

# Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in Newark and Detroit During the Summer of 1967

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All responsibility for the contents of this paper resides with the author.

In comparison to the “race riots” of the World War I and World War II era, the urban unrest that erupted in America’s cities during the mid-to late 1960s seems to represent a different class of phenomena. The riots that took place earlier in the century were characterized by street melees which pitted groups of white and black civilians against one another over access to recreational and residential space. Participants sought to inflict bodily harm on one another as a means of defending their turf. Few riot related deaths in Chicago (1919) or Detroit (1943) were attributed to police action. By contrast, episodes of the urban unrest that took place during the 1960s were marked primarily by conflict between black residents and predominantly white police/military forces (Hahn and Feagin 1970:183). The vast majority of riot-related deaths in these cases were attributed to the police or National Guard. (Bergesen 1980)

Furthermore, the main targets of rioters during the 1960s were business establishments operated by white merchants in black neighborhoods, not civilians of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Violence was oriented toward the destruction and/or appropriation of property, not interpersonal assaults, with the exception of police officers who were charged with protecting such property. Thus, as Janowitz (1968) notes, the form that urban unrest took during the 1960s differs notably from riots that occurred earlier in the century. Given their orientation toward property violence, the 1960s era events may be best characterized as “commodity riots”, distinguished from the “communal” riots of previous decades. Yet, despite noting these differences of form, we must continue to address whether the underlying structural conditions which gave rise to these events were indeed similar, and if so, whether a general model of riot violence still holds. To address this matter, I turn to the cases of Newark and Detroit in the summer of 1967.

The summer of 1967 represents the apex of the 1960s cycle of urban unrest, with 164 “civil disorders” breaking out in 128 cities. (National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorder 1968:113). Of these disturbances, Newark (July 12-17) and Detroit (July 23-28) were the most severe in terms of property damage and loss of life. In Newark, over 10 million dollars of property was damaged and 23 people killed (all but 2 were African American). In Detroit, 22 million dollars of property was damaged and 43 people killed. (National Committee on Civil Disorders 1968:107). Such figures would not be matched again until the Los Angeles Riot of 1992.

Both disturbances were set off by police activities. In Newark, an African American cab driver named John Smith drove around a parked police car. He was subsequently stopped and arrested, during which time he was severely beaten. As he was dragged into the 4<sup>th</sup> precinct headquarters, a crowd began to assemble from a public housing project across the street. When police allowed a small group of civil rights leaders to visit the prisoner, they demanded that Mr. Smith be taken to a hospital. Emerging from the building, these civil rights leaders begged the crowd to stay calm, but they were shouted down. Soon a volley of bricks and bottles was launched at the precinct house and police stormed out to confront the assembly. As the crowd dispersed they began to break into stores on the nearby commercial thoroughfare, Springfield Avenue. The riot had begun. Within 48 hours, National Guard troops entered the city, and with their arrival the level of violence intensified.

In Detroit, police vice squad officers executed a raid on an after hours drinking club or “blind pig” at Twelfth Street and Clairmount Avenue. They were expecting to

round up a few patrons, but instead found 82 people inside holding a party for two returning Vietnam veterans. Yet, the officers attempted to arrest everyone who was on the scene. While the police awaited a “clean-up crew” to transport the arrestees, a crowd gathered around the establishment in protest. (Locke 1969:27, National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders 1968:85). After the last police car left, a small group of men who were “confused and upset because they were kicked out of the only place they had to go” lifted up the bars of an adjacent clothing store and broke the windows. (Personal Interview, Roosevelt Hurt, June 17, 2001). From this point of origin, further reports of vandalism diffused. As police and military troops sought to regain control of the city, violence escalated.

### ***Police Brutality***

The precipitating incidents that touched off these events were not isolated occurrences. Rather, they reflected an ongoing pattern of harassment at the hands of predominantly white police forces. In Detroit, the “Big Four” or “Tac Squad” roamed the streets, searching for bars to raid and prostitutes to arrest. They frequently stopped youths who were driving or walking through the 12<sup>th</sup> street neighborhood. They verbally degraded these youths, calling them “boy” and “nigger”, asking them who they were and where they were going. (Fine 1989:98). Likewise, in Newark, police stops of black motorists and pedestrians were routine. A community activist, who by day worked with police officers to help foster mutual understanding, recalled being stopped almost every night on his way home from work (Personal Interview, Tom Carmichael 6/21/02). Most of the time, black residents were asked to produce identification, and having suffered their requisite share of humiliation, were allowed to proceed on their way. But if one could not produce “proper” identification, this could lead to arrest or worse. In a few notable cases, police stops led to the injury or death of those who were detained.

In Newark, the case of Lester Long readily comes to mind. On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1965, while cruising around the city in their 1955 Chevrolet, Lester Long and his companions drove past an unmarked police car that was traveling in the opposite direction. They were promptly tailed and stopped at a nearby corner, upon which they were asked to produce identification. The officers on duty doubted the authenticity of Long’s papers. They released his companions, but placed him in the back of the patrol car. While the police were checking into his prior arrest record, Long jumped out of the patrol car and fled along the adjacent boulevard toward a crowd of patrons that had just left a local nightclub. Before he could reach the sidewalk, Lester Long was shot in the back of the head by a patrolman’s service revolver. Despite the fact that deadly force was not warranted under the circumstances, and despite inconsistencies in their testimony, neither of the patrolmen involved in the shooting was prosecuted.

That same summer, Bernard Rich, a 26-year old African-American male, died in police custody under mysterious circumstances while locked in a jail cell. Two weeks later, the police, at another traffic stop, shot a 27-year old black motorists during a high-speed pursuit. Finally, on Christmas Eve, while investigating an alleged mugging outside a Ukrainian social club, police detained a group of teenagers. In the process of searching the youths, who were pushed up against a brick wall, one of the officer’s guns discharged, fatally wounding Walter Mathis, age 17. Like the other shooting victims, he

died from a wound to the back of the head. No officers were indicted for this shooting, but adding insult to injury, Mathis' brother Walter and three other companions were arrested on suspicion of larceny. (Porambo 1971:39-59, Wright 1968:4-5).

As suggested by the aforementioned examples, few cases of police abuse in Newark ever made it to a jury. Police-related shootings and beatings for the most part were not prosecuted, and efforts by the black community to generate a civilian police review board were stymied by city hall. (National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders 1968:58)

“The police have always been defensive about the brutality charge. Since 1960, they have had a complaint system of their own. Of sixty complaints made in six years, the police investigators have substantiated the charge of brutality two times. In addition, although rejecting CORE'S demand in 1965 for a civilian review board, the Mayor decided to refer future complaints of brutality to the FBI and county prosecutor. From September 1965 until August 1967, 7 cases were reported but no action was taken on any. The case of cab-driver Smith was the first referred to the FBI in more than a year.” (Hayden 1968:15)

Police in Newark were not only brutal, but notoriously corrupt, running gambling rackets, operating car theft rings, and shaking down local merchants for protection money. It was widely believed that the Mafia had substantial contacts within the police force, affording them an informal veto on police appointments (Porambo 1971:64-65). In December 1965 an Essex County Grand Jury investigation revealed that there were overlapping payroll records of Newark police department employees and a mob-related contractor (Wright 1968:5). This combination of police misuse of force, rampant corruption and the intransigence of the justice system when dealing with police misconduct cases deeply damaged black people's faith in the police. In post-riot press release, the Committee of Concern (a local civil rights organization) stated:

“A large segment of the Negro people are convinced that the single continuously lawless element operating in the community is the police force itself, and its callous disregard for human rights. Many independent observers believe this position has merit””. (Report for Action p32, Porambo 1971:64)

In Detroit, black civilians fared little better than their Newark counterparts with respect to encounters with the police. As in Newark, many black Detroiters believed that the police were themselves a criminal element who acted in concert with Mafia bosses to reap profits from vice activity in the ghetto. Police Commissioner George Edwards confirmed this view in his testimony before the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, testifying that the police had “strong tie-ins” with reputed mobsters. (Fine 1989:101). But the main issue in the minds of Detroit's black residents was police harassment and police brutality, which they identified in a Detroit Free Press Survey as the number one problem they faced in the period leading up to the riot. (Detroit Free Press 1968, Fine 1989, Thomas 1967).

“Police sometimes used excessive force against their prisoners in the station house or against individuals in the ghetto, where white policemen believed themselves both hated and in the presence of danger. The likelihood that misuse of force might occur was increased by the fact that most police contacts with civilians were not subject to close surveillance and the police could claim they had acted in self-defense or because the suspect had resisted arrest. The head of the Detroit NAACP remarked in 1965 that at

one time in Detroit ‘every Negro arrested somehow fell down and suffered a cracked skull’ (Fine 1989:100).

Such excessive use of force was manifested in the 1962 police shooting of a black prostitute named Shirley Scott who, like Lester Long of Newark, was shot in the back while fleeing from the back of a patrol car. Other high profile cases of police brutality in Detroit included the severe beating of another prostitute, Barbara Jackson, in 1964, and the beating of Howard King, a black teenager, for “allegedly disturbing the peace”. (Fine 1989:117)

A number of citizens in both cities suggested that the police might not have been so brutal had they been more racially representative of the communities they served. “The most frequent recommendation of Negro community people for improving police-community relations was to increase the number of Negro policemen” (Report for Action 1968:35). The fact of the matter is that African-Americans were woefully underrepresented on both police forces. Although the number of black police officers had nearly doubled in Detroit between July 1966 and May 1967 from 134 to 227, blacks still constituted only 5% of the overall police force. Furthermore, as of April 1966, only one out of every eight black officers held a rank higher than that of patrolman. (Fine 1989:109). In Newark, black officers accounted for 145 of 1322 total officers or 10.9%, a somewhat better figure than Detroit, but only 9 black officers held a rank above that of patrolman. (Report for Action 1968: 24) Given these numbers, black residents of Detroit and Newark saw the police not as part of the community but as an occupation force. According to the president of the Detroit NAACP in 1965:

“The Negroes in Detroit feel they are part of an occupied country. The Negroes have no rights which the police have to respect”. (Detroit Free Press January 10, 1965).

In a similar vein, activist Tom Hayden made the following pronouncement for Newark:

“Dominated by Italians who run Newark politics, tainted by alleged underworld connections, including a token of about 150 blacks among its 1400 members (all of them in subordinated positions) the police department seems to many Negroes to be an armed agency defending the privileges of the city’s shrinking white community” (Hayden 1967:15)

Resident’s negative attitudes toward the police were matched by policemen’s negative attitudes toward the black community. Lower level white officers in Detroit saw themselves as defenders of the white majority against the rising black minority. They saw blacks as a “privileged” minority who were “ready to use violence” to attain a “greater advantage vis-à-vis the white community”. (Fine 1989:97). Such views provided ready justification for police violence against black civilians. According to journalist Ron Porambo, Newark police officers felt that “A little brutality would keep ‘them’ in their place”. (Porambo 1971:64). This proclivity for violence against blacks spilled over to police actions during the riots themselves, which may explain why 69% of Detroit riot fatalities and 80% of Newark riot fatalities were attributed to police and armed forces. Given the high percentages of police shootings, Bergesen (1980) labeled the events that took place in Newark and Detroit, “police riots”.

## ***Political Power***

The mutual suspicion and hostility that characterized the relationship between black citizens and the police in Newark and Detroit were matched by feelings of political powerlessness and acrimony toward political officials. By the late 1960s, both Newark and Detroit had sizable black communities. In Newark, African Americans constituted a numerical majority. In Detroit, the black population was rapidly approaching the 50 percent mark. Yet despite these numbers, in neither city did black people hold the reins of political power.

This disparity of political power was self-evident in Newark, when Mayor Hugh Addonizio, who had professed sensitivity to black concerns during his election campaign, failed to appoint blacks to leadership positions in his administration. Assemblyman George Richardson, who served briefly in Addonizio's administration, testified that "Negroes supported Mr. Addonizio for mayor with the idea that he would appoint black people to responsible positions, where they could get the experience needed to take over the city when a Negro mayor was elected" Richardson continued "Negroes found out immediately after the election that the supposed partnership did not really exist." (Report for Action 1968, 1972:7).

Most tellingly was the manner with which the mayor handled a school board vacancy by appointing an Irish high school graduate, Councilman James T. Callaghan over Wilbur Parker, the first African-American certified public accountant in the State of New Jersey. Based on their respective credentials, it was obvious which candidate was the most qualified, but political favors carried more weight than formal qualifications. Members of the black community, particularly those who had a stake in the education system, were incensed. Fred Means, president of an organization named Negro Educators of Newark, even alluded to the possible of riot if this decision were not reversed. He bluntly stated that, "The Negro community is in turmoil over this injustice. If immediate steps are not taken, Newark might become another Watts" (Report for Action 1968:15).

Further contention resulted over the administration of federal anti-poverty funds. As part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the federal government sought to channel funds to community groups in poor neighborhoods as a means of empowering poor people to address their indigenous problems. Under the Community Action Program, groups like Newark's United Community Corporation could apply for federal funds to launch jobs programs, day care centers, and other programs people in the community felt were needed at the time. Mayor Addonizio feared that the UCC would become an alternative power base, which would then challenge his leadership. To a certain degree, Addonizio was right. UCC took on functions akin to a government in waiting, resolving problems that the city government was unable or unwilling to handle, such as confronting slumlords about building conditions.

"Largely excluded from positions of traditional political power, Negroes, tutored by a handful of militant social activists who had moved into the city in the early 1960s, made use of the anti-poverty program, in which poor people were guaranteed representation, as a political springboard. This led to friction between the United Community Corporation, the agency that administered the anti-poverty program, and the city administration" (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders 1968:59)

Addonizio petitioned the Federal Government for changes in the Community Action Program that would make funding of community groups subject to mayoral approval. Eventually, notwithstanding the Mayor's efforts, Congress declined to renew funding for the CAP program. Black residents who had been politically empowered by CAP now felt deeply disappointed, but were unwilling to fade into the shadows. They channeled their anger against Addonizio and the federal government into a campaign to halt construction of a proposed medical school complex. Militant leaders like Amiri Baraka, then known as Leroi Jones spoke of revolution. The black community had become politically organized and self-aware. The genie was out of the bottle and could not be put back in.

In Detroit, the situation was somewhat different. The new mayor was young, charming and liberal in his political orientation. His desire to help the black community was more sincere than his Newark counterpart. In his first term in office Mayor Jerome Cavanaugh revived the Committee on Community Relations and instructed it to enforce fair employment practices among firms holding municipal contracts. Making good on campaign promises, he appointed several African-Americans to positions in his cabinet such as Alfred Pelham, who became city comptroller and, perhaps more significantly, George Edwards, as commissioner of police. One NACCP official described Edward's appointment to the office of police commissioner as akin to Lyndon Johnson's appointment of Thurgood Marshall to the U.S. Supreme Court. (Fine 1989:19). Compared to their counterparts in Newark, Detroit's black community was well represented, with two black congressmen, three municipal judges, and twelve members of the state legislature. (Fine 1989:32). With a liberal mayor, responsive to black people's concerns, it seemed that Detroit was a "model city" for race relations. Nicholas Hood, a black city councilman, summarized this spirit prior to the riots stating that "Detroit is far ahead of any major city in America because we have a city administration that will not only listen to the concerns brought to it but will set out to work on these concerns". (Fine 1989:33).

Yet, despite these prominent appointments, black political leadership, and Mayor Cavanaugh's good working relationship with mainstream civil rights groups, a significant segment of the black community in Detroit felt disenfranchised, frustrated by what they perceived to be the relatively slow pace of racial change and persistent racial inequality. Although black Detroiters had higher incomes, lower unemployment rates and higher levels of education relative to their peers in other cities, these measures paled in comparison with the gaps in income, employment, and education in Detroit among whites and blacks. According to one long-time community activist, blacks in Detroit did not compare themselves to blacks in other cities. Rather, they compared themselves to whites in Detroit. Such comparisons helped give rise to militancy in the black community. (Ron Hewitt, Personal Interview 6/29/01 ). Local militant leaders like the Reverend Albert Cleague spoke of self-determination and separatism for black people, arguing that whites were incapable and or unwilling to share power. At a black power rally in Detroit in early July 1967, H. Rap Brown foreshadowed the course of future events, stating that if "Motown" didn't come around, "we are going to burn you down". The irony of this statement is that in Detroit Mayor Cavanaugh, unlike Hugh Addonizio of Newark, was making a real effort to turn the city around, to make the city government more responsive to black people. Yet, despite his best efforts, the reforms instituted by Cavanaugh failed

to address many of the fundamental problems faced by black residents in Detroit, problems that were rooted in the changing structure of America's cities: shortages of affordable housing, loss of industrial jobs, and the increased concentration of poor blacks in poor neighborhoods. Given these structural conditions, no amount of incremental reforms could stanch the rise of black militancy

### *Housing*

Police brutality and a sense of political powerlessness, although major concerns in the period leading up to the riot, were not the only problems experienced by Detroit and Newark residents. Both cities were beset by a myriad of social problems that all had potential effects for fomenting collective violence. Of these, the quality and availability of housing was a major source of contention among black residents and government officials. A public opinion survey by the Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorder in New Jersey, otherwise known as the Hughes Commission, revealed that 54% of black respondents indicated that "housing problems had a 'great deal to do with the riot'". This was a larger margin than those who said that unemployment (53%), lack of equal job opportunities (52%), broken promises by city officials (52%) and unresponsiveness of city officials to Negro wishes (46%) had a "great deal to do with the riot". Notably, only 46% of black respondents indicated that police brutality was a key factor in causing the riot. When asked to consider Newark's most serious problem, 37% of black respondents mentioned housing, second only to high living costs (44%). These responses were indicative of the dire need for affordable housing in Newark at that time. (Report for Action 1968:55)

Much of the existing housing in Newark during the mid to late 1960s was uninhabitable by modern safety and health standards. The city's own application for the Model Cities program in 1966 "described over 40,000 of the city's 136,000 housing units as substandard or dilapidated". (Report for Action 1968:55) Slumlords collected rent but often failed to perform regular maintenance, let alone improvements, to their properties. (Sternlieb 1969). Sometimes landlords simply set fire to their property in hope of receiving an insurance windfall. Between 1961 and 1967 Newark averaged 3620 structural fires per year. (Winters 1979:5). Due to their limited housing options, blacks in Newark paid more money for lesser quality domiciles:

"There can be no question that Newark's non-whites pay more than whites for substandard housing. In a special report of the U.S. Census of Housing HC(S1)-94, the variation in the prices paid by whites vs. non-whites is highlighted. If we analyze the data for substandard housing alone, the median rent was \$61.00 per month; for non-whites it was \$72.00 per month. Thirty percent of the white renters of substandard housing paid less than \$55.00 per month, as contrasted with only 12.4% of non-whites. On the other hand, only 10.5% of whites paid \$80.00 or more, while 22.2% of the non-whites paid that amount". (Sternlieb and Barry 1967:9)

The alternative to private housing for many low-income Newark residents was not much better. Public housing, which consisted of high-rise high-density projects, was neither conducive to their well being nor the people who served them. Yet by 1967, "a vast constellation of low-income public housing projects was already standing in the



Central Ward”. Eleven percent of all Newarkers lived in such projects, one of the highest concentrations of public housing in the nation. (Winters 1979:8)

“Some 18,000 people are now crowded into an area with a radius of about a mile and a half. There is little grass or open space around the project grounds. There are no lavatory facilities on first floors or near playgrounds. It is virtually impossible in densely populated vertical silos for parents to supervise their youngsters, for maintenance workers to keep up with their chores, or for policemen to do their job adequately”. (Report for Action 1968, 1971:56)

Public housing in Newark merely helped concentrate poverty and despair in one centralized location, further isolating the black poor from the society at large. One former public housing resident, whose family left the projects just before the 1967 riot stated:

“I remember being in the projects and during the daytime there would be just as many people walking around during the week as on a Saturday, so that should give you some indication of what is what like. In the summertime there were lots of folks just sitting on the benches or just hanging around the corner... There was so much depression and lack of hope; the people just had no hope”. (Gerald Drinkard, Personal Interview 10/5/01)

Affordable housing, or the lack thereof, was also a fundamental concern for black Detroiters. When polled by the Detroit Free Press regarding the problems that contributed most to the rioting in the previous year, respondents listed “poor housing” as one of the most important issues, second only to police brutality. (Detroit Free Press 1968, Thomas 1997:130-131). Detroit had a long history of housing discrimination stretching back to the turn of the century when black migrants first arrived in the city and middle-class African-Americans sought to integrate predominantly white neighborhoods. During the 1940s and 1950s white Detroiters sought to block the entry of blacks into their neighborhoods by legal and extra-legal means, in one instance building a six-foot high, one-foot wide concrete wall, to separate themselves from potential black neighbors. In a similar vein, white residents engaged in several bitter campaigns during the 1940s and 1950s to prevent the integration of public housing located in predominantly white areas (Farley et al. 2000:154-161) “For those white Detroiters unwilling or unable to flee, black movement into their neighborhood was the moral equivalent of war” (Sugrue 1996:246) By the 1960s, with the exception of some movement of blacks into formerly white neighborhoods, little had changed. In fact segregation had become more pronounced. “Despite the spatial expansion of black residences in the 1950s, ‘invisible walls’ continued to separate whites and blacks. Blacks, indeed were actually more segregated in their housing in 1960 than they had been 30 years earlier” (Fine 1989:10)

The quality and cost of housing differed substantially for blacks and whites in Detroit:

“Whereas 69.6 percent of Detroit’s whites in 1960 lived in housing built before 1939, 91 percent of nonwhites lived in such dwellings. The homes non-whites lived in were less valuable and less soundly built than white-owned homes. The median value of owner-occupied non-white homes in 1960 was \$10,200, that of owner occupied white homes, \$12,600; and 27.9% of non-white homes, as compared to 9.8% of white homes, were dilapidated or deteriorating. Unlike Detroit whites, 64.7 percent of whom owned their homes, 61.1% of non-whites lived in rental units. Although non-whites lived in inferior dwellings as compared to whites, they nevertheless paid approximately the same rent as

their white counterparts: \$76 was the median rent per month for non-whites, \$77 for whites. Since they had lower incomes than whites, rent absorbed 29.2 percent of the income of non-white renters, as compared to 19.7 percent of the income of white renters (Fine 1989:11)

For black residents who could not afford private housing, public housing in Detroit was little better than public housing in Newark. Like Newark's public housing, Detroit's projects were mostly high density and hyper-segregated, "reinforcing isolation by race and income and reducing informal supervision over children and youth". Yet applicants for public housing in Detroit continued to outpace the number of available units. (Thomas 1997:26-27) This pattern occurred by design as "slums" were cleared and residents relocated to the already crowded projects of the center city (Sugrue 1996:87).

In both cities the shortage of housing was further exacerbated by "urban renewal" projects. In Detroit, entire neighborhoods were bulldozed to make way for freeways that linked city and suburbs. Not surprisingly, the neighborhoods that met their fate in such manner were predominantly black in their composition. To build Interstate 75, Paradise Valley or "Black Bottom", the neighborhood that black migrants and white ethnics had struggled over during the 1940s, was buried beneath several layers of concrete. As the oldest established black enclave in Detroit, "Black Bottom" was not merely a point on the map, but the heart of Detroit's black community, commercially and culturally. The loss for many black residents of Detroit was devastating, and the anger burned for years thereafter. In the meantime, former residents had to find shelter. Moving westward they poured into the second established black enclave in Detroit, the 12<sup>th</sup> street neighborhood, a seemingly stable middle class area. As a result of the influx of less affluent residents from the east side, this neighborhood soon experienced overcrowding and decay. It would be the epicenter of the 1967 riot.

In Newark, "urban renewal" or "Negro removal" as it was referred to by local residents, would play an equally important role in fomenting rebellion. Plans were already in place to build superhighways which would bisect the black community. (Winters 1979:4-5). Then in the early months of 1967 the city proposed the "clearance" of 150 acres of "slum" land to build a medical school/hospital complex. Of course, this would involve the demolition of numerous homes in the predominantly black Central Ward. Given the shortage of housing in other areas, the effects of such displacement were potentially devastating. A Rutgers University study stated "if the total of units "in poor condition" was calculated, only 4133 vacant units were actually available". This report further noted that "a substantial part of the housing outside the core area (3223 or these 4133 units) was too high priced for the people who would need relocation". (Chernick et al. cited in Report for Action 1968:62). Activist Tom Hayden succinctly summarized the resident's fears:

"The city's vast programs for urban renewal, highways, downtown development, and most recently, a 150 acre Medical School in the heart of the ghetto seemed almost deliberately designed to squeeze out this rapidly growing Negro community that represents a majority of the population" (Hayden 1968:6)

Upon hearing of the proposal, members of the local community quickly mobilized and began to hold protest rallies. Some of the same people who attended these rallies were present at the 4<sup>th</sup> precinct house, where the riot started that summer. The city's plan

to build the medical school, while demolishing black occupied homes, would help set the stage for future confrontation. (Winters 1979:48)

### ***Industrial Decay and Unemployment***

Amidst a backdrop of police brutality and housing crisis, a profound change was underway in the economic structure of cities like Newark and Detroit. By the late 1960s both cities were caught in the throes of industrial decline, for which black workers bore the brunt. The flight of manufacturing jobs, which had begun in the 1950s, accelerated during the 1960s. In Newark, the famed breweries that drew water from the polluted Passaic River shut down, as did the tanneries which fouled the water to begin with. The big conglomerates, Westinghouse and General Electric, who manufactured large appliances in Newark soon followed. In their wake, thousands of jobs were lost.

“Aggravating the growing deficit of resources even further was the postwar abandonment by industry, leaving fewer employment opportunities nearby for the lower skilled and unskilled who remained in or came into the city. Stripped of much of its leadership and other resources and faced with problems from before and after the war, the city came to be like a house ransacked” (Wright p57)

As a result of previous discrimination and poor education, black workers, who were concentrated in heavy industry, felt the impact of these changes more than white workers who had moved upward into managerial and professional jobs.

“When inadequate education is coupled with lack of work experience and training, and overt or built in discrimination the picture becomes even bleaker for the non-white. Although the Newark labor market has a total unemployment rate hovering around 4.3%, the Negroes in the city suffer an unemployment rate of 11.5%, twice as high as among whites (5.9%)”

But it was black youth, just entering the labor market, who seemed to have suffered the most in the long run. The Hughes Commission (1968) stated the following grim statistics. Among 16-19 year old Negro men, more than a third—37.8% are jobless. Considering that more than 40% of Newark’s Negroes are under the age of 15, an even more serious crisis lies ahead.” (Report for Action 1968, 1971:66)

Detroit, internationally recognized as a center of automobile production seemed to fare a little better economically than Newark. But beginning in the 1950s, the big car manufacturers, Ford, Chrysler and GM began to automate their assembly lines and outsource parts production to subcontractors located in other municipalities and foreign countries. (Sugrue 1996:128) Detroit, like Newark, was deindustrializing and black workers “felt the brunt” of this change:

“Data from the 1960 census make clear the disparate effect of automation and labor market constriction on African American workers. Across the city 15.9 percent of blacks, but only 5.8 percent of whites were out of work. In the motor vehicle industry, the black-white gap was even greater. 19.7 percent of black auto workers were unemployed, compared to only 5.8% of whites. Discrimination and de-industrialization proved to be a lethal combination...By the early 1960s, observers noted that a seemingly permanent class of underemployed and jobless blacks had emerged, a group that came to be known as the ‘long-term unemployed’ (Sugrue 1996:144)

Yet, as with Newark, it was the black youth of Detroit who were most impacted by the tidal wave of economic restructuring and it was these unemployed, alienated youth who would later serve as foot soldiers in the urban uprising that followed.

“The combination of discrimination and deindustrialization weighed most heavily on the job opportunities of young African-American men. Young workers, especially those who had no post-secondary education, found that entry-level operative jobs that had been open to their fathers or older siblings in the 1940s and early 1950s were gone. The most dramatic evidence of the impact of industrial change on young black workers was the enormous gap between black and white youth who had no attachment to the labor market...By the end of the 1950s, more and more black job seekers, reported by the Urban League, were demoralized, ‘developing patterns of boredom and hopelessness with the present state of affairs’ The anger and despair that prevailed among the young, at a time of national promise and prosperity, would explode on Detroit’s streets in the 1960s. (Sugrue 1996:147)

### *Ethnic Succession*

Accompanying this economic transformation was an equally significant demographic shift. As early as the 1950s, when industrial enterprises shut down their urban manufacturing plants and relocated jobs to the suburbs, white residents followed. This trend would intensify in Newark, Detroit and other American cities during the 1960s as throngs of white homeowners packed up and moved to the greener pastures of suburbia. The federal government played a key role in promoting this urban exodus, subsidizing the construction of housing by offering low interest loans to veterans and other “qualified” applicants, generally non-whites. Federal highway funds built the interstate that would carry white workers from the suburbs to downtown offices and back. Blacks, facing discrimination at the hands of realtors and/or lacking the resources necessary to move, were increasingly abandoned in the central cities. A “chocolate city, vanilla suburb” pattern had begun to take hold.

In Newark, as a result of post-war suburban migration, the white population plummeted to approximately 158,000 in 1967 from 363,000 in 1950 and 266,000 in 1960. Correspondingly, the black population of Newark rose from 70,000 in 1950 to 125,000 in 1960 and an estimated 220,000 in 1967. By 1967, a majority of Newark residents (55%) were African-American. According to educator Nathan Wright Jr., author of *Ready to Riot*, “No typical American city has as yet experienced such a precipitous change from a white to a black majority. (Wright 1968:16)

Demographic changes at the city level, were reflected in particular neighborhoods, namely the Central Ward, formerly home to a sizable concentration of immigrant and second generation Jews. Abandoning their homes and synagogues, these Jews, along with some Poles and Italians, fled for the suburbs of nearby South Orange, West Orange, and Livingston. There they rebuilt the institutions they had left behind. (Helmreich 1998) Between 1960 and 1967, two thirds of the white population of the Central Ward moved out. (Winters, 1979:87). By the time of the riot, the Central Ward was a predominantly black neighborhood, yet served by mostly Jewish owned businesses--- a recipe for ethnic tension.

Population change in Detroit took on similar dimensions. Like Newark, Detroit was swept by a wave of white flight. During the 1950s the white population of Detroit declined by 23%. Correspondingly, the percentage of non-whites rose from 16.1% to 29.1%. In sheer numbers the black population of Detroit increased from 303,000 to 487,000 during that decade. (Fine 1989:4) By 1967, the black population of Detroit stood at an estimated 40% of the total population. (National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders 1968:89-90). As in Newark, some neighborhoods were more affected by white flight than others. This was particularly true for the Twelfth Street neighborhood, where rioting broke out in the summer of 1967. According to historian, Thomas Sugrue:

“The consequences of flight were clear in the racial composition of the Twelfth Street area. Whereas virtually no blacks lived there in 1940 (the area was 98.7% white), the area was over one-third (37.2%) non-white in 1950. By 1960, the proportion of blacks to whites had nearly reversed: only 3.8 percent of the areas residents were white. Given that the first blacks did not move to the area until 1947 and 1948, the area underwent a complete racial transition in little more than a decade. Sugrue 1996:244)

This rapid turnover in population in the neighborhoods of Detroit and Newark brought with it the attendant ills of social disorganization, crime and further discrimination. For some scholars in Newark, this progression seemed to inevitably produce such effects. With respect to Newark, but applicable to Detroit as well, Nathan Wright Jr. stated the following:

“All societies strive more for order than for orderly but needed changes. Thus it would seem immediately fallacious to deny that gross discrimination did not exist in a city that has moved from an 85 percent white urban oriented majority in 1940 to a nearly 60 percent black, strongly rural oriented black majority in 1965. Newark has been—and is—the scene of massive urban change. Such change brings disorganization” (Wright p8)

In the words of historian, Sidney Fine, the impact of demographic change on Detroit’s Twelfth Street neighborhood was devastatingly clear:

“The transition from white to black on Detroit’s near northwest side occurred at a remarkably rapid rate...In a familiar pattern of neighborhood succession, as blacks moved in after World War II, the Jews moved out. The first black migrants to the area were middle class persons seeking to escape the confines of Paradise Valley. They enjoyed about “five good years” in their new homes until underworld and seedier elements from Hastings Street and Paradise Valley, the poor and indigent from the inner city, and winos and derelicts from skid row flowed into the area. Some of the commercial establishments on Twelfth Street gave way to pool halls, liquor stores, sleazy bars, pawn shops, and second hand businesses. Already suffering from a housing shortage and lack of open space, Twelfth Street became more “densely packed” as apartments were subdivided and six to eight families began to live where two had resided before. The 21,376 persons per square mile in the area in 1960 were almost double the city’s average. “The blight—human misery—was setting in”, a black man who lived in the area at the time recalled. “You could feel it in the air, smell it coming rancid out of the bars, watch it...on the faces of kids not 20 years old yet”. (Fine 1989:4)

### *Testing the Ethnic Succession Hypothesis*

Some twenty years earlier in Detroit and forty years prior in Chicago, one could observe the these same essential conditions: crowding, poverty, vice and crime, all corresponding to the mass migration of rural blacks into the former immigrant ghettos of the urban North. In previous research, (Herman 1999) I proposed that the violence which marked the Chicago Riot of 1919 and the 1943 Detroit riots was a product of demographic flux, rooted in social disorganization that accompanied racial change. In the remainder of this paper, I empirically address whether the violence that swept Newark and Detroit neighborhoods during the Summer of 1967 can be explained according to this same ethnic succession hypothesis.

Using a combination of census data and information on the location of riot-related fatalities (culled from official riot commission reports), I address whether the presence of riot related fatalities (as a measure of riot activity) corresponds to neighborhoods which experienced the most rapid rate of demographic change. The first step involved gathering demographic data at the census tract level for the entire city or SMSA. Such data included indicators of racial/ethnic composition (percent black, percent white, change in percent black, change in percent white), indicators of housing scarcity (persons/housing units and ratio of owners to renters), and indicators of economic well-being (percent males unemployed, median household income). In the maps and statistical models that follow, I used the census tract as my main unit of analysis, a proxy for neighborhoods, whose boundaries vary according to the observer.

The second step involved compiling a database of riot related fatalities for each riot, including the name, age, race, gender, and circumstances of death, as well as the day, time and street address where each fatality occurred . Using the address mapping or geocoding feature of Arcview GIS (Geographic Information Systems) software, I precisely determined where each fatality lies on a map of census tracts for the city. Linking a spreadsheet containing demographic data by census tract to a census tract boundary map, I overlaid the position of the riot fatalities with the demographic features of the neighborhoods in which these death occurred, thereby producing composite maps of riot fatalities and indicators of racial/ethnic change along with indicators of economic well-being. These maps are presented in Figures 4.1-4.11

Figure 1

## 1967 Newark Riot Fatalities and Percent Black, 1950

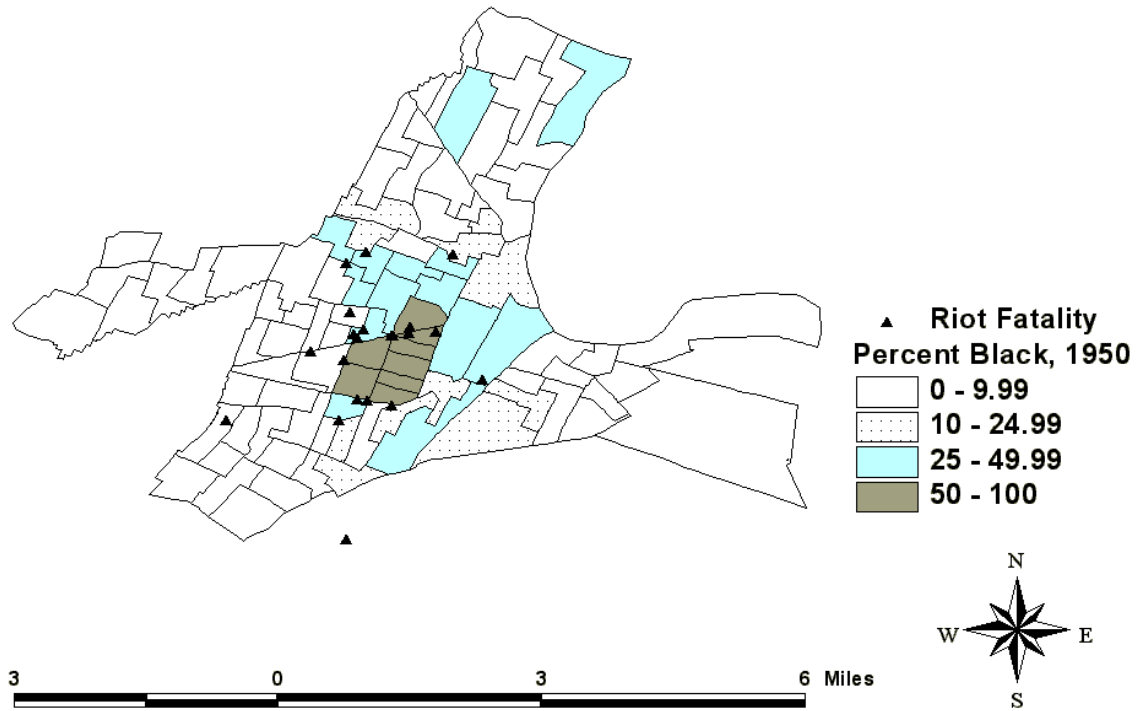


Figure 2

### 1967 Newark Riot Fatalities and Percent Black, 1960

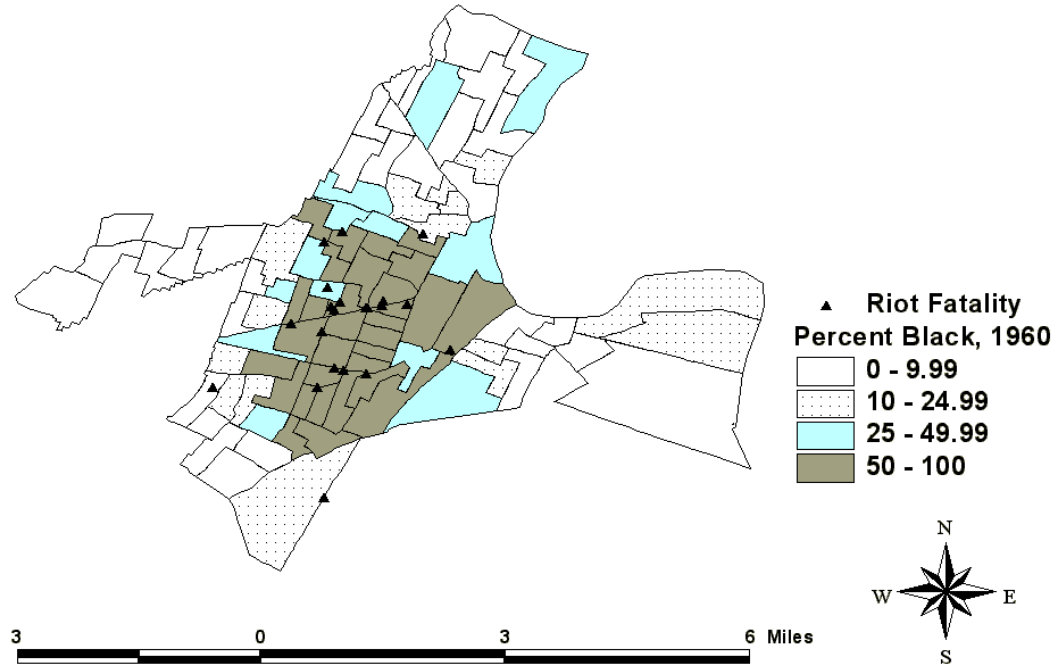
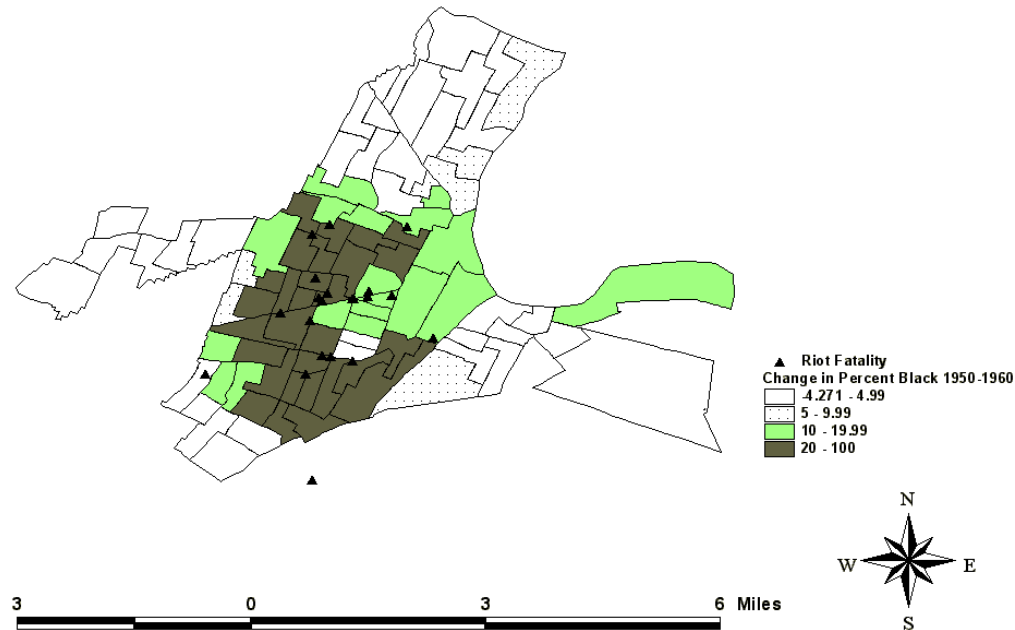




Figure 3

### 1967 Newark Riot Fatalities and Change in Percent Black, 1950-1960



Figures 1-3 display relationships among the location of Newark Riot fatalities and the changing racial/ethnic composition of Newark census tracts during the decade preceding the riot (1950-1960). Figure 1 shows the location of riot fatalities with respect to the distribution of black population (percent black) in 1950. Figure 2 looks at the black population distribution in 1960. Figure 3 examines the change in black population composition between 1950 and 1960.

Figures 1 and 2 reveal a significant expansion and concentration of black population in Newark's Central Ward during the 1950s. In 1950, only 8 census tracts had a black population greater than 50% of the tract's total population and 14 had a black population between 25 to 50 percent of the tract's total. By contrast, in 1960, 30 census tracts had a black population of 50% or more and ten tracts had a black population of 25-50%. Figure 3 reveals that the preponderance of riot fatalities took place in census tracts where the black population increased by more than 20% during the decade. This lends support to an ethnic succession explanation of riot violence. The areas that experienced the most demographic change had the greatest likelihood of being touched by riot related homicides.

Figures 4-5 look at the relationship between riot-related fatalities and economic indicators (percent males unemployed and median household income). Figure 4 reveals a general correspondence between high rates of male unemployment and the riot violence. The preponderance of deaths occurred in tracts where male unemployment was ranged between ten and twenty percent, with the exception of a cluster of fatalities along

Springfield Avenue which was a commercial, not residential, area. Figure 5 shows that riot fatalities were also generally associated with tracts that had the lowest levels of average household income. Based on the GIS map analysis, I tentatively conclude that both ethnic succession and economic deprivation played a role in contributing to the presence of riot violence in Newark neighborhoods during the Summer of 1967.

Figure 4

### 1967 Newark Riot Fatalities and Percent Males Unemployed, 1960



Figure 5

### 1967 Newark Riot Fatalities and Median Household Income, 1960



Figures 6-10 present the results of a comparable GIS analysis for Detroit riot fatalities census tracts.

Figure 6

### 1967 Detroit Riot Fatalities and Percent Black, 1950

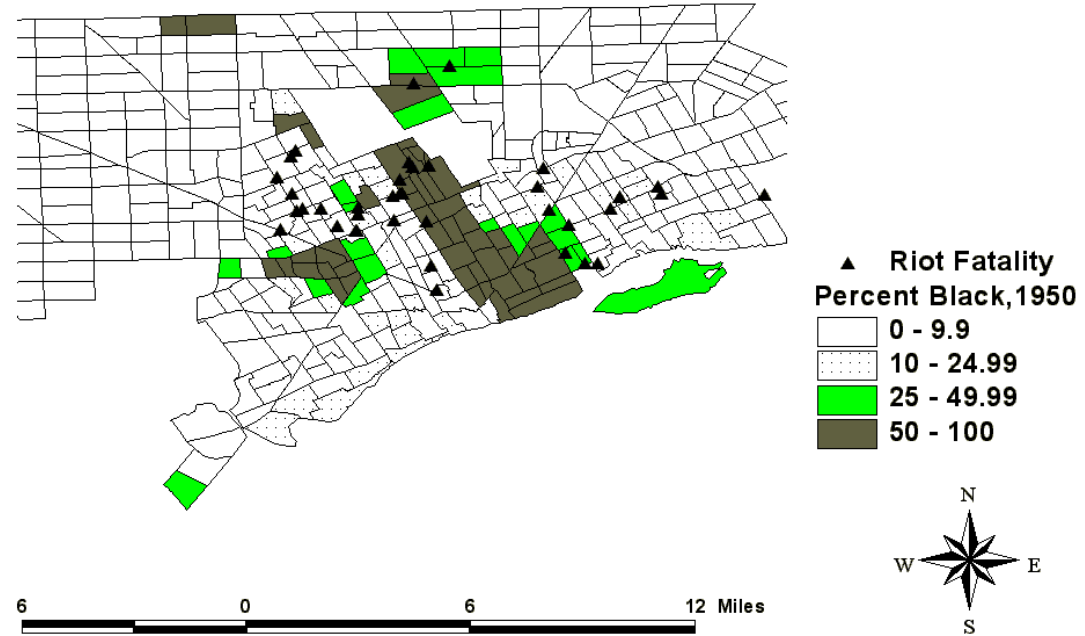


Figure 7

### 1967 Detroit Riot Fatalities and Percent Black, 1960

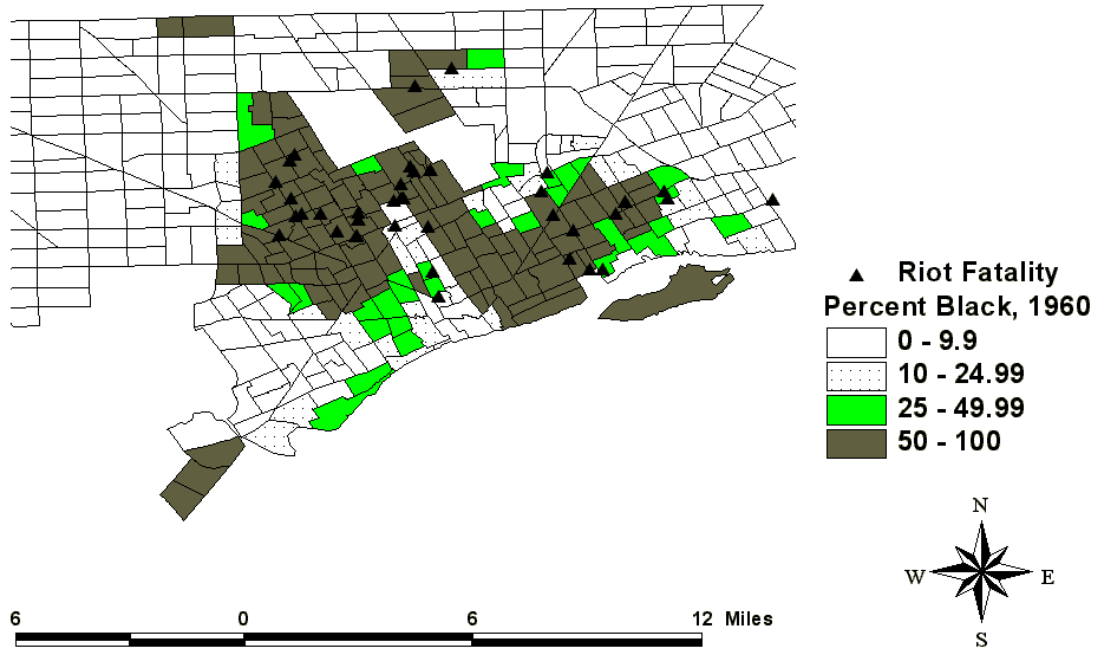
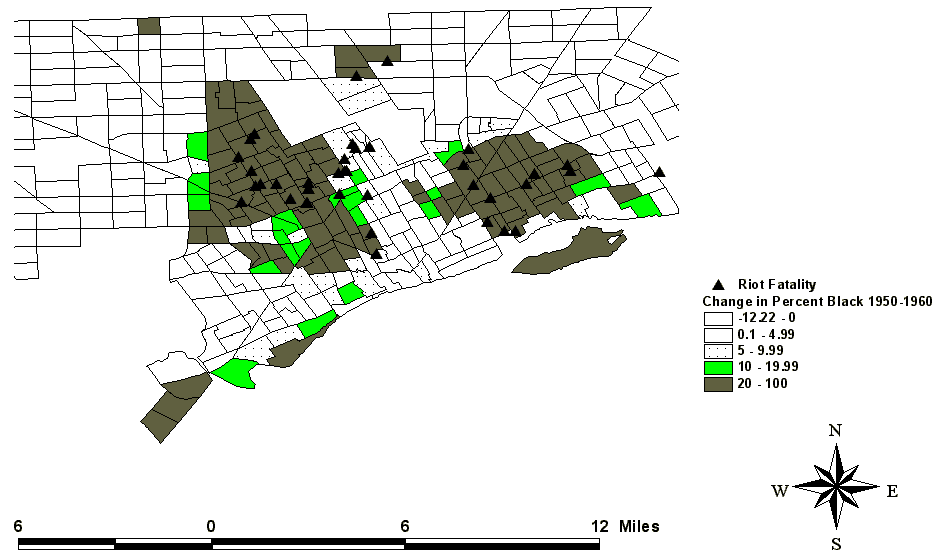


Figure 8

### 1967 Detroit Riot Fatalities and Change in Percent Black, 1950-1960



As illustrated by Figure 6, in 1950 the black population of Detroit was concentrated in the center of the city, an area known as Paradise Valley/Black Bottom. Between 1950 and 1960, several homes and businesses in that area were demolished to make way for the construction of Interstate 75. As shown in Figure 7, by 1960 much of the black population had relocated to enclaves on the east and west sides of Detroit. The concentration to the northwest, where many of the riot fatalities are located is the 12<sup>th</sup> street neighborhood--the neighborhood where the 1967 riot began. Overall, from 1950 to 1960 we see dispersion of black population from the center, yet increasing concentration of the black population in well-defined clusters. Figure 8 reveals that most of the riot related fatalities occurred in these areas on the west and east side of Detroit where the racial composition had changed most dramatically. With the exception of a few deaths clustered along Woodward Ave (center north) which was a commercial district, the vast majority of deaths took place in census tracts where the black population increased by more than twenty percent. This correspondence lends support to an ethnic succession explanation for riot violence.

Figure 9

### 1967 Detroit Riot Fatalities and Percent Males Unemployed, 1960

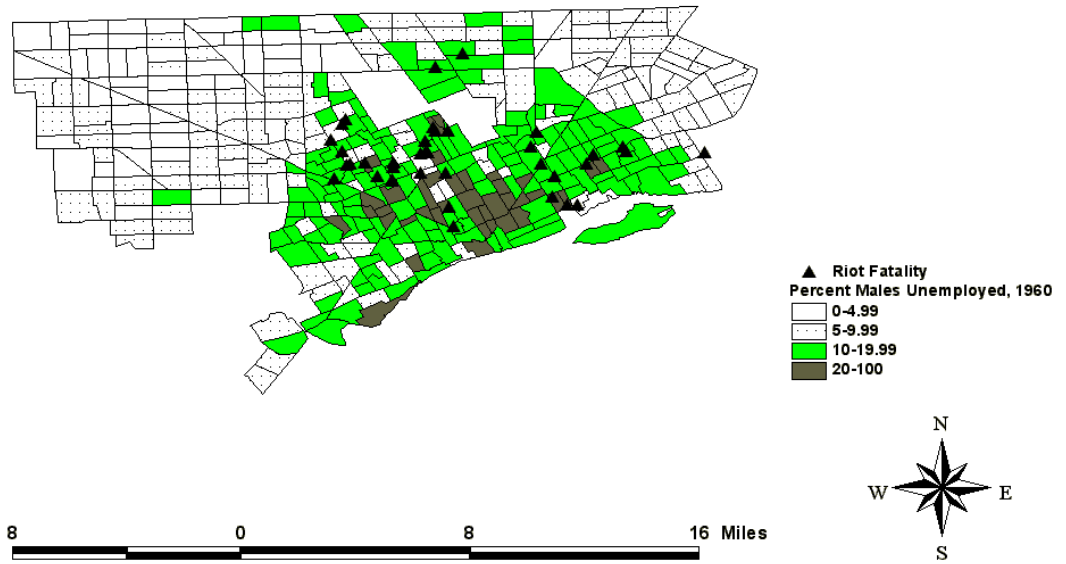
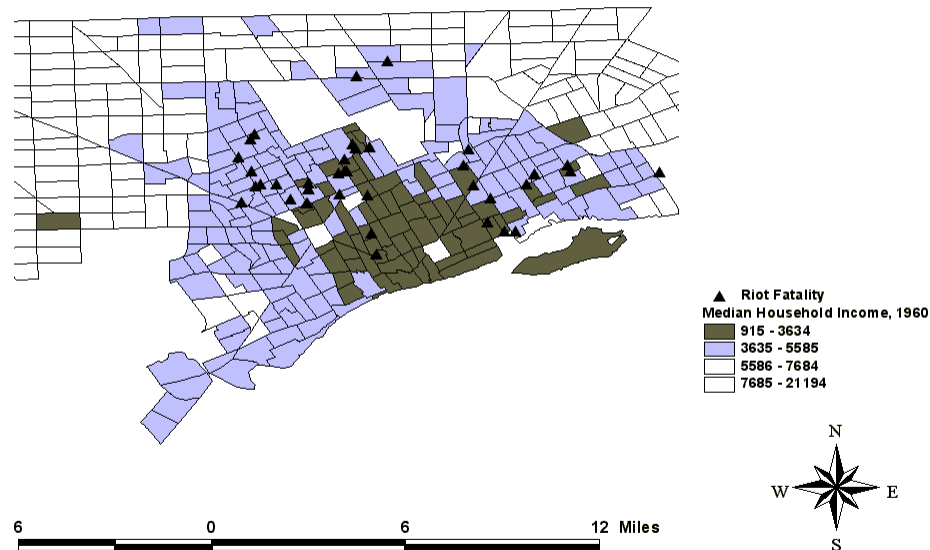


Figure 10

### 1967 Detroit Riot Fatalities and Median Household Income, 1960



Figures 9 and 10 examine the relationship between riot fatalities and economic well-being. While Figure 9 shows that the majority of deaths took place in tracts where the percentage of unemployed males ranged from 10-19.9%, a smaller number occurred in the tracts marked by the most severe rates of male unemployment (20 percent or greater) are largely untouched by violence. Likewise, Figure 10 shows that a majority of riot fatalities took place in neighborhood where the median household income ranged between \$3635 and \$5585 per year and that a lesser amount of fatalities occurred in tracts marked by the lowest levels of household income (less than \$3635 per year). Thus, while it is clear that riot violence was concentrated in neighborhoods with higher rates of male unemployment and lower household incomes, it seems that riot violence was not concentrated in the very poorest of neighborhoods with the worst rates of male unemployment. Rather riot related fatalities clustered in those tracts that were just a step above those with the most severe levels of poverty and unemployment. As with Newark, in Detroit a combination of ethnic succession and economic deprivation seems to have given rise to local outbreaks of riot activity.

#### *Difference of Means (T-test)*

Although GIS map analysis allows us to make visual associations between the presence of riot fatalities and the underlying demographic features of neighborhood where they occur, map analysis can not inform us about the strength of these associations or whether they are statistically significant. A fairly simple statistical technique known as a



difference of means or t-test allows us to address whether there are significant differences among the demographic characteristics of tracts that contained riot deaths versus tracts where riot deaths did not occur. The results of this analysis are contained in Table 1 (see Appendix).

As shown in Table 1, for Newark there were 24 tracts that contained a riot related fatality as opposed to 73 tracts that did not contain a fatality. For those tracts with riot fatalities the mean change in percent black from 1950-1960 was 32.6%. For Newark tracts without riot deaths, the mean change in percent black was only 12.4%. Whereas both death and non-death tracts witnessed a proportionate increase in black population, the tracts where fatal violence occurred witnessed a much greater increase. Because the 1960s census treats black and white persons as mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories, the increase in percent black for these census tracts was matched by a corresponding decrease in percent white from 1950-1960. In short, tracts with riot fatalities, on average, had greater rates of relative black population increase and white population loss than tracts without fatalities.

Based on 1960s census figures, tracts with riot fatalities in Newark had a significantly higher average proportion of black residents and a significantly lower average proportion of white residents. As suggested by Spilerman (1970, 1971) riot fatalities tended to cluster in areas with sizable black population. Finally, for Newark, tracts with riot fatalities were characterized by significantly higher rates of unemployment (8.6% vs. 6.5%) and significant lower household income (\$5697 vs. \$4657) than tracts without riot fatalities. These results confirm those of our GIS analysis for Newark. Riot tracts were characterized by greater rates of demographic change and greater economic distress. .

Difference of means tests for Detroit yielded similar results. In Detroit, which covers a larger geographical area than Newark, there were 33 tracts that contained a riot fatality and 386 census tracts with no fatalities. Detroit census tracts marked by riot fatalities had, on average a 44.6% increase in percent black, compared to a 13 percent increase. The black population proportion was increasing in most Detroit neighborhoods, but the neighborhoods where riot deaths took place had a significantly greater rate of black population increase. By 1960 tracts that had riot related fatalities had a significantly larger average black population proportion (62.9% vs. 25.9%), and a significantly smaller average white population proportion (37% vs. 74.1%), again confirming Spilerman's hypothesis that rioting was associated with black population size. (Spilerman 1970,1971).

In terms of economic indicators, Detroit tracts with deaths had a significantly larger average male unemployment rate (14.6% vs. 10.6%) and a significantly lower median household income (\$4752 vs.\$6212) than tracts without fatalities. As a package, these difference of means tests for Detroit confirm the visual associations uncovered in the GIS maps displayed in Figures 6-10. This preliminary statistical analysis provides further support for ethnic succession and economic deprivation as key factors in generating urban unrest.

Difference of means analysis, like GIS, has limitations. The main drawback of such tests is that they can only be performed on one variable at a time and thus can not control for the effects of other independent variables on the dependent variable. To simultaneously address the effect of our demographic, economic and housing factors on the dependent variable (# of riot deaths in a tract), I employ multiple regression

modeling. Given that the number of census tracts containing riot deaths is relatively small compared to the number of tracts that did not contain deaths, I utilize a type of regression modeling best suited to rare event and event counts, known as poisson regression. The poisson regression models displayed in Table 2 (See Appendix), estimate the number of deaths likely to occur in a census tract based on that tract's structural characteristics.

For Newark (Model 1), when controlling for the effects of housing indicators (ratio of persons to housing units, ratio of homeowners to renters) and economic indicators (percent males unemployed, median household income (logarithm)), change in percent black 1950-1960 has a significant effect on the number of deaths in a census tract ( $p < .05$ ). As change in percent black increases, the likelihood of multiple riot fatalities in a tract also increases. This provides support for the ethnic succession hypothesis. Tracts with the greatest intensity of riot violence were those that had experienced the largest proportion changes in black population size. Of the housing and economic indicators, only the logarithm of median household income reaches the .05 level of statistical significance. Not surprisingly, as median household income increases the likelihood of riot related deaths in a tract decreases. Riot violence is inversely associated with economic well-being.

Model 2 adds a measure of black population size (percent black, 1960) to Model 1. When percent black, 1960 is added to the list of variables from Model 1, the effects of change in percent black disappear. This suggests that the size of the black population in Newark census tracts is a better predictor of the intensity of riot violence than the change in percent black. However, these two variables are highly correlated with one another in Newark ( $r = .79$ ). The tracts that experience the most demographic change were also those that by 1960s contained the largest concentrations of black population. Thus the effects of change in percent black and percent black 1960 are not independent and are therefore inseparable in the regression model. Controlling for the effects of change in percent black and percent black 1960, the effect of median household also disappears. Again, this may be due to strong correlation between median housing income and percent black in 1960 ( $r = -.64$ ). This correlation suggests that areas with higher levels of percent black also had lower levels of median household income. These tracts with a high percent of black residents had also experienced a greater magnitude of change in percent black during the decade preceding the riot. Therefore, poverty, racial change and segregation in Newark were interrelated and were all contributing factors which help explain where riot violence occurred.

Models 3 and 4 display the results of poisson regression analysis for Detroit census tracts. Controlling for the effects of housing indicators (ratio of persons to housing units, ratio of homeowners to renters) and economic indicators (percent males unemployed, median household income (logarithm)), change in percent black 1950-1960 has a significant effect on the number of deaths in a census tract (Model 3). As change in percent black increases, the likelihood of multiple riot fatalities in a tract also increases. This effect ( $p < .01$ ) is stronger in Detroit than for Newark. Adding percent black 1960 to the model, does not alter the strength or statistical significance of change in percent black, despite the result that percent black 1960 is also a significant predictor of riot violence ( $p < .05$ ). Some neighborhoods with high percentages of black residents predate the 1950s. As such not all predominantly black neighborhoods in 1960 were the product of racial change in the 1950s. Those neighborhoods that were affected by racial change in

the 1950s were more likely to be touched by riot violence, independent of the size of their black population in 1960. In short, for Detroit census tracts riot violence was clearly related to the exodus of whites and the influx of black residents.

For Detroit, economic indicators fail to predict the likelihood of multiple riot fatalities in a tract. Neither percent males unemployed nor the log of median household income has a significant independent effect on the dependent variable when controlling for racial/ethnic composition. Yet, housing factors do appear to have played a role in setting the stage for violence in Detroit. Paradoxically, the ratio of persons to dwellings is negatively associated with riot deaths, suggesting that tracts with greater housing density were actually less susceptible to riot violence than tracts with less density. More expectedly, the ratio of homeowners to renters is negatively associated with the presence of multiple fatalities. This suggests that areas with a higher degree of homeownership were less likely to be touched by riot violence than tracts inhabited primarily by renters. This measure may serve as both a proxy for social organization and for economic status.

While poisson regression models for Newark and Detroit yield varying results for the effects of housing and economic factors on the presence of riot related fatalities, in both cities a tract's black population size was a significant predictor of riot violence. I must conclude that neighborhoods most susceptible to violence were those with the largest black populations as a percent of the total. In this respect, Spilerman's (1970, 1971) is confirmed. Riot intensity is a function of black population size. But for Newark and Detroit, the location of riot violence was also determined by the changing racial composition of census tracts. While the relationship between change in percent black and the presence of riot fatalities was stronger in Detroit than Newark, riot violence in both cities could also be attributed to ethnic succession. Together, racial change and segregation (as measured by the concentration of black population) in census tracts serve as predictor of riot violence, independent of the economic and housing characteristics of these areas.

In short, poisson regression analysis indicates that ethnic succession was significantly related to riot violence in both cities, thus confirming the results of both the GIS map analyses and the difference of means tests presented earlier. The convergence of results from three separate forms of geographical and statistical analysis offers strong proof that measures of demographic change are essential for predicting *where* riot violence was most likely to occur during the summer of 1967 in Newark and Detroit. To address *why* riot violence took place, however, we must re-examine the historical context of the communities where the riots occurred. By doing so, we may further specify how ethnic succession fostered urban unrest.

## **Conclusion**

By the mid 1960s cities like Newark and Detroit were in the throes of a second phase of demographic transition. The first phase had taken place when black migrants arrived from the rural south in the years between 1910 and 1950, encountering stiff resistance from first and second generation white ethnics who sought to their the racially and culturally exclusive enclaves. This phase culminated with the expansion of ghetto boundaries but the persistence of racial segregation. By the 1950s, blacks found

themselves increasingly concentrated in public housing projects that isolated them from mainstream society (Hirsch, 1998).

The second phase occurred when whites, whom only a few decades earlier sought to repel the “invasion” of black residents into their communities and workplaces, now abandoned the cities for greener suburban pastures. New residential black majorities rose in their place and inner city neighborhoods that had previously been home to white immigrants, like Newark’s Central Ward and Detroit’s 12<sup>th</sup> Street, became predominantly black.

Nonetheless, by the mid to late 1960s the succession was still not complete. Whites, despite having relocated residentially from the central cities, still held prominent positions in politics and commerce, and constituted the vast majority of ranking officers on the municipal police forces. Although black people had the numbers, they lacked the formal trappings of political and economic power, which remained in white hands. Cities with new black residential majorities continued to be governed predominantly by white politicians and police while industrial jobs disappeared and unemployment among black youth rose dramatically. Given the rising expectations unleashed by the successes of the civil rights movement, black residents of Newark and Detroit could not help but notice the disparities of power and persistence of economic inequality within their cities.

Historian Thomas Sugrue provides a succinct comparison of the conditions that gave rise to rioting in Detroit during the 1940s and two decades later in the summer of 1967:

“The riot of 1943 came at a time of increasing black and white competition for jobs and housing; by 1967 discrimination and deindustrialization had ensured that blacks had lost the competition. White resistance and white flight left a bitter legacy that galvanized black protest in the 1960s. Detroit’s attempts to take advantage of the largesse of the Great Society offered too little, too late for Detroit’s poor, but raised expectations nonetheless. Growing resentment, fueled by increasing militancy in the black community, especially among youth, who had suffered the brunt of economic displacement, fueled the fires of 1967.” (Sugrue 260)

Although it did not experience a major riot during the wartime years, Newark had essentially gone through the same cycle as Detroit. Black migration met with white resistance, only to give way to white flight a few decades later. As industrial enterprises shut down, blacks found themselves trapped in cities with declining opportunities and little hope for the future. In Newark and Detroit, ethnic succession was marked by demographic change, but little political or economic progress. The sense of status inconsistency produced by this incomplete succession is central to understanding why the riots occurred. The places where people rioted were the neighborhoods that had undergone the greatest transition in the shortest period of time. They were communities where white-owned businesses now catered to predominantly black residents. They were neighborhoods where white police encountered black youth whom they too often regarded with disdain and treated with contempt. They were “slums” where many white politicians feared to tread except when accompanied by a bulldozer. In the words of Nathan Wright Jr., these were places where people were “ready to riot” (Wright, 1971).

Ironically, the riots brought black people in Newark and Detroit together, channeling their anger and spawning new political movements that would soon bear fruit (Personal Interviews, Ron Hewitt 6/19/01, Tom Carmichael 6/21/02). Within a few years, both cities elected their first black mayors. Small businesses changed ownership from white to black. Black residents moved into homes abandoned by whites. Blacks entered the rolls of police and fire fighters in substantial numbers. Yet after the riots larger business establishments like Bambergers (Newark) and Hudson (Detroit) that had catered mainly to the white middle class also fled from the predominantly black cities. In turn, the tax base continued to decline, leaving the new black political regimes and, by extension, the cities, pressed for resources. The succession was finally complete, but was achieved at great cost.

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Table 1

**Demographic Measures for Census Tracts With and Without Riot Fatalities by Riot Event**

Riot (Decade)	N	<u>Mean Percent Change</u>		<u>Mean Percent (End of 10 Year Period)</u>			
		Black	White	Black	White	Males Unemployed	Median Household Income
<b>Newark 1967 (1950-1960)</b>							
Tracts with Fatalities	24	32.6***	-32.6***	62.2***	37.4	8.6***	\$4657**
Tracts without Fatalities	73	12.4	-12.4	22.7	76.5	6.5	\$5697
<b>Detroit 1967 (1950-1960)</b>							
Tracts with Fatalities	33	44.6***	-44.6***	62.9***	37.0***	14.6**	\$4752***
Tracts without Fatalities	386	13.0	-13.0	25.9	74.1	10.6	\$6212

\*=p<.05 \*\*=p<.01 \*\*\* p<.001, Two Tailed Test

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Census Tract Data for the Newark SMSA (1950, 1960) Paper Volumes  
U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Census Tract Data for the Detroit SMSA (1950, 1960) Paper Volumes



Table 2

Poisson Regression Estimates of the Number of Riot Fatalities in Newark and Detroit Census Tracts as a Function of Change in Racial/Ethnic Composition, Housing, and Economic Characteristics, 1950-1960

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>Dependent Variable: Number of Riot Fatalities</u>			
		Newark 1967		Detroit 1967
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Racial/Ethnic Composition</i>				
Change in Percent Black (1950-1960)	.0204* (.0095)	.0080 (.0099)	.0308*** (.0052)	.0227*** (.0062)
Percent Black, 1960	-----	.0313*** (.0086)	-----	.0139* (.0068)
<i>Housing Indicators</i>				
Ratio of Persons/Housing Units, 1960	.1621 (.3737)	.0481 (.3745)	-.6199* (.3479)	-.6977* (.3588)
Ratio of Homeowners/Renters, 1960	-2.932 (2.529)	-1.269 (2.528)	-.8241** (.3213)	-.8342** (.3283)
<i>Economic Indicators</i>				
Percent Males Unemployed (1960)	-.0117 (.0583)	-.0473 (.0624)	-.0353 (.0377)	-.0425 (.0375)
Median Household Income log(1960)	-2.775* (1.522)	-1.140 (1.760)	-.0325 (.9120)	.6504 (.9497)
Constant	22.321* (12.899)	7.477 (15.164)	.5021 (7.959)	-5.454 (8.283)
Log Likelihood	40.84	54.80	108.097	112.122
D.F.	88	88	403	403

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001 One Tailed Test. Standard Errors are in Parenthesis

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Census Tract Data for the Newark SMSA (1950, 1960) Paper Volumes  
U.S. Census of Population and Housing, Census Tract Data for the Detroit SMSA (1950, 1960) Paper Volumes