The Four Histories of Black Power: The Black Nationalist Sector and Its Impact on American Society

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ABSTRACT

Interest in the Black Power movement and its various political, social, and cultural organizations remains high among scholars and members of the Black community. Scholarship on these organizations and the movement's overall trajectory often discusses how these organizations faltered by not fulfilling their role of leading the Black community in the post-Civil Rights era. In this paper, we revise this view with a survey of scholarship on the many organizations that defined the Black Power movement. We call this collective effort the "Black Nationalist Sector" and it encompasses all organizations of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s whose organizational identity was based in some part, if not wholly, on the promotion of distinctive Black interests from a nationalist perspective. Our review shows that the view of Black Power as a short lived political movement is misleading. Relying on a wealth of recent scholarship, we identify four different paths within the Black Nationalist Sector: radicalized confrontation, cultural production, institutional advocacy, and alignment. Each path has a distinctive history and impact on American society.

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Introduction

Black Power emerged at a crucial time for the Civil Rights movement. After decades of struggle, and groundbreaking legislative and judicial victories, activists were split on the movement's future. Some activists wanted to expand the fight for equality to include issues like poverty and the Vietnam War. In their view, desegregation was only one part of a larger push for social justice. Black Power presented itself as a radical alternative to this emergent agenda. It rejected racial integration as the sole, or even primary, motivation for Black collective action. The principal argument of the Black Power movement was that African Americans should first try to develop institutions that serve their needs, and speak to their experience, before they attempt address broader social concerns (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). For many observers, Black Power, often cloaked in strident rhetoric, was a perverse rejection of the Civil Rights movement and its accomplishments (e.g., Rojas, 2007, pp. 33–34).

This article discusses how scholars should interpret the aftermath of the Black Power movement. Currently, scholars offer competing, occasionally contradictory, frameworks for understanding its long-term impact. Some choose to frame Black Power as a failed radicalization, a disappointing end to the Civil Rights movement (Carson, 1991; Countryman, 2006; McAdam, 1982, 1988; Weisbrodt, 1990). Others focus on the state's repression of the movement (Churchill & Vander Wall, 2002a, 2002b; Davenport, 2005; Newton, 1973). Yet others focus on how Black Power groups provided important social and educational services to impoverished communities (Nelson, 2011) or emphasize the movement's long-term presence in the performing and visual arts (Smethurst, 2005).

The purpose of this paper is to reconcile and synthesize these diverse views of Black Power. Our argument is two-fold. First, we argue that it is a mistake to view Black Power as a

purely ideological movement. Instead, we suggest that it be viewed as both an ideological and an organizational phenomenon. That is, Black Power activists developed an alternative theory of social change, but they also created organizations that implemented these ideas. Second, we argue that focusing on one type of organization results in an incomplete picture of the movement. Even a casual perusal of the literature shows that Black Power was extremely diverse in terms of the organizations it spawned. To choose but a few examples, scholars have examined communes (Wagner-Pacifici, 1994), colleges (Fergus, 2009; Rojas, 2007), dance companies (Smethurst, 2005), jazz collectives (Lewis, 2008), and armed revolutionary groups (Davenport, 2005).

This complexity requires a framework that addresses the shared visions, but diverse organizational structures, of the Black Power movement. We call the population of organizations within the Black Power movement the "Black Nationalist Sector." This terminology draws attention to a number of important issues that should inform scholarship in this topic. First, the diverse groups of the Black Power era shared Black nationalism as an ideology. These groups based their identity on the idea that African Americans should work together due to their shared experience of repression. These groups are also connected through overlapping memberships. The person who joined the Black Panther Party may have also joined a Black arts group. Thus, these groups were not isolated, but part of a larger network of organizations. Second, the word "sector" draws attention to the overall structure of Black Power. The terminology is borrowed from research on the "social movement sector," which denotes the activists and organizations that lobby government, recruit protestors, and otherwise provide the infrastructure for social change (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Similarly, the movement expressed itself through a number of allied groups that pursued a variety of goals while relying on a common vision.

The theory of the Black Nationalist Sector (BNS) has an important implication for scholarship. There is not a single narrative that describes Black Power. Rather, there are multiple "streams" of action within the BNS that have substantially different histories, ranging from failure to lasting change. It is misleading to focus only on cultural change or confrontation with the state. These histories, and others, are all found within the movement. In our discussion of the BNS, we identify four broad categories of groups: political organizations, cultural organizations, reform groups, and other miscellaneous groups that temporarily adopted Black Power symbolism and rhetoric. We motivate this typology with a survey of the different types of Black Power groups that have been examined by scholars.

Prior Interpretations of Black Power's Evolution

Interest in the Black Power movement of the 1960s and its various political, social, and cultural organizations remains high among scholars and members of the Black community.[1] We focus on the era of the 1960s and beyond because it represents an important break with earlier eras of Black conscious social political action, such as the "golden age" of nationalism described by Wilson Moses (1988). While earlier groups promoted Black autonomy, such as the Nation of Islam and the African Blood Brotherhood, the Black Power movement of the 1960s attracts heightened attention because of its contentious relationship with the Civil Rights movement and its history of conflict with the American state. The Black Power Movement of the 1960s is also

1 In keeping with many leaders', participants', and scholars' writings, we use "the movement" and "Black Power" interchangeably with the "Black Power movement." It should be noted that "Black Power" relates to the nationalist framework used by BNS organizations, while the movement embodies the collective efforts of BNS organizations and people working for self-determination and empowerment in the Black community. These efforts are not limited to the time examined in this article, but reached a climax during the mid-twentieth century, which is of much focus to many scholars and commenters.

remarkable because it was the first widespread movement that brought Black Power ideas into the mainstream of American culture.

In approaching Black Power's history, scholars and commentators have often relied on a thesis of decline. Scholarship on Black Power organizations and the movement's overall trajectory often discusses how these organizations faltered by not fulfilling their role of leading the Black community in the post-Civil Rights era. For example, critics often begin and end a description of the Panther's sudden appearance in the late 1960s and their remission in the 1970s (Allen, 2011; Pearson, 1995). Even supportive observers, such as William Van Deburg (1992) and Jeffrey Ogbar (2004), have maintained that the principle outcome of the movement may have been cultural. Thus, scholars often underestimate its influence beyond cultural changes. In their view, though the political victories of these movements may have been limited, it had a lasting impact on African American culture and inspired other American minority groups, which allowed these groups to benefit in the American polity. Jeffrey Ogbar (2004) begins the conclusion of his study of Black Power with this perspective:

> The cultural shifts that occurred in the Black Power era benefited Blacks and other groups (whites included), forcing them to deconstruct widely held notions of race. The counterhegemonic thrust of Black Power ushered new celebrations of Blackness that had been absent from civil rights struggles. Additionally, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and others were well aware that more militant actions placed the civil rights movement in a more favorable position to realize concessions from the white power establishment. (p. 191)

In explaining why Black Power succeeded as a cultural movement while having limited success as a political movement, researchers have relied on a few explanations. First, factionalism undermined the Black Power Movement and its organizations. That is, the leadership of groups such as the Black Panthers, the US organization, the Revolutionary Action Movement, and so forth, tended to be composed of individuals who tended toward conflict

(Ahmad, 2006; Brown, 2003; Kelley, 2003; Ogbar, 2004; Umoja, 2006). This thesis is supported by the multiple disputes and schisms that characterized the history of the Panthers and the conflict, occasionally violent, between some Black nationalist organizations. Second, the decline of organizations promoting Black nationalism is often attributed to state repression. Scholarly investigations and legal actions have yielded a great deal of evidence showing that local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies successfully penetrated Black Power organizations and disrupted them (see Churchill & Wall, 2002a, 2002b; Davenport, 2005; McAdam, 1982; Ogbar, 2004; Van Deburg, 1992). The COINTELPRO papers, for example, describe how the FBI was able to place informants and provocateurs within the Black Panther Party. Davenport's (2005) article on the repression of the Republic of New Africa provides a detailed analysis of when local and state police targeted the Detroit area group. Third, some Black nationalist groups may have had goals that were particularly unsustainable. For example, the Republic of New Africa promoted Black secessionism, a view at odds with the majority of Black public opinion (Dawson, 2001, pp. 122–24).

The Black Nationalist Sector

Recent scholarship has challenged and substantially modified the view that Black Power was a short lived political movement disrupted by a combination of state repression, factionalism, and unrealistic goals. Rather, the most recent literature documents that its sustained impact lies in areas aside from political organizing. A series of studies document how Black Power motivated various artistic groups, leading to innovative forms of music (Lewis, 2008), literature (Smethurst, 2005), and the visual arts (Heitner, 2013). Nelson's (2011) investigation of the Black Panther organization shows how it created health programs that served communities in

various urban centers, whereas Rojas's (2007) analysis of Black studies programs describes how nationalist politics motivated ethnic studies programs, which have continued for decades. Other research has found that youth organizations adopted and employed Black Power ideology as a foundation of their collective identity (Williams, 2001). This expanding literature shows that, in addition to challenging American racial identity, Black Power created an American landscape that has been substantially altered by interactions with Black nationalists. By focusing primarily on the most visible political organizations, research downplays the diverse groups and missions that emerged from the Black Power Movement. One exception to this trend is Jeffries's (2006) edited volume that examines the histories of less well-known Black nationalist organizations. The current examination expands previous studies by further defining the boundaries of Black Nationalist organizations and identifying their broad impact on American society.

We call this diverse collection of organizations the "Black Nationalist Sector" (BNS). In this article, the "Black Nationalist Sector" is defined as those organizations of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s whose identity was based partially, or entirely, on the idea that they should promote distinctive Black interests. In keeping with scholarship on Black nationalist ideology, we focus on groups that insist that African Americans retain a controlling interest in the institutions that serve them—e.g., higher education (see Rojas, 2007)—and how their community is portrayed in the wider culture—e.g., the performing arts and broadcasting (see Smethurst, 2005; Heitner, 2013). Although Black nationalism existed prior to the 1950s, we suggest this 30-year period is when Black nationalists and their organizations solidified the cultural, organizational, and political approaches to improving the economic and social position of African Americans and their experiences in society and had the highest amount of activity. Interested readers may consult McAdam (1982), Egerton (1994), Olsen (2001), Biondi (2003), Gilmore (2009), Sullivan

(2010), Tyson (2001), and Rogers (2012) for further discussion of nationalist political mobilization before the Civil Rights era.

Previous research has noted the complexity of African Americans' views toward Black nationalism (Brown & Shaw, 2002; Jeffries, 2006a; Ogbar, 2004; Van Deburg, 1997, 1992). This diversity of thought is reflected in the wide range of organizations that adopted a Black nationalist ideology. For example, historians and social scientists have often focused on prominent political organizations such as the Black Panthers, the US Organization, post-1964 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Revolutionary Action Movement (Ahmad, 2006; Brown, 2003; Carson, 1981; Hayes & Jeffries 2006; Jeffries, 2006b; Morgan & Davies, 2012; Ogbar, 2004; Umoja, 2006). The common theme is that these groups believed that Blacks needed revolutionary action to enforce their interests.

In drawing attention to political organizations of the 1960s, we do not downplay the debt they owe to earlier groups that promoted Black autonomy. For example, scholars commonly cite the Nation of Islam as an example of a self-contained Black community that inspired the Black Power activists of the 1960s (Clegg, 1997; Lee, 1996; Ogbar, 2004). Founded in 1930, the Nation of Islam had grown to include thousands of followers who adhered to the belief that they should control their own economic and cultural institutions. In pursuit of this goal, the Nation owned its own businesses, schools, and media. Today, the Nation of Islam is considered the leading American Black nationalist organization.

Radicalized political organizations and the Nation of Islam do not exhaust the realm of organizations belonging to the BNS. A cursory examination of American society shows that nationalist impulses motivated the founding of organizations in many spheres of American life, such as the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music, and other arts organizations that

had roots in the Black Power era (Lewis, 2008), and the Black Congressional Caucus, formed in 1971 to allow Black legislators to coordinate and influence legislation. Though rarely discussed, Black Power also motivated important professional groups of the 1970s, such as the Association of Black Psychologists, the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, and the National Conference of Black Lawyers. While none of these groups would be described as militant or revolutionary, they explicitly frame their actions as an attempt to assert Black interests and were founded in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

The theory of the BNS draws on developments in both Black studies and social movement research. Dawson (1994) and Fraser (1995) draw attention to a radical Black public sphere, a realm of public discourse where African American interests can be asserted (Alkalimat & Williams, 2001; McKee, 2005). According to this literature, the "public sphere," as it is often understood, often reflects the views of the majority. As a consequence, repressed minorities must work to create a "counter public" that embodies their interests and agendas. This counter public is found in informal settings, such as Black barbershops, and in more organized political structures, such as political parties (Harris-Lacewell, 2006). There are also cultural institutions that express the view of the Black counter public, such as scholarly journals (e.g., *The Black Scholar*).

In social movement research, there is a growing consensus that social movements tend to be interconnected to a high degree and that they "spillover" into each other (Meyer, 2004; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996; Meyer & Whittier, 1994). Movements influence each other through overlapping memberships, shared ideologies, and the transmission of tactics from one group to another. This high degree of mutual influence suggests that the various strands of Black Power, ranging from secessionists to legal associations, be viewed as parts of a larger whole focused on

Black autonomy within White society. This is not to say that all the organizations discussed in this article adopt or promote the same goals or view, or that they use the same tactics, but that they operate within a spectrum of opinion and base their identity, in part or whole, on some form of Black nationalist ideology.

We now discuss six areas of American society the BNS has worked within since the 1960s and 1970s to illustrate the breadth and influence of this sector beyond the traditional perspective of the movement and its associated organizations. These areas include the following: 1) education and academia, 2) the professions, 3) the arts and media, 4) intentional communities, 5) secessionist movements, and 6) politics. These organizations may work or had worked in ways that crossed areas. Thus, their grouping does not indicate a fixed or narrow perspective of each organization's total efforts, but rather a general view of their main areas of work, which could have touched different aspects of society. Furthermore, we do not aim to provide an all-encompassing review of the organizations that are or could be included in the BNS. The numerous efforts and organizations, large and small, are beyond the scope of this article and we provide examples of them. Yet, this supports our perspective that the traditional and narrow view of the movement and Black nationalist organizations in general homogenizes a much larger movement and its actual influences on society, while capitalizing on limited aspects of the movement.

Education and Academia

Education is an area of social life that has been profoundly shaped by the BNS. The movement established community education programs in many regions of the U.S., from Oakland to Mississippi (Carmichael, 2003; Moody, 1968; Newton, 1973). These educational

programs were designed to combat the White resistance to desegregation rulings handed down by the Supreme Court and also served the goal of merging the often dismissed history of the Black community into school curricula. Schools offering these innovative curricula were established throughout the Black belt in the South and the after-school programming established by the Panthers in the Bay Area of California.

Not all of the movement's efforts to increase educational resources and opportunities were as well known as the programs run by the Panthers and the freedom schools. In Milwaukee, for example, the movement pushed to secure better educational resources and opportunities for the Black community through school reform efforts. These policies had dual goals of promoting integration while also creating alternative school settings to promote educational agendas aligned with Black nationalism (see Dougherty, 2004). Many efforts to assert "community control" over schools were meant to counter the mainstream system that restricted Black students' opportunities and resources. These strategies were often motivated by the idea that the Black community should assert control over schools via the curriculum (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Maynard, 1968). This approach to Black education has much in common with contemporary battles over resegregation of suburban neighborhoods (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012; Johnson, 2002).

Black nationalists did not limit themselves to formalized instruction, but included creating institutions for preserving Black culture. For example, in Chicago, the Vivian G. Harsh of Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature was founded at the Carter G. Woodson regional library branch of the public library system. The collection currently holds over 50,000 volumes, 500 journals, and 100 microfilms and is named in honor of the first Black woman to lead a Chicago Public Library branch, Vivian G. Harsh, who began collecting and

organizing a special collection on and for the Black community of Chicago. This collection has since evolved into a substantial community and research center supported by the Vivian G. Harsh Society, moving to its expanded location in 1975 (Burt, 2009; Joyce, 1988; *Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection*; *Vivian G. Harsh Society*). Similarly, in New York, the Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture is a research unit of the New York Public Library system devoted to the experiences of African-descended peoples across the diaspora (*Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture).* Established by Arturo Alfonso Schomberg nearly 90 years ago, the Schomberg Center grew throughout the twentieth century and was designated a research unit of the public library system in 1972. The Schomberg collections include a unique index of over 179,000 citations of Black resources, the Kaiser Index of Black Resources, more than 3,900 rare books, 500 manuscripts, 15,000 pieces of sheet music and rare papers, 20,000 pieces of art and artifacts, 500,000 photographs from across the African diaspora, 5,000 hours of oral history, and 5,000 movies, films, and documentaries. The Schomberg also established the Scholars-in-Residence Program in 1986 to increase the research capacity of the center.

Perhaps the most significant impact of the movement's efforts in education are found among American colleges and universities. From university consortia, scholarly organizations, and specialized journals to the Black student movement and the establishment of Black studies, the movement reshaped higher education in the 1960s and 1970s. The mid-twentieth century witnessed the collaborative nature of the movement and its efforts in higher education with the formation of the Atlanta University Center Consortium, Incorporated, in 1964 (*Atlanta University Center*). Currently utilizing the resources and expertise from Morehouse College, Spelman College, Clark-Atlanta University, and the Morehouse School of Medicine, the Atlanta University Center developed programming to increase the educational, business, and community

offerings for the Black community. These efforts include developing a centralized library system, a dual degree engineering program with Georgia Institute of Technology, and more recently, neighborhood revitalization efforts. The movement's educational efforts in North Carolina included an attempt to break free of mainstream American higher education to provide a specific college setting for movement participants with the creation of Malcolm X Liberation University (see Fergus, 2009). Additionally, similar to the formation of the Black Caucus in state and federal governments, faculty, staff, and students formed their own institutional versions of these caucuses in the 1960s and 1970s to focus on the Black community in relation to their experiences and resources on campus.

The Black student movement began in earnest at San Francisco State University in the late 1960s. By the end of the 1970s, the Black student movement had swept across the U.S., touching every type of institution from small liberal arts colleges to Ivy League institutions (Biondi, 2012; Bradley, 2009; Rogers, 2012; Rojas, 2007; Small, 1999; Wallerstein & Star, 1971; Williamson, 2007). Although Black students worked toward expanding their opportunities and resources, while protesting racial discrimination on campus for decades before the 1960s, this era of student protest is most notable because of students' explicit connection to the Black Power Movement and nationalist perspectives, not to mention the size and frequency of student movement activities. Students pushed for many changes on college campuses, including the establishment of Black student unions and centers, increased student and faculty diversity, the foundation of theme houses, such as the Ujamaa houses, and the creation of Black studies programs and degrees. As these programs of study developed, so did the need for more scholarly associations and journals to connect scholarship and literature on and for the African diaspora. In order to meet this need, scholars established such entities as the National Council of Black

Studies (NCBS) in 1975, *The Black Scholar* in 1969, *Journal of Black Studies* in 1970, the *Review of Black Political Economy* in 1970 (see Brown, 1993), the *Journal of Black Psychology* in 1974, *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters* in 1976, and the *Western Journal of Black Studies* in 1977. Since this time, more academic forums have taken hold to provide scholars and writers with additional outlets to engage issues of the African diaspora, with the most recent effort coming from the Black Left Unity Network, with the establishment of their journal in 2013, *The Black Activist*.

Professions

As the number of Black professionals slowly increased following the demise of chattel slavery, their segregation was solidified through the denial of inclusion in professional associations. For example, the American Medical Association did not allow Black medical doctors to join (*National Medical Association*). Given this obstacle, Black doctors and physicians formed the National Medical Association in 1895, serving as both an example of the segregated reality of the profession, but also to highlight the need to focus on Black community interests in the medical field as well as other professions. The National Medical Association is an early example of the need for Black professionals to form associations that allowed their inclusion and kept the interest and the needs of the Black community in mind; Black Power accelerated their growth.

There are many professional associations established during this era that continue to exist today. Here we name a few and note their mission statements and pursuits. The Association of Black Psychologists, for example, was founded in 1968 and was "guided by the principle of self-determination" with a focus on the needs of Black psychologists as professionals, but also to

have a "positive impact upon the mental health of the national Black community" and to address "significant social problems affecting the Black community and other segments of the population whose needs society has not fulfilled (*Association of Black Psychologists*). Originally founded as a "caucus," the Association of Black Sociologists was created in 1970 with the mission of promoting the interests of Black and minority sociologists, to "protect the professional rights and safeguard the civil rights of Black/minority sociologists against repression that may arise from the epistemological perspectives and/or activities," and to "provide perspectives for the analysis of the experiences of Blacks and other minority groups as well as knowledge for understanding and resolving the varied problems these groups confront" (*Association of Black Sociologists*).

These professional groups influenced national associations by demanding changes in their organizational structures and policies. For example, within the American Sociological Association, the Association of Black Sociologists pushed for the establishment of the Minority Fellowship Program to assist students of color with completing doctoral degrees in sociology while simultaneously restricting the ability of departments to use the age-old excuse that they could not find any "qualified" sociologists of color (Association of Black Sociologists, 2010). Similarly, Black political scientists formed the National Conference of Black Political Scientists in 1969 to provide an organization centered on the study and promotion of the political aspirations and experiences of African-descended peoples in the U.S. and the diaspora (*National Conference of Black Political Scientists*).

A final example is the National Conference of Black Lawyers. Founded in 1968 and embracing the calls for more progress and social change from groups associated with the movement, the National Conference of Black Lawyers initially focused on legal and violent attacks on the Black community, radicalized organizations, and counter-intelligence programs.

The preamble of the association's constitution documents the need for Black lawyers to work to protect the Black community from institutional and structural racism and ensure a fair share of dignity and power for Black people, as no other organization fulfills these needs, and to work for justice against White racism. Following the "era of militancy," the National Conference of Black Lawyers expanded their legal efforts to addressing affirmative action and equal opportunity cases and working in solidarity with groups across the globe (*National Conference of Black Lawyers*).

Black professionals also asserted their interest was the formation of think tanks and intellectual/advocacy communities to support the Black community, such as the Black Think Tank, founded by Drs. Nathan and Julia Hare in 1978 to examine Black male and female relationships, Black children, and Black educational opportunities. The Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies, for example, now housed at Northeastern Illinois University, was founded in 1966 by Jacob Carruthers to examine the experiences of African Americans and the system of institutions in Chicago's inner city with the goal of improving the quality of life, while also producing a broader perspective of African diaspora influence in global history and Western thought (see Carruthers, 1999). Similarly, in Atlanta, the Martin Luther King Center was founded shortly after his death to preserve his speeches and writings, promote civil rights, and serve as a research center. The King Center has continued to serve as a research center, archive, and legal advocacy organization since its founding. In 1970, the King Center received a Ford Foundation grant to support its activities, as well as fund the Institute of the Black World, which subsequently broke ties with the King Center to pursue a more Black nationalist avenue of community education and research (Rojas, 2007). Specifically, the Institute of Black World Studies began to organize Black scholars, artists, and activists to write position papers to steer discourse on various aspects of the Black community and experience. The 1970s were unfriendly

to the institute as it struggled to receive substantial funding support to continue pursuing publication and conference opportunities and, following a burglary and the recession of the late 1970s, the Institute for the Black World slowly dwindled to a small office before it closed in the early 1980s (Rojas, 2007).

An important role Black nationalist organizations played in the professional world did not necessarily focus solely on white collar positions, but also on entry-level and blue collar jobs in many metropolitan areas. One example of how Black nationalists worked to create more opportunities for Black workers is found in Biondi's (2003) discussion of Black nationalism in New York City. These organizations worked to increase pay equality and open up unions for Black workers in several areas of business, such as the brewing industry. A secondary aspect of growing employment opportunities for Black workers was enlarging where and how they could spend their increased capital. Black nationalist organizations also worked to break apart restricted covenants in middle-class neighborhoods and increase housing options to fight residential segregation (Biondi, 2003). In addition, the Revolutionary Action Movement also worked to organize Black workers (Ahmad, 2006).

Other ways Black nationalism influenced the business sector was through the establishment of community development corporations in order to push the self-determination and industriousness of the Black community. These corporations were found in many areas of the U.S., particularity established metropolitan areas, such as New York City (Purnell, 2012), and in developing, "cutting-edge" areas, such as the efforts to create "Soul City" in the Research Triangle of North Carolina (Fergus, 2009). Despite these efforts to utilize Black Power to increase the economic success of the community, a fine line was walked by many Black nationalist organizations and their members by using Black Power for business and making a

business out of Black Power. That is, although many Black entrepreneurs utilized aspects of the Black Power Movement to increase their community's foothold in the business sector, these same entrepreneurs also had to ensure that they did not fetishize Black Power into a commodity; a material good without substance and disconnected from the movement (see Hill & Rabig, 2012, for further discussion).

A somewhat lesser known, but invaluable contribution to past and current professions is found in institutional review boards (IRBs). The need for IRBs arose during the tumultuous times of the mid-twentieth century, in addition to the release of information of unethical experimentation on the Black community, such as the Tuskegee experiments, and misrepresentations of the Black community, such as those found in the infamous Moynihan Report of 1968. These attacks on the Black community under the veil of "science" and "research" led Black nationalists to push for change and protection of the Black community. In light of this need, the Black United Front in Boston and Black faculty members and their associations across the Boston metropolitan area led the establishment of one of the first community review boards in 1970, the Community Research Review Committee (Black Scholars Open Fire, 1970; Walters, 1973; Williams, 1974). These scholars and community members established a systematic review of proposed research on the Black community to protect community members from misrepresentation and harm. As Walters (1973) noted, "we need to pay much closer attention to the kind of research that is funded, who does the funding, who carries out the research, what the findings are, who is responsible for dissemination of the findings, and how they are used and intervene at any stage in the process" (pp. 206–207). This system was in full swing within weeks of its creation as it began critiquing and rejecting suspect

research proposals such as studies of Black children's cognitive development in Roxbury (see Black Scholars Open Fire, 1970).

The Arts and Media

The arts were also an area where there was a strong presence of Black nationalism. Many of the earliest organizations in the BNS employed artists to help them establish a distinctive identity. The Black Panthers of Lowndes County, Alabama, employed the Black Panther as its symbol on various publications. Later, the Black Panther Party became well known for its artwork. The images developed by Emory Douglas, and others, came to symbolize Black nationalists in the eyes of the public.

In addition to deploying the arts, nationalists created a number of organizations that promoted a distinctly Black aesthetic. Lewis's (2008) study of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music chronicles the rise of the Chicago area jazz organization, whose goal is to preserve, institutionalize, and disseminate Black music. This organization became the hub for an international network of performers who integrated African American art forms with European classical and avant-garde music, as well as establishing a school for young people. Other organizations, such as Los Angeles's Underground Musicians' Association, pursued similar goals on the West Coast. The sights, sounds, and writings of the movement reached broadly throughout American society to change radio, television, and literature (Heitner, 2013; Lewis, 2008; Thomas, 2012).

The Association for the Advancement of Creative Music is only one example of the broader Black Arts Movement, which promoted Black consciousness in a wide range of literary, visual, and performing arts. What is important for this discussion is that the Black Arts

Movement was not only an aesthetic, it was an organizational principle. Numerous schools, collectives, and arts organizations were created to institutionalize and disseminate the Black Arts aesthetic. In the literary arts, many historians point to groups such as the Umbra Workshop, which included future luminaries like Ishmael Reed. In the visual arts, perhaps the most well-known is the AfriCoBra collective, which produced "Black conscious" artwork in Chicago and where were found other organizations and individuals working in the field around the city (Donaldson, 2012; Fenderson, 2011; Hogu, 2012; Jones-Henderson, 2012). The poet and playwright Amiri Baraka founded organizations as well, such as the Totem Press publishing group, which contributed to what literary scholars now call new American poetry. Within drama, groups such as the National Black Theater, founded in 1968 by Barbara Ann Teer, became a focal point for performance in New York and maintained connections with allied institutions, such as the Studio Museum of Harlem (Smethurst, 2005).

Intentional Communities

One avenue pursued by Black nationalists was the creation of planned communities. These communities would allow members to structure their lives around their beliefs in different aspects of Black nationalism. A well-known example is Philadelphia's MOVE community, which was established in 1970 by John Africa. The group is notable because its home was destroyed in a stand-off with police and some of its members became outspoken activists, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal (see Anderson & Hevenor, 1987; Wagner-Pacific, 1994).[2] Although MOVE stressed self-determination and alignment with Black nationalism generally, it also

[2] Mumia Abu-Jamal was associated with the MOVE organization and was a former Black Panther. He was imprisoned after being convicted of shooting a police officer during an altercation. Some have theorized that tensions between MOVE and the Philadelphia police were a contributing factor in the incident. See Wall (2010) for a summary of this issue.

emphasized animal rights, criticizing technology and its effects on society, health affairs such as vegetarian dieting (Wagner-Pacific, 1994), and, most recently, critiquing the prison-industrial complex for holding Black men and women, particularly those with Black nationalist views and MOVE members, as political prisoners, fighting for their exoneration (Thomas, 2002). The general philosophy of MOVE was "naturalist" and emphasized "getting back to nature." This ideology influenced every member's daily activities and political agenda (Anderson & Hevenor, 1987). Furthermore, MOVE members did not send their children to school since they believed that the educational system was, like all societal institutions, politically corrupt. Overall, MOVE worked to create a critical, Black nationalist organization that was self-sustaining and self-guiding in order to make an alternative lifestyle and community for members so they could break free of the oppressive system they protested against almost daily. This orientation and the actions of the organization has led some to view MOVE as a unique form of "revolutionary Black humanism" (see Thomas, 2002).

A second example of a Black nationalist organization attempting to form an internal community is the Republic of New Africa, established at a 1968 conference where an estimated 100 participants signed a "Declaration of Independence." This document urged Black people in the U.S. to free themselves from oppression and build a better society. It also demanded that Black people promote responsibility, scholarship, service, and industriousness; promote freedom of religion; support and wage world revolution until all people were free; build an independent nation and state government; end exploitation of man and environment; promote equality of rights regardless of gender; end class and race discrimination; promote self- and mutual respect of all people; ensure personal dignity and integrity of all peoples and justice for all; place the means of production and trade within the state government to guarentee the benefits are enjoyed

by all members; and to promote and reward hard work and initiative and devotion to revolution (Cunnigen, 1999, 2006). The Republic of New Africa attempted, in the early 1970s, to establish their own community outside of Jackson, Mississippi, and, like many Black nationalist organizations, were targeted by overt and covert government actions to disperse members and disrupt and possibly shut them down (see Cunnigen, 2006; Davenport, 2005). The leaders of the Republic of New Africa actively worked to purchase farmland, while also attempting to negotiate with the federal government for secession and reparations for decedents of former slaves. Promoting the principles of cooperative economics and self-sufficiency, Ujamaa, the Republic of New Africa unfortunately did not gain much support in Mississippi or nationally for their efforts. One important lesson learned from the work of those within the Republic of New Africa is, counter to some scholars' views, that it brought Black nationalists of differing class, regional, gender, and educational backgrounds together to pursue their goals as an organization (Cunnigen, 2006, 1999; Umoja, 1999, 2013).

Secessionist Movements

Black Nationalist organizations did not always settle on continually working within the U.S. system of government; they sometimes attempted to break free of the state and form their own nation. This is most visible with the efforts of the Republic of New Africa. As mentioned above, this organization worked to promote and produce a better society than they were living in at the time, which also meant forming their own nation-state to break free of a system of oppression and to establish a government that was for the equality and benefit of all people, particularly African Americans (Cunnigen, 2006). The Republic of New Africa attempted to establish a new capital in central Mississippi called "El Malik," but faced local, state, and federal

government actions that weakened their foothold in the Black Mississippi community and their ability to acquire land. The organization attempted to acquire the land of the Black belt, which includes Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina to form their new nation. Along with this land, the Republic of New Africa called for reparations for the centuries of racial oppression and, most importantly, sovereignty as an independent nation-state (Biondi, 2003; Cunnigen, 2006). Although the organization attempted to meet and work with federal and state officials to see their dream of independent nationhood met, this did not come to fruition in the end.

Politics

Black Power organizations were very active in several areas of politics. For example, Black nationalism motivated the Congressional Black Caucus, which was founded in 1971 following the increase of Black representatives in Congress. Building on the Democratic Select Committee, the Congressional Black Caucus' supported the Black community during boycotts (Nixon's State of the Union address in 1971). It also sponsored national conferences on health, education, and business, delivered a Black Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights (1972), spear-headed efforts to build equal opportunity enforcement and legislation, helped establish Martin Luther King, Jr., Day as a national holiday, created an alternative national budget, and introduced anti-apartheid legislation (*Congressional Black Caucus*).

Black nationalist organizations also promoted specific policies that were aimed at the economic and social development of the Black community. The Black Panthers, for example, asserted that a redistribution of wealth and resources was needed to assert Black equality in an unequal America (Jeffries, 2006b; Newton, 1973). The Black Panthers also focused on decreasing unemployment rates and improving the job opportunities in the Black community,

working to promote school reform and increase educational resources for children, fighting against medical discrimination and inferior health care facilities, and developing Black representation in all areas of the government (Jeffries, 2006b; Nelson, 2011; Newton, 1973).

In addition, the Revolutionary Action Movement also assisted in the political realm beyond the organization of workers, such as by working to improve access to health care in Cleveland (Ahmad, 2006). Furthermore, many Black nationalist organizations, such as the US organization, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Black Liberators, supported candidates in local, state, and federal elections (Ahmad, 2006; Brown, 2003; Carmichael, 2003; Hayes, III, & Jeffries, 2006; Helmreich, 2006). A central concern of many Black nationalist organizations was police brutality and attacks on the Black community. The Black Panthers, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Republic of New Africa, the Black Liberators, supporters of Robert F. Williams, and many other organizations worked to stop such policing of the community, while also increasing armed self-defense and knowledge of the legal system (Ahmad, 2006; Cunnigen, 2006; Helmreich, 2006; Jeffries, 2006b; Tyson, 2001).

As Biondi (2003) notes, several organizations, such as the Republic of New Africa, N'COBRA, and the Black Panthers, pushed leaders for formal reparations for the decedents of slaves. The push for reparations continues today, making a large stand in 1997 at the United Nations' World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa, and employing a variety of arguments and data to support the need for African Americans to receive the modern version of the "40 acres and a mule" originally promised to freed slaves. As is seen above, the BNS consistently organized around policies to promote Black community interest on nationalist lines.

The Four Histories of Black Power

The survey of the Black Nationalist Sector (BNS) serves an important theoretical purpose—to revise a common view of Black Power's history. As noted at the beginning of this article, Black Power is often described as having three distinct phases: an early and intense phase of political mobilization, a second phase of suppression and implosion, and finally, a diffuse, but long term, cultural impact. This examination shows that this is a highly incomplete view and, at best, only describes the trajectory of political organizations such as the Black Panthers, the Revolutionary Action Movement, and the Republic of New Africa. It does not accurately describe the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music, professional organizations such as the Association of Black Sociologists, educational programs such as Black Studies programs, and publishing outlets such as *The Black Scholar*.

A revised interpretation of the BNS admits that political mobilization was the initial impetus of Black Power, but that it soon became an organizing principle for many activities beyond voting, elections, and activism. Rather, Black Power became a component of a cultural identity, which, in turn, was used to build long-lasting schools, firms, and social networks that penetrated American society. Thus, the BNS does not represent a single mode of action. Rather, it represents a spectrum of possibilities, paths, and historical trajectories. Once it is realized that Black Power organizations did not all share a history of brief growth and quick collapse, it becomes possible to compare them and discover the range of outcomes and the sources of difference. In this section, we identify four major trajectories within the BNS and briefly discuss them. We note that these categories are not rigid. Instead, this typology is offered as a guide for analysis. A closer examination of a particular person or group will show that goals and identities changed over time and that boundaries are fluid.

Political Confrontation

Many organizations adopted a position of militancy, which we define in this section as a direct challenge to state power and existing social relations. The explicit goal was revolutionary and, at times, secessionist. These organizations, such as the Panthers and the Republic of New Africa, adopted a Marxist or Maoist ideology and often armed themselves. Among organizations that maintained such a strong stance, there is an unsurprising uniformity of history, as many collapsed by the early 1970s and most disbanded by the 1980s. Revolutionary Action Movement had disbanded by the late 1960s, the Black Liberation Army reached its height in 1972, and the Republic of New Africa ceased operating as a political group by 1972 (Ahmad, 2006; Cunnigen, 2006, 1999; Kelley, 2003; Umoja, 2006). In 1983, the Philadelphia police destroyed the MOVE commune, which was an intentional community motivated by Black nationalist ideology (Wagner-Pacifici, 1994). The Panthers themselves ceased operations nationally by the mid-1970s, and arguably ceased operations by 1982 with less than $20 to fund community operations in their last office in Oakland (Ogbar, 2004; Umoja, 1999).[3]

The forces that undermined these groups are well rehearsed in the literature. These groups were specifically targeted by the American state for disruption (Churchill & Wall 2002a, 2002b) and their leaders were contentious and frequently violent. For example, Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, and Maulana Karenga have all been convicted of violent crimes during the course of their lives (Brown, 2003; Pearson, 1995). Finally, there is the obvious, yet still important, point that these groups had goals that were simply unsustainable within 1970s America, such as establishing an all-Black state in the U.S. South.

[3] There are at least two successor groups that lay claim to the mantle of the Black Panther Party. One is the Huey P. Newton Foundation, founded in 1993. That group maintains *blackpanther.org* and promotes the legacy of Huey Newton. There is also a New Black Panther Party, which uses Black Power rhetoric but is not sponsored by former Panthers or their descendants.

Culture

Another group of organizations focused on aesthetics and cultural production. Rather than directly attack the American state and White mainstream culture, they adopted "by-passing" tactics, where a social movement establishes their own independent institution instead of directly challenging political incumbents (Davis & Robinson, 2012). Cultural Black Power groups are an excellent example of this trend. Instead of directly influencing, or attacking, the mainstream visual and performing arts, these groups created "free spaces" where artists could, in relative safety, develop an alternative vision and transmit it to the public (Polletta, 2002).

Surveying these groups yields a different view of Black Power. Many did quickly collapse in the late 1960s and 1970s due to ideological disputes, such as the Negro Ensemble Company of New York, a theater group, but many others survive to this day and have become widely influential within the mainstream. The Association for the Advancement of Creative Music is an excellent example. After forty years, the group still performs and holds classes and at least two of its former members, Anthony Braxton and Wadada Leo Smith, have gained worldwide renown through MacArthur Foundation grants. In addition, the National Black Theater in Harlem continues to produce works by Black playwrights that speak to issues not normally found in venues. What we learn from these cultural groups is also well rehearsed in the Black Power literature. Black Power was successfully translated into an aesthetic with a long-lasting impact. The focus of this article has been on specific organizations, but other scholars have documented the impact of Black Power on fashion, style, speech, and so forth.

Institutional Advocacy

Political militancy and cultural production do not exhaust the strategies within the BNS. Institutional advocacy asserts Black interests and perspectives in mainstream political and social life. Groups that exhibit advocacy include Black studies programs in predominantly White universities, professional organization, such as the Association of Black Psychologists, and political units within government, such as the Black Congressional Caucus.

The underlying lesson is that Black Power provided a motivation for asserting Black interests in a way that retains Black identity. An insightful example is the history of Black studies programs. Originally motivated by militancy—activists often wanted separate all Black colleges—Black studies programs are a place that, within the confines of mainstream education, provides a distinctive view of Black history and is done in a way that allows scholars and students to carefully explore African American history without the need to subvert, or mitigate, the importance of the Black experience.

What an examination of the institutional advocacy strategy reveals is the surprising level of success. Black studies programs, for example, still exist and are now in a period of relative expansion. The Congressional Black Caucus provided a valuable platform for organizing Black legislators and recently, members have addressed drug law disparities that affect Blacks and ensured that Obama's health care reform package included funds for clinics in low-income communities. It would be a mistake to say that institutional advocacy is a complete success, but it is also a mistake to ignore the gains of this strategy.

Alignment

The last strategy within the BNS that we discuss is "alignment." We observe that a number of organizations adopted the rhetoric and symbolism of Black Power, but without a full commitment to political confrontation, cultural production, or advocacy within the mainstream. Rather, the adoption of Black Power ideas signified an approval of the broader movement and a partial integration of it with the growing BNS.

Youth organizations illustrate this well. The Black Stones, a Chicago area gang, existed prior to the emergence of Black Power and adopted Black nationalism as a framework for articulating their identity beyond that of a gang. There is not much evidence, however, that the Black Stones participated in direct actions, such as protest, or in the advocacy typical of nationalist educational or professional groups (Williams, 2001). Rather, it was a way of aligning themselves with cultural themes that were then defining Black social life at the end of the Civil Rights era. As mentioned earlier, the Black Stones eventually deemphasized nationalism and adopted other frames as time passed on, including Kmetic symbolism and religious iconography. The Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago reflects this as well. As reported in Speller's (2005) review of afrocentric congregations, there was a short-lived expression of Black Power in that church when some members did not feel that integration was happening quickly enough. Later, "gradualists," who supported incremental approaches to Black progress, won out and reoriented the church toward the mainstream Civil Rights Movement.

Reframing the Thesis of Decline

The diverse strands of the Black Nationalist Sector (BNS) suggest that standard stories of decline in the 1970s are also incomplete and in need of revision. The emphasis on organizations

adopting a confrontational strategy results in a focus on violent conflict and factionalism. However, other organizations were not subject to these same pressures. Very little scholarship, if any, has attributed the rise and fall of professional organizations, such as the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, to state repression or interference by law enforcement. This is not to say that such groups were never targeted, rather, that they were not subject to the same level of violent repression that groups like the Black Panthers, the Republic of New Africa, or MOVE experienced. Additionally, little evidence exists in relation to the prevalence of intense factionalism among these professional organizations. Instead, organizations that were engaged in cultural production or advocacy often suffered because of other forces, such as declining interest in nationalism by the African American public.

Consider the Institute for the Black World, which has been the subject of recent scholarly attention (Rojas, 2007; White, 2004). An offshoot of the Martin Luther King organization in Atlanta, the Institute of the Black World published policy analysis, educational materials, and books from a consciously Black perspective. As discussed in White (2004), the Institute of the Black World eventually had to close by the early 1980s. Some scholars pinpoint the final decline on a burglary that physically damaged its office, which some have thought was condoned or performed by local law enforcement. However, it is also true that the Institute of the Black World showed many signs of decline prior to this intervention. The organization had been losing donors for years and was having problems gathering funds for its courses and publications. The Institute of the Black World shows the importance of Black public opinion, which attenuated the efforts of many Black consciousness organizations in the 1970s. The shift in how Black leaders and professionals viewed these groups likely had a larger influence on their health than state repression, for the simple reason that the programs like COINTELPRO were aimed mainly at

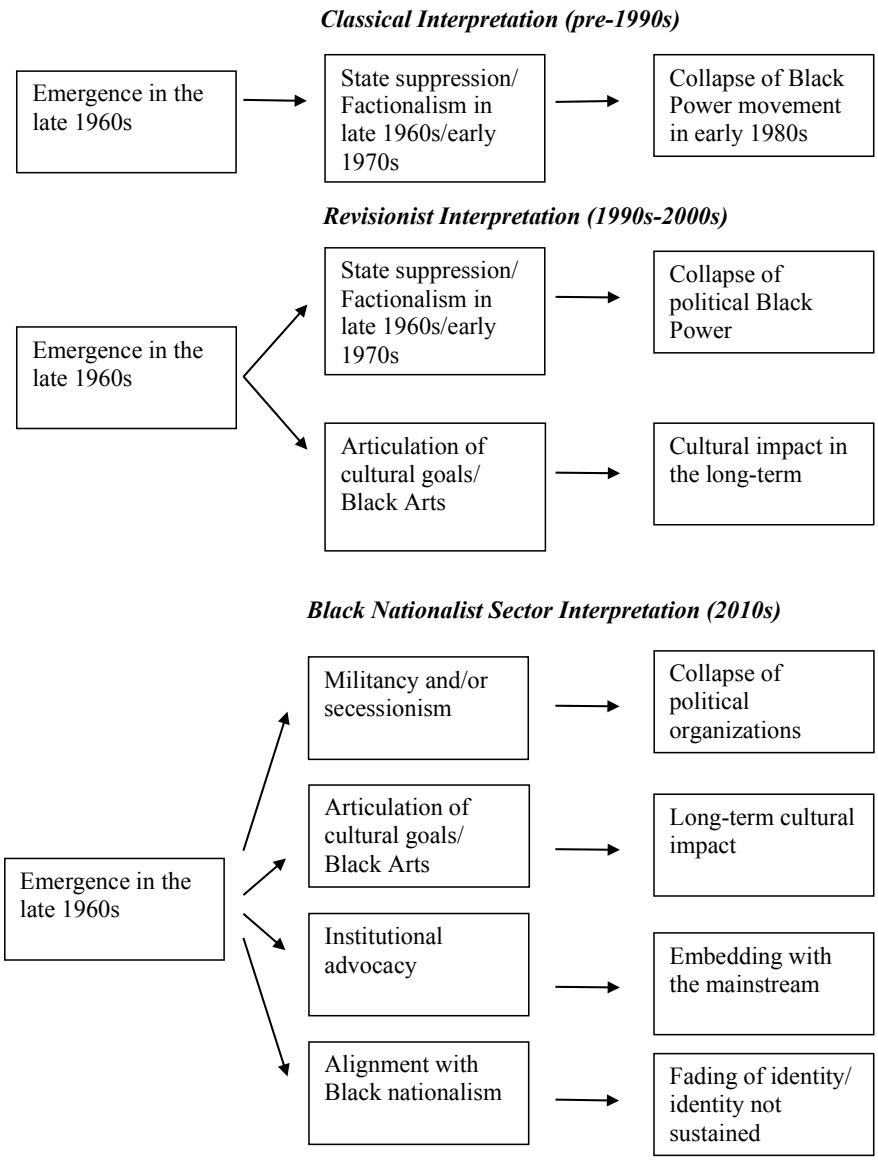
organizations that were focal points for politics rather than the hundreds of nationalist groups that focused on education, arts, and professions.

Another observation is that many nationalist organizations were, in many respects, highly successful. A number of arts organizations could be considered in this way. The Association for the Advancement of Creative Music, the National Black Theater, and the *Black Scholar* all continue to operate and influence their respective fields. Black studies programs experienced initial difficulties in the 1970s and 1980s, when Black students decreased their interest, only to be revived in the 1990s and 2000s. These examples show that important parts of the BNS thrive. While they did suffer when interest in Black consciousness abated in the 1970s, they possessed other resources. For example, Black studies programs were subunits of larger universities that could support them and musical organizations, like the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music, were integrated within broader artistic networks that provided renewed strength.

With that said, we can trace three trajectories of scholarship on Black Power and its associated organizations. Diagram 1 displays a summary of the trajectories taken by scholars using each perspective. First, prior to the 1990s, the "classical" interpretation of the movement and its organizations is the following: Black Power rose to existence in the 1960s, but state suppression and factionalism among the groups during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s led to its demise by the early 1980s. Second, during the 1990s, the "revisionist" interpretation of Black Power took hold in scholarship. Although these scholars also supported the classical interpretation of Black Power organizations falling sway to state suppression and factionalism, they noted the importance of their cultural impact and their members on American society, which resulted from articulation of the specific cultural goals associated with the organizations and Black nationalism. Finally, as we propose in this article, a third lens for interpreting the

movement and its organizations exists: the Black Nationalist Sector. Acknowledging seeds of Black Power developing in the 1950s, but solidifying in the late 1960s, the organizations within this sector differed in trajectories based on their organizational type. Black Power radical and secessionist organizations often collapsed as a result of the traditionally cited state suppression and/or factionalism. Black Power organizations that articulated their cultural goals of Black nationalism evolved to have lasting impacts on various aspects of American culture. Finally, the organizations oriented toward avenues of institutional advocacy in line with the movement became embedded within mainstream institutions such as politics and education. Black Power organizations that simply allied themselves with Black nationalism during the preeminent era, yet with no clear connections and goals beyond simple identification, deemphasized their connections to Black nationalism generally and kept few connections from their original development.

Diagram 1. Interpretations of the Development of Black Power



Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to question the view of Black Power that sees it as a short-lived movement, or one whose impact is mainly cultural, which was accomplished by focusing on the Black Nationalist Sector (BNS). This theoretical lens draws attention to the diversity within the Black Power Movement and shows that conventional interpretations are incomplete and based on the history of radicalized political organizations. Organizations defined by goals other than political confrontation have histories that do not resemble that of the Panthers, Revolutionary Action Movement, or similar groups.

The view presented here has two implications for students of Black Power. First, it strongly argues that Black Power was not an unfortunate side effect of Civil Rights, a degradation of the movement of King and Rustin. Rather, Black Power organizations adopted goals that were substantially different than those promoted by more conventional Civil Rights groups. These groups did not seek to reform the White mainstream, but instead sought a parallel space, which some scholars have described as a "counter-center" within the mainstream (Rojas, 2007, pp. 220–225). Second, the theory of the BNS allows scholars to appreciate the continuity of form from the late 1960s to the present. Thus, future research can understand what was retained from the classical Black Power era and what was not.

Finally, scholarship should investigate more closely how mainstream American culture views the remaining nationalist organizations. In some ways, American culture continues to be quite hostile. The "classic" Black Power groups like the Panthers remain, in the eyes of many, the symbol of revolutionary excess, but other groups in the Black Nationalist Sector may have a more positive association within the mainstream. Black studies programs are one example. Though they occasionally garner hostile criticism, they are, in fact, expanding through the

creation of doctoral programs, which requires the support of other actors in higher education. In the end, Black nationalism continues to ebb and flow with broader social trends and we continuously need to reexamine how these organizations and members work to pursue their goals and identity. Only then can we understand the complexities of Black Power beyond the traditional "rise and fall" thesis and fully document its true impact on American life.

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