Kegan, Ltd. 1948), p. 37.

¹⁶Robert Bierstedt, "An Analysis of Social Power," American Sociological Review, XV, No. 6 (Dec., 1950), pp. 730-733.

Power then is the potential for the employment of force not the actual employment of such force. Bierstedt identifies three sources of power: numbers, resources and social organization. Under the heading of resources he includes money, prestige, property and natural and supernatural resources along with such factors as knowledge, competence, deceit, fraud and secrecy.¹⁷

Blalock, building on Bierstedt's work, maintains that,

power is a multiplicative function of two very general types of variables, total resources and the degree to which these resources are mobilized in the services of those persons or groups exercising the power.

Blalock believes that any definition of power must take into consideration the time dimension. Therefore his working definition of power is: "Power is the actual overcoming of resistance in a standard period of time."¹⁸

James McKee in his doctoral dissertation, "Organized Labor and Community Decision-Making," has formulated a definition of social power that is closely related to an earlier one derived by John Useem. This definition, which we are going to use in our analysis, defines social power in the following terms: "Social power is the

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 733, 737.

¹⁸ Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations (New York: Capricorn Books, 1970), p. 110.

distribution of influence, pressure, and authority within a social system for the making, legitimizing, and execution of decisions within that system."¹⁹ This definition is one that views power as the process of decision-making within a social system. The emphasis here is on power as an integral part of a system of social relationships rather than as a simple property possessed by some individuals. Social power in terms of this definition is a sociological process.

This definition served as a guide in the analysis of the power framework within which decisions effecting the black community were formulated and legitimized. It also guided us as we became aware of the ways in which non-decisions were made. That is, in the ways in which the power distribution could inhibit problems of concern to the black community from becoming structured into formal issues that could be directed through appropriate organizational channels to the agencies of government empowered to engage in decision-making and the legitimation of those decisions.

Legitimation is normally a key conceptual tool in the study of social power. Legitimation is indicated by the use of symbols which show that an action or decision is deemed to be correct or appropriate. In the case of the black community, it would appear that legitimation

¹⁹James McKee, "Organized Labor and Community Decision-Making," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), p. 50.

would be indicated by symbols validating the right of blacks to participate in the decision-making processes of the larger community.

In this study, the relationship between the larger community and the black community will be viewed as a power relationship. The resolution of issues is seen as resulting from the interplay of these power relationships. Various loci of power are involved in these struggles and the resolution of issues usually depends upon the power resources the black community is able to activate in its support vis-à-vis the power resources of other loci that oppose black goals.

CHAPTER IV

CONFLICT THEORY AND BLACK
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

In the previous chapter, we dealt with the concept of social power and its relevance for our analysis of black community leadership. In this chapter, we would like to turn to a related conceptual tool--conflict theory. Conflict theory has been employed to an increasing extent by those interested in exploring social processes and social problems. The current interest in black people and their problems and aspirations has resulted in a number of studies which use conflict theory as an important analytical tool.

One of the earliest and most influential theories of social conflict was advanced by Karl Marx. Marx maintained that social and political conflicts have an economic basis. Conflict grows out of changing conditions related to the productive forces of the economy. Workers become alienated and unite in a class struggle against the state and the capitalistic class. Marx was concerned with only one type of conflict--class conflict. He appeared to have

no interest in the effects of conflict other than the fact that it would lead to the overthrow of the capitalistic system. Nor was he interested in conditions that might mitigate or control conflict.

Another important writer who was to influence those who would develop theories related to social conflict was Charles Darwin. Darwin, the biologist, was to influence many social theorists and Social Darwinism was to have a wide and pervasive impact as a social philosophy espoused by many public leaders in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. Its central thesis was that individuals and groups in our society are engaged in an endless series of struggles for existence. In these struggles, it is almost always the most able who emerge victorious. This philosophical approach to the history of man and of society found expression during this period in a number of works dealing with political and social history and philosophy. Three of these writers, Walter Bagehot, Ludwik Gumplowicz and Gustav Ratzenhofer described evolutionary processes in which societies competed, one against another, and the strongest emerged victorious.¹ All of these social philosophers saw a process analogous to that of biological

¹Robert C. Angell, "The Sociology of Human Conflict," in Elton B. McNeil, The Nature of Human Conflict (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 95-98.

selection taking place among societies with conflict playing a central role. However, only Bagehot dealt with the effects of conflict on the structure of the societies involved and practically no attention was devoted to the effect of external factors on the conflict situation. Conflict was viewed simply as a process which culminated in the victory of the fit over the less fit.

The first sociologist to deal with conflict as a separate process rather than as a part of a larger evolutionary process was Georg Simmel. Simmel maintained that conflict was a constructive process that could produce meaningful social change and integration within a society. Simmel's ideas have been effectively disseminated through the works of Lewis A. Coser whose Functions of Social Conflict draws heavily on the earlier work of Simmel. However, long before the publication of Coser's book, Simmel's ideas had left a mark on American sociology. Robert Park had attended Simmel's lectures at the University of Berlin and had incorporated many of Simmel's concepts in the volume he coauthored with Burgess, Introduction to the Science of Sociology.

The Park and Burgess volume included a number of quotations from Simmel's work and focused attention on the central role of conflict on basic forms of human interaction. Park maintained: "Only when there is conflict is behavior conscious and self-conscious; only here are

the conditions for rational conduct."² Not only was conflict a mechanism for inducing self-conscious behavior but it was an essential process in any organized society. "Conflict" indicated Park, "tends to bring about an integration and a superordination and subordination of the conflict groups. . . ."³

A number of other early sociologists including Albion Small, Lester Ward, E. A. Ross and Charles Cooley, saw conflict as a functional process that could produce integration at higher levels. Cooley maintained that "conflict, of some sort, is the life of society, and progress emerges from a struggle in which individual, class, or institution seeks to realize its own idea of good."⁴ Nor was the importance of conflict as a process confined to those working in the field of sociology. John Dewey commented that,

conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving. . . . Conflict

²Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, Introduction to the Science of Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), p. 578.

³Robert E. Park, "The Social Function of War," American Journal of Sociology, XLVI, No. 4 (January, 1941), 565.

⁴Charles H. Cooley, Social Process (New York: Scribners, 1918), p. 39.

is a sine qua non of reflection and ingenuity.⁵

Interest in conflict as a social process declined in the second quarter of the twentieth century and by the middle of that century had reached such a low ebb that an American sociologist felt called upon to write an article "Where is our Modern Sociology of Conflict?" The author found a number of reasons why "American sociologists . . . have been content to leave the scientific study of conflict where Simmel left it."⁶ Bernard found that perhaps the most important reason for this neglect was that Americans tend to disapprove of aggressive conflict and prefer not to deal with it as a concept. When forced to do so we invoke "cultural explanations--or scapegoats--in order to protect ourselves from having to face more dangerous interactional ones."⁷ Bernard found other reasons for the neglect of this field but the primary one appeared to be this tendency for American sociologists to view conflict as abnormal and dysfunctional for our social system.

In this connection a number of writers have noted the influence of the structural-functional approach to

⁵ John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct (New York: The Modern Library, 1930), p. 300.

⁶ Jessie Bernard, "Where is the Modern Sociology of Conflict?" American Journal of Sociology, LVI, No. 1 (July, 1950), p. 11.

⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

conflict. Structural-functional theory views society as an action system with each part functioning in an integrated way, the whole being unified through some value consensus. It has been said that,

this way of looking at a society tends to make conflict appear as deviant or abnormal, since the central concern is the successful integration of the various parts into a smooth-running whole. The tremendous vogue which this approach has enjoyed has therefore tended to distract American sociologists from attention to conflict processes.⁸

Coser, a student of conflict processes is also critical of Parsonian theory saying "focusing on normative structures, which maintain and guarantee social order, Parsons was led to view conflict as having primarily disruptive, dissociating and dysfunctional consequences." The result has been that sociologists with this theoretical orientation

center attention predominantly upon problems of adjustment rather than upon conflict. . . . Where the older generation discussed the need for structural change, the new generation deals with adjustment of the individual to given structures.⁹

Himes agrees saying that,

in contemporary sociology the problem of social conflict has been largely neglected. . . . This tendency issues from pre-occupation with models of social structure

⁸Angell, op. cit., p. 104.

⁹Lewis A. Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (New York: The Free Press, 1956), p. 20.

and theories of equilibrium. Conflicts are treated as strains, tensions or stresses of social structures and regarded as pathological. Little attention is devoted to the investigation of conflict as a functional social process.^{10*}

James McKee finds that Americans are committed to an ideology of moderation which assumes that conflict is largely illusory and can be eliminated by perfecting skills in the areas of communications, human relations and education. But, pointing to one area in particular, the conflict between black and white, McKee notes that conflict is not illusory; it is very real and our ability to deal with it may well serve as the ultimate test of the viability of our ideology of moderation.¹¹

¹⁰ Joseph S. Himes, "The Functions of Racial Conflict," in Raymond W. Mack, ed., Race, Class and Power (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1968), p. 402.

* A recent article by an American historian, Michael Wallace on the neglect of violence in American History appears appropriate to the discussion. Wallace maintains that one reason for the neglect of violence is that "Americans have accepted the Horatio Alger myth, never doubting that ours was a society in which all groups had the opportunity to advance and prosper peacefully. For a variety of reasons--abundance of resources, a frontier safety valve, absence of feudal institutions or class divisions, the two-party system--ours was an open, fluid system. Rising groups easily entered the great middle class; ethnic differences softened and ran together in the great melting pot. The outs had no need for revolutionary violence; the ins, no need for forceful repression. Thus when violence did appear, it had to be dismissed as an inexplicable aberration." American Scholar, XL, No. 1 (Winter, 1970-71), pp. 81-82.

¹¹ James B. McKee, "The Ideology of Moderation: Some Assumptions about Conflict in American Society," an address delivered in the Provost's Lecture Series, Michigan State University, Feb. 26, 1964 (mimeographed), p. 8.

Coser gives a related reason for the tendency of sociologists to ignore conflict. He maintains that the increased interest in applied social science during recent decades, with the accompanying opportunity for sociologists to affiliate themselves with extra-academic organizations, has had a marked effect on sociologists. He notes that in an earlier period, sociology was primarily an academic discipline but in recent decades its research findings and its research personnel have been widely utilized by various public and private agencies. As American sociologists have turned from pure research, where they devised their own projects, to applied research, they have, in many cases, relinquished the freedom to study problems of their own choosing. Coser believes that there are two important consequences of this growing tendency for sociologists to work within a business or a governmental framework. The consequences are:

- (1) The sociologist who affiliates himself with public or private bureaucracies will be expected to deal with problems that the decision-makers pose for him; and (2) those problems are likely to concern primarily, . . . the preservation of existing institutional arrangements.¹²

The result of this tie with extra academic institutions according to some sociologists can result in research interests which emphasize equilibrium and view conflict

¹²Coser, Functions, p. 27.

as dysfunctional. They point to the well known Mayo "Human Relations" school which approaches conflict as a "social disease"¹³ and to Kurt Lewin's Center for Group Dynamics which has an orientation that emphasizes the emotional factors that inhibit understanding but gives little or no recognition to the fact that "realistic conflicts" may also be an important factor in "blocked understanding."¹⁴

However, during the past two decades as if in answer to Bernard's question "Where is the Modern Sociology of Conflict?" there has developed a renewed interest in conflict as an important aspect of social processes initiated and supported by scholars who are critical of the theoretical orientation of the structural-functional school. They reject any orientation which views conflict as a disruptive and dysfunctional force for they believe that the clash of social values and human interests can serve as an important impetus to social progress and as a stabilizing influence in society.

One of the most successful proponents of the conflict approach has been Lewis Coser, who has done much to popularize the work of Georg Simmel. In his book,

¹³J. A. A. Van Doorn, "Conflict in Formal Organizations," in Anthony Reuck and Julie Knight, Conflict in Society (London: Churchill Co., 1966), p. 113.

¹⁴Coser, Functions, p. 26.

The Functions of Social Conflict, Coser reformulated Simmel's ideas in a more logical and cohesive fashion. Simmel's basic premise had been that conflict is a constructive process that gives rise to social change and can serve an integrating function. As Coser notes,

Insofar as conflict is the resolution of tension between antagonists it has stabilizing functions and becomes an integrating component of the relationship. . . . Loosely structured groups and open societies, by allowing conflicts, institute safeguards against the type of conflict which would endanger basic consensus and thereby minimize the danger of divergences touching core values.¹⁵

Another important contributor in this area has been Ralf Dahrendorf. Dahrendorf maintains that there are two solutions to the problem of order in society. One, the solution proposed by the Parsonians, assumes that society is inherently stable with all its parts in equilibrium. The second solution visualizes society as consisting of contradictory groups with differing interests and values, the whole being conducive to social change. Integration in this model is achieved through coercion.

Dahrendorf does not maintain that the conflict model is the correct one. Rather, he feels that both perspectives are valuable. Dahrendorf says:

¹⁵Ibid., p. 80.

Both models are in a certain sense valid and analytically fruitful. Stability and change, integration and conflict, function and "dys-function," consensus and constraint are, it would seem, two equally valid aspects of every imaginable society. . . . Possibly a more general theory of society may be thought of which lifts the equi-validity of both models, the coexistence of the uncombineable, onto a higher level of generality. As long as we do not have such a theory, we must content ourselves with the finding that society presents a double aspect to the sociological understanding, each no better, no more valid, than the other.¹⁶

In another publication, Dahrendorf has described the consensus model and the conflict model as "the two faces of society" and has indicated that social integration is the result of both coercive and integrative processes. However, Dahrendorf does feel that meaningful analysis of social change can best be understood by utilizing the conflict model.¹⁷

Another sociologist, Irving Horowitz, has suggested the superiority of the conflict model based on "the impossibility of describing any but the most permissive and tolerant communities in terms of consensus matrices." Moreover, conflict theory, with its openness to problems of coercion, pressure groups, social classes, political myths, cultural clashes, racial strife,

¹⁶Ralf Dahrendorf, "Toward a Theory of Social Conflict," Journal of Conflict Resolution, II, No. 2 (June, 1958), pp. 174-175.

¹⁷Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 157-165.

etc., more nearly approximates the going issues in Gesellschaft relationships. In short, from a descriptive point of view, conflict theory covers a wider and more profound range of questions.¹⁸

Political scientists have also shown an interest in the role of conflict in the political process. The importance of Lasswell's question "who gets what, when, how?" has already been noted. No one has given a complete answer to this question but, as one writer has observed, there have been a number of partial answers and "they are all conflict oriented, describing a process in which regulated or unregulated conflict plays a central role."¹⁹ Central to the political process for many political scientists is the role of interest groups and interest groups and conflict seem to go hand-in-hand or as David Truman has put it "the activities of political interest groups imply controversy and conflict--the essence of politics."²⁰

We have already noted that a number of scholars including Blalock, Schermerhorn and Burgess have stressed the need to view race relations from a power frame of

¹⁸Irving L. Horowitz, "Consensus, Conflict and Cooperation: A Sociological Inventory," Social Forces, XLI, No. 2 (December, 1962), p. 184.

¹⁹William A. Gamson, Power and Discontent (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1968), p. 3.

²⁰David B. Truman, The Governmental Process (New York: Knopf, 1953), pp. 502-503.

reference. Himes has noted the interest of social scientists in social power and has gone on to say,

One latent consequence of this development has been to sensitize some sociologists to conflict as a perspective from which to investigate race relations. Thus race relations have been called 'power relations' and it has been proposed that research should be cast in terms of a 'conflict model.'²¹

A recent study that utilizes such a conflict model is the Killian and Grigg study of black leadership in Tallahassee. Killian and Grigg drawing on Coser's theoretical analysis of the integrative functions of conflict found that viewing race negotiations as a conflict relationship could assist in reducing some of the violent reactions to race problems. In a conflict relationship, negotiators are freed from playing the dual role of arbitrator and antagonist. Each set of leaders state their position in a realistic manner and in a way that preserves their solidarity with their own group. White leaders, who are usually economic elites or the representatives of economic elites, make no pretense of being concerned with the moral aspects of racism. White leaders make concessions in response to the threats from black leaders to use economic or political sanctions or even violence. Negro leaders in turn make some concessions when they find that white leaders, because of a variety

²¹Himes, op. cit., p. 403.

of constraints, are unable to grant all that the black community demands. Positive results are a product of the realism that is a part of such a conflict relationship. Each side sees the potential power of their antagonist and each side develops a more realistic point of view regarding the factors that limit the flexibility of their opponents. As Coser has noted "conflict consists in a test of power between antagonistic parties. Accommodation between them is possible only if each is aware of the relative strengths of both parties."²²

Killian and Grigg drawing on their observations of the Tallahassee situation have noted some additional positive results growing out of these hostile confrontations:

Paradoxically, this interaction within a conflict relationship seems to produce positive changes in the attitudes of the individuals involved. The phenomenon of developing respect for an able antagonist who pursues his objectives with candor, courage, and integrity is not an uncommon one. White Americans may have to learn respect for Negro Americans as opponents before they can accept them as friends and equals.

In a conflict relationship, moreover, stereotypes can be broken down through personal confrontation. Comments of members of . . . leadership groups indicate that they have come to perceive previously unnoticed differences in members of the opposite group. They have developed an

²²Coser, Functions, p. 137.

awareness of the structural restrictions upon the behavior of each side, so that neither appears quite as unreasonable as before. And even in concentrating on their points of disagreement, they have found areas of agreement and likeness.²³

Laue in a study of protest organizations finds conflict playing a central role in effecting improvements in the racial condition of blacks. He says "in virtually every case of desegregation in the United States, change has come only after the development of a crisis situation which demanded rapid resolution by a community's leadership structure."²⁴

Olsen argues that,

If racial inequality is in fact largely a consequence of power exertion by whites, it then follows that blacks seeking to change the situation so as to gain greater equality of privileges and prestige must in turn exercise power against the dominant whites.²⁵

The problem here, as a number of writers have observed, is that blacks in many cases lack the requisite power resources.

There are a number of useful definitions of social conflict. Bernard has defined it "in terms of systems

²³Killian and Grigg, op. cit., p. 140.

²⁴James H. Laue, "The Changing Character of Negro Protest," Annals of the American Academy, CCCLVII (Jan., 1965), p. 125.

²⁵Marvin E. Olsen, "Power Perspectives on Stratification and Race Relations," in Marvin Olsen, ed., Power in Societies (New York: Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 302.

with mutually incompatible goals or values, so that accommodation involves costs of some kind or other."²⁶ Boulding has defined conflict "as a situation of competition in which parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other."²⁷ Coser has defined social conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals."²⁸ Mack and Snyder in an important paper summarizing studies of social conflict, instead of offering a formal definition of the term, have outlined a set of properties constituting a model for identifying conflict phenomena and situations. They maintain that five properties or essential units must exist to have a conflict situation:

- (1) Conflict requires at least two parties.
- . . . (2) Conflict arises from 'position scarcity' and 'resource scarcity.'
- (3) Conflictful behaviors are those designated to destroy, injure, thwart, or otherwise control another party or other parties. . . .
- (4) Conflict requires interaction among parties in which actions and counteractions are

²⁶Jessie Bernard, "The Sociological Study of Conflict," in International Sociological Association, The Nature of Conflict (Paris: UNESCO, 1957), p. 116.

²⁷Kenneth E. Boulding, Conflict and Defense (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 5.

²⁸Coser, Functions, p. 8.

mutually opposed. (5) Conflict relations always involve attempts to gain control of scarce resources and positions or to influence behavior in certain directions; hence a conflict relationship always involves the attempt to acquire or exercise power.²⁹

This definition will serve as a guide in the use of conflict theory as a conceptual tool in this dissertation.

We have dealt at length with conflict theory because we believe it is, along with social power, an important sociological concept that can aid us in our analysis. Conflict theory helps fix the loci of power in the community. Then drawing on the propositions developed through the use of social power as a conceptual tool it is possible to make value judgements regarding the power resources of the black community.

²⁹Raymond W. Mack and Richard C. Snyder, "The Analysis of Social Conflict--Toward an Overview and Synthesis," Journal of Conflict Resolution, I, No. 2 (June, 1957), pp. 218-219.

CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM

This dissertation is a study of black community leadership in Durant. Durant was selected for this study: (1) because it is a heavily industrialized community with a constantly growing black population and as such might be considered a typical--if any city can be described as typical--American urban community; (2) because the investigator was a resident of the community for two and one half years and was able during that period to gain background knowledge of the community and its residents. During this period, he also prepared several research papers dealing with both general community leadership and black community leadership. These projects helped to broaden his knowledge of the community and its leadership structure.

Since previous studies indicated that it is useful to use both the reputational approach and the issue or decisional approach to obtain accurate results in leadership studies, it was decided to employ both methods. In the reputational approach, a modification of the Miller-Form Technique was employed. Knowledgeable blacks

representing the five institutional sectors of business, education, labor, the professions and religion were asked to provide the names of outstanding black leaders in the community. The definition of leader was to be: "One who would be consulted on an issue of major concern to the black community." Blacks who were named by at least three of the five knowledgeable were included on the preliminary list of leaders. Open-ended interviews were then scheduled with these leaders to discuss their leadership role in the black community. During the interviews, these leaders were also asked to indicate the most important leaders on the preliminary list and to add new names or to delete the names of individuals they felt should be excluded.

In addition, a fairly exhaustive study of several issue-areas of concern to the black community was conducted in order to obtain the names of blacks who played active leadership roles but who had not been identified through the reputational approach. In studying issue-areas, materials in the library of the Durant Journal and in the Durant Public Library were utilized. Publications of the City of Durant that were appropriate to these issue-areas were also reviewed. It was hoped that the issue approach would uncover the names of additional black leaders.

Interviews were scheduled with all black leaders identified by either method. Each leader was asked to discuss the general nature of the racial climate in Durant. In addition, in-depth probing of their own leadership role in specific issue-areas of concern to the black community was also undertaken. Research was guided by a desire to determine: (1) the way in which black leaders operate-- leadership styles; (2) the effectiveness of black leadership; (3) the power resources available to black leaders. Wilson has described his use of the open-ended interview technique in the following way:

These interviews were loosely structured explanations of the issue-involvement of the respondent. No fixed interview schedule was employed; each interview was designed to elicit from the particular individual the activities and issues that most concerned him and in which he played some role. Each was asked, in various ways, to describe and explain his involvement or lack of involvement, his attitudes toward the issue, the goals he sought, the means he favored using, what in fact he had done about the issues, how he saw other actors involved in the issue, what opinion he had about the ultimate resolution of the issue, what work he did in his organization and so on.¹

In the case of Durant, it appeared necessary, first of all, to determine whether or not there was a black "power structure"--a single group of leaders who exercised general leadership across a whole range of issues--or whether the leadership structure was more amorphous with a variety of different black leaders involved at different

¹Wilson, op. cit., p. 11.

times in different race issues. Wilson found this type of black leadership structure in Chicago. He says:

Each issue brought forward a different set of leaders; each issue elicited a slightly different pattern of actions and fell into the province of different organizations. All that can be said with certainty about structure is that if one knows the nature of the issue, one can usually predict which group or what kind of group of Negroes, will become involved.²

It also seemed important to determine the relevancy for Durant of typologies of leadership that have been derived in other studies. Could leaders be categorized by style or goals as militant, liberal or conservative or in terms of some other sort of typology? Burgess has used four categories--radical, liberal, moderate and conservative--and this fourfold typology appeared to be one that might best represent leadership styles in Durant.

Interest in the effectiveness of black leadership was focused on the ability of black leaders to represent issues and problems to the larger community that were of concern to the black community so that appropriate solutions could be achieved. In addition, there was the question of the rapport between black leaders and the black community. Did black leaders have the respect of their constituents and in turn did they respect those whom they represented?

²Ibid., pp. 13-14.

The third area of interest was, in reality, the area of major concern. It was the question of the power resources of black leaders. There is of course a relationship between power resources, leadership styles and leadership effectiveness. In recent years, there has been a large body of literature dealing with the theme of black powerlessness and since the major focus of this study is on the power resources of the black community and its leaders, it is helpful to note some of the suggestive studies that have dealt with the question of black power or as many have described it--black powerlessness. In Chapter I, we surveyed studies of black community leadership and some of these dealt with power and influence or with the lack of it among black leaders. However, in addition to community studies there is a vast literature, some by laymen and some by social scientists, that deals either directly or at least peripherally with the question of black power or powerlessness.

Among those writers who maintain that blacks in America are, for all practical purposes, powerless are a number who have compared the condition of the black community in America with that of oppressed colonial peoples in other areas of the world. Pinkney says:

The black community in America is like a colonial possession in that it tends to be economically and politically dependent upon the larger community . . . The residents of the black community are crowded

into a geographical area distinguishable from the general community by poor housing conditions and the lack of services provided. Education is controlled from the outside, and the police often assume the posture of occupying forces. In short, all important decisions--political, economic and educational--affecting the black community are made for its residents by white Americans.³

In commenting on this same theme of black powerlessness Knowles and Prewitt conclude:

Within the established channels of the institutions of the dominant society, blacks are virtually powerless. Within the major institutional sectors of housing, employment, politics and education, blacks in posts of authority were almost universally confined to places within the black subsector. . . . The legitimate limits to their exercise of power are bound by the condition that they do not basically disturb the balance of the dominant society. Therefore, influence vis-à-vis the dominant sector is usually confined to getting minor concessions.⁴

Most social scientists have acknowledged that blacks have limited economic and social power but some believe that blacks can win important concessions through the political process by use of the ballot. Theoretically this is possible but there are important limitations as a number of studies have shown.

³Alphonso Pinkney, Black Americans (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 69.

⁴Louis L. Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt, Institutional Racism in America (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 157.

Blalock has noted that to achieve political goals blacks must often form coalitions with other groups and their ability to do so may depend upon a number of factors over which they have little or no control including divergent regional economic interests and conflicting urban and rural interests.⁵

Bailey notes that power under the American system is shared. To obtain power, it is necessary to be able to reciprocate by giving something in return. This involves both the possession of resources and the ability to use resources. Here, blacks labor under a handicap because their only important source of influence is their vote and as Bailey points out: "The linkages between votes cast in elections and public policy outcomes are exceedingly complex, precisely because of the pluralistic nature of power and decision-making. . . ."⁶

The powerlessness of black politicians was noted by a research team employed by the Kerner Commission to conduct studies of fifteen northern cities. They found that blacks were unable to utilize the political process to achieve goals to the same degree that previous ethnic groups had. The big city political machine had declined

⁵Blalock, Toward Theory of Minority-Group Relations, p. 180.

⁶Harry A. Bailey, Jr., "Negro Interest Group Strategies," Urban Affairs Quarterly, IV, No. 1 (Sept., 1968), p. 32.

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or disappeared and its place has been taken by reform governments strongly supported by the middle class which inhibits this traditional route of exerting minority influence. These investigators found that even when elected, black officials are not generally regarded as full-fledged political brokers. Black politicians also reported a declining confidence by their constituents in the political process.⁷

In the political arena, the numbers of blacks elected to office is almost never commensurate with their percentage of the total population. Moreover, influence extends beyond the formal structure of government to other institutional policy-making bodies and here blacks are likely to have even less representation. A study of major public and private institutions in Cook County showed that only 2.6 percent of the top eleven thousand policy-making posts were held by blacks in spite of the fact that they constituted 20 percent of the population. When these positions were weighed in terms of the type of position and ability of the black incumbent to exert influence it was estimated that less than 1 percent of the effective power was held by blacks.⁸

⁷David Boesel, "White Institutions and Black Rage," in Peter H. Rossi, ed., Ghetto Revolts (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 43-45.

⁸Harold M. Baron, "Black Powerlessness in Chicago," Trans-action, VI, No. 1 (November, 1968), pp. 28, 31.

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The powerlessness of blacks--this is the theme conveyed by much of the literature, both scholarly and popular, and so it is hoped that this case study of some significant issue-areas in Durant would provide clues as to the power resources of black leaders in that community. The issue-areas selected were chosen after consulting with knowledgeable in both the black community and the larger community and after reviewing the files of the local newspaper, the Durant Journal, for the period 1960-1971. Conflict theory helped to isolate and bring into sharper focus those areas where power resources might be evident. Using conflict theory as a guide, four community issues were selected which had at one time or another been of deep concern to the black community. These issue-areas were:

(1) Human Relations Commission. The original proposal to establish a human relations commission met with vigorous opposition. Members of the Durant City Commission voiced the fear that such a commission would have arbitrary powers. The original Human Relations Ordinance prepared by the Durant chapter of the NAACP was rejected. Only after the ordinance had been emasculated by removing certain penalty provisions was the City Commission willing to approve it. Further controversy developed over the question of whether or not a permanent human relations director should be appointed.

(2) Police-Black Community Relations. This issue-area is represented by a broad spectrum of minor confrontations and mutual antipathies mitigated to some degree by attempts of individuals within the black community and within the police department to establish a more harmonious relationship between the police and Durant Negroes. A number of incidents will be reviewed. Two of the most important conflict situations were:

1. A minor race riot in 1967 whose scope was apparently limited by the judicious action of the county prosecutor in releasing one hundred black youths in return for their promise to go back to the ghetto and work actively for black restraint.
2. Black protest activity caused by the appearance in Durant of the segregationist candidate George Wallace during the 1968 presidential campaign. A number of protesting black youths were arrested including the son of the black mayor, Roger Milton.

(3) Open Occupancy Ordinance. An open occupancy ordinance was voted down by the City Commission in 1967. The black mayor, Roger Milton, announced that he was resigning. The commission hurriedly reconsidered the issue and passed the ordinance. However, a conservative leader organized a campaign to have a city-wide referendum on the issue. A vigorous campaign was conducted by leaders on both sides of the issue and the Open Occupancy Ordinance

was successfully passed by a margin of thirty-eight affirmative votes.

(4) Educational Policies Related to the Black Community. There is general discontent among members of the Durant black community over de facto segregation in black schools. The "blue stocking" school board is aware of this discontentment and generally is receptive to some of the requests initiated by the black community. However, the school board is faced with a certain amount of hostility from Durant's blue-collar workers many of whom view the school board as a representative of elite economic interests and who appear to resist black demands for more equitable educational opportunities. Specific problems of some significance in this issue-area include controversies resulting from criticisms of the quality of the instructional program in predominantly black schools; violent student confrontations between whites and blacks; and black discontent with the type of Negro selected to represent the black community on the school board.

It was expected that the ways in which problems related to these four issue-areas were resolved would provide important information about black leadership, leadership styles and black power resources vis á vis the resources of various loci of power in the larger community. In addition, it was felt that the list of black

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leaders obtained through the analysis of these issue-areas would provide a check on the accuracy of the list of black leaders obtained by means of the reputational approach.

It was also planned to relate these research findings to those derived from other studies. Recently, social scientists have emphasized the need for comparative studies of community leadership. It has been noted that studies of individual communities are more meaningful when related to other community studies. Therefore, it appeared that it might be possible to establish a broader validity for the conclusions derived in this study by comparing the results with those derived from other studies of black community leadership.

The problem, then, might be summarized in the following way--In this study of black leadership, we proposed to: (1) determine the makeup of the black leadership structure by using both the a) reputational and the b) issue-area approaches; (2) determine the effectiveness of these leaders in representing the black community and (3) determine the power resources of the black community vis-à-vis the larger community.

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CHAPTER VI

THE LEADERS OF DURANT'S BLACK COMMUNITY

In the previous chapter, the three principal objectives of this study were outlined. The first objective was to identify the individuals who play major leadership roles in Durant. Two methods were utilized in identifying these leaders--the reputational and the issue-area. The initial list of reputational nominees was obtained by using a modification of the Miller-Form Technique. Knowledgeables representing the five institutional sectors of labor, religion, education, business and the professions were asked to indicate community leaders within the black community. Those who were selected by at least three of the knowledgeables were placed on the final list. The list included twenty-eight leaders. Twenty-five of these leaders were interviewed. Each person interviewed was asked to designate the most important leaders on the list. The definition of leader was: "One who would be consulted on an issue of major concern to the black community." Respondents were also told that they could add the names of additional leaders

if they wished to do so. Several black leaders indicated that they did not wish to check the list. Several others marked the lists in a manner not in keeping with the instructions and these ballots were voided. However, the nineteen remaining ballots were tabulated and the results have been listed in rank order along with the leaders' occupations and an evaluation of their leadership style.

LIST OF REPUTATIONAL LEADERS

| Leader | Number of Nominations | Position | Leadership Style |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------|
| Roger Milton | 18 | Former Mayor, Register of Deeds | Liberal |
| Howard Hobart | 15 | County Comm. | Liberal |
| Daniel Riggs | 15 | Attorney | Liberal |
| Albert Hilton | 14 | Former NAACP President | Liberal |
| Mrs. Kay Brenton | 13 | Regional Dir. Civil Rights Commission | Liberal |
| Rev. Robert Ralston | 12 | Clergyman | Liberal |
| Floyd Tipton | 12 | City Councilman | Liberal |
| Earl Tower | 12 | County Comm. | Liberal |
| Robert Claridge | 11 | Educator | Moderate |
| Leroy Dinsmore | 11 | Union Official | Moderate |
| Fred Faunce | 11 | Businessman | Conservative |
| Mrs. Virginia Houston | 11 | Bd. of Educ. Member | Liberal |

| Leader | Number of Nominations | Position | Leadership Style |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Howard Payne | 11 | Attorney | Moderate |
| Nelson Robins | 11 | Businessman | Moderate |
| Rev. Albert Rodman | 11 | Professor | Moderate |
| Stanley Asher | 10 | Clergyman | Liberal |
| Lewis Smith | 10 | Mortician | Liberal |
| Mrs. Wilma Ordway | 8 | Social Leader | Moderate |
| David Royál | 8 | Educator | Moderate |
| Donna Royal | 8 | Educator | Moderate |
| Rev. James Bank | 7 | Agency Head, Clergyman | Moderate |
| Hale Blanchard | 7 | Judge | Conservative |
| Philip Haitles | 7 | Businessman | Moderate |
| Dr. John Kingston | 7 | Physician, Bd. of Educ. Member | Conservative |
| Rev. Peter Mitchell | 7 | Clergyman | Moderate |
| Dr. Clarence Payne | 7 | Physician | Moderate |
| Dr. Roberta Symes | 7 | Educator | Moderate |
| Floyd Oldham | 6 | Union Official | Moderate |

In general, it was found that the reputational method provided the names of many black leaders including a number of the most important ones but that there were several significant omissions. The reputational approach isolated seven of the top black leaders but failed to uncover two other important leaders. In addition, it failed

to provide the names of a number of promising young secondary leaders (including the executive director of the Urban League and the executive director of the Model Cities Program). The issue approach appears to provide a more accurate picture of leadership patterns. It more effectively highlights young leaders who are gaining in stature and "elder statesmen" who are declining in importance.

The list of top black leaders based on an examination of the issue-areas consists of the following leaders:

LIST OF ISSUE AREA LEADERS

| Leader | Position | Leadership Style |
|------------------|--|------------------|
| Roger Milton | Former Mayor, Register of Deeds | Liberal |
| Howard Hobart | County Commissioner | Liberal |
| Daniel Riggs | Attorney | Liberal |
| Albert Hilton | Former NAACP President | Liberal |
| Mrs. Kay Brenton | Regional Director, Civil Rights Commission | Liberal |
| Floyd Tipton | City Councilman | Liberal |
| Earl Tower | County Commissioner | Liberal |
| Jack Marles | NAACP Official, Urban Coalition Co-Chairman | Liberal |
| Marvin Gridley | Mortician; Human Relations Commission, Vice-Chairman | Liberal |

On the basis of the experience gained from this study, it would appear that a knowledge of major issue-areas provides the most accurate approach to community leadership. However, the reputational approach can be useful as a supplementary method of uncovering secondary leaders in the community who do not happen to be active in major issue-areas. Several of the individuals found on the reputational list in this study play almost no public role as representatives of the black community, yet they appear to be highly regarded by segments of both the black community and the larger community and are sometimes consulted on race-related issues or serve on boards dealing in a peripheral way with race-related issues.

In Chapter V, which outlined the methodology of this study it was indicated that a typology of radical-liberal-moderate and conservative would be used to describe leadership styles. These leadership styles have been defined in the following way:

Conservative: Believes in achieving black goals through the political process. Does not support protest activities designed to provide blacks with greater access to the larger society.

Moderate: Believes in achieving black goals through the political process but also supports

protest activities designed to provide blacks with greater access to the larger society. However, on a personal level does not actively participate in such protest activities.

Liberal: Ideology and goals are congruent with those of the moderate. However, unlike the moderate, actively engages in protest activity designed to give blacks greater access to the larger society.

Radical--Two ideological strands: One type rejects the idea that blacks can achieve their rights within the present political and social system and supports programs designed to alter the system.

A second type believes that blacks can best achieve their rights by withdrawing from the larger society and forming a separate black society.

Both types reject the idea that blacks can achieve equality of treatment through the contemporary political process.

In a sense these definitions represent pure types.

In actual situations, it appears that black leaders

sometimes alter their styles from time to time and place to place. However, it is still useful in an analysis of leadership to rate blacks in terms of a typology.

The labeling of black leaders in terms of the typology shows that there are only a handful of conservative leaders in Durant and no black leader could be characterized as radical. Although there are radicals in the black community, they do not appear to have a community-wide constituency for their names do not surface in the reputational approach. Radicals are occasionally involved in issue-areas but they do not play effective roles nor do the positions they take on political issues command any broadly based support within the black community. The top black leaders have been described as liberals. It would appear that this is the type of leadership favored by most blacks in Durant. It is a style which is predicated on working from within the system but one that also demands that black leaders maintain an aggressively critical stance vis á vis the larger community.

A study of four issue-areas of concern to the black community supplemented by information gained through interviews with black leaders indicates that there is no single group of black leaders who function as a black "power structure" in Durant. There is no single group of leaders who are invariably consulted on all issues of concern to the black community and whose decisions are regarded as

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representing a consensual view of the black community. Nor is there any organization that can be said to provide general leadership in the black community. There are a handful of top leaders and a larger group of secondary leaders who play significant roles in representing the black community to the larger community. Most of the top leaders as well as a number of the secondary leaders are consulted on most major issues that relate to the black community. However, it would probably be inappropriate to say that they represent the black community or that they speak for the black community. Instead of being described as leaders of the black community, they might more accurately be described as leaders in the black community. Yet, a number of these black leaders are more than leaders of factions or special interest groups, for most of them could conceivably be involved in almost any issue of concern to the black community regardless of its nature. However, they certainly do not function as a tightly knit group that must pass on all significant issues. Nor are all of these leaders necessarily involved in all major issues. The names of those who are consulted varies somewhat from issue-to-issue.

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In interviews with blacks the complaint was heard with some frequency that black leaders did not have a genuine and unselfish interest in Durant's black community but were primarily interested in pursuing their own selfish interests. Durant's black leaders were compared in rather unfavorable fashion with those in other communities. Critics noted that black leaders in other urban centers were more willing to render assistance to individuals and groups in the community.

If this criticism is valid, it can perhaps be explained by the fact that most of Durant's black population are first or second generation residents of the community. It would appear that black leaders have not had sufficient time to develop the economic resources that would permit them to provide large-scale economic assistance to others in the black community. Certainly there are no large black business enterprises of the type that can be found in other urban communities. Yet most black leaders who were interviewed appeared to be genuinely concerned about Durant's black community.

The group that is most critical of Durant's black leaders are the young militants who pose as spokesmen for the ghetto blacks. These young men maintain that Durant's black leaders are oriented to middle-class values and a middle-class life-style and thus are unable to either appreciate or to articulate the problems and needs of

ghetto blacks. Durant's black leaders are, of course, very much aware of this criticism and react to it in a variety of ways. Some black leaders resent the criticism. A few take some pride in pointing out that the criticism may be justified since their achievements have allowed them to enjoy a life-style far different from that experienced by ghetto blacks. On the other hand, a few black leaders while admitting that many black leaders can not communicate with the "grass roots" maintain with pride that they themselves are still able to do so. It does appear that one can say with some objectivity that Durant's black leaders tend to place greater emphasis on issues that are of concern to middle-class blacks. There appears to be, for example, more concern about open occupancy than there is about unemployment.

There has been an attempt to form one organization--The Civic Affairs League--to serve as a kind of leadership organization. Although, a number of important blacks are currently members, it has not been successful in achieving community-wide recognition as the organization that represents all of Durant's blacks or black leaders. It has aroused some resentment in the black community so that a black labor leader reports that black leaders who wish to be identified with blue-collar groups are wise not to become closely affiliated with it. Durant's Labor Leadership

League, organized by black labor officials, is patterned after a similar organization in nearby Detroit, but as one labor leader said, "it never got off the ground." Blacks, in general, feel that although no single organization represents all blacks, the Urban League and the NAACP come closest to approximating this goal.

Although several ministers are included on the list of black leaders and a number of ministers still play influential roles in the community, the clergy are not as significant a part of the black leadership group as they once were. Black leaders show considerable ambivalence toward black ministers. Some black leaders view them in a favorable light while others speak of them with disdain. Their traditional role as spokesmen or leaders in the black community has been usurped in many cases by politicians, agency leaders, labor leaders and business and professional men. However, ministers can still exert a great deal of influence. A black minister-leader reports with glee how a fellow clergyman told a young black militant: "Why I have more people on my board of vestry than you have in your whole organization." In the important open occupancy referendum, Durant's black clergy were credited with playing a major role in getting out the black vote and in obtaining funds to support the political campaign.

The ambivalence felt by many black leaders toward the black clergy is paralleled by the same types of feelings concerning black politicians. Some black leaders speak of black politicians with great regard while others are quite caustic. There appears to be a fairly prevalent notion in the black community that politicians are frequently the recipients of graft. A recent indictment of one black politician on such a charge--although still unsubstantiated--has done little to lessen such suspicions.

Some black leaders believe that black labor leaders, by virtue of the importance of their position in the union, are the most powerful black leaders in the community. However, black labor leaders maintain a rather low profile in the community and as a consequence are virtually unknown to some segments of the black population. Undoubtedly, black labor leaders exercise a great deal of influence but their commitment to the union coupled with the fairly conservative sentiments in the white working community regarding race-advancement issues puts some restrictions on the leadership roles they can play in the black community. Nevertheless, two black labor leaders are included on our list of black leaders.

Conservatives in our group seem to fall into two categories. There are several who appear to have adopted a conservative stance simply because they are vulnerable to reprisals from the larger community. However, there

are others who maintain that their views represent a basic commitment to a conservative social and political ideology. They feel that blacks must compete on equal terms with whites and they maintain that for whites to use a less rigorous set of standards in judging black performance is in itself a tacit acknowledgement of black inferiority.

The first research objective of this dissertation has been to describe the individuals who play leadership roles in the black community. It has been noted that there is in Durant no single group of black leaders who function as a black power structure. Nevertheless, it has been possible to identify the names of important black leaders who are involved in most of the issue-areas.

In succeeding chapters, four important issue-areas will be described. Black leadership as it functions or fails to function will also be described. A study of these issue-areas should therefore serve to fulfill two additional research objectives of this study: (1) the effectiveness of black leadership in Durant and (2) the power resources of Durant's black community.

The first issue we will discuss is one that has been of overriding importance to the black community--the establishment of a human relations commission.

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CHAPTER VII

THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Discussions of a Human Relations Ordinance were initiated in the Durant City Commission in 1958 and in 1959 a committee with black Commissioner Roger Milton serving as chairman began to discuss the merits of several model ordinances. Public hearings were held on the proposed Human Relations Ordinance and little opposition was voiced. Support for the proposal came from the Urban League, the NAACP, the UAW and the Durant Council of Churches.¹ Hiram Banton, president of the Durant CIO Council noted that there was "a real need in Durant" for such an organization. Daniel Riggs, chairman of the executive board of the NAACP said that Durant was a leader in college and cultural activities but that in race relations it was looked on as a "backward city."²

Commissioner Milton's committee continued to meet for the balance of the year and during the early

¹D.J., Feb. 23, 1959.

²D.J., March 24, 1959.

months of 1960. However, the mayor of Durant seemed to be lending the project only token support and frequently emphasized the difficulty of obtaining funds to support the proposed project.³

In March, 1960, Commissioner Milton and his committee presented their proposed ordinance to the City Commission. It was a modified version of one which had been suggested by the NAACP and was similar to an ordinance which had been in force in Grand Rapids since 1955. The HRC was to be a fact-finding agency that would investigate areas of tension. Violation of the ordinance was to be punishable by fine or imprisonment. Prosecution of violations was to be initiated by the city attorney after the Human Relations Commission had certified the case. During the final stages of writing the proposal, a section had been struck out, at the insistence of one of the city commissioners, that would have made it unlawful to discriminate in the advertising, sale, rental or leasing of a dwelling.⁴

Commissioner Milton said that he would have preferred an ordinance that contained stronger provisions regarding discrimination in housing but he felt the proposed ordinance was "a step in the right direction."

³D.J., June 24, 1959.

⁴D.J., March 11, 1960.

He said that he hoped that if a Human Relations Commission was established it would "investigate discriminatory practices. . . . and suggest remedies."⁵

In April 1960, the City Commission, after an acrimonious discussion, voted to return the HRC Ordinance to the legislative committee where it had originated.⁶ Chairman, Roger Milton, exasperated because his committee had already spent a year in formulating the ordinance charged that it was time that some of the commissioners "started taking a position for things that are right--and stop siding with the (Durant) Journal, Manufacturers Association and the Chamber of Commerce."⁷

Passage of the HRC Ordinance

After further revision, the ordinance was again brought out of committee and presented to the commission. And once again, opponents attacked the measure. One section empowered the HRC to "make investigations and studies in any field of human relations." Critics felt that this provision was too broad in scope and that in the wrong hands might be used injudiciously. Another provision of the ordinance gave the HRC power to make a

⁵D.J., March 11, 1960.

⁶Proceedings of the City Commission, April 11, 1960, p. 1661. Cited hereafter as City Comm.

⁷D.J., April 12, 1960.

public report on "any complaints of discrimination, tensions, and prejudice filed with or referred to it." Opponents claimed that this provision could be used to smear innocent people and that it was only another instance of how the bill would "open the way toward a police state."⁸ However, after additional delays, the ordinance was passed by the City Commission.⁹ There were hints, however, that several commissioners planned to emasculate the ordinance by failing to provide funds for its implementation and Richard Cronin, Durant realtor, who had testified on several occasions against the measure announced that the Durant Real Estate Board would circulate petitions for a referendum election on the measure.¹⁰

The mayor announced that he had every intention of appointing able people to the HRC Board for he felt that the ordinance "means nothing without a good responsible group" to carry out its provisions.¹¹ He added that the quality of the commission's membership was the key to its effectiveness. However, since each commissioner including those who had voted against HRC was allowed to nominate

⁸D.J., April 17, 1960.

⁹City Comm., April 25, 1960, p. 1705.

¹⁰D.J., April 26, 1960.

¹¹D.J., April 26, 1960.

one HRC Board member, several were selected who appeared to have only a limited interest in open occupancy.¹²

The task of securing a chairman for the commission was complicated by the fact that the mayor found it difficult to obtain a prominent citizen to serve in the office. It was first announced by the mayor that Mrs. N. N. Stanton, wife of one of Durant's leading citizens, would serve as chairman. However, Mrs. Stanton expressed surprise, saying that she had no knowledge that she was being considered until her name had been publicly announced. She declined the appointment, declaring that her job as executive director of the Girl Scout Council "and other time-consuming commitments" would prevent her from giving the assignment the attention it deserved.¹³

A few days later, the mayor announced that Harry Higgins, the general-secretary of the Durant YMCA was to be chairman of the Human Relations Commission. The following day, Higgins also declined the post, noting that he had still been considering whether or not to accept the post when the mayor had announced his appointment. Higgins explained that he had to decline the appointment because he needed to devote all his time to the new YMCA building.¹⁴

¹²D.J., May 3, 1960 and City Comm., May 2, 1960, p. 1707.

¹³D.J., May 5, 1960.

¹⁴D.J., May 10, 11, 1960.

The search for a chairman continued until late in May, when one of the board members, Joseph Marden, a businessman, agreed to serve as chairman.¹⁵

In retrospect, the passage of the Human Relations Ordinance by the City Commission appears to have been little more than a symbolic act. The City Commission was faced with the necessity of responding in some positive way to the complaints of the black community. However, the symbolic response--the HRC Ordinance--was so structured that it lacked the requisite power to protect the rights of minority group members. This technique of responding to demands of interest groups with symbolic acts is frequently employed by political leaders at all levels of representative government.

Repeal of the HRC Ordinance

Although the Human Relations Ordinance appeared to provide almost no punitive powers for the Human Relations Commission and appeared to be largely a symbolic act, members of the white community particularly representatives of the real estate interests appeared to view it with great concern. Shortly after its passage, realtors began circulating petitions calling for a referendum election.¹⁶

¹⁵D.J., May 24, 1960.

¹⁶D.J., April 26, 1960; May 19, 27, 1960.

HRC Board Chairman, Joseph Marden, at first voiced his opposition to any thought of repeal and expressed his conviction that Durant's citizens would vote to uphold the ordinance.¹⁷ However, Marden apparently had a change of heart, for two weeks later, at a special meeting of the commission, he and ten other members of the Human Relations Commission Board recommended that the Durant City Commission repeal the HRC Ordinance and draft a new ordinance with emphasis on educational functions. Recommended for elimination in the new ordinance was a section in the existing ordinance dealing with publication of complaints and the section outlining punitive measures for failure to comply with the ordinance. The eleven board members supporting repeal expressed their conviction that the citizens of the community did not really understand the purpose of the commission and that a referendum vote would only result in a defeat for the ordinance and would set back for years the cause of good human relations. In addition, Chairman Marden believed that a "defeat would tend to harm the good reputation and esteem held for the city throughout the state by all who believed in equal rights, opportunity and dignity for all men."¹⁸

¹⁷D.J., June 3, 1960 and City Comm., June 16, 1960, p. 1767.

¹⁸D.J., June 15, 1960.

The position of the chairman and ten members of the commission was immediately attacked by Jack Marles, president of the NAACP. Marles said,

We are appalled by the apparent capitulation of the members of the suspended HRC in their recommendations to the City Commission . . . We believe that the capitulation to the bigots and racists here in Durant on such an ordinance will make the ordinance a meaningless piece of documentation.¹⁹

Marles also appeared before the City Commission and urged them not to repeal the ordinance saying that he had confidence that the voters would approve the ordinance as it was. He told the commission that deletion of the penalty clause in the ordinance would be like taking away the penalty for violating the speed limit. He opposed any additional watering-down of the ordinance, noting that a housing provision had been deleted from the original ordinance. Marles also criticized the HRC, noting that some of its members "are dedicated to scuttling it."²⁰

The City Commission refused to consider repeal of the HRC Ordinance and voted to adjourn. Since the commission meeting was held on the last day on which the measure could be reversed by that body, final determination of the fate of the ordinance lay with the voters of Durant.²¹

¹⁹D.J., June 16, 1960.

²⁰D.J., June 17, 1960.

²¹D.J., June 17, 1960 and City Comm., June 16, 1960, p. 1767.

The discussion of the Human Relations Commission Ordinance became more heated as the election approached. The Human Relations Council, a non-governmental, voluntary predecessor of the Human Relations Commission, came out in opposition to repeal. Commenting on the referendum, the council noted:

The referendum was caused by the circulation of petitions by realtors, even after housing was removed from the ordinance. They are the only known group to have officially taken a stand against the ordinance. Many church, civic, labor, political and professional organizations have endorsed the ordinance.²²

In their statement in opposition to the ordinance, the Goodrich County Real Estate Board maintained: "We of the real estate profession want to make it clear that we take second place to no one in our support of the constitutional equality of man." The board went on to note: "We do not believe local groups, should be stampeded down the road to 'social equality' by threats of race riots or by false tensions."²³

In an editorial, the Durant Journal urged the voters to repeal the HRC Ordinance. The Journal claimed that the "only workable approach to improved human relations is through education not coercion." Discussing the section of the HRC Ordinance giving the Human Relations Commission

²²D.J., July 31, 1960.

²³D.J., July 31, 1960.

power to make investigations in any field of human relations the Journal felt that this prerogative "could lead to interference in fields not even contemplated by those who drew up the ordinance. It could result in interference in religious or family matters not at all germane to the stated purpose of the ordinance." Turning to the section giving the commission the right to make public reports of discrimination, the Journal found this provision "dangerously broad" and predicted that "it could lead to smearing of innocent persons." Finally, the editorial objected to the provision requiring citizens to give information at commission hearings. Such power "in the wrong hands . . . could result in dragging persons into a controversy even though they might not be involved," said the Journal.²⁴

On August 2, 1960 the Human Relations Commission Ordinance was repealed by a vote of 29,645 to 8,101. Only twenty-one of the city's one hundred thirty-one precincts voted in favor of the ordinance. Twenty of Durant's twenty-three predominantly black precincts and one all-white precinct voted in favor of retaining the ordinance.²⁵

The short-lived history of the Human Relations Commission appeared to strengthen the feeling of black

²⁴D.J., July 31, 1960.

²⁵D.J., August 3, 1960.

leaders and the black community that the larger community was unwilling to make meaningful changes in its historic attitude toward blacks. Black leaders pointed out that the ordinance as passed had lacked necessary punitive clauses; that individuals had been appointed to the board who appeared to have no genuine interest in assisting blacks; and that the board was hardly in existence before petitions calling for a referendum election were being circulated by Durant realtors. Black leaders also expressed astonishment over the fact that the chairman along with ten other members of the HRC Board had recommended that the city repeal the measure and pass in its place an even weaker Human Relations Ordinance.

The power aspects of the issue were revealing. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the leaders of the black community, aided by certain white influentials, had been able to get the City Commission to pass the ordinance establishing the Human Relations Commission. Undoubtedly, the reluctance of the commissioners to pass the measure was based, at least in part, on their belief that the white community did not favor the ordinance. That the commissioners' evaluation of their constituents' views was correct was indicated when the issue was subjected to a referendum election. Here the issue was soundly defeated by the electorate. In many cases, the major power resource available to the black community is

the black vote. However, in the case of the Human Relations Ordinance the black community was not able to use this resource effectively.

The Second HRC Ordinance

The issue of a Human Relations Commission for the city of Durant remained largely dormant for three years. Then in July, 1963, the Rev. Alan Robinson of the Durant Council of Churches proposed that action be initiated to reestablish such an agency.²⁶ No immediate response was forthcoming but in September black leader Marvin Gridley appeared before the Durant City Commission to urge that some action be taken on the Robinson proposal. Commissioner Milton agreed and noted that it was particularly lamentable that Durant was one of the few major cities in the state without such an agency.²⁷

At a special commission meeting, held later in the month, Robinson outlined some of the specifics of his plan which was in many ways similar to the ordinance of 1960.

At the same time that Robinson made his report, Durant Mayor Henry Pandon in an apparent attempt to seize the initiative, announced that he planned to appoint

²⁶City Comm., July 30, 1963, p. 329.

²⁷D.J., September 10, 1963.

a biracial advisory committee to work in the field of human relations.²⁸

Three black organizations, the NAACP, the Civic Affairs League and the Labor Leadership League, announced their opposition to the mayor's biracial group plan and indicated that they favored the legislation proposed by Rev. Robinson. Robert Terhune, of the NAACP, noted that the history of advisory committees of this type did not justify the creation of one in Durant. He said that the NAACP would consider any Negro serving on such a committee an "Uncle Tom" who was more interested in placating the white community and the white power structure than in working for the betterment of the black community. He said committees of this kind that had served in other communities had done little to further the cause of human rights. He described such committees as "only window dressing" because they lacked the structure and backing to make them effective.²⁹

In spite of the opposition to his proposal, the mayor went ahead and announced the names of individuals

²⁸D.J., September 27, 1963 and City Comm., September 26, 1963, p. 423.

²⁹D.J., November 7, 1963.

who were to serve on his committee.*³⁰ However, three of the black members named indicated their intention of withdrawing and two testified at the City Commission meeting in favor of the Robinson ordinance.³¹

The mayor was angered by the response of the black community to his proposal and withdrew it, commenting at the same time that it was regrettable "that the organizations and individuals who could have contributed so much to the success of the proposed advisory committee chose to take a contrary course."³² Commissioner Milton tried to assuage the mayor's disappointment. He told the mayor that he sincerely believed that the advisory committee could not do an effective job without the backing of an ordinance.

At this time, City Attorney Edward Johnson, informed the City Commission that certain sections of the ordinance prepared by Rev. Robinson conflicted with sections of the city charter and the state constitution. Reverend Robinson agreed to revise his measure so that it would meet all legal tests.³³

³⁰ D.J., November 8, 1963.

* The author was working with the wife of one of the appointees during this period. She described to him how she and her husband had been greeted with cries of "Uncle Tom" by other blacks when they attended a party.

³¹ D.J., November 13, 1963.

³² D.J., Nov. 13, 1963 and City Comm., Nov. 14, 1963, p. 478.

³³ D.J., November 13, 1963.

The revised ordinance was submitted to the commission two months later. Robinson had altered the ordinance to conform with the city attorney's opinion that under the state constitution, municipalities had no power to enforce penalty provisions contained in local human relations ordinances. Robinson's new proposal depended entirely on voluntary cooperation and contained no provision for enforcement. Robinson anticipated that the black community would be critical of his proposal because it contained no penalty provisions. Nevertheless, he viewed his ordinance as a first step.³⁴

Robinson, a white liberal and a knowledgeable and sympathetic friend of the black community, was correct in anticipating criticism of his proposal by black leaders and it was not long in coming. Howard Hobart, president of the Durant NAACP, scornfully described Robinson's amended proposal as "no more than a sheet of paper."³⁵ Robinson admitted that his second proposal was weaker than his first, but added that "perhaps its greatest strength is that is is what we can get at this time."³⁶

Sentiment regarding the proposed ordinance was so divided that the AFL-CIO Council announced that it

³⁴D.J., January 17, 1964.

³⁵D.J., February 9, 1964.

³⁶D.J., February 9, 1964.

could neither support nor condemn the measure.³⁷ The chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union condemned the revised ordinance saying that "all of its teeth have been pulled."³⁸ We have noted that the NAACP had condemned the measure. However, the Urban League supported the proposal and black Commissioner Roger Milton cast his vote for it saying, "I realize what can and cannot be done."³⁹

After some delay, the ordinance was passed by the City Commission and early in March, Mayor Pandon, appointed fifteen individuals to the new Human Relations Commission. Since each of the city commissioners was again permitted to nominate one appointee, several individuals were again appointed to the Human Relations Commission Board who had displayed opposition to vigorous action in the human relations field. One member, Bill Knott, a real estate agent, had been a leader in the successful attempt by real estate interests to defeat the previous Human Relations Ordinance in the referendum election of 1960 and the chairman of the commission was Don Morgan, a former commissioner who had been a frequent critic of human relations legislation.⁴⁰ Black leaders voiced their conviction that the

³⁷D.J., February 12, 1964.

³⁸City Comm., February 17, 1964, pp. 182-183 and D.J., February 18, 1964.

³⁹D.J., February 18, 1964.

⁴⁰D.J., March 3, 1964.

City Commission not only had emasculated the ordinance but that they were, in addition, attempting to make the commission itself ineffective by appointing incompetent members to the board.

Ineffectiveness of the New
Human Relations Commission

Little was heard from the Human Relations Commission until July, 1964, when black Vice-Chairman Marvin Gridley, complained about the general ineffectiveness of the commission. Gridley was particularly disturbed because his niece had been unable to secure suitable housing in the white area of the city. He said that the real estate company that had refused to assist her in finding a satisfactory apartment was represented on the HRC Board in the person of one of its vice-presidents, Bill Knott. Gridley, apparently referring to Knott, said that "insincere" people were being appointed to the HRC Board and threatened to resign from the commission if it didn't "move positively in a forthright way."⁴¹ Gridley's strong protest caused the commission to pass a resolution extending an invitation to real estate representatives to attend an HRC meeting.

Toward the end of the month, the commission met with Wayne Pinton, president of the Durant Board of

⁴¹D.J.; July 10, 1964.

Realtors. Pinton read the ten-point policy on minority housing of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, which he indicated was also the policy of the Durant Board. Pinton refused to express an opinion regarding the housing situation for blacks in Durant, saying he had been empowered by his organization only to read the ten-point policy and could not express any personal opinions. When, at one point, he was asked if he thought Durant had a housing problem, he refused to comment.⁴²

An attempt was made to secure further conversations with Durant realtors. Bill Knott, HRC Board member and realtor, who was viewed by some board members with suspicion, was asked to arrange a meeting between the HRC Board and his fellow realtors. However, little of a positive nature appears to have been achieved in this area and Knott resigned from the board a short time later.⁴³ In this situation the powerlessness of the Human Relations Commission to secure the cooperation of the Durant Board of Realtors appeared in the final analysis to be a reflection of the powerlessness of the black community. Unable to muster effective power resources, the black community appeared unable to get the realtors to cooperate in efforts to investigate the prevalence of housing discrimination nor

⁴²D.J., July 31, 1964.

⁴³D.J., October 6, 1964.

was the black community powerful enough to activate other loci of power in the community to exert pressure on the board.

In March, 1965, the Human Relations Commission held its first hearing devoted to the question of racial discrimination in housing. Several prominent black leaders complained about difficulties in securing housing in Durant.⁴⁴ However, the hearings did not lead to any positive accomplishments. Moreover, the City Commission appeared to be disturbed by the fact that the HRC had held such a hearing.⁴⁵

Appointment of an HRC Director

For some time, those who were interested in the human relations climate in Durant or who were concerned about the failure of the Human Relations Commission to achieve concrete results had felt that there was a need for a permanent HRC director if the commission was to function effectively. However, when the proposal was presented to the City Commission, several commissioners, pointing to the recent housing investigation expressed concern that a director might undertake further

⁴⁴D.J., March 12, 1965.

⁴⁵D.J., March 12, 1965.

investigations.⁴⁶ Ultimately, the ordinance providing for a director was passed by the City Commission.⁴⁷ However, the commissioners had indicated in rather emphatic fashion that they did not welcome further investigations of discrimination in housing on the part of the Human Relations Commission.

In September, it was announced that Bruce Allan, a young man of thirty-six, who had most recently served as assistant director of Toledo's Board of Community Relations, would be Durant's new Human Relations Commission director.⁴⁸

Although not scheduled to take over his new post until October, Allan delivered a speech to the Durant Human Relations Commission in September. The speech was covered in some detail by one of the feature writers on the Durant Journal. Noting that one of the first things Allan would have to face was "an effort to put him out of business"--a petition drive for a referendum election--the reporter went on to say that Allan would have to do a major job of educating the public. The Journal reporter found, however, that "Allan is likely to be effective. In a brief talk to HRC, he managed to convey more about

⁴⁶ D.J., March 19, 1965.

⁴⁷ D.J., March 30, 1965.

⁴⁸ D.J., September 3, 1965.

its mission than HRC itself has been able to do in the entire eighteen months it has been in business." Noting Allan's effect on the HRC members, the reporter commented: "The change in the climate was very noticeable to observers. A former air of discouragement was missing."

The reporter found that,

some HRC members have been frank to admit that the agency, created by city ordinance, has been drifting rather aimlessly and that its accomplishments have been few. They felt that unless there was someone to carry out HRC business between its monthly meetings, they were in a sense flapping their wings without getting off the ground. With a full-time director, they see themselves as finally in a position to accomplish some meaningful things in accordance with the provisions of the ordinance.⁴⁹

Bruce Allan assumed the post of HRC director in October. Allan optimistically described Durant as "a city of hope" and went on to say: "I think we can do things in the Durant way--by education, by negotiation, by conference and conciliation, and primarily by communication among all our citizens."⁵⁰

Continuing Ineffectiveness
of the Human Relations
Commission

However, the addition of a director did not make the board effective. In fact, the difficulties experienced

⁴⁹ D.J., September 26, 1965.

⁵⁰ D.J., November 11, 1965.

by HRC appeared to increase. First, friction developed between Allan and the board when board members insisted on getting involved in the individual cases being handled by the staff. Allan pointed out that the board's function was to act as the policy-making body while the staff's function was to handle the individual cases of discrimination. He noted that interference by the board could impede the work of the staff and might actually deter people from seeking assistance from the staff.⁵¹ However, from time to time, board members continued to get involved in individual cases.

Next, the Human Relations Commission had to defend itself against attacks from the City Commission whose members accused Allan of failing to keep them informed about the agency's program. Allan replied that he had sent a variety of materials to the city commissioners and that all of it had apparently been ignored.⁵²

Additional controversy developed when the HRC chairman's post was vacated. Marvin Gridley, black vice-chairman, was passed over and a relatively new white member of the commission was appointed chairman. Gridley accused the commission of discrimination and tendered his

⁵¹D.J., October 7, 1966.

⁵²D.J., May 2, 5, 1967.

resignation. Only a unanimous vote of confidence caused Gridley to reconsider and withdraw his resignation.⁵³

The publicity caused by these controversies did not add to the stature of the Human Relations Commission. In addition, the commission was criticized by black spokesmen for not being more aggressive in attacking discrimination.⁵⁴ In 1968 and 1969, in an attempt to counter such criticism, HRC attempted to launch new programs and attempted to broaden its contacts with other community agencies and organizations. It announced a new four-phased program called "Project Pulse." The program was to include: A mobile unit to make city services available on a direct and immediate basis to citizens; a corps of street workers who would assist ghetto residents; a school program tailored to assist school drop-outs; and an apprenticeship program to assist young black girls in securing office employment.

In describing their program, the board noted that in the past, they had been primarily a "fire fighting" operation "reacting rather than acting, responding rather than doing." They felt that the proposed program would be a new, positive, approach to problems in the human

⁵³D.J., January 10, 1969.

⁵⁴D.J., January 6, 1968.

relations field. The HRC Board estimated that the cost of the program could be \$168,000.⁵⁵

The program did represent a positive approach to solving minority problems in the community. However, it received only a passing glance from the City Commission. It was apparent that a program of this magnitude could be undertaken in Durant only when it originated at the federal or state level and when its major funding came from those sources.

The Human Relations Commission also attempted to open up lines of communications with other agencies. When difficulties arose in the schools, HRC scheduled meetings with school officials and with citizen groups. However, these attempts were largely unproductive, probably because the school administration did not welcome the involvement of outsiders in school problems.⁵⁶ HRC also attempted to increase its rapport with the police department by scheduling meetings with police officials but these plans were also largely unproductive.⁵⁷ Moreover, beginning in 1968, the commission was subjected to almost continuing criticism from political leaders, agency leaders and from its own board members.

⁵⁵ D.J., August 11, 1968.

⁵⁶ D.J., March 3; August 14; December 11, 1970.

⁵⁷ D.J., July 10; November 19, 1970.

Late in 1967, a community relations specialist with the Justice Department made an assessment of the work of the Durant Human Relations Commission. In his report to the commission, the community relations expert told the HRC Board that "it must become more aggressive and willing to put its head on the chopping block more often." Members of the commission agreed that HRC was "too defensive and inactive" but Marvin Gridley, black acting chairman of the Human Relations Commission, put some of the blame on the Durant City Commission noting that "some commissioners like us the way we are--not aggressive enough."⁵⁸ It was also noted that each city commissioner, including those who had opposed the whole concept of a Human Relations Commission, had been responsible for the nomination of a member of the Human Relations Commission and that one could hardly expect that a commissioner who had opposed the ordinance would nominate an individual who would be an aggressive proponent of civil rights.

Shortly after this, the Durant regional director of the State Civil Rights Commission, Mrs. Kay Brenton, made a report to the Civil Rights Commission in which she concluded:

The HRC [Durant Human Relations Commission]
is for all practical purposes defunct. . . .

⁵⁸D.J., January 6, 1968.

Attendance at meetings is short of a quorum. The commission is not utilized in its proper role by either city officials or citizens. Matters coming before the City Commission within jurisdiction of HRC are handled by City Commission without reference to or consultation with HRC. Its stature is not such that any community support could be mobilized to strengthen it.⁵⁹

In April 1969, black leaders Donna Wilson, Howard Hobart and Earl Tower, all of whom were county supervisors, were joined by black City Commissioner Tipton, in proposing that the county hire a community relations director. A white commissioner objected, saying that such a post would duplicate the work being performed by the Durant Human Relations Commission and that it would be better to try to work to make HRC more effective. However, the black leaders disagreed saying that Bruce Allan, HRC director, was ineffective and had no "rapport" with the black community.

Supervisor Earl Tower, went on to say that Allan could not possibly be effective under the present circumstances in the black community. He said "it has nothing to do with ability or training. It's just that he's the wrong color" and referring to an outbreak of violence that had occurred two years previously, Tower said: "We had to guard him [Allan], to see he didn't get hurt in

⁵⁹ Durant Regional Office, Civil Rights Commission, Durant Investigatory Housing Hearings, Progress Evaluation Report, February 23, 1968, p. 12.

1967." Tipton added that the Durant Human Relations Commission had done some good in the past but that now it was "outdated" and "completely useless."⁶⁰

In August, occurred another of those sessions in which members of the Human Relations Commission engaged in self-flagellation. This time it was a new member, Dale Floyd, who suggested that HRC members "look at our own image in the community." He elaborated:

We're looked on as a group that doesn't do anything. I think we should discover whether this community has any confidence in the HRC to handle its complaints. I have a feeling the community does not think we are competent to do this--especially the blacks and the Mexican-Americans.⁶¹

Other members of the commission agreed. They complained about the commission's failure to act in a way to achieve concrete goals.

In December, a position paper dealing with the programs and goals of the commission was distributed to members of the Human Relations Commission. Board member, Daniel Kingston, criticized the position paper for "reflecting some of the weaknesses of the commission." Kingston said the goals of the commission as these were outlined in the paper (i.e., the fostering of good human relations and seeking freedom, justice and equality for

⁶⁰D.J., April 10, 1969.

⁶¹D.J., August 14, 1970.

all citizens) were "momentous but vague tasks." He went on to say "we could work forever but with these goals we'll never have any way to measure success."⁶²

In February, the City Council^{*} began discussing the advisability of abolishing the Human Relations Commission. Mayor Linton suggested the functions of the HRC could be handled just as well by the state Civil Rights Commission and the City Council's Social Programs Committee, or by the Police Department's Community Relations Division. The recent Universal Motors strike had deprived the city of needed tax revenue and the mayor noted that abolishing HRC would save the city \$35,000. Marvin Gridley vice-chairman of the Human Relations Commission who had often been a severe critic of HRC rose to its defense saying that for the council to "do away with the whole HRC would make the community a laughing stock." Gridley admitted the HRC "has not lived up to its' responsibility" but added that this was because the group does not "have the tools to work with. It's ridiculous for HRC to have a puny budget of \$35,000,"⁶³ Gridley said. He noted that the Grand Rapids' budget was \$160,000 and said that

⁶²D.J., December 11, 1970.

^{*} In 1970, the City Commission's title is changed to City Council and the County Board of Supervisors title is changed to County Commission.

⁶³D.J., February 11, 1971.

Durant's HRC budget was the lowest of any comparable city in the United States.

Black City Councilman Tipton, said that the council should "either decide we're going to find the money" and the powers necessary to expand the role of HRC "or we ought to eliminate it." "To maintain HRC the way they are now" Tipton said "is a waste of the taxpayer's money." Tipton said HRC "has reached the point where either it gets the tools or gets the hell out of the ball game."⁶⁴

Resignation of Bruce Allan

In February, 1971, Bruce Allan submitted his resignation to the board of the Human Relations Commission. The resignation was submitted at the first HRC Board meeting to take place following a City Council meeting in which the possibility of dissolving the Human Relations Commission had been discussed. No official action on the resignation was possible because, as so often happened, there was not a quorum present. Allan finally agreed to withhold his resignation when most members agreed with Commissioner Floyd that "the timing of the resignation is very bad in view of what the City Council is considering." The seven members present gave Allan a unanimous vote of confidence.

In his statement to the commission, Allan said he had "reason to believe that I am the source of the

⁶⁴D.J., February 11, 1971.

commission's problem. There have been rumors that there are those in city government trying to get me out of this job." He said he had been told that his performance was "inadequate and that I do not have the support of the black community which I don't think is true."

Allan went on to say "it's time for me to go. You need new blood and a new perspective. I've done the best with what we've had."

Both Allan and Assistant Director Mitcham complained that they had not received enough direction from the Human Relations Commission or from city officials. Allan said: "Occasionally we're asked to write a letter, the rest of the time we operate in a vacuum." Regarding his relations with the City Council, Allan said, "no one's ever specifically asked me to show any record of what we do at meetings." He said that when he started working about five and one half years ago, he did submit regular reports "but much to my surprise and chagrin no one read them or paid the slightest attention."

As for the HRC meetings, Allan commented "we've been running some group therapy sessions and I'm getting sick of it." Allan did agree to withhold his resignation "until a more appropriate time." He said, "I don't want to be responsible for this commission's going down the drain."⁶⁵

⁶⁵D.J., February 12, 1971.

Exactly one month later, the Human Relations Commission was again meeting. Most of the discussion was devoted to the goals of HRC and why it had been ineffective during its eight years of existence. Allan sat quietly for more than an hour as the discussion was taking place, then he said "I don't think I'm a quitter but I've had it about up to here. I've taken abuse. My life has been threatened. I've had it. I've had enough grief for the rest of my days. I am herewith resubmitting my resignation. Period, paragraph."

The commission adjourned to discuss the resignation in private and then reassembled a few moments later. Allan said that everyone agreed that he would resign as executive director of HRC.

During the course of the meeting Vice-Chairman Marvin Gridley had been critical of the achievements of HRC. He declared

We've done nothing. We're just spinning our wheels and wasting our time. I feel our days are numbered. The city is in a financial bind and they're looking for places to cut. The reason they're considering cutting us is simple. We are not doing anything. It's just a lot of rhetoric.

Gridley went on to say "we cannot point to a single thing that we have done to lessen tensions in the community."

Some members disagreed. However, the consensus was probably represented by one member who said "HRC can't

take all the blame . . ." the framers of the HRC Ordinance "didn't want it to be a strong Human Relations Commission."⁶⁶

The resignation of Bruce Allan appeared to be the final chapter in the history of the Human Relations Commission. Allan's resignation was brought about by a series of frustrations which he described in an interview. Allan was troubled by the fact that it had been impossible to establish separate areas of responsibility for the HRC director and for the HRC Board and also by the fact that he was being criticized by some black leaders for not attacking discrimination in Durant in a more aggressive fashion.⁶⁷ However, probably the major frustration was the fact that the Human Relations Commission was a relatively powerless agency that was not going to effect any meaningful changes in the human relations climate in Durant.

Black Leaders View the
Human Relations Commission
Issue-Area

In interviews with Durant's black leaders, a number of criticisms of the Human Relations Commission were voiced. Blacks felt that the director, Bruce Allan, was not aggressive enough. Some blacks also criticized

⁶⁶D.J., March 12, 1971.

⁶⁷Interview with Bruce Allan, April 13, 1971.

Allan for failing to establish good rapport with the black community particularly with ghetto blacks. A black school administrator noted that officials frequently neglected to contact Allan when a crisis seemed to call for his intervention and on at least one occasion he was denied admission to a school with a troubled racial problem. However, most blacks realized that the major problem was the fact that the ordinance establishing HRC did not provide the commission with the appropriate power or authority. Lacking power resources, the commission was in many cases virtually ignored by other power loci in the community including the Board of Education and school officials, the City Council, the business community and the police department.

Failure of Black Leaders
to Create a Viable Human
Relations Commission

Blacks in the community once had high hopes that this agency was going to accomplish a great deal. They worked hard to inaugurate the first Human Relations Commission; saw it defeated in a referendum election; battled to obtain a second human relations agency; struggled to see that it had a permanent director and staff; and came to its assistance when it was under attack from outside forces. The roster of those who were involved at some stage in the affairs of the Human Relations Commission

reads like a black Who's Who of Durant--Mayor Roger Milton; Commissioners Wilson, Hobart and Tower; City Councilman Tipton; Special Advisor to the governor Gridley; Civil Rights Regional Director Brenton; Clergymen Asher and Ralston; NAACP Presidents Riggs, Hilton and Marles; Urban League Directors Marsh and Blane; businessmen Faunce and Haines; and civic leader Houston.

Probably no issue of concern to black people had seen the involvement of so many black leaders. This is because they had hoped that HRC could effect meaningful changes in the human relations climate of the city. However, after several years of struggle, they realized that the Human Relations Commission was not going to be an effective agency because the larger community was not going to allow it to be one. The Human Relations Commission Ordinance had not given the commission the requisite power to make it effective and the City Council representing the larger community was not prepared to allow it to play a meaningful role in community affairs. The ordinance and the commission were merely symbols of the City Council's acknowledgement of the need to respond to the black community's demand for some action in the human relations area. However, the City Council realized that its response to black demands must not be in the nature of truly effective action for to do so would provoke the white community.

The relevance of conflict theory in examining black power resources in an issue-area of this type is apparent. An examination of conflict situations makes it possible to evaluate the power resources of various loci of power. Using this method, it appears that the business community (represented particularly by the Board of Realtors) and the City Council were both power loci with greater resources than the black community possessed.

The major objective in investigating the four designated issue-areas has been to assist us in our analysis of the effectiveness of black leadership. In the case of the Human Relations Commission, we find that black leadership has been relatively ineffective. This ineffectiveness does not result from a lack of leadership skills among black leaders but rather appears to result from the fact that black leaders are leaders without power. They do not have the power resources that would give them ready access to important centers of decision-making.

The story of the Human Relations Commission, then, is the story of the relative powerlessness of black leaders in Durant to make the agency an effective instrument for social change and human understanding.

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY

In a survey of 109 cities Karl and Alma Taeuber found that Durant had the highest index of residential segregation of any city outside of the South.¹ This residential segregation has resulted in rather marked racial imbalance in many of the schools. Table 17 shows the black enrollment in the various elementary schools.

Table 17 shows the segregated pattern of elementary education with nine of the forty-three schools having black enrollments of more than 90 percent while eighteen of the schools have black enrollments of 10 percent or less (eleven of these schools have black enrollment of less than 1 percent).

¹Karl E. Taeuber and Alma F. Taeuber, Negroes in Cities (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965), p. 39.

TABLE 17

BLACK ENROLLMENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

| Black Enrollment (Percent) | Number of Schools |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 100-91 | 9 |
| 90-81 | 3 |
| 80-71 | 2 |
| 70-61 | 3 |
| 60-51 | 0 |
| 50-41 | 3 |
| 40-31 | 3 |
| 30-21 | 1 |
| 20-11 | 1 |
| 10-1 | 18* |

*Eleven schools had black enrollments of one percent or less.

Source: Durant Community Schools, op. cit., p. 1.

A somewhat better racial balance--as indicated in Tables 18 and 19--is achieved in the junior and senior high schools. However, much remains to be done if the schools are to arrive at a racial balance that is representative of the mix existing in the community.

As was noted earlier in Table 10, the black enrollment remains a constant 42 percent of the total student enrollment at all three educational levels. However, as Table 20 illustrates, the percentage of black teachers most nearly approximates the black student enrollment in the elementary schools (30%). In junior high schools, the percentage of black teachers falls to

25 percent and in senior high schools, it drops to 15 percent.

TABLE 18

BLACK ENROLLMENT IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

| School | (Percent) Black Enrollment |
|-----------|-------------------------------|
| Polk | 88 |
| Adams | 76 |
| Jefferson | 66 |
| Madison | 55 |
| Monroe | 27 |
| Jackson | 17 |
| Van Buren | 14 |
| Harrison | 2 |

Source: Durant Community Schools,
op. cit., p. 2.

TABLE 19

BLACK ENROLLMENT IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

| School | (Percent) Black Enrollment |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| Roosevelt | 64 |
| Washington | 49 |
| Taft | 26 |
| Lincoln | 25 |

Source: Durant Community Schools,
op. cit., p. 2.

TABLE 20
RACIAL DISTRIBUTION OF TEACHERS IN THE DURANT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SEPTEMBER 1971

| Schools | <u>Elementary Staffs</u> | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---------|---------------------------|---------|--------|---------|----------|---------|-----------------|---------|--------|---------|
| | American Indian | | Blacks | | Oriental | | Spanish Surname | | | White |
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| 43 | 2 | 0.2 | 303 | 30 | 2 | 0.2 | 0 | 0 | 712 | 70 |
| | | | | | | | | | | 1019 |
| | <u>Junior High Staffs</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 0 | 0 | 124 | 25 | 1 | 0.2 | 4 | 0.6 | 377 | 74 |
| | | | | | | | | | | 506 |
| | <u>Senior High Staffs</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 1 | 0.2 | 69 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0.4 | 372 | 83 |
| | | | | | | | | | | 448 |

Source: Durant Community Schools, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

Faced with the dilemma in attempting to achieve an equitable distribution of its black teachers in its "de facto" segregated elementary school system, the school administration has attempted to solve the problem by placing 39 percent of the black elementary teachers in the nine elementary schools with black enrollments of 91 percent or more; 44 percent of the black teachers in the sixteen schools with black student enrollments in the 11 to 90 percent range and 17 percent of the black teachers in the eighteen schools with black enrollments of 10 percent or less. Thus, most of the black teachers are concentrated in the black schools but there is a sprinkling of black teachers throughout the system.

In the junior high schools and senior high schools, where the percentage of black teachers is smaller than in the elementary schools, it appears that it has been easier to achieve a somewhat more equitable balance because the schools themselves have a better student racial balance. This is indicated in Tables 21 and 22. However, even here there are rather marked deficiencies.

TABLE 21
BLACK STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

| Junior High School | Black Enrollment (Percent) | Black Teachers (Percent) |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Polk | 88 | 55 |
| Adams | 76 | 44 |
| Jefferson | 66 | 27 |
| Madison | 55 | 25 |
| Monroe | 27 | 15 |
| Jackson | 17 | 16 |
| Van Buren | 14 | 10 |
| Harrison | 2 | 6 |

Source: Durant Community Schools, op. cit., pp. 2,4.

TABLE 22
BLACK STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

| Senior High School | Black Enrollment (Percent) | Black Teachers (Percent) |
|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Roosevelt | 64 | 19 |
| Washington | 49 | 20 |
| Taft | 26 | 13 |
| Lincoln | 25 | 12 |

Source: Durant Community Schools, op. cit., pp. 2,4.

Black Criticism of the
Durant School System

The educational policies of the Durant Board of Education have been a source of controversy for a number of years. Black spokesmen maintain that the policies supported by the Board of Education are not providing equitable education for black children. Black leaders feel that black children attend schools that for all practical purposes are segregated institutions and that the board is not actively committed to a policy of integrated education. Black spokesmen maintain that these segregated schools are not equivalent to schools in white areas in terms of physical conditions or in terms of levels of instruction. They maintain that school buildings in black areas are older than those serving white areas and are not maintained properly. Classrooms are overcrowded and teachers do not have adequate professional preparation. Those whites who do teach in these schools, say black leaders, often are prejudiced or at least unsympathetic to the problems and aspirations of black students. Counselors tend to view blacks as fitted only for vocational courses and discourage black students from enrolling in college preparatory courses. Blacks complain that black teachers are discriminated against when promotions are involved. Black spokesmen also feel that the close ties between the Hobbs' Foundation and the Board of

Education sometimes are detrimental to the provision of quality education for black children. Funds are used, they say, for facilities for special educational programs that might better have been devoted to the basic instructional program.

Durant Board of Education

There is a fairly prevalent feeling in Durant that the Board of Education has long tended to represent "blue stocking" interests. Board members are usually business or professional men or industrial executives. They are normally high status persons who would never consider becoming involved in local partisan politics but are proud to serve on this prestigious board.

For several years, the black community had an effective spokesman on the Durant Board of Education in the person of black physician, Alexander Waldron. Serving from 1963 to 1966, Waldron aggressively criticized the educational orientation of the board which he felt failed to recognize the special needs of black children and the severe handicaps that hamper their educational progress.

Dr. Waldron, who died quite suddenly in 1966, was succeeded by another black physician, Dr. Kingston who was appointed to fill our Dr. Waldron's term of office. To the chagrin of the black community, Dr. Kingston tends to espouse views that are more in keeping with the

traditional philosophy of the Board of Education. He believes his primary obligation is to represent the entire community and he rarely attempts to act as a special spokesman for the black community.²

In 1968 the League of Women Voters issued a report summarizing a two-year study of Durant public schools conducted by the league. The study which concentrated on the elementary grades made a number of critical comments about the school system. These included:

School achievement scores . . . of children in Durant in basic subjects of reading and mathematics is low in comparison with other systems in the nation.

Many thousands of children attend schools in Durant under adverse conditions--poorly prepared teaching staff, inadequate program services and antiquated buildings.

Many children whose needs for expert teaching are greatest are being taught by the least qualified teachers.

In finance drives, the Durant Board of Education has emphasized economy rather than the needs of children.

The report also noted the need to provide the public with more information about programs and finances. This criticism reflected the rather widespread concern among some Durant citizens that the Hobbs' Foundation which sponsors and underwrites many special educational programs is, in effect, running the school system. The report noted:

²Interview with Dr. Kingston, March 31, 1971.

All monies to which the Durant School District takes title became public monies, no matter from what source they derive. Whether they come from local taxes, state or federal aid or gifts from donors, they must be budgeted, accounted and audited in accordance with comprehensive, consistent procedures.

The report also recommended that the board adopt a uniform standard or policy in regard to the disciplining of children. It summed up its findings by concluding that quality education was not generally available to Durant students.³

The Board of Education responded to the league report by calling it generally inaccurate and misleading. However, at a panel discussion sponsored by the Durant Federation of Teachers, panelists gave their approval to the report and indicated that their only reservation was that the report didn't go far enough in its criticisms and recommendations. Black leader and panelist, Dr. Albert Rodman, psychology professor at the community college complimented the League of Women Voters saying "you had the nerve to stand up and say that something is stinking in Denmark." Rev. John Koeniger of the Unitarian Church said that he felt the present school board could not provide the requisite leadership. He noted that the board was not really representative of all segments in the community since it was made up of professional and managerial people who

³League of Women Voters. Study of Durant Public Schools (Durant, League of Women Voters, 1968), pp. 8, 9, 10, 13, 14.

were conservative and had a "vested interest in the status quo."⁴

Black Protest Action

Following the assassination of Martin Luther King, black leaders and the black community began to react in a more aggressive fashion in their criticisms of problem areas. In education, Durant's black leaders asked that immediate attention be given to critical areas with particular emphasis on increasing the number of black supervisors and counselors in the school system. This new aggressiveness was also manifested in a number of other ways. White students enrolled in mixed schools complained that they were being harassed by black students.⁵ Several major outbreaks of violence requiring the assistance of the police department occurred in the schools. Washington High was closed and tear gas was required to break up a disturbance at Roosevelt High School. Reacting to the violence, a group of conservative white parents presented school officials with a series of demands related to discipline and promotional policies that was in essence an indictment of the black community.⁶

⁴D.J., October 11, 1968.

⁵D.J., February 6, 7, 1968.

⁶D.J., April 5, 8, 1968.

The disturbances had hardly been settled at Washington and Roosevelt when they broke out at Taft High School and law enforcement officials and a black minister were called in. The minister succeeded in getting the black students to return to class.⁷ Criticism of the Durant school administration became more widespread. Black critics were joined by whites who protested against the alleged lack of order in the schools. Dr. Evans, superintendent of schools, responded by saying that he intended to maintain order but added: "Society cannot pass on to the schools all of the problems of society."⁸

A few weeks after these outbreaks, the second annual Community Relations Institute sponsored by the Hobbs' Foundation was held. The program featured a number of discussion groups in which ghetto blacks participated. Once again blacks reiterated their criticisms regarding the lack of adequate counseling for black youths in the school system and stressed the need for specialized training programs for the student not planning to attend college. Blacks also expressed the need in schools for discussions devoted to interracial problem areas.

The following year, on the first anniversary of the King assassination, trouble broke out again in Durant's

⁷D.J., April 25, 1968.

⁸D.J., April 25, 1968.

schools. Police used tear gas to break up groups of students in areas adjacent to Roosevelt High and parents were called to proctor the halls at Roosevelt and Washington.⁹ Later in the month, trouble developed at Taft High. Black student demands included more black counselors; more black history books; an end to police intervention in school disturbances; and equal disciplinary treatment of black and white students.¹⁰

During this period the state Civil Rights Commission heard a series of complaints from the Lancer Club, a group of young activists, dedicated to improving the conditions of the black man in Durant. In discussing education, the Lancers complained that the textbooks used in the Durant schools did not properly represent the black man's role in history. They also noted that black students were more apt to be punished for misconduct than were white students. Club spokesmen also complained that school counselors "deliberately steer Negro youths away from college preparatory courses and discourage them from taking those courses which would challenge them to develop their minds."¹¹

⁹D.J., April 3, 4, 5, 1969.

¹⁰D.J., April 23, 1969.

¹¹D.J., March 17, 1968.

The director of the Durant office of the state Civil Rights Commission, Mrs. Kay Brenton, spoke at a public forum shortly after this regarding problems in the black community. She noted that because of de facto segregation most black students and teachers were concentrated in eleven schools. She pointed out that a number of these schools were not in good physical condition. She reiterated the complaint that there were few black administrators and counselors in the school system. Mrs. Brenton also noted that black students maintained that they were steered into the "general course" rather than into the college preparatory course. She said that the "general course" did not even adequately prepare a student for apprenticeship programs in the skilled trades. She also noted that students complained about discipline in the schools, maintaining that it was based on white, middle-class standards and values.¹²

In 1969, Black students at Durant Junior College demanded that more black students be given positions on the school newspaper; that more black history courses be offered; and that more black instructors and counselors be appointed. There were also complaints that there were not enough blacks in the college choir and that not enough blacks were chosen as choir soloists. Apparently feeling

¹²D.J., April 30, 1968.

that their demands were not receiving an adequate hearing from the college administration, a group of about forty students from the college "Black Union" ravaged Durant's Art Center where they destroyed furnishings and art objects valued at \$4,000. It appeared that the Art Center was selected because there had been a conflict with the Fine Arts Department over the content of some courses. The students were later apprehended, tried and fined.¹³

In 1969, at a forum held under the auspices of a black church, a black teacher told the audience: "Feel free to go into the schools. You're paying for them." He told parents that they should make certain that black children who were capable of taking college preparatory work were enrolled in the appropriate courses. He also criticized the placement tests used in the school system noting that these utilized materials that were more familiar to the middle-class, white child than to the ghetto, black child.¹⁴

In October, 1969, the members of the Durant Board of Education were offended when the Durant Journal, long considered by many to be the spokesman for business and industrial interests in the community, published an editorial calling on the Board of Education to open its

¹³D.J., May 2, 1969; January 10, March 3, 1971.

¹⁴D.J., August 25, 1969.

private discussion meetings to the public. The editorial noted: "Under the board's present system the public is justified if it concludes that what it's permitted to see at regular board meetings is for the most part mere rubber-stamping of policies forged in private."

In reference to the board's response to the League of Women Voter's study of education, the editorial noted:

It is rather ironic that the board discussed its reply to the League of Women Voters in a private meeting. Rather than face-to-face discussion, the board put together a position justifying the present system and dispatched it via the U.S. mail.

The editorial concluded:

Refusal by a school board to permit the public to hear its dialogue is, in fact, fostering public ignorance, which results in suspicion and misunderstanding. And promoting ignorance is hardly a laudable goal of any educational endeavor.¹⁵

Renewed School Disturbances

Starting in November, 1970, a series of disruptions took place at Lincoln High School culminating on November 24 in a number of skirmishes between groups of black and white students.¹⁶ The public, the press, students and school officials were all alarmed at the violence. It was considered to be the worst disruption in the history of the Durant school system.

¹⁵D.J., October 11, 1969.

¹⁶D.J., November 25, 1970.

Black students had been complaining for some time about the school. They were concerned about the lack of black-related materials in the instructional program but their major complaint was in regard to the hostility they felt was manifested toward blacks by both white teachers and white students.

Following the incidents that occurred on November 24th, police were assigned to the school but there was no further violence and the school recessed for the Thanksgiving break. When Lincoln High reopened on November 30th, strict security measures were in force and remained in force until December 18th.

Black councilmen complained about the use of police in the disturbance at Lincoln. Councilman Bill Eaton maintained that the Board of Education was responsible for creating the problems in the schools and that when these problems got out of hand and erupted into violence, the board abrogated its responsibilities and called the Durant police. Eaton complained that the police were acting as a kind of gestapo for the school administration and he asked the council to undertake an investigation of school problems. Black Councilman Floyd Tipton echoed these sentiments. Tipton said the police should be called to "quell the violence" but that they should not be used to patrol the schools. This he felt should be done by parents. Tipton noted that the administration had forbidden parents

to enter the school building. "I think this is totally wrong," he said.

Any time the parents are willing to volunteer to come into the schools, they should be welcome. It is their school, the administration is paid by their tax dollars, and most important, these are their young people in the schools that are creating the disturbance.¹⁷

However, on December 17th, approximately one hundred Durant police officers arrived at Lincoln and were deployed in every classroom where they proceeded to search the students. Twenty black students who were considered to be ring-leaders were served with subpoenas to appear before a citizens grand jury. Black students maintained that the search procedure had been directed primarily at them.¹⁸

Civil Rights Commission Investigation

A black mother had requested assistance in the school controversy from the state Civil Rights Commission and the commission during December and January conducted a series of meetings and interviews at Lincoln. The report of the Civil Rights Commission aroused a good deal of controversy when it was released. It began by pointing out that much of the racial friction and antipathy was based

¹⁷D.J., December 1, 1970.

¹⁸D.J., December 18, 1970.

on the fact that "polarization on the basis of race exists within the student and adult community of Lincoln Community High School."¹⁹ The report noted that there was little interaction or communication between white and black students. White students, parents and teachers blamed black students for being the physical aggressors in incidents between blacks and whites. Black students felt that both white teachers and white students were increasingly hostile toward them. The parents and students of both races felt that discipline was a major problem. White students felt that school officials were afraid to punish black students. Black students felt that they are more severely punished than white students for similar infractions.

The report recommended greater student participation in locating problem areas and recommending solutions. It also recommended student dialogue and seminar sessions to increase understanding and awareness between black and white students. The report recommended that teachers with skills and sensitivity in human relations be hired to teach at Lincoln. In addition, it recommended that in-service programs directed at increasing racial understanding be undertaken and it called on the Durant school system

¹⁹Civil Rights Commission, Durant Lincoln Community High School: A Report of Fact Finding (Civil Rights Commission, 1971), p. 14.

to announce its expectation that teachers maintain a professional and unbiased attitude in all their relationships with parents and children. The report recommended increased parental involvement in the operation of the schools. It criticized the disciplinary policy of the schools and recommended a parent or parent-student review board.

The Durant Board of Education maintained an ambivalent attitude toward the report. Mr. Don Klinger, president of the board, admitted that there were problems at Lincoln High School but maintained that the report had erred in some of its conclusions.²⁰ The principal of Lincoln, noting the criticism leveled at his administration for not fostering communications between blacks and whites, maintained that dialogue groups had been formed in the past but had dissolved because of lack of interest and participation. However, the report met with the approval of the executive director of the Urban League, Martin Brown, who said: "The criticisms just enforce what we and some other community groups have been saying all along." Mrs. Mary Digby, Durant realtor and president of the conservative "Save Our Schools" (SOS) group called the report "unfair, biased and racially bigoted."²¹

²⁰D.J., January 28, 1971.

²¹D.J., January 27, 1971.

Mrs. Digby's group of conservative whites had sent a telegram to the governor earlier in the month asking him to guarantee Lincoln High parents "the right to send children to school for an education and not have their lives and safety threatened." The governor replied that he felt these situations were best handled at a local level and that he had been informed that the community and the school system were addressing themselves to the problem. Mrs. Digby characterized the governor's answer as "in the usual manner of a politician."²² The SOS dispatched a second telegram to the governor which said in part "while subversive groups play at revolution, we, the people, are the victims! Must every generation of students be sacrificed while elected officials appease, and politicians dance to the tune of a few more votes?"²³

Lincoln High Human Relations Commission Controversy

In January, it was proposed that a school Human Relations Commission with black and white parents as participants should be formed. The selection of the black participants for this commission resulted in a great deal of controversy. A meeting was called for the purpose of electing representatives. At the meeting, black parents

²²D.J., January 11, 1971.

²³D.J., January 27, 1971.

asked school representatives to grant to the new Human Relations Commission the authority to review school administrative decisions at Lincoln High. When this request was rejected, many blacks left the meeting. Black leaders said that there had been a prior agreement among blacks to stage a walk-out if their demands were not met. However, some blacks who did not know about the projected walk-out remained and elected a slate of representatives to the Human Relations Commission. Black leaders considered this to be a "cop out" and refused to recognize these delegates as the legitimate representatives of black parents. They called a meeting at which a new slate of officers for the school's Human Relations Commission was elected. Those blacks who had been elected at the earlier meeting and who were not sanctioned by the black community were barred from this meeting. A petition calling for the removal of the top administrative leaders at Lincoln High was also drafted by the seven hundred parents in attendance at this meeting who styled themselves as "Black Students and Parents for Justice in Our Public Schools." James Homes of the NAACP and Martin Brown of the Urban League indicated that they supported these demands.²⁴

That the issue was tending to polarize the community was indicated by the fact that only one caucasian,

²⁴D.J., November 25, 1970.

Elwood Carson, of the Urban League was allowed to attend the meeting of black parents. Polarization was also indicated by the fact that the next meeting of the Durant Board of Education was attended by a large group of white parents in a gesture of support for the board's policies. At this meeting, the board was presented with a petition signed by 1,800 persons indicating support of the school administration at Lincoln High.²⁵

White parents who might have been expected to show some sympathy for the black position began to assume a more rigid stance. Thus, the chairman of the Durant Human Relations Commission who was the parent of a child attending Lincoln complained about "outside agitation" that was being used to "stir up" black parents.²⁶

This reference by whites to "outside agitators" occurred so often that the Urban League saw fit to respond in the following way:

It is inaccurate for school officials to refer to Urban League staff members as outsiders. When they are working at the request of involved community members, they are anything but outsiders. It is believed that black students were facing subtle and open racism on the part of white students and administration. Past experience with similar situations has shown that the administration approach resulted

²⁵D.J., December 3, 1970.

²⁶D.J., November 29, 1970.

in little change in the sources of problems--
they only relieved symptoms.²⁷

The Urban League official went on to point out that in this case the Urban League was only following out the mandate of its national organization--to work for institutional change where equal opportunity did not exist.

At first, school officials refused to recognize the new slate of black representatives. Negotiations dragged on between school officials and leaders of the black community regarding which set of black delegates was to serve as representatives of the black community on the Lincoln High Human Relations Commission. At a meeting of blacks, called to discuss the situation, black students upbraided their parents for not being more aggressive in their dealings with school officials. They accused their parents of "selling out to the man." One student leader in an impassioned speech said "students are ready to go back to that school and fight [and] die if conditions don't change."²⁸ Other student speakers echoed these sentiments and received prolonged applause from the student segment of the audience.

However, school administrative officials finally agreed to hold another election for black representatives

²⁷D.J., November 29, 1970.

²⁸D.J., December 4, 1970.

and an almost completely new slate of delegates, more activist in sentiment, was selected.²⁹

Continuing Black Criticism
of Educational Policies

That there was still much unhappiness about school policies was indicated in March when Richard Cranston of the "Citizens Coalition for Quality Education" asked State Representative Wilson Robertson to include Durant in his proposed investigation of urban education. Cranston noted that two studies, one by the League of Women Voters and one by the state Civil Rights Commission, had been critical of the Durant school system. But, said Cranston, "we want a legislative investigation because they (school officials) have laughed off the league--they can say they're just a bunch of idle women; and people believe the CRC always favors blacks anyway. They won't be able to dismiss the legislature in the same way." Representative Robertson replied to the request by indicating that he was sympathetic to Durant's problems but felt that broadening the scope of his investigation would diminish its effectiveness.³⁰

²⁹D.J., February 1, 1971.

³⁰D.J., March 30, 1971.

With the election to the board in April 1971 of Mrs. Virginia Houston,³¹ who was a forthright critic of the board and who had served as president of the League of Women Voters when its critical study had been undertaken, it appeared that blacks might be able to hope for more vocal representation, if not for more constructive action regarding educational problems of concern to the black community.

Black Leaders View the
Issue-Area of Education

Black leaders when interviewed mentioned a number of deficiencies in the school system which they felt affected the performance of black students. It was noted that simply hiring more black teachers for the system was not necessarily a progressive step if the black teachers had not received adequate training. A related complaint was that the school administration refused to provide information on teacher's qualifications.

It was said that the school programs were good in some areas--adult education--but deficient in other areas--basic instructional program in the elementary grades. There were complaints that white teachers in predominantly black schools made no attempt to know or understand the

³¹D.J., April 6, 1971.

black subculture and therefore had great difficulty relating to black students.

Blacks believe that the Durant Board of Education represents the "white establishment." It was noted that the board arrives at decisions in closed meetings and then reaffirms these decisions in their public meetings. Blacks maintain that in order to secure "safe" candidates for the board, outgoing board members resign before their term expires and handpicked successors are appointed by the board to fill the unexpired term. The new appointee then runs for office at the next election as an experienced incumbent. Blacks also feel that elections for the school board are intentionally held at special elections that will attract little voter interest or concern. Blacks say that the black member of the board does not work aggressively enough to promote better education for black children. Some blacks feel his candidacy was promoted by the "white establishment" because he was expected to assume a complacent role. Blacks are critical of the close ties between the Board of Education and the Hobbs' Foundation and some believe that the foundation is in effect running the educational program in Durant. As an indication of the power of the school board, it was noted that no business concern would underwrite the report of the League of Women Voters that was critical of the school system although

such funding is frequently done in many communities as a public relations gesture.

Blacks maintain that few black teachers are promoted to supervisory positions that carry real decision-making responsibility. They complain that white counselors tend to channel blacks away from college preparatory courses and into general courses that do not even prepare students for the apprenticeship programs in the skilled trades. Black leaders also complain about school discipline which they believe is enforced more vigorously against black students than against white students.

Black leaders are critical of some black employees of the Board of Education for not being more militant in protesting inadequacies that affect blacks. However, not all blacks employed by the school system are apologists for the system. Although they tend to be less critical of the education system than many other blacks, they recognize that there are deficiencies. Black apologists for the system believe that at least some of the black criticisms are unfair. They maintain that inadequately prepared teachers are being eliminated (in this regard they point out that school administrators are criticized by black leaders for hiring inadequately prepared black teachers but that when these teachers are released the action may activate black protest organizations). Apologists note that effective integration of the school system

is hampered by the constantly shifting character of the population in a number of the neighborhoods. To those who criticize the moderate attitude of the black member of the school board, his rejoinder is that he believes he must establish his status as a responsible representative of the entire community before he can serve as a successful pleader for black needs.

The black community because of its major power resource--the black vote--may possess some power potential for affecting decision-making in this issue-area. It is entirely conceivable that in the future the black community in combination with other power loci--perhaps the UAW, the Democratic Party, the Durant Federation of Teachers or the Durant churches--may be able to muster enough strength to effect the changes it desires. To do so would probably necessitate doing a more effective job in mobilizing the black voter to turn out for the special Board of Education elections. The voter turnout in support of Mrs. Virginia Houston--a black critic of school board policies who received more votes in a recent election than any other candidate--indicates that such voter support can be activated.

Limited Success in Implementing Black Goals

However, the achievements of black leaders in the issue-area of education appear to have been limited.

Blacks have been unsuccessful in implementing many of their goals that relate to upgrading the instructional programs and improving the physical facilities that serve predominantly black schools. Nor does it appear that either the school board or the school administration is particularly receptive to suggestions for change that originate in the black community. While school administrative officials point to the increasing percentage of black teachers in the system, there are still relatively few blacks holding responsible positions.

In this issue-area, as in the issue-area of human relations, black leadership has been largely powerless to effect significant changes. Black leaders appear to lack the power that would provide access to importance centers of decision-making.

CHAPTER IX

POLICE-BLACK COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The area of police-black community relations is one that is of constant concern to the leaders of the black community in Durant. Black citizens feel that they are frequently subjected to rude and abusive behavior on the part of the police and that they are on occasion treated in a brutal fashion. They complain that they are harassed by police when police surveillance is not required while they often find it difficult to obtain police assistance when there is a real emergency. The black community maintains that it is virtually unrepresented on the police force. There are only a handful of black officers on the force due to the fact, say black leaders, that black officers find it virtually impossible to earn promotions.

Early History of Black Complaints

Complaints of police brutality were fairly frequent during the late fifties and early sixties and the white commissioner of the predominantly black third ward,

George Hamilton, noted that he had been protesting about these incidents since 1950 "but somehow the complaints get lost in the shuffle."¹ In October, 1958, after a young girl had been brutally beaten by police, blacks began to picket the city hall.² A committee was appointed by the Durant City Commission to investigate the matter but exonerated the police department. Commissioner Hamilton proposed that a lay committee be established to hear citizen complaints but this proposal was voted down.³

In 1959 the third ward elected Roger Milton, the first black man to serve on the City Commission, as its representative. Milton a relatively mild-mannered man soon found himself making frequent complaints about the over-zealous activity of police officers.⁴

Officers of the NAACP were also lodging frequent complaints about police brutality in the early sixties. Robert Terhune, president of the NAACP, urged that Durant policemen receive training in human relations. He said that the police department has asked for "more cooperation from the Negro community" but noted that policemen "display blatant discourtesy when answering complaints made by

¹D.J., September 23, 1958.

²D.J., September 23, 1958.

³D.J., October 7, 21, 1958.

⁴D.J., December 29, 1959; January 5, 12, 1960.

Negroes." He said that he was not condemning the entire police force but the department "has evidently attracted some sick or ignorant types." He asked that the "undesireables" be "purged." Terhune said that if the influential citizens were unable to stop police brutality it would be necessary to take corrective action. He said: "If . . . the citizenry of Durant wishes the stigma of open protests, demonstrations, picketing and boycotting in order that all its citizens may realize their constitutional rights, then this organization stands ready to spearhead them."⁵ Howard Hobart of the NAACP also lodged a complaint saying "as Negroes, we are beginning to wonder if we need protection from the people who are hired to protect us."⁶

Efforts to Improve Police-Black Community Relations

During the middle sixties law enforcement officials, particularly County Prosecutor Larson, made attempts to improve relations between the police and the black community. A meeting of black clergymen and law officials was held and Larson called for improved communications between the two groups. Larson noted the need to

⁵D.J., June 7, 1963.

⁶D.J., December 10, 1963.

investigate individual charges of police brutality without delay so that resentment and ill will would not fester and grow.⁷

During this period, the Urban League was granted permission to offer a program on human relations to Durant police officers and biracial conferences between black leaders and police officials were initiated. The director of the Urban League indicated that he felt that these positive steps might improve relations between the police and the black community.⁸

A new police chief, Lawrence Roberts, was appointed and seemed genuinely concerned about black rights. Blacks came to recognize that he had some sympathy for their problems but felt that he was constrained from taking affirmative action by the prevalence of bigotry among his subordinates and among his superiors.

Chief Roberts admitted that there was a need for more black policemen on the force and indicated that he would try to recruit black officers. At one time, there had been twelve black patrolmen on the force but having encountered difficulty in achieving promotions, they accepted positions as plant protection officers when Universal Motors opened up this area to blacks.⁹

⁷D.J., August 27, 1964.

⁸D.J., January 3, 1965.

⁹D.J., April 8, 1965.

Although some whites in Durant during the middle sixties were becoming more sympathetic to black complaints about police harassment this did not appear to include Durant's first citizen, R. S. Hobbs. Mr. Hobbs, in an interview said that he felt allegations of police brutality were "a lot of baloney." He said "police have to arrest some tough actors who want to get into fights and officers often risk their lives . . . Police don't go out to beat up somebody."¹⁰

Civil Disturbances

In July 1967, a series of disorders broke out in the predominantly black near north side of Durant. Gangs of black youths roamed the streets taunting whites, breaking windows and looting stores. The Durant Fire Department answered forty fire alarms--fourteen of them in connection with fire bombing. During the course of the rioting, police arrested scores of young blacks. Black Mayor Roger Milton had been warned that there might be trouble and had scheduled a meeting with other black leaders. However, the disturbances broke out while the meeting was still in progress.¹¹

¹⁰D.J., February 15, 1966.

¹¹D.J., July 25, 1967.

Milton, along with other black leaders, went into the streets to assist the police in quelling the disturbances. Milton confronted some of the groups and was said to have taken part in several arrests and in a number of cases talked groups into dispersing. Shortly before dawn he asked the governor to declare a state of emergency in Durant.¹²

Milton later complimented the police for the able way in which they performed. He said that he felt the disturbances were the manifestation of petty lawlessness but were also a manifestation of the anger at the city's "power structure" and its lack of accomplishment in dealing with the problems of the city. In particular he noted the lack of recreational facilities, jobs for young people and decent housing.¹³

Bill Newton, president of the activist Lancer Club, was more critical of the police. Newton, who often served as a kind of spokesman for ghetto youths, maintained that over-reaction by police to some youthful exuberance had probably precipitated the riot. Newton and the young men who were in his group also expressed anger at the leaders of black organizations and at the white community for failing to assist young blacks who were experiencing

¹²D.J., July 25, 1967.

¹³D.J., July 25, 1967.

difficulty in finding jobs. One member of Newton's group said "these so-called leaders don't know whats going on. They never come down here. Our people want jobs. My three brothers have looked everywhere for work but they can't get a job."¹⁴ A young black reporter, who was the son of a community leader, also commented on the hostility that ghetto blacks exhibited during the crisis toward middle-class blacks.

Attempts at Arbitration

On the afternoon following the disturbances, a series of meetings were held. Attending the first meeting were city officials, community leaders and a large group of black youths. At this meeting it was proposed that the city release the black youths who had been arrested as a result of the previous night's rioting. Prosecuting Attorney Larson, at first refused but after some thought decided to do so, provided the young men agreed to go back in the streets and advise other blacks to "cool it." Larson knew that the agreement was risky but his faith was justified when the one hundred and two young men who were released did as they had promised. They went to potential trouble spots and calmed people down; they traveled in sound trucks requesting everyone to "cool it;" and some

¹⁴D.J., July 26, 1967.

appeared with adults on radio and television programs and requested young people to cooperate with the authorities. The calculated risk of releasing the prisoners worked because on subsequent evenings there was much less activity and although further arrests were made none of the original group of prisoners were caught breaking the law.

Larson said that he believed he could trust the integrity of the black youths if he gave them a chance. However, he told them that it was a "one-shot deal." If they were caught violating the law again, they would be subjected to the full weight of the law. Larson believed that his decision not only saved the city from further violence but that it "built a bridge" across the gap between the black community and the police. He said "we showed the Negro . . . that the law isn't only "Whitey's" law, but is everyone's law--and that it does have compassion." Larson believed that the agreement solved more than the "immediate problem of protecting lives and property." "Through it we sought to establish something permanent in order that the Negro could trust us and have confidence in us so that when we say to him in the future that this is the way the law is, he knows it applies equally to him as well as to anyone else." They will know, Larson said, that the law is not only "Whitey's way of doing things."¹⁵

¹⁵D.J., August 1, 1967.

There was a good deal of criticism of Larson's decision to release the prisoners. "Issuing an invitation to engage in lawlessness" was the way some described it.¹⁶ However after summarizing the pros and cons of the decision to release the prisoners the Durant Journal concluded "there is no argument that Durant rests easier than it did last week, and Durant also rests easier than Detroit."¹⁷

Following the meeting between Larson and black youths a second meeting was held which included leaders of the black and white communities. John Marsh of the Urban League listed the problem areas that were irritating the city's black residents. He concluded by saying "we don't want to threaten but the time is growing short." He then asked for a commitment to action from civic leaders. Much of the discussion centered on the lack of jobs for young blacks and a commitment was obtained from Universal Motors' executives and Hobbs Foundation executives to provide additional jobs. Congressman Reigle who attended the meeting called on local business and industrial leaders to find additional jobs for black youths. Reigle said that Durant was "on the verge of an explosive situation" and

¹⁶D.J., July 27, 1967.

¹⁷D.J., August 1, 1967.

that it would be necessary to spend both time and money to correct abuses and "head off a worse situation."¹⁸

There soon was evidence that at least some community leaders in Durant were sincere in their offers to provide jobs for young blacks for approximately one hundred job offers were received during the next few days.¹⁹

On the thirty-first of July, the governor cancelled the "State of Emergency" he had declared at the request of Mayor Milton.²⁰ The story of the Durant riot was closed. The community had been shocked into an awareness of the discontent felt by many of its blacks and there had been some attempts to alleviate some of the conditions. Unfortunately, the concessions made by the white community were not fundamental enough to alleviate the basic problem.

Continuing Black Criticism of the Police Department

In 1968, representatives of the state Civil Rights Commission spent several hours with the youthful activists of the Lancer Club. Club members were critical of the "establishment" in Durant and indicated that they included black leaders in their indictment. The young men criticized almost every segment of the community including the

¹⁸D.J., July 26, 1967.

¹⁹D.J., July 29, 1967.

²⁰D.J., July 31, 1967.

news media, clergy, established Negro groups and even Negro Mayor Roger Milton. The Durant Police Department received particular attention. Robert Parsons, club president, said that Police Chief Lawrence Roberts,

is a good man and is really trying to do the right thing. But he hasn't been able to get the message across to the cop on the beat, and that can mean trouble. We don't intend to start any trouble and I don't think any other Negroes want to start any trouble. But if a single spark is set off by overly-aggressive police action, trouble could come, and once it came it wouldn't end.²¹

In April 1968, stirred by the death of Martin Luther King, Albert Hilton president of the NAACP, backed by a number of leaders of civil rights organizations presented a series of demands at a press conference. Two of the demands related to police-black community relations. These were (1) "establishment of a civilian review board for the police department" or the "creation of the post of civilian commissioner of police," (2) "promotion of Negroes in all phases of police work, including immediate appointment of Negroes as detectives." Hilton explained the demands by saying, "we are trying to direct grief into constructive channels rather than in sporadic misbehavior in the streets."²²

²¹D.J., March 17, 1968.

²²D.J., April 6, 1968.

The Durant Police Department began to initiate some programs to promote greater rapport with the black community but there were still complaints of police brutality and in June, 1968, the NAACP was given permission to station observers in police headquarters on weekends. The program was initiated by the NAACP but about twenty-five Durant clergymen later joined the program and the NAACP dropped out. The observers jotted down information as each prisoner arrived including the time of arrival, condition and conduct of prisoners and force used by the police. The effectiveness of the program was attested to by the fact that there was a marked decline during this period of complaints of police brutality.²³

The Wallace Rally

A rather unpleasant situation developed during the 1968 political campaign when presidential aspirant George Wallace visited Durant. The Wallace rally was picketed by blacks and a confrontation of sorts took place between the Durant police--a number of whom had shown some sympathy with Wallace's candidacy--and some black youngsters. Eight black youths were picked up by the police including Marvin Milton, the fifteen year old son of the mayor. Blacks claimed that police treated several of the youngsters in

²³D.J., July 4; October 27, 1968.

brutal fashion and maintained that at least some of those who were arrested were not guilty of any illegal activity. The youths were not charged and were released in the custody of their parents. Following the incident at the rally, the Greater Durant Committee on Freedom and Law Enforcement--an organization created to strengthen understanding and rapport between law enforcement authorities and the black community--met with Police Chief Roberts and asked for an investigation of police conduct and that members of the committee be allowed to participate as observers. Rev. Robinson, one of the committee, said:

Chief Roberts was sympathetic to our request but said that it would have to be cleared with the City Manager. Klein (the City Manager) said he would consider the matter but informed us two days later that he would not permit an investigation of the type we requested.

This refusal brought forth the resignations of seven of the committee including the heads of the Urban League, NAACP and the regional office of the state Civil Rights Commission leaving only law enforcement officials, the superintendent of schools and the executive director of the Human Relations Commission on the committee. Spokesman for those who resigned said "we believe we have been put in the position of being used as patsies by the police department." Those resigning did not blame Chief Roberts. They noted that Roberts "is one of the best police chiefs in the county and is sympathetic to our view of the

problem. But he is a prisoner of the system and can't do things without clearing them with the city manager."²⁴

Mrs. Kay Brenton, director of the Durant office of the state Civil Rights Commission, said that the committee had the potential to improve relations between law enforcement officials and citizens of the community. "But to realize that potential it was essential that there be good faith on both sides of the table. Many of us do not believe we have always seen good faith from officials." She went on to say that there "must be effective machinery for objective investigations of citizen complaints."²⁵

An additional dimension to the controversy occurred when Mayor Milton, through his attorney, requested that the policeman who had arrested his son be required to take a lie detector test. However, City Manager Klein, rejected the request.²⁶

Shortly after this, Milton revealed that he did not intend to run for a second term as mayor but would seek his sixth term as a city commissioner. The mayor conceded that the arrests at the Wallace rally, including that of his son, had produced some opposition to his candidacy. He

²⁴D.J., October 10, 1968.

²⁵D.J., October 11, 1968.

²⁶D.J., October 11, 1968.

noted that some other candidates for public office had "felt under pressure"²⁷ not to support him.

The Durant Journal had been critical of what it termed the "protective parent" reaction of Milton but in an editorial the paper called on him to reconsider his decision not to run for the office of mayor again. The Journal noted that Milton "holding office through a period of civil disorder and racial strife without precedent in U.S. history . . . was a conscious and noticeable force for rapprochement between the races," and that "he had won respect for his representation of his city."²⁸

In this controversy, black leaders appeared to be able to muster little support for their position. The resignations of black leaders from the committee had little or no impact and the black mayor's position on the issue made him so politically vulnerable that he decided not to run for office again. It was clear that blacks without support from other loci of power had in this situation only limited power resources.

NAACP Dinner

Shortly after this, Rev. James Groppi, white, militant, civil rights priest spoke at the fiftieth anniversary dinner of the Durant NAACP. Before beginning his

²⁷Detroit Free Press, October 14, 1968.

²⁸D.J., October 15, 1968.

speech, Father Groppi asked: "Is it true the intelligence department of the police is here?" Three men who were setting at a table in the center of the room said "yes." "Why are you here? Do you represent the police department?" Father Groppi asked. One answered emphatically "no!" The officer went on to say that they were interested in what Father Groppi had to say. Father Groppi noted that the policemen had taken down the names of all those who had been introduced during the dinner and he asked the policemen to leave. When they didn't do so, he said "I refuse to continue until the police department leaves." The three policemen got up and left. The black audience stood up and applauded. Father Groppi then went on to attack the courts, merchants who cheat blacks, the educational system, the country's power structure and the churches. At the end of his talk, Father Groppi received a second standing ovation.²⁹ Black leaders maintain that the type of over-zealous police surveillance evidenced in this incident occurs frequently in Durant and they view its occurrence with great resentment.

Continuing Black Complaints of Police Brutality

Late in 1968, a meeting devoted to police-community relations was held in a Durant church. Lieutenant Brinton

²⁹D.J., October 21, 1968.

of the Durant Police Department who was in charge of community relations said: "Of course there's some police brutality but basically we have a good police department." However, Albert Hilton of the NAACP described a number of instances of flagrant brutality and Brinton agreed that "it does happen" and that it is often directed at black people.³⁰

There was also evidence that, despite the good intentions of police administrators, incidents of police brutality were continuing to occur for there were frequent complaints including several from prominent people who had witnessed such incidents. Dick Malone, a special education teacher told the City Commission that he saw the police repeatedly strike a prisoner who was making no attempt to resist. Malone said that when he asked for the policeman's badge number from another officer, he was threatened with arrest and a beating. Malone said that it was almost impossible to follow the procedures set up for lodging a complaint and when he insisted on action, the police furnished a report of the incident which was filled with half-truths. Regarding the report, he said, "it was so outrageous that I seriously wonder if the police can conduct an internal investigation."³¹

³⁰D.J., December 9, 1968.

³¹D.J., August 12, 1969.

In spite of the apparent goodwill of some police administrators it did appear that the procedures for registering complaints were unsatisfactory. Some blacks maintained that the chief of police was, in fact, a captive of the system and was unable to initiate changes because of the intransigence of the City Commission and because of resistance within the police department itself.

Selection of Vice Squad Head

In August, 1969, Chief Roberts complained that he was not consulted when the new head of the vice squad was appointed. It was said that black commissioners had exerted pressure on the city manager to have a specific officer selected. There were protests from other commissioners and by the Durant Journal that these black commissioners were interfering in administrative matters. Black Commissioner Tipton said that he had never ordered the city manager to accept his proposed candidate and would have dropped the matter if the manager had objected. He added that he saw nothing wrong in discussing personnel with the city manager. Tipton who had been critical of the police department's failure to crack down on prostitution in his ward noted with approval that since the new supervisor had been appointed there had been more frequent arrests for vice and not a single complaint of police

brutality.³² In this situation it appeared that black commissioners had been able to exert pressure on the administrative officers of the city. The democratic process had, in this case, provided blacks with the power to effect at least some minor changes in the police department.

Ombudsman Appointed

A few days later, at a City Commission meeting, City Manager Klein proposed that the city provided an ombudsman. The black community had long been critical of the fact that there were no adequate procedures for filing complaints about police irregularities. Guidelines for handling these types of complaints had been developed in 1968 but blacks complained that they were a well kept secret. Klein had at one time resisted the suggestion to create an ombudsman. He had admitted that "the reaction of the department to complaints could be improved" but felt "that a large number of complaints are not well founded."³³

In order to reach an acceptable compromise between civil rights groups and the police department it was decided that the ombudsman should be a black police

³²D.J., April 15; August 12, 1969.

³³D.J., August 19, 1969.

officer. Black City Commissioner Tipton complimented Klein on his plan and indicated that he felt it was "a step in the right direction." Klein, who was usually a rather staunch defender of the police department admitted that some Durant police officers appeared to have "anti-social tendencies." Tipton went a step further saying "certain officers are trying their utmost to agitate other people into starting a riot."³⁴

A black patrolman, Robert Darden, was appointed as ombudsman. However, the appointment greeted with approval by black leaders and the black community was largely unproductive. Although complaints were filed with the ombudsman and were investigated and processed by him, affirmative action was rarely undertaken.³⁵

Renewed Complaints From The Black Community

That police-black community relations was still a sensitive area was sustained in a report published in 1969 by the Urban Coalition, a group of important white and black leaders brought together to assist blacks in obtaining their social and constitutional rights. The coalition report,

³⁴D.J., August 28, 1969.

³⁵D.J., November 9, 1969.

dealing with problem areas, had police-black community relations at the top of its list of sensitive areas.³⁶

In spite of the attempts by law enforcement officials to improve the situation, black members of the Durant City Council and the Goodrich County Commission continued to voice complaints about police activity. In November, 1970, Councilman Milton noted that 75 percent of the complaints received from the black community were still related to police activity. Black Councilman Floyd Tipton said: "In Durant, the black and minority people are not protected we're policed. . . . The only time we see police in the neighborhood is if there has been a complaint, or if they are looking for someone to arrest." Commissioner Milton felt that there definitely was a need for more black policemen but added that the increase in the number of black councilmen had helped to ease the situation.

Police Chief Roberts responded to this criticism by saying "the lower-income blacks complain that there are too many policemen in their neighborhoods. Then you get calls from middle-income blacks who say they need more police protection." Roberts said that he was trying to recruit more blacks for the police force but added "what can you do if everyone in the community tells a kid not

³⁶D.J., October 12, 1969.

to grow up and become one of those pigs." Roberts didn't feel that the black areas were over-policed but he said that they get their share of officers because "we've gone overboard on community relations there."³⁷

However, the Ombudsman Project of the Model Cities Program, in cooperation with the Urban Coalition of Durant, had kept records of policemen whom it found repeatedly "abuse, illegally arrest and harass" blacks. The ombudsman Project also held public hearings where minority groups could present their complaints regarding police brutality. An Ombudsman Project spokesman claimed that there were about one hundred pending cases of police brutality filed with the NAACP and seventy with the Durant office of the Civil Rights Commission. Don Filson, director of the Ombudsman Project, was critical of the investigation procedures utilized in cases of police brutality. He said, "the cases never get out of city hall," and said the reason was that the police department investigated itself. Filson was also critical of black officials saying they had not done much to ease the situation. As for law enforcement, he said "the police are just supposed to keep niggers in their place."³⁸

³⁷D.J., November 15, 1970.

³⁸D.J., November 15, 1970.

The Institute of Community
Studies Survey

In February, 1971, the results of a survey of Durant community services conducted by the Institute of Community Studies of New York was published. One section of this study dealt with police-black community relations. It began "in Durant police routinely wear hard hats. This is an unusual procedure. In most cities hard helmets are used at times of civil disorder or riot. The hard hat has a symbolic meaning for the black man of Durant. It is a sign of 'looking for trouble' and intimidation." The report noted that "blacks at all levels feel suppressed by the police force" and believe that police are utilized by the white establishment to intimidate them. This feeling is especially prevalent, noted the survey, among moderate and low-income blacks. The report mentioned four factors that reinforce black attitudes regarding the police. These are: "(1) harassment, (2) verbal and physical abuse, (3) the continuous authoritarian display of power, (4) the poor employment experience of blacks on the police force."

The report went on to note that blacks are often stopped and questioned by police particularly when traveling through white neighborhoods and that black-white group situations received undue police surveillance. The report also noted that seventy-seven citizen complaints had been made against the police force and that only one had been

sustained. In that case the guilty officer merely received a written reprimand and was reassigned.

The investigators found that,

the integrity of the police force . . . is seriously questioned by blacks and whites. The law enforcement activities have tended to focus on such crimes as social gambling, prostitution, etc., while more serious crimes were ignored. . . . Over a period of time some residents have begun to believe that a number of law enforcement officials are involved in payoffs.

The report made a number of recommendations including: the elimination of abusive attitudes toward blacks; the elimination of unnecessary policing in the black community; the adoption of policies that would attract black recruits to the police force and would give promise of possible promotion of black patrolmen in the future; and development of a more comprehensive program of community relations vis-á-vis the black community. A most important recommendation was one calling for a director of public safety who was to be responsible to the City Council, and a citizen complaint review board.³⁹

Lewis Hobbs, son of R. B. Hobbs, but more liberal in social philosophy than his father was now president of the Hobbs' Foundation. Lewis was also chairman of the committee that provided the funding for the survey. In

³⁹ Institute of Community Services, Community Services in Greater Durant, 1970, pp. 95-99.

discussing the report Hobbs admitted that "we need to make changes."⁴⁰

Police Chief Roberts appeared to be angered by a number of the observations and recommendations in the report. He said: "I didn't need a study to tell me we need more black officers. . . . Basically we've done everything we can in the area of recruitment . . . Part of the reason blacks haven't been recruited is that they don't want to be." Roberts went on to say "the unfair thing is that they say we don't promote people." He said "we have nothing to do with promotions" and went on to describe the civil service procedure. Turning to the changes of excessive patrolling in black neighborhoods, Roberts said: It depends on who you are talking to. We get complaints that we don't do enough."⁴¹

Black Police Officer
Dissatisfaction

That there was much dissatisfaction among black officers on the police force was apparent when seven black police officers in the summer of 1971 resigned from the Fraternal Order of Police. The officers maintained that the policeman's lodge had failed to represent them in equal opportunity matters. They then formed a Durant chapter of

⁴⁰D.J., February 2, 1971.

⁴¹D.J., February 25, 1971.

the Society of Afro-American Police. Robert Darden, ombudsman with the Durant Police Department, who served as spokesman said that the group was formed to give black officers "more of a voice" in the department and to "help build our own morale."⁴²

Black Leaders View the
Issue-Area of Police-Black
Community Relations

In interviews, black leaders indicated that police-black community relations was one of the areas of greatest concern to them. They felt that the problem of police brutality needed immediate attention. Black leaders complained that the city manager and the chief of police were aware of sadistic officers on the force but were unable to remove them because of opposition from some members of the City Council. It was reported that sadistic police officers have been told by their superiors to stay out of the black areas but that they frequently disobey orders. It is felt that the practice of recruiting policemen from small communities results in police officers who have had little or no contact with blacks, who fear blacks, and who, as one leader said in a voice trembling with emotion, treat blacks as "animals." Blacks had hoped that the appointment of an ombudsman charged with investigating allegations of police

⁴²D.J., August 25, 1971.

brutality would help, but they have been disappointed with the results. Complaints are filed with the ombudsman and he investigates and makes recommendations for action but nothing happens.

Blacks maintain that attempts to improve the image of the policemen in the black community have had only limited success. A scooter patrol that brought policemen in closer contact with blacks did have some success. However, an attempt to have black youths work as police cadets failed. It was said that the veiled hostility of white patrolmen was quite apparent to black youngsters in the program.

The failure of black patrolmen to earn promotions is another frequently cited complaint. Black leaders feel that the white supervisor's evaluations of black patrolmen, which is part of the civil service rating, serves to aid whites in preventing blacks from receiving promotions. Blacks also feel that the content of police civil service exams is oriented toward white, middle-class life-styles and blacks have been pressing the city administration to provide alternative test forms. Blacks also feel that the policemen's organization, the Fraternal Order of Police, is committed to a policy of limiting black promotions.

Only two black leaders felt that the complaints against the police department were largely unjustified.

One felt that blacks must be willing to compete on equal terms with whites and that to do so, black patrolmen need to work more diligently in upgrading their qualifications.

The issue-area of police-black community relations is one that is fraught with problems and difficulties. However this might well be an area where blacks can exert some pressure through the political process by using "balance of power" techniques--that is, by offering to support other political factions in return for their assistance in this area. Our survey of this issue-area indicates that blacks have been able to effect some changes by using this technique. Black elected officials have been able to exert some pressure on city officials to make some changes in the Durant Police Department. Specifically they were able to have a sympathetic police official appointed to a sensitive post and they were able to secure the appointment of an ombudsman. It is also apparent that many police officials have begun to act more circumspectly in their relationships with the black community. The political process, which has provided blacks with very limited power resources, appears in this issue-area to allow blacks to exert some pressure on governmental decision-making and by so doing to secure some limited benefits.

Black Leaders Possess
Limited Resources with
Which to Effect Change

However, it is clear that blacks are still decidedly disadvantaged in the issue-area of police-black community relations. Although blacks constitute approximately 30 percent of the population of Durant their representation on the police force is approximately 5 percent and no black occupies a supervisory position on the force. In addition, black citizens are frequently subjected to rude treatment and occasionally to brutal treatment by law enforcement officers. Although an ombudsman has been appointed, his reports tend to be ignored by his supervisors. As in the case of the previously examined issue-areas of human relations and education, it is clear that the ability of blacks to effect significant improvements in police-black community relations is severely constrained by the limited power resources of black leadership.

CHAPTER X

OPEN HOUSING

A study prepared by the Council of Social Agencies of Durant shows that 71 percent of the city's non-white population was concentrated in seven census tracts. Of the city's forty-one census tracts, twenty-four had less than 1 percent non-white population.¹ Karl and Alma Taeuber in their study Negroes in Cities² indicated that Durant's segregation index is 94.4 on a scale of 0 to 100, reflecting the percentage of the black population in Durant that would need to be relocated to other neighborhoods to effect a racially balanced residential pattern. The study indicated that Durant was the most segregated city in the northwest, north central and western regions of the United States.

The rather rigidly segregated pattern of housing in Durant is maintained in a variety of ways. Realtors

¹Durant Council of Social Agencies, Census Tract Project, Part I (Durant Council of Social Agencies, 1963), p. 38.

²Karl E. Taeuber and Alma Taeuber, Negroes in Cities (Chicago, Aldine Co., 1965), pp. 29-30.

are committed to maintaining the homogeneity of white areas and some blacks elect to remain in black areas either through fear or preference. When black families do move into white areas, they sometimes encounter hostile white neighbors who can and do use threats and intimidation.

Attempts to Promote Open Occupancy

In 1963 the NAACP started an active campaign to obtain a fair housing ordinance. A series of meetings under the auspices of the NAACP were held to rally support in the white community.³ Since the Durant Board of Education has always had social and economic elites serving on it, it is not surprising that the NAACP began exerting pressure on the board to support an open occupancy law.

In 1964 and 1965, a member of the NAACP attended every meeting of the Board of Education and at each meeting would rise and request the board to support an open occupancy ordinance. One evening, Charles Strong, board chairman angered by the NAACP tactics replied, "we are here to educate children not to house them."⁴ This led to a spirited exchange between Strong and black board member, Dr. Alexander Waldron, with Waldron pointing out

³D.J., August 31, 1963.

⁴D.J., October 29, 1964.

the relationship between open housing and equal educational opportunities. However, the board did not alter its position and prominent black attorney Riggs described the board's position as "hypocritical."

In 1964, a new organization HOPE (Housing Opportunities Provided Equally) was organized and began to play an active role in promoting integrated housing. Since realtors would not normally assist whites who were willing to sell to blacks, HOPE attempted to act as an intermediary by purchasing the homes from whites and selling to blacks. HOPE also began an active campaign in 1964 of picketing owners and realtors who were flagrant in their discriminatory policies.⁵

In 1965, urban renewal and a new freeway program began displacing large numbers of blacks. It was estimated that about thirty-three hundred units would be needed to house those who had been displaced--most of whom were blacks. There was also concern that the replacement housing projects were to be built in the predominantly black areas of the city thus serving to perpetuate segregation. Several groups including the Urban League and HOPE appeared before the Durant Housing Commission asking for a more balanced distribution of project locations. A meeting between black leaders and the head of the Housing Commission led to a

⁵D.J., November 16, 1964.

heated exchange in which the director of the Housing Commission said that he objected to "people telling us to sit on our hands until we achieve the millennium." John Marsh of the Urban League responded by saying that he did not feel that public housing could be used to eliminate all the problems of segregation in the community but he did feel that care should be taken to see that the sites selected for housing projects did not serve to "promote this problem." He said he objected to the idea of "doing something now and worrying about the problem later. Let's do something we can live with" in the future, he said, and added "we don't want a pattern that will perpetuate the problem of segregation."⁶

However, the Urban League reluctantly agreed to accept the site selected by the Housing Commission--in an area of Durant with the highest concentration of blacks--with the provision that additional units were to be built in areas where mixed occupancy was possible.

Board of Education Support
For Open Occupancy

In 1966, the Durant Board of Education passed a resolution calling for the adoption of an open occupancy ordinance. The board stated that it "recognizes and supports the right of anybody to live anywhere in Durant."

⁶D.J., January 7, 1966.

It "recognizes that segregation is not in the best interest of a truly quality education for all children."⁷ This appeared to be a rather significant achievement for the black community. Lacking power resources, itself it was able to actuate the elite Board of Education to make a commitment to open occupancy.

The black community had long been critical of the Durant Board of Realtors feeling the board members were the major obstacle to fair housing. Black leaders were undoubtedly responsible for initiating a statement from the State Civil Rights Commission in July 1966 which criticized the campaign being conducted by Board of Realtors against open housing. The commission accused the realtors of attacking "the legal and moral foundations of . . . constitutional law which forbids racial discrimination in housing" and it called the realtors campaign "dishonest" because it "distorts and twists provisions of the proposed bill."⁸ These criticisms were echoed by similar complaints made by John Marsh of the Urban League of Durant.⁹

CRC Hearing

In the fall, the State Civil Rights Commission began conducting a public hearing on equal housing

⁷ D.J., May 26, 1966.

⁸ D.J., July 11, 1966.

⁹ D.J., July 28, 1966.

opportunities in Durant. Commission Co-chairman Bill Foster indicated that the reason for selecting Durant was that "despite considerable new home and apartment construction in the area, we have had complaints that Negroes are unable to buy or rent housing on the open market."¹⁰

During the course of the hearings, a number of witnesses appeared before the commission. An early witness was the superintendent of schools, who said that no more than six of the elementary schools in the city had enrollments whose racial composition approximated the total elementary school population. He said: "The degree of racial imbalance that exists in some of the elementary schools in Durant is a result of long established patterns of housing segregation in the city of Durant."¹¹

A number of black witnesses also appeared before the commission to testify that they had been subjected to discrimination when seeking housing in the Durant area. Two black employees of a federal agency described the difficulties they encountered when they were transferred to Durant. One said he was told by the broker that he would

¹⁰D.J., October 26, 1966.

¹¹Civil Rights Commission, Equal Housing Opportunities in Durant Public Hearing, November 29, 30; December 1, 9, 1966, p. 2.

not assist him in obtaining an apartment in an all-white apartment building. The other described how vacancies disappeared between a phone inquiry and his arrival at the building. A black pharmacist related similar experiences. A member of the Durant Human Relations Commission described how two Negro teachers cancelled their contracts because they were unable to find adequate housing in Durant. The HRC representative attributed their difficulties to the "discriminatory policies and practices of the Durant Board of Realtors and its members."¹² This opinion was corroborated by John Marsh the executive director of the Urban League, who maintained that the real estate interests were the primary perpetrators of the "ghetto" in Durant. The president of HOPE also indicted the Board of Realtors saying "their unwritten policy is not to sell homes to Negroes in white areas whether the owner wants to or not." He supported his allegation with corroborative signed statements from seven individuals. He noted that realtors maintained that it was "against their national code of ethics to introduce a foreign element into a neighborhood." The president of HOPE added "in order for . . . Negro families to obtain housing in . . . [white] areas it was necessary for a white person to purchase the house and then resell it to the Negro buyer."¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 3.

¹³Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Negro realtors appeared before the commission and charged that they were discriminated against or knew of cases where others were discriminated against when attempting to gain membership in the Durant Board of Realtors. It was asserted that the denial of such membership handicapped the black broker. The black realtor did not have access to houses listed with the multiple listings exchange nor the opportunity to have ready access to services available through the community's banks.

No officer or member of the Durant Board of Realtors appeared before the commission although the commission invited the president of the board and each broker-member against whom allegations of discrimination had been made to testify.

Charges of discrimination were also leveled by several blacks against builders. Officers of the Home Builders Association were invited to appear at the hearing but all declined the invitation. One builder who did testify said that in most cases builders would not sell lots to Negroes in new subdivisions.

Witnesses also testified that a great deal of the housing in the ghetto areas was substandard. It was noted that the census tracts with the highest proportion of substandard housing also had the highest non-white population. A social caseworker testified that sixty-three of seventy of her client families were living in over-crowded or

substandard homes. A Catholic nun who did social work among low-income families complained that it was difficult to get the authorities to enforce the city's housing code.

A member of a Catholic social agency stated that he had surveyed twenty families living in substandard housing and found that none of the families were aware that a housing code existed. He said that slum landlords deliberately exploit the segregated housing market. He related how one landlord told a white family that if they objected too vigorously about housing conditions, he would evict them and "put niggers in the house" because he "could get more money per week out of the house if he had niggers in it anyway, and the niggers wouldn't complain because they have no place to stay."¹⁴

Complaints were also lodged against other institutions in the city. The NAACP and HOPE said that they had tried unsuccessfully to change the policies of the Eureka Realty Division, a subsidiary of Universal Motors. They reported that the policy of Eureka was to list homes that it controlled only with the Board of Realtors. "The company refused to consider the suggestions of NAACP and HOPE that Eureka-held properties be listed also with Negro

¹⁴Ibid., p. 10.

brokers and that Eureka include non-discrimination instructions in listing agreements."¹⁵

The president of HOPE was critical of the role played by the Hobbs' Foundation in the area of human rights. He said that the foundation had "sidestepped the issue of open occupancy in our community" and that when the foundation employs new black personnel the "only help they are given in securing housing is in the Negro areas that are already overcrowded."¹⁶

As the hearings were concluding Ralph Grimes, commission co-chairman, expressed disappointment that three of the most influential organizations in the community--Universal Motors, the Hobbs' Foundation and the Durant Board of Realtors--had elected not to take part in the hearings.

Although Hobbs' Foundation executives had originally declined an invitation to appear at the hearing, they changed their minds and testified at the final session which was set aside for rebuttal testimony. Representing the foundation were Richard B. Hobbs, founder and chairman of the board, and Howard R. Millington, executive director. It seemed very possible that their appearance was the result of an editorial in the Durant Journal which was headlined "Did

¹⁵Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 11-12.

Durant's Conscience Doze During the Hearing on Housing?"

Mr. Hobbs made specific reference to the editorial when he said he didn't think the foundation had been dozing in any way. Hobbs also said he didn't think "any (public) statement of mine saying I oppose or favor open occupancy housing would be of any benefit" to Durant's housing problem. He said whichever side he took, those who favor the other side "would feel badly toward me and the foundation." When a clergyman on the civil rights board pointed out that if the influential people in Durant didn't take an interest in the problem of segregated housing in the community, one could hardly expect the rank and file to do so, Mr. Hobbs replied rather inexplicably, "I have many friends in the Negro community and nobody is going to get me to take a position that these friends would take exception to."

The testimony became somewhat more acrimonious when a representative of the Civil Rights Housing Division described to Mr. Hobbs how Negro teachers had left the community because they could not find adequate housing and said "even your mayor lives in the ghetto." Hobbs replied with a smile, "if the mayor wants to move up in my neighborhood, he's welcome to." The officials next comment, "I can't understand your unwillingness to offend some people (by taking a stand). You are without a doubt the most influential person in Durant and to be such you must

have offended some people" caused Hobbs to bristle and he replied angrily "thats too bad for you. I don't have to convince you."¹⁷

Mr. Howard Millington, executive director of the foundation, said "my personal position is like Mr. Hobbs'." He said that he felt open occupancy was a political matter and "if we get into politics, our charter could be taken away from us." Millington indicated that "a massive attack" was needed to cope with Durant's housing problems. But regarding the question of securing adequate housing for blacks, he concluded rather weakly "if there were simply solutions, I would jump at them in a minute. But the issues won't be solved until they are solved in the hearts of men."¹⁸

At the conclusion of the hearings, the Civil Rights Commission published it's report. The report said:

The City of Durant, and the larger metropolitan area are rigidly segregated, with nearly all of Goodrich County's non-white population concentrated in contiguous census tracts in the inner core of the city. . . . Segregated housing patterns appear to be controlled and maintained by builders and members of the Durant Board of Realtors who refuse to show or sell properties in white areas to Negroes, whether so instructed by their clients or not, decline to service open occupancy listings, and deny Negro real estate brokers membership

¹⁷D.J., December 10, 1966.

¹⁸D.J., December 10, 1966.

in the organization itself and its subsidiary shared listing system.

The commission also concluded:

The failure of financial, commercial, industrial and other private corporations and organizations to be represented at the hearing tends to show that that segment of the community is, at best, disinterested in the resolution of the problems of housing discrimination and segregation in the Durant area. In view of the strong economic, political, and educational force these groups have been for the improvement of the quality of community life in Durant, their silence on the question of equal housing opportunity serves to retard progress toward its achievement.¹⁹

The commission recommended that the city of Durant:

Enact a comprehensive ordinance prohibiting discrimination in housing. . . .; appropriate sufficient funds for the Human Relations Commission . . . to enable it to deal more effectively and autonomously with problems of unequal housing and other areas of racial tension and discrimination . . .; refrain from undertaking any renewal or related projects that would involve displacement of families until an adequate supply of . . . housing is available . . . and improve the effectiveness of its code enforcement program.²⁰

The response of the various power loci in the community, particularly the business-industrial loci, to the CRC hearings appeared to underscore the relative powerlessness of black leaders to influence changes in housing policies. The hearings, supported and conducted by an official state agency, were largely ignored by important organizations in the private sector which did not cooperate

¹⁹Civil Rights Commission, op cit., pp. 14-15.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 15-16.

with the Civil Rights Commission. When Mr. Hobbs, probably the most important single individual in the community, did appear, he did not manifest any sympathy or support for the principles of open housing.

Proposals for an Open
Housing Ordinance

On July 24 and 25, 1967, a rather serious civil disturbance took place in the north-end of Durant in areas that were predominantly black in composition. One result of the disturbance was renewed pressure by black leaders for concessions from the white community including the passage of an open occupancy ordinance. Rev. Robert Ralston, black leader, testified before the City Commission that housing was one of the black community's major problems. Disturbances during the past week he said, "have borne out the fact that we really need such an ordinance. I am begging you to pass it."²¹ A few days later the city attorney was directed by the City Commission's Legislative Committee to prepare an open occupancy ordinance and shortly after this an ordinance was submitted to the commission for consideration.²² However, much to the chagrin of its proponents, the Open Occupancy Ordinance was turned down by the commission.²³

²¹D.J., August 5, 1967.

²²D.J., August 8, 11, 1967.

²³D.J., August 15, 1967.

Mayor Milton Resigns

Mayor Milton who had played an important role in this issue-area was close to tears as he spoke to the commissioners and the three hundred spectators at the meeting. He said:

I have been down here [the mayor lived in the black ghetto on the north side of Durant] a long time, almost nine years now, and I have tried to do everything possible for everyone in this city, and I don't care what color or economic status. Last November, this City Commission saw fit to make me mayor and . . . I thought here at last we have a local government willing to accept people on the basis of their ability and not because of race, and I have lived with this and I have preached this to my community. Tonight, however, I've changed my mind. I'm not going to sit here and live an equal-opportunity lie.²⁴

Milton then told the commission he would resign. Many of those in the audience stood and applauded him.

Reaction to the Mayor's Resignation

Commenting on the actions of the evening the Reverend Alan Robinson executive director of the Durant Council of Churches, termed Milton's resignation "the most honest and most cleansing act of the evening. He stood ten feet tall above those who by their act robbed him and his followers of their rights and dignity."²⁵

²⁴D.J., August 15, 1967.

²⁵D.J., August 15, 1967.

The Durant Journal noted that while the City Commission had been meeting a group of young black activists were also meeting at the St. Charles Street Community Center to discuss the ineffectiveness of Negro leaders in Durant. The ghetto audience was told that "Negro leaders weren't aware of our problems . . . It is time for us to represent ourselves, not to be led by false leaders. The middle class wants to emphasize open occupancy. That doesn't involve the grass roots." After the meeting adjourned, this group went up to city hall where they learned of Milton's resignation. Several embraced him and said "we love you brother."²⁶

News of Milton's resignation was followed quickly by other resignations. Three black members of the Human Relations Commission and one black member of the County Board of Supervisors resigned. Five additional members of the Board of Supervisors announced their intention of resigning as did blacks on the boards of various other community agencies.²⁷

The Rev. Alan Robinson said that the failure of the commission to enact an open occupancy ordinance was "evidence of just how sick our city is" and these sentiments were re-echoed by other influential citizens and

²⁶ D.J., August 15, 1967

²⁷ D.J., August 15, 16, 17, 1967.

institutions. The Durant Journal editorialized that Milton's resignation was "a demonstration of one man standing up for that in which he believes--and in which we all should believe." The executive director of the Urban League said in regard to the five commissioners who voted against open occupancy "they believe in democracy for everyone except the Negro." He said that the rejection of open occupancy caused all Negroes, moderate and militant to wonder about the democratic process in Durant. Two leaders of the Jewish community released a statement in which they said that it is "altogether shocking" that open occupancy need be the object of legislation,

but how much more shocking that during these critical times an ordinance merely legislating those rights which have been previously granted should fail. . . . The shortsightedness and political expediency evidenced by five of our city commissioners last night was a disgrace to our city and an insult to our fine mayor.²⁸

It appeared that the defeat of the Open Occupancy Ordinance and the resignation of Mayor Milton had nudged some of Durant's middle-class blacks into a more militant stance. A meeting was held the next evening at the Oak Avenue Christian Church pastored by Rev. Asher who had just resigned from the board of the Durant Human Relations

²⁸D.J., August 15, 1967.

Commission. It was soon evident that Durant's blacks not only were going to press for an open occupancy ordinance but that they were also going to demand commitment to change in other areas. John Marsh, executive director of the Urban League said that if Mayor Milton was willing to withdraw his resignation there still would need to be some new "ground rules" that would involve commitments to find solutions to problems affecting blacks.²⁹

The Black Solidarity Rally

The next day, Albert Hilton president of the NAACP announced plans for a Black Solidarity Rally.³⁰ The series of events that occurred in connection with this rally disturbed many in both the white and black communities.

On Friday, Hilton called City Manager Klein to secure permission for the rally that was to take place on Sunday. Permission was granted and rally sponsors began erecting a platform on Saturday morning. They were interrupted by police who took the platform down. Klein informed Hilton that he had given permission for a rally but not for a platform to be built. Klein said that it was illegal to erect such a platform without getting prior approval from the City Commission.

²⁹ D.J., August 16, 1967.

³⁰ D.J., August 17, 1967.

On Saturday afternoon, County Prosecutor Larson called a meeting of black leaders and City Manager Klein. Larson said that he believed it was unconstitutional to require a permit for a peaceful gathering on public property. He said that he believed that it had been unnecessary to request permission in advance to hold the rally but permission had been given. He went on to say that when Klein granted permission to hold such a rally, it should have been assumed that the sponsors would build a platform. In an emotion packed session, an agreement was then concluded between black leaders and white officials. The agreement stipulated that blacks were to be permitted to erect a platform on the city hall property. Larson then issued a statement that was critical of city officials. Larson said:

Certain public officials in attempting to deny the use of city hall grounds for a rally are putting law enforcement agencies of this city and county in the position of officially denying certain privileges granted under the U.S. Constitution. They are also making an issue of keeping off the grass a so-called "crisis" and are strengthening the claims of those who say that government and the police are against them. . . . There have been many instances where the city has permitted a platform to be built on the grounds to hear speakers. . . . I think it is time we concentrated on enforcing serious laws and fighting serious crimes, rather than worry about someone stepping on the grass.³¹

By nightfall, it seemed that a satisfactory solution had been reached and the rally sponsors were preparing to

³¹D.J., August 20, 1967.

build their platform. However, shortly before midnight, black leaders received a call from Police Chief Roberts asking them to come to headquarters. There they were told that the City Commission had informed the city manager that they would not be allowed to build their platform. The shocked president of the NAACP and the director of the Urban League immediately contacted a state representative who in turn contacted the governor. The governor got in touch with the attorney general who called Larson at 2 a.m. Larson petitioned for an injunction and the case was argued at 7 a.m. in the morning before two circuit court judges. At 9:15, the judges ordered the injunction and by 10 a.m. work had begun again on the platform.³² Larson commented on his action in this way: "I have an obligation to protect the constitutional rights of every citizen. I thought there was a breach of the freedom of assembly, a breach of a previous commitment and the imminent possibility of a breach of the peace because of these harassments." He also added: "Based on the events of the last few weeks and especially the last couple of days, I'm beginning to wonder if some elected officials are not intentionally trying to provoke a confrontation between Negroes and whites."³³

³²D.J., August 21, 1967.

³³D.J., August 21, 1967.

This type of incident is not uncommon as far as the black community is concerned. They feel that individually or collectively they are subjected to this kind of harassment. Lacking the power to protect themselves, they must appeal to segments of the larger community for support. Here the sympathy of a public official, the county prosecutor, stood them in good stead.

The rally went off as scheduled on Sunday, August 21, 1967 with about 4,000 in attendance. The most dramatic event of the day was the surprise appearance of the governor and attorney general at the rally. The governor in a whirlwind visit landed at the airport, conferred with city officials, visited with Mayor Milton--who had been hospitalized because of a stomach disorder and exhaustion--and had a conference with city commissioners who he urged to adopt an open occupancy ordinance. The governor then went to the rally and spoke in support of open occupancy. He added that he admired "Roger Milton for not letting them keep using him as a stooge."³⁴ The "them" apparently referred to the commissioners who had voted against the Open Occupancy Ordinance.

Successful Passage of the Open Occupancy Ordinance

At this time, the Hobbs' Foundation reversed its position on the issue. Lewis Hobbs, president of the

³⁴D.J., August 21, 1967.

foundation sent a letter to each city commissioner urging them to vote for an open occupancy ordinance. Hobbs outlined the goals of the foundation which he said included promoting Negro rights and opportunities. He went on to note that "recent events" have put the goals and achievements of the Hobbs programs in jeopardy. He called on all citizens to join with the foundation in "a new effort toward racial justice and opportunity." Hobbs' closed his appeal with a request to "Mayor Milton to reassume his office and give us his necessary leadership at this difficult time."³⁵

This statement appeared to signal a change in the orientation of Durant's elites on the question of an open occupancy ordinance. The power resources of the business, professional and industrial segments in the community now appeared to be available to those supporting this legislation and this had important implications for the successful resolution of the issue. However, as will be noted later, support of an open occupancy ordinance does not indicate support for changing the basic housing patterns in the community. The successful passage of such an ordinance often has only a minimal effect on these patterns, as the leaders of the larger community probably recognized.

³⁵D.J., August 20, 1967.

On August 28th, Roger Milton said that he was so encouraged by offers of support from individuals and organizations that he had decided to remain in office. Milton said: "In light of this massive declaration of support, I no longer feel that my continuation as mayor will be an unwitting obstacle to the fight for equal opportunity."³⁶ He requested all those who, out of sympathy for his position, had announced their intention of resigning to continue in office. Mayor Milton said he was declaring a moratorium on discussions of open occupancy until September 5th in order to ease tensions.

After some delay, the Open Occupancy Ordinance was adopted in October when one commissioner who had formerly opposed the measure switched his vote and when a second commissioner who had been absent when the measure was originally defeated also cast an affirmative vote.³⁷

The ordinance prohibited discrimination in the sale or rental of property on the basis of race, color or national origin. Violations of the ordinance carried a maximum penalty of ninety days in jail and a three hundred dollar fine.

³⁶D.J., August 28, 1967.

³⁷D.J., October 24, 1967.

Referendum on Fair Housing

Harry Spicer who was active in the John Birch Society in Durant announced shortly after the ordinance had passed that he was heading a "Committee to Repeal Forced Legislation" that would circulate petitions calling for a referendum election on the Open Housing Ordinance.³⁸ After several weeks of intensive work, the required number of signatures were obtained. The question of open occupancy was then one that would be decided by the electorate in the next election.

A "Friends of Fair Housing Committee" was established to mobilize sentiment in support of the Open Occupancy Ordinance. Officers of the organization included prominent black leaders and white friends of the black community. In addition to the working officers, a number of honorary chairmen were named, including Lewis Hobbs, president of the Hobbs' Foundation; Robert Andrews, a prominent civic leader and former Universal Motors' executive; Mrs. Howard Evans, wife of the superintendent of schools; David Marden president of a chain of discount stores and an important member of the Jewish community; C. E. Patton regional director of the UAW; and Jack Hilton, civic leader and prominent businessman.³⁹ The makeup of the committee

³⁸ D.J., November 28, 1967.

³⁹ D.J., January 5, 23, 1968.

represented important loci of power and seemed to purport that the community was united in support of open occupancy.

As the weeks passed most major organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, UAW, League of Women Voters, Federation of Teachers and the Durant Ministerial Association came out in favor of the ordinance.⁴⁰ However, the two major parties were, at best, rather ambivalent in their support. The Republican Party indicated that it felt that the issue was not a partisan one and refused to take a stand on the issue.⁴¹ Democrats did somewhat better but their stand was still rather equivocating. The only support they gave the issue was a statement by the Democratic County Chairman that "most Democrats are convinced open housing is desirable."⁴²

The Durant Journal dispatched one of its reporters to visit four cities with open housing ordinances to see how these were functioning. The journalist reported his observations in a series of five stories. He summarized his findings in the following way:

the most spectacular thing that happens after a city puts an open housing ordinance into effect is that nothing happens. This sardonic comment . . . is a bit unfair and inaccurate.

⁴⁰ D.J., December 24, 1967; January 9, 31, February 15, 19, 1968.

⁴¹ D.J., January 19, 1968.

⁴² D.J., February 16, 1968.

But it is close enough to the truth to give the lie to those who anticipate massive Negro migrations into white neighborhoods.⁴³

Having thus reassured its' readers, the Durant Journal, which had formerly opposed this type of legislation, published several editorials in favor of open occupancy.⁴⁴

When Dick Gregory appeared at Durant's Whitmore Auditorium, during the height of the campaign, he was asked to give his opinion of open occupancy. He probably drew shudders from proponents of the measure when he said "fair housing is not important." Asked to explain his comment he said: "Fair housing can be a psychological victory but it is a small thing. Society makes such a big issue that once communities have such a law they feel they have dropped a little bit of God down on the community."⁴⁵

The election was held on February 20, 1968 and the lead changed hands a number of times. Many supporters of the measure including Mayor Milton, went to bed with the feeling that the Open Occupancy Ordinance had been defeated for City Clerk Harding's count indicated that the measure had lost by fifty-seven votes. Milton, before going to bed had even read a statement in which he acknowledged the

⁴³D.J., February 4, 1968.

⁴⁴D.J., February 11, 16, 1968.

⁴⁵D.J., February 17, 1968.

narrow margin of defeat and called the election "a moral victory, if nothing else." However, the count made by the staff of the Durant Journal did not tally with the city clerk's figures and in the morning two reporters went to the city clerk's office to compare the returns. They discovered that there was a 100-vote error and that the Open Occupancy Ordinance had won by a margin of forty-three votes.* Milton who had gone to sleep at 3:15 a.m. thinking the measure had been defeated, learned in the morning of the victory. He said simply, "it's just wonderful. The people won."⁴⁶

The fact that Durant was the first city to actually pass an open occupancy ordinance by popular vote was not lost sight of by the rest of the country. Congratulatory messages poured in.⁴⁷

The measure had passed in five of the nine wards in the city and of course could not have done so without substantial white support. However, the black community had given the ordinance unusually heavy support. In the predominantly black third ward, the measure passed by a vote of 3,306 to 351. The turnout of registered black

* The Durant Board of Canvassers certified the election victory margin as one of thirty-eight votes. In the recount in March, this margin was reduced to thirty votes.

⁴⁶ D.J., February 21, 1968.

⁴⁷ D.J., February 23, 1968.

voters was, in comparison with previous elections almost spectacular. The turnout in the third ward represented 58.4 percent of the registered voters, 4 percent more than in any other ward and 7 percent higher than the city-wide average. It was also noted that of the fifteen precincts where more than 60 percent of the registered voters voted, eleven were in primarily black areas.⁴⁸

It was felt that the churches and the community elites had played important roles in the victory. As Miss Helen Gordon secretary of the "Friends for Fair Housing" noted after the election: "We practically depended on the churches--and on the power structure."⁴⁹ The black community with support from important elite interests had won a victory although it would turn out to be only a token victory.

It would appear that without support from the other loci of power, the black community would not have been successful in winning the referendum election. The makeup of the committee "Friends for Fair Housing," was intended to convey the idea that all important segments in the community supported open housing. Moreover, the inclusion of key influentials like Lewis Hobbs demonstrated that the issue had the support of the business

⁴⁸D.J., February 24, 1968.

⁴⁹D.J., February 24, 1968.

and industrial leaders of the community. The secretary, Miss Gordon, had noted the importance of the "power structure" in achieving victory. Power loci involved in the victory included business and industry, the Board of Education, the churches, and labor--although in the latter case it was apparent that labor was hampered in utilizing all its power resources because of the rather widespread ambivalence and even hostility of some of its' white membership toward open occupancy. Both major political parties were also extremely cautious in offering meaningful endorsements of open occupancy.

Without the able assistance and support of other loci, it would appear that the black community would have been defeated on this issue. For the black community lacked the resources to win such an election.

Many white community residents were disturbed by the outcome of the referendum, feeling that it would result in radical changes in housing patterns. But, as the various community leaders who had supported the ordinance probably realized, only minor changes in housing patterns occurred. The victory in retrospect appears to be a rather hollow one and appears to validate the thesis of black powerlessness.

Effect of the Open
Occupancy Ordinance

The State Civil Rights Commission which had conducted the 1966 hearings devoted to housing problems in Durant had made certain recommendations regarding future action to be undertaken to alleviate some of the problems. A year after the recommendations had been made, the director of the Durant office, Mrs. Kay Brenton, made a progress report in which she noted that the only reason the housing problem had not become more acute for Durant's blacks was that a cut-back in federal funding had reduced Durant's urban renewal program. Mrs. Brenton reported continued difficulty in obtaining funding for low-cost housing. She also reported only minor improvements in the negative attitudes of the Durant Board of Realtors.⁵⁰

A few months later, at a public forum, Mrs. Brenton made some additional comments on the housing problem. She noted that the city's Open Occupancy Ordinance would have little effect on the segregated housing patterns in the city until there was an adequate supply of homes for low and moderate income blacks. She pointed out that three thousand people had been displaced by freeway construction and that many were still without housing in spite of the

⁵⁰ Durant Civil Rights Commission, Investigatory House Hearings Evaluations Report, February 23, 1968, pp. 1, 2.

fact that one thousand units of public housing had been provided by the city. Mrs. Brenton went on to note that the segregated housing patterns in the city resulted in rather rigidly segregated schools. She pointed out that most of Durant's black students and black teachers were concentrated in eleven black schools.⁵¹

Ten months after the passage of the Open Occupancy Ordinance, Vice-chairman, Marvin Gridley told the Human Relations Commission that blacks were still being discriminated against in regard to housing and that those who were adversely affected didn't know how to file a complaint. Gridley noted that the city attorney had received only one complaint but indicated that he himself had received a number of complaints from people who didn't know what to do.⁵²

Shortly after this, John Marsh, executive director of the Urban League was invited to speak at a luncheon meeting of the Durant Board of Realtors. Marsh told the realtors that a lack of adequate housing was one of the major problems in Durant. He said the shortage could be attributed to the prevalence of a "racist" assumption that black men should not own homes in white neighborhoods. Marsh blamed realtors for playing an important role in

⁵¹D.J., April 30, 1968.

⁵²D.J., September 6, 1968.

perpetuating residential segregation in Durant. Marsh said that when racial intergration is progressing nicely in a neighborhood, many white realtors "set out to deliberately destroy it." Marsh supported his contention by citing several local examples of "blockbusting." He said some realtors would not show a home in an integrated neighborhood to a white family. This he said would eventually tip an integrated neighborhood into becoming an all black neighborhood. Marsh maintained that there were white realtors who "pressure white home owners to sell and move out" the moment a neighborhood becomes integrated. Marsh urged the realtors to help improve the housing situation for blacks in the community without having to be prompted by "outside pressure." For he noted, "if you fail to do so--the Urban League and other groups will increase efforts to require you to correct these inequities."⁵³ The mere fact that Marsh had been invited to address the Durant Board of Realtors, an organization that had firmly opposed open occupancy, might, of course, be viewed as a favorable sign.

However, an incident that occurred in the Spring of 1969 seemed to indicate that much remained to be achieved in the area of open occupancy. In the middle of May, a black mother, Mrs. Mary Lott and her six children

⁵³D.J., October 23, 1968.

moved into a public housing unit in a white neighborhood. Six weeks later, after suffering much abuse, they moved out. The Durant Journal noted sardonically: "The Lotts didn't make any friends with neighbors during their one and a half month stay."

For the entire month and a half the Lotts were constantly harassed. Eggs were thrown at the house, the lawn was torn up by a truck, the fuel line of their car was cut and the accelerator and carbureator damaged and a jar of kerosene was thrown at the house. When the two youngest children went to play in a vacant lot nearby, a white man brandishing a stick drove them out. The fifteen year old daughter described to a reporter how six white boys blocked her path on the way to school and "reminded me what the white man's privileges were toward a nigger girl."⁵⁴

Mrs. Lott reported that she remained in the house until her oldest daughter, Irene, who was a member of a national honor society; had won an award for Americanism from the American Legion; and was preparing to attend Michigan State University on a scholarship became so emotionally disturbed that it was doubtful whether she could begin college. It was then that the Lotts decided to move.

⁵⁴D.J., August 3, 1969.

The Lott family was replaced by a white family that were the next applicants on the public housing list. Rev. Alan Robinson, who was chairman of the Urban Renewal Relocation Subcommittee, noted: "It's unfortunate that they [Department of Community Development] moved a white family in. . . . This told the white community they had won. It showed them that if they objected [to black families] only whites would be moved in." Robinson said that the community of Durant, including the city manager and the police, had failed the Lotts and he added "I certainly want to include the commissioner of the . . . ward [Melvin Howard] with those who failed. I am not conscious of any action on his part to make it so Mrs. Lott could live in peace."⁵⁵

Commissioner Howard responded with sentiments that many blacks feel are fairly characteristic of the larger community in Durant. He said, "I don't want to see this thing fanned by do-gooders and left-wingers into something that it isn't." He went on to say that if "there were all-black areas, then presumably there should be an all-white area and we are the only all-white ward in the city. I don't see how they (the Lotts) could be happy in an all-white neighborhood. No white person could be happy in an all-black neighborhood."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ D.J., August 3, 1969.

⁵⁶ D.J., August 3, 1969.

Black Leaders View the
Issue-Area of Housing

In the interviews conducted with black leaders, complaints regarding the housing situation in Durant were voiced with some frequency and vehemence. Black leaders are very concerned about the fact that, despite the passage of an open occupancy ordinance, adequate housing for blacks is in short supply and housing is still rather rigidly segregated. A black leader who had been an important city official maintains that the conservative outlook of the business community hampers Durant in obtaining additional federal urban renewal funds. Other black leaders complain about the misuse of the urban renewal funds that have been allocated to the city. Blacks maintain that the areas selected for renewal are not the ones that are most in need of attention. Several expressed the belief that renewal sites are selected by the "power structure" for the future expansion of the "Education and Fine Arts Center" and the downtown business area. Some blacks suspect that one project is being implemented to provide future expansion space for a Universal Motors' plant.

Black leaders also complain that the prices blacks receive for their homes in renewal areas are not adequate for the purchase of comparable structures in other areas of the city. They cite cases where displaced persons,

particularly retirees, have had to leave the city to find satisfactory housing. Black leaders do find that there have been some constructive attempts to locate public housing in mixed or in white neighborhoods. They also approve of recent attempts to erect single family units rather than large housing projects. They note, however, the frequent complaints about the quality of this housing and the fact that building codes are not vigorously enforced.

As compared to the Human Relations Commission issue, it might appear, at first glance, that the black community has achieved a number of important successes in its struggle for open housing. It has succeeded in getting the Durant City Council to pass a fair housing ordinance and when the ordinance was tested in a referendum election the black community emerged victorious. When the right of peaceful assembly had been denied blacks by the city government, they received strong support from the prosecuting attorney. The governor and the attorney general had visited the city to support black goals. Support for an open housing ordinance had been received from community elites and the Durant Journal. These were positive accomplishments but from a realistic point of view they must be viewed as token victories for the community of Durant is still rather rigidly segregated.

Inability of Blacks
to Effect Changes in
Segregated Housing

Viewing the issue-area of housing in terms of social power it is possible to detect several power loci opposed to the black goals of securing adequate, safe and sanitary housing in non-segregated neighborhoods. The most important of these opposing power loci are the Durant Board of Realtors and the City Council. The council supports token open housing legislation but almost certainly would oppose measures designed to achieve significant residential integration. It would appear, in fact, that the segregated patterns are maintained with the approval of a majority of those in the white community. Because of this sentiment, labor unions, the local political parties and even the churches can lend only limited support to the principal of open housing. Without active support from important power loci, it would appear that the black community with its limited power resources is going to find it extremely difficult to alter the existing segregated housing patterns in the near future. As in the case of the previously examined issue-areas of education, human relations and police-black community relations, it would appear that black leaders who have been attempting to effect changes in housing conditions have been relatively ineffective because they have been leaders with little power.

CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Investigations of community leadership frequently conclude with a set of hypotheses or propositions that summarize the studies findings. Frequently these hypotheses are related to conclusions generated by other studies in an attempt to indicate their general validity.

In this chapter, we have listed ten propositions that represent the conclusions growing out of our study of Durant. We do not suggest that these propositions are grounded on irrefutable empirical evidence but we do feel the interview material and the printed materials relating to the four issue-areas tend to support the validity of these propositions. We have when possible tried to relate the propositions to findings produced by earlier studies to determine if there might also be some general validity for the propositions.

The propositions, then, that have been generated by this study are:

- (1) The methodological approach used in this study--the employment of both the reputational

and the issue approach--appears to have general validity. The use of both approaches appears to be necessary to obtain a complete picture of community leadership. Prestus recommends this dual approach to community leadership¹ and Ladd in his study of black leadership in Greenville and Winston-Salem has noted the need to supplement the reputational approach with the issue approach. Ladd finds that "Negro leadership is issue leadership."²

- (2) There is no single group of black leaders in Durant--no "power structure." The group of top black leaders, as revealed by the reputational and issue approaches, would probably be consulted on an issue of significance to the black community. Yet it cannot be said that this group is in a position to make decisions for the black community or to speak for the black community. They are, in effect, leaders in the black community rather than leaders of the black community. This finding

¹Prestus, Men at the Top, p. 62.

²Ladd, Negro Political Leadership in the South,

coincides with those of other studies.

Thompson in his study of black leadership in New Orleans found that there were a number of black groups or classes and that "each of these segments or classes produces its own leadership."³ Scoble found the leadership structure fragmented in Los Angeles.⁴ A recent study by a black investigator in the midwest revealed similar findings.⁵ McKee after studying Grand Rapids concluded that "no one person, or even one group of persons, can speak for or legitimately represent the Negro community. In that sense, there are no leaders of the Negro community. But there are numerous leaders in the Negro community."⁶

- (3) Using a typology with the labels conservative, moderate, liberal and militant, it was found that most of Durant's leaders were moderates or liberals and that no militants were included

³Thompson, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴Scoble, Negro Politics in Los Angeles, pp. 35-36.

⁵Elijah Anderson, "Black Shadow Politics in Mid-westville," Sociological Inquiry, Vol. 42, No. 1 (1972), p. 20.

⁶McKee, Negro Leadership in Grand Rapids, p. 2.

on the list of leaders. Burgess also employs a fourfold typology and has described most of her black leaders as "liberal."⁷ When the "issue" approach was used to narrow our list of black leaders, we also found that we had a list of top black leaders that could be most accurately described by using our ideological label--"liberal." We believe that the use of a fourfold classification permitted us to label our leaders with a greater degree of precision than would have been possible using one of the frequently employed threefold classifications. However, we recognize that it is not always possible to label individuals with complete accuracy in terms of the rather inelastic definitions of a typology. Therefore, we do see some validity in Ladd's approach to leadership typologies in which leadership styles are defined in relative rather than in absolute terms.⁸

- (4) It was found that the use of a conceptual framework which views race relations as power

⁷Burgess, op. cit., pp. 177-178.

⁸Ladd, op. cit., p. 150.

relations was helpful. It provided a clearer perspective of the power limitations of the black community vis-à-vis other loci of power. For as Blalock has noted, "racial discrimination is ultimately based on power relationships between a dominant and a subordinate group."⁸ Burgess finds this approach to be analytically fruitful¹⁰ while Schermerhorn notes that "power relations set the basic frame within which acculturation, discrimination, prejudice, etc., do or do not take place."¹¹ Himes has noted that since race relations appear to be power relations "research should be cast in terms of a 'conflict model.'"¹² We did indeed find that the insights offered by "conflict theorists" enabled us to perceive more clearly power conflicts in the community. Conflict theory served as a kind of barometer indicating major problem areas. The insights offered by "conflict

⁹Blalock, "A Power Analysis of Racial Discrimination," p. 53.

¹⁰Burgess, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

¹¹Schermerhorn, op. cit., p. 55.

¹²Himes, "The Functions of Racial Conflict," p. 403.

theorists" were also useful in pointing to the positive functions of conflict in the race relations area. From this perspective, conflict is seen as having an integrating function. Leaders of both the black and white communities become aware of problem areas and the need to seek solutions to race-related conflicts. White leaders become aware of the seriousness of the problems facing black people while blacks become cognizant of the fact that the freedom of action of white leaders is sometimes restricted by the prevailing sentiments of their constituents.

Sociologists who have dealt with social power have indicated that legitimation is a key concept. Legitimation of power is normally conveyed by the use of symbols that serve to verify the fact that the individual or group does, indeed, possess social power. Symbols of legitimation in the black community are rare because power resources are rare. Some symbols indicating power potential do exist, however. Negroes serving on the City Council and the School Board and as mayor, are by the simple process of filling these offices,

serving as symbols of some power potential in the black community. New educational programs devoted to black problems and the black experience, a black ombudsman, additional numbers of black teachers and black policemen--all are symbols of the fact that the black community has the potential for developing power resources. However, this power potential is still largely dormant. Blacks on elective and appointed boards are still not able to force major shifts in policies affecting the black community. There are no important black administrators in the police department or on the school administrative staff. Housing and elementary education are still rather rigidly segregated and police and the black community maintain a rather hostile attitude toward one another.

- (5) Black leadership positions generally fall to those who have achieved occupational status within the black community. Leaders are normally city officials, agency leaders, union officials, professional men or business leaders. McKee in his study of Grand Rapids also noted the increasing importance in the

black leadership structure of labor leaders and college educated professionals.¹³ However, black occupational status alone does not guarantee leadership status in Durant. There are blacks filling important occupational roles who are not community leaders. Leaders in the black community must possess personal qualities which for lack of a better descriptive term we shall characterize as "leadership style"--a kind of charisma, as it were.

- (6) There is a certain degree of ambivalence shown by the black community toward its' black leaders. Blacks frequently distrust the motives of their leaders. Myrdal, almost thirty years ago, observed that "the Negro hates the Negro role in American society, and the Negro leader, who acts out this role in public life becomes the symbol of what the Negro hates"¹⁴ and Clark,¹⁵

¹³McKee, Negro Leadership in Grand Rapids, pp. 5, 6, 11.

¹⁴Myrdal, op. cit., p. 774.

¹⁵Clark, Dark Ghetto, p. 197.

Scoble¹⁶ and Silberman¹⁷ have noted this distrust or hatred of black leaders by the black masses.

In Durant, the most ardent critics of black leadership are the young black radicals who accuse black leaders of reflecting white middle-class life-styles and a middle-class point of view on race-related issues. The criticism of these militants is somewhat blunted by the fact that they have limited constituencies. However, in spite of the ambivalence toward black leaders, these leaders do appear to be able to mobilize general community support when faced with a race-related crisis.

- (7) Durant's black community does not possess the old established black families that exist in other communities and tend to provide leadership and stability, nor are there large black commercial enterprises that can provide business capital for black businessmen.

¹⁶Harry M. Scoble, "Effects of Riots on Negro Leadership," in Louis H. Masotti and Dan R. Bowen ed., Riots and Rebellion (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1968), p. 342.

¹⁷Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in Black and White (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 200-201.

Watters and Cleghorn have noted that northern communities frequently lack this established black leadership and black capital.¹⁸

- (8) White leaders in recent years appear to be taking a greater interest in assisting blacks but this assistance is constrained by the fact that the community, in general, does not appear to be too sympathetic toward race-advancement issues. This fact appears to have caused the local political parties to soft-pedal these issues. Jones, Wilson and Keech have all noted that the posture of white elected officials in regard to race-related issues is influenced by the value structures of their constituents^{19, 20, 21}

¹⁸Pat Watters and Reese Cleghorn, Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Arrival of Negroes in Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Ward, 1967), p. 91.

¹⁹Mack H. Jones, "Black Officeholders in Local Government in the South: An Overview," Politics 1971, No. 2 (March, 1971), p. 70.

²⁰James Q. Wilson, "The Negro in American Politics: The Present," in John P. Davis, eds., The American Negro Reference Book (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 453.

²¹William R. Keech, The Impact of Negro Voting (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1968), pp. 107-108.

and Howard,²² Boesel,²³ Sindler,²⁴ Lipsky,²⁵ Clark,²⁶ Knowles²⁷ and Strange²⁸ all have concluded that the black community can expect to receive only limited gains through the political process. Even the UAW in Durant has been obliged to exercise some restraints in their traditional support for black rights. Economic elites, because they are sometimes less vulnerable to sanctions than politicians or agency leaders, occasionally appear to be in a better position to assist blacks. This elite support has been noted by Crain and

²²John Howard, "Blacks without Power," in Steven E. Deutsch and John Howard ed., Where Its At: Radical Perspectives in Sociology (New York: Harpers and Row, 1970), pp. 119-120.

²³Boesel, op. cit., pp. 43-45.

²⁴Allan P. Sindler, "Protest Against the Political Status of the Negro," in Harry A. Bailey, Jr., Negro Politics in America (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Co.), pp. 426-429.

²⁵Michael Lipsky, Protest in City Politics (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970), p. 182.

²⁶Kenneth B. Clark, "The Negro Elected Official in the Changing American Scene," The Black Politician, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July, 1969), pp. 10-12.

²⁷Knowles and Prewitt, op. cit., pp. 155-157.

²⁸Strange, op. cit., pp. 48-52.

Vanecko in their study of school desegregation.²⁹

- (9) Some black leaders believe that effective action on race-advancement issues is difficult to implement on the local level. They believe that the most effective implementation takes place on the state or national level through legislation and litigation. Strange has commented on this problem. He says: "The prospects for local solutions to the racial crisis in the metropolis are dim. . . . The inescapable conclusion is that solutions will have to come from Washington."³⁰
- (10) The black community in Durant can be characterized as relatively powerless to effect major changes in its condition. This powerlessness of black leaders has been documented in numerous studies. Hunter noted that "none of the leaders in the Negro community may operate in the same echelons of power as the

²⁹Robert L. Crain and James J. Vanecko, "Elite Influence in School Desegregation," in James Q. Wilson, City Politics and Public Policy (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1968), p. 148.

³⁰Strange, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

top leaders in the total community. . . ."31 Thompson found that "insofar as the formulation or execution of policies and practices governing the civic, political, economic, educational, professional and cultural life of the community is concerned, Negroes are powerless."32 Barth and Abu-Laban note that "Blacks hold positions of little importance in the community's institutional structures; their decisions have no serious ramifications for the larger community."33 Many other studies have arrived at the same conclusion including those by McKee,34 Sloan,35 Clark,36 Strange,37 Baron,38 Drake,39 Marshall,40

³¹Hunter, op. cit., p. 139.

³²Thompson, op. cit., p. 165.

³³Barth and Abu-Laban, op. cit., p. 76.

³⁴McKee, Negro Leadership in Grand Rapids, p. 2.

³⁵Sloan, op. cit., p. 228.

³⁶Clark, Dark Ghetto, pp. 155-156.

³⁷Strange, op. cit., p. 49.

³⁸Baron, op. cit., p. 33.

³⁹St. Clair Drake, "The Social and Economic Status of the Negro in the United States," Daedalus, Vol. 94, No. 4 (Fall, 1965), pp. 803-805.

⁴⁰T. A. Marshall, "Reflections on Power," Sociology, Vol. 3, No. 2 (May, 1969), p. 151.

Tucker,⁴¹ Comer,⁴² Silberman,⁴³ Pfautz,⁴⁴
and Scoble.⁴⁵

Black Powerlessness

The central conclusion growing out of our study is that the black community in Durant is relatively powerless to effect major changes in such important areas as housing, education, human relations and police-black community relations. In Durant, the black community lacks economic and social power. There are no black individuals or institutions in Durant with major financial resources. No black leader could be considered a community-wide leader. Black leaders have only limited access to important centers of decision-making. They can bring issues to the attention of the authorities but usually are unable to see that significant changes are effected. No black leader can be considered a social leader. A number of blacks serve in appointive or elective offices yet they have not been able to effect any significant changes in political, social or

⁴¹ Sterling Tucker, Black Reflections on White Power (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 70.

⁴² James P. Comer, "The Social Power of the Negro," Scientific American, Vol. 216, No. 4 (April, 1967), p. 27.

⁴³ Silberman, op. cit., p. 194.

⁴⁴ Pfautz, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴⁵ Scoble, Negro Politics in Los Angeles, p. 2.

economic priorities that would provide major improvements in housing, education or police-black community relations. The greatest potential for power in the black community is the black vote. This appears to be true in Durant and in most communities with sizeable black populations. Yet social scientists have noted the difficulties involved in translating votes into social and economic benefits. A number of studies have pointed to this difficulty. Jones, in his study of local government in the South, reports: "Black office holders . . . have not had significant success in reordering the priorities of the bodies on which they serve and they have enjoyed only limited success in increasing the black community's share of benefits and services" ⁴⁶ and Wilson notes that utilizing the political process "can only marginally affect the income, housing, occupation or life changes of Negro electorates." ⁴⁷ Keech has noted that black minorities should not expect that the vote will be of paramount importance in helping them achieve social justice. He finds that elected officials will only support race advancement measures when these do not conflict with their own values or with those of a majority of the voters. He says: "The prospects that votes will help eliminate basic inequalities in the life chances of Negroes

⁴⁶ Jones, op. cit., p. 70.

⁴⁷ Wilson, "The Negro in American Politics," p. 456.

are contingent on the degree to which appropriate programs fit within the value structure of elites [elected officials] and voting majorities."⁴⁸

Keech seems to have touched on the crux of the problem involved in translating votes into solutions. In order for black voters to be effective, they must coordinate their efforts with one or more loci of power within the larger community. However most other loci of power including political parties, labor unions, business, school boards and religious communities seem constrained from making additional concessions to the black community by widespread resistance from the larger community.

Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

It was felt that the limitations of this study are the limitations inherent in any one-man study of community leadership. Certainly a survey team would have been able to undertake attitudinal surveys that would have provided much additional valuable information regarding the black community and its relationship to black leaders.

As the study of the issue-areas progressed it was clear that there was one important problem area--unemployment--that has not developed into a public issue-area.

⁴⁸Keech, op. cit., pp. 107-108.

Bachrach and Baratz have indicated that leaders sometimes are able to prevent problems from developing into public issues.⁴⁹ However, there did not appear to be any "conspiracy" on the part of black leaders to deliberately ignore this problem area. Rather it appeared that unemployment has not emerged as an important issue-area because it has been clear to black leaders that it is one that can not be dealt with effectively at the local level.

It is also important to point out that although we have painted what might be regarded as a uniformly bleak picture of race relations in Durant during the past decade, the period should not be viewed as one uniformly lacking in hope and achievement. During the late fifties and early sixties signs of racial progress were limited. However, the middle sixties was a period in which there was a great deal of protest activity and considerable optimism among black leaders in Durant regarding the possibility of modifying their situation. It was also a period when white leaders, recognizing that blacks had legitimate grievances, tried to make some concessions to the black community. In recent years, however, Durant's black leaders again appear to be more pessimistic regarding the possibility of achieving important goals for the black community.

⁴⁹Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, op. cit.

There are many similarities among the conclusions emerging from this study and those growing out of other studies of black leadership, but there are also some important differences. This would lead one to suggest that there is a need for additional studies of black leadership in a variety of community settings with differing economic, social and political environments in order to determine the effect of these factors on leadership styles and goals.

Durant's Black Leaders and the Future

Most of the black leaders dealt with in this study are attempting to arrive at solutions by working within the on-going social system. However, many black leaders in Durant appear to be somewhat confused about objectives in the immediate future. Blacks appeared at one time to feel that federal and state legislation and litigation would solve many of their problems. However, they have learned that even where legislation provides access to the larger society, the white community utilizes other methods of preventing blacks from achieving the rights of full citizenship. In Durant, this has been particularly true in the area of housing where it would appear that private interests still prevent blacks from exercising their legal rights. Even where full access is available, blacks find that the negative attitudes of the white community serve

as a kind of psychological barrier to full participation. In Durant, this appears to have occurred in the public schools. Blacks feel that many white administrators, counselors, teachers and students maintain an attitude of covert hostility toward them. This hostility of the larger community to full integration has caused some national black spokesmen to re-evaluate their traditional support for an integrated society and to question whether the full development of black people might not be most readily achieved in a separate black society. However, black leaders in Durant do not yet appear ready to abandon their historic commitment to an integrated society.

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