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Jill Eisenberg

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On the Record: The Visibility of Race, Class, Gender, and Age in Richmond, Virginia’s Newspaper Coverage of 1960’s Sitdown Movement
By Jill Eisenberg

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Abstract

This research project is an analysis of the representation of race, class, gender, and age in local newspapers during the early 1960 civil rights' sitdown movement in Richmond, Virginia. Political figures and heads of media were predominantly older, elite, white- and male-oriented and -dominated. Through studying both white Richmond and African American Richmond newspapers, this thesis explores how these interlocking and interdependent systems of oppression and privilege affected the portrayal of groups and individuals in the media. Gender, race, class, and age cannot be studied in isolation from one another when analyzing the Civil Rights Movement and newspapers as primary sources because many of the individuals and groups involved often identified in multiple spheres. By focusing on newspapers and using Richmond as a case study, this thesis addresses the motivation as to what becomes reported and memorialized. This thesis analyzes how these groups were portrayed in news articles but also explores why certain groups were invisible or hyper-visible in articles and pictures. Questions addressed include: How was being African American, a woman, working-class, and/or a student used for and against civil rights activists? How did race, gender, class, and age legitimize or undermine action? When these groups did attain visibility in a news article, how were they portrayed? Investigating the effects of (in)visibility in the Civil Rights Movement will help us to understand the significance of all groups in a fight for justice.
I. Introduction

NAACP attorney and Richmond councilman, Oliver Hill, “critically remarked that if University of Richmond students became aroused over an issue Thalhimers would not have them arrested.”¹ This remark taken from the *Times-Dispatch* in February 1960 illustrates the frustration African American Richmonders experienced when their children were arrested for standing up for justice. Next February marks the 50th anniversary of the arrest of 34 college students from Virginia Union University at the downtown Thalhimer’s department store in Richmond. These young men and women were inspired by the student-led sitdown demonstrations in North Carolina a few weeks earlier and resolved to bring the movement home and join in the fight for desegregation. Theirs and the other arrests that quickly followed inaugurated Richmond’s sitdown movement in 1960. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and *Richmond Afro-American* newspapers followed the sit-in demonstrations both in Richmond, other Virginian cities, and the rest of the nation throughout the year until one by one public and many private facilities desegregated. Although the news coverage in both papers aimed to depict the truth and atmosphere surrounding the sitdown movement, each paper presented a different reality of the sitdowns throughout the South. The *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* gave varying amounts of space and place within their pages and focused on separate features of the individuals, organizations, and events, thereby creating distinct narratives. Race, gender, class, and age are interdependent and interlocking systems of oppression and privilege; the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* used each in complex and conflicting ways to address, justify, and criticize the 1960 sitdown movement. In order to understand

how the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* portrayed the sitdown movement in 1960, it is necessary to analyze their use of race, gender, class, and age within their articles.

Analyzing these two newspapers' coverage of Virginia's sitdown movement in 1960 is an attempt to bring to light the need for more scholarship beyond Virginia's Civil Rights history in the courtroom and classroom. Richmond in this time period has an innumerable amount of stories. Many are still being told today and others have yet to be revealed and preserved. Robert A. Pratt contends, "There has been no comprehensive examination of black protest in the commonwealth. We know that there were student-led protests in Richmond, and there were also sit-ins, marches, and other demonstrations throughout the state. Yet Virginia’s place in the movement remains unclear and undefined." Hence, a major story that is still not being fully recorded in both historical research and popular culture is the story of Richmond’s sitdown movement and the multitude of actors involved in the demonstrations. The sitdown movement is crucial in understanding Virginia’s Civil Rights Movement history because “the Thalhimer’s boycott of 1960 was Richmond’s version of the Montgomery bus boycott. African Americans’ boycott of Thalhimer’s department store was a defining moment in the history and direction of Richmond’s CRM.” Therefore, the history of the modern Civil Rights Movement needs to be reconstructed to incorporate the sit-in demonstrations in Richmond, Virginia, the role of the local newspapers that covered them, and the participants of the demonstrations.

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3 Lewis A. Randolph and Gayle T. Tate, *Rights for a Season: The politics of Race, Class, and Gender in Richmond, Virginia* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 180.
Although scholarship has been done to claim Virginia’s contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, the majority of civil rights history is still Deep South-focused and elite leader-focused, and the majority of Virginia’s Civil Rights Movement history still concentrates on the courtroom and integration of public schools. The Civil Rights Movement in Richmond in general has not been explored nearly as well as the substantial scholarship given to the movement in the Deep South. “The perception lingers,” according to Robert A. Pratt, “that because most of the civil rights protests occurred in the Deep South, nothing happened in the rest of the South, which, of course, was not the case.” Media and historical spotlight has largely neglected or ignored Richmond and greater Virginia’s sitdown movement because the events were not incredibly violent, graphic, or disruptive to mainstream society and so not as “interesting” or “front page” material as other parts of the South. Accordingly, John V. Moeser and Christopher Silver assert that “local politics in Richmond never was infected with the same virulent racism as was the case in some other southern cities.” While research has examined Virginia’s legacy in school integration and the courtroom, the majority of articles, dissertations, and books still emphasize the Deep South movement with significantly less exploration of the local activities of the Upper South or the national influence the Upper South on the national Civil Rights Movement. Virginia is further crucial to delve into because "Virginia has progressed from being a state that was the bulwark of American slavery and a front-runner in the massive resistance to school desegregation to being a state that

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4 Pratt, “New Directions,” 151.
5 John V. Moeser and Christopher Silver, “Race, Social Stratification, and Politics: The Case of Atlanta, Memphis, and Richmond,” The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 102 (October 1994), 527.
has elected a black politician to its highest office." In this context, Virginia offers a unique perspective of changing race relations in the South. Of the scholarship that has been done on Richmond and Virginia, the focus has been on the legal and political developments of the movement.

By expanding the scope of Civil Rights Movement scholarship, previously overlooked and ignored actors are brought into focus. Virginia had certainly made headlines for its role in court cases for school and other public space integration, but past and present emphasis on legal and political strides neglects the role of African American women, male and female students, and the lower classes because these groups rarely held positions of power or visibility in the legal or political spheres. For example, only a few individual women from Richmond have name recognition within the local movement and they were often given barely more than a few sentences in articles or books. “When one looks at the history of the Civil Rights Movement,” as maintained by LaVerne Gyant, “One would think that there were only a few women involved.” In order to study the roles of other participants and “nontraditional” leaders in Richmond’s Civil Rights Movement, it is necessary to look at their visibility during the time period and how the sitdown demonstrations were portrayed as a social movement. Using Richmond as a portal into Civil Rights Movement history offers further insight into how gender, age, race, and class affected the image of civil rights organizations, helped and hindered the cause, and how they reveal the social and political context of the time period, and how

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this local community in Richmond faced the same barriers many of their peers did in other organizations and communities throughout the South.

In order to study these newspapers' coverage, it is important to understand the concept of the “Great Man theory.” Much scholarship has been done focusing on the influential, national spokesmen of the Civil Rights Movement, which is called the “Great Man theory.” According to Bernice McNair Barnett, “the invisibility of modern Black women leaders and activists is in part a result of gender, race, and class biases prevalent in both the social movement literature and feminist scholarship. Social movement scholarship has focused almost exclusively on great men and elites as movement leaders.”8 The “Great Man theory” focuses on the lives and contributions of the elite male leaders of civil rights organizations and has been a major staple in Civil Rights Movement scholarship until recently, when there has been a big push to look at social movement history and feminist history. Additionally, Owen J. Dwyer states, “The ‘Great Man’ paradigm of history dominates the retelling of the Civil Rights Movement. This version of the past focuses on leaders rather than on organizers or participants and valorizes the national at the expense of the local. The ‘Great Man’ paradigm obscures the role of women, most of whom were local, working-class activists.”9 Rather than the demonstrators who ensured the successes of protests, charismatic spokesmen have received the most attention in national press, historical museums, and historical research.

As indicated by Lynne Olson, “virtually all the major early works about the period

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portray the movement through the filter of the men and their organizations.\textsuperscript{10}

Consequently, the focus on a few individuals has solidified the Civil Rights Movement in the minds of many as a movement of a few celebrities rather than entire communities. The complexities and the many participants of the movement become lost because as Lynne Olson reasons, "the tendency to view the Civil Rights Movement as a monolithic entity with but a few bright stars at the helm is appealing to our sense of drama and facilitates images, albeit sometimes superficial in nature."\textsuperscript{11} In analyzing race, gender, class, and age, this paper not only allows us to see how these newspapers portrayed the "great men" but also how the news media portrayed those who did not fit into the "Great Man" archetype. However, this practice of focusing on elite male leaders does not start and stop with post-hoc scholarship.

Both the \textit{Times-Dispatch} and \textit{Afro-American} actively sought out male leaders to interview and describe in more detail than other groups who did not fit the elite male leader standard. Despite the major contributions of African American women in the 1950s and 1960s, "with few exceptions, most accounts of this period focus on male leaders and the organizations they led. Very little is known about the countless black women who were the backbone of the civil rights struggle in local communities across this nation."\textsuperscript{12} The "Great Man theory" has downplayed the contributions of and affected the study of women, male and female students, and lower classes.

Although the sitdown movement in Richmond definitely had its prominent male leaders, the sitdown movement still provides a valuable chance to examine the participation of more elements of the African American community than in previous civil rights struggles and to compare the Richmond news sources with other Southern news coverage. Sit-ins had been used as a form of protest in the African American communities throughout the South and in Richmond since emancipation. However, the student-initiated sitdown movement formally began in the winter of 1960. These sit-ins were different than earlier sit-in demonstrations because they attracted mass community organization and gained national momentum. The sit-in movement of 1960 was the first time African Americans across the nation collectively participated in the fight for desegregation, thereby not only challenging white society status quo but also traditional African American community approaches to racism resistance. A significant percentage of the college students who participated were female and many older women in the community walked with students and bolstered the picket lines when students had to be in class. Lewis A. Randolph indicates, "The picket line was organized and staffed for the most part by black women six days a week." With this example, the sitdown movement presents a useful access point into Richmond's African American participation in the Civil Rights Movement. Moreover, the sitdown movement afforded more active participation of adult women and students than previous tactics in lawsuits and state legislation. "When the 'outside of the courtroom' dimension of the movement emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s," argues Jewel L. Prestage, "women played significant roles in grass-roots organizations in local communities, in national coordination

structures, and in confrontations with hostile police officers and anti-integration groups and individuals.”

The sitdown movement is a valuable period to investigate in the history of the Civil Rights Movement because students and older women who participated in these protests often experienced unprecedented power. Anne Standley stresses that the movement gave women as well as men a sense of empowerment “despite the exclusion from top positions in movement organizations and the little recognition they received from either blacks or whites for their contributions.”

Young and old, many for the first time had an active role in creating tangible change.

Therefore, studying the sitdown movement through newspapers provides a unique and intimate opportunity to experience the movement as it grew and changed over the course of events. Newspapers are crucial to understanding the local Richmond movement because of their prominence in the community and, as G. Ray Funkhouser indicates, “the amount of media attention given to an issue strongly influences its visibility to the public.”

Following the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* every day through 1960 brings the local movement into clearer focus as a continuing reality and helped recreate a day-to-day life of the local people most affected by the movement. Although newspapers, like most primary sources, are not completely objective, newspapers are still important because they give us not only more detail about the national and local leaders, but also the day-to-day life of the local people most affected by the movement. Seeing the same neighborhoods, organizations, and individuals appear in the articles as the sit-ins

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progressed takes us out of the distant courtroom and political halls. While newspapers are products of elites because of their writers, advertisers, and stockholders, newspapers still provide rare commentary and observation of communities and of those not able to observe themselves. “The news media,” according to G. Ray Funkhouser, “are our only way of knowing, at the time, what is happening in the world outside our immediate experience. Most of us do not have the patience to wait a few years and see what actually did happen.”17 In this view, newspapers’ portrayal of the participants in the movement helped set the stage for who was elevated to publicly-recognized leadership and who would be remembered in local and national memory. Studying how these papers used race, gender, class, and age enables us to understand how readers saw and understood the events of the time, but also how much of our public memory and historical scholarship has relied on these perspectives.

II. Newspapers as a Source

An analysis of media coverage requires a cognizance of the myriad of external factors that also affected who was represented and how they were portrayed in the news. Undoubtedly, many groups were not able, either by choice or more realistically by institutionalized exclusion, to achieve elite positions of leadership or visibility in the Civil Rights Movement. Many groups and individuals faced discrimination from multiple sources for different spheres of their identity. This discrimination took both obvious, blatant forms and also unobvious, systemic forms. For example, African American women were at the forefront of the movement just as much as African American men, but women were predominantly invisible as movement spokespersons and leaders. This trend

occurred because, as Bernice McNair Barnett argues, “Race, gender, and class constraints generally prohibited their being the recognized articulators, spokespersons, and media favorites.” African American women had just as much reason to fight for justice as African American men, but the contradictory and additional roles expected of them hindered their ability to ascend to more elite positions beyond the grassroots level. Conversely, African American men had the advantage of the institutions like the church, which provided a direct pipeline to prominent leadership positions. Rhetaugh Graves Dumas reasons that the church “was the critical training ground for black leadership. The vast majority of black leaders, including the post-war politicians, got their start in the church.” African American women have been the most susceptible to invisibility in the Civil Rights Movement and scholarship, according to LaVerne Gyant, because they “faced triple barriers—race, sex, and class.” Many of the reasons why African American women were underrepresented were deeply ingrained social views and institutional obstacles. African American women struggled to secure and retain high leadership positions while facing obstacles from their churches, organization structure and culture, socialization, role conflict, class and education, discrimination, and personal decisions. Because of these different barriers, African American women were often directed away from high leadership positions and confined to lower levels of leadership and participation.

Consequently, newspapers reflected these prevailing exclusionary practices of sexism, classism, ageism, and racism in government, national and local civil rights

20 Gyant, “Passing the Torch,” 629.
organizations, and the larger society. This reflection took the form in much of the media's coverage of civil rights events whereby newsmen were only allowed to speak with designated spokespersons or leaders chosen by their civil rights organization, which would most likely be a middle-class African American man who gained his status as either a lawyer, civil rights leader, or through the church. Bernice McNair Barnett emphasizes, "Typically, positional leaders and spokespersons were, in fact, males and may have been more highly respected not only by Black and white supporters but also by white opposition. Indeed, in the Southern social structure of the 1950s, women were expected to adhere to the adage that they should be seen, not heard, and in Southern Baptist churches women's place was 'in the pew' and 'out of the pulpit.'"  

Moreover, gender bias within the movement and within news coverage was in part a reflection of the times. Women's exclusion from formal leadership positions and media interviews "during the time of the Civil Rights Movement should come as no surprise" as Belinda Robnett argues because, "the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States did not develop until the late sixties and early seventies. Within this context, notions of femininity and equal representation of women were not considerations in movement participation."  

Thus, news media functioned within the social and political frameworks that established acceptable spokespersons and messages.

Yet, newspapers do not simply reflect current societal practices. In fact, they very much pride themselves on providing the objective, accurate "truth" of a story, even if it shows society and its customs in a dark light. The Times-Dispatch believed editors and writers faced the task of giving readers "comprehensive news coverage that is as accurate

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and objective as human skill can make it." 23 For example, media coverage of the Civil Rights Movement had a significant impact in the dismantling of Jim Crow segregation in the South. Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff point out that "most newspapers and the emerging journalism on television showed their propensity to cover the hot and simple story, not the complex one; they were drawn to the raging fire, not the slow burn." 24 Although resistance and protest to segregation had existed for generations, new tactics and strategies, like passive resistance, created highly visible backlashes that captured media spotlight in great force. An Associated Press article in the Times-Dispatch illustrates the ferocity never before captured in such critical light: "Fifty young Negroes—two of them dripping wet from a hosing—were arrested during a sit-down demonstration in a Chattanooga, Tenn., variety store yesterday. Robert V. Thacker, manager of the Kress store, said that when the Negroes refused to leave the white lunch counter he threatened to turn a water hose on them." 25 The violent, graphic images and news footage that came out of the South shocked, horrified, and moved millions of Americans and other people around the world because it brought to light the systemic degradation of African Americans. Indeed, many of the images and stories came not just from Northern media sources but also from many Southern journalists and photographers themselves.

However, newspapers are not immune to the belief systems and customs to the regions and cultures they live in. Many "white" newspapers were part of the culture that supported de jure segregation and went along with and in many cases actively supported

it, both because they agreed with the segregation and because their readership did. For example, James J. Kilpatrick, editor of the now defunct *Richmond News Leader*, crafted the southern strategy of Massive Resistance in response to *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1955 and soon after "Virginia’s white political elite developed a strategy of ‘interposition.’" 26 Moreover, "keeping news and editorial separate was an article of faith at both Richmond papers," which is a sentiment James Latimer, a major political reporter at the time for the *Times-Dispatch*, confirmed. He held, "when the editorial papers were espousing Massive Resistance, the news writers tried not to be influenced by it, except that there were times, I think, that all of us decided we ought to try to correct the record in case the editorialists had misstated or omitted important facts." 27 In fact, the white Richmond newspapers in the middle of the twentieth century “enjoyed a period of unparalleled influence in the state” because “the editorial columns of the *News Leader* and *Times-Dispatch* were powerful influences in the controversy over desegregation as well as in the debates over urban renewal. During the civil rights era, the newspapers provided the central forum for discussion of the litigious city’s many legal cases.” 28 In sum, while newspapers *may* have very much hoped to provide “only the truth” and let readers decide for themselves, the newspapers were also very aware of their power to persuade, which did not end with the opinion page, often intentionally.

This agency is the focus of this thesis. The newspapers might not have been able to talk to anyone other than designated leaders, but such organizational rules have never

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stopped them before in getting a story. They could have talked to the dozens of other participants at the sit-in but chose to interview the “leader.” Or if they did choose to interview a demonstrator, they would choose a male. When they did choose to write about, photograph, or interview a woman or student, the resulting articles or pictures almost always took agency away from the women and students and made them victims of oppression or vessels of the cause. Newspapers are therefore key tools to study the time period in order to see what they reflect about society in general and, more importantly, to study their role in agenda-setting and influencing public opinion.

The *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* were meticulous and deliberate in how much space and time was allotted to civil rights issues and, specifically, the sit-in movement. In a rare opportunity of introspection, the *Times-Dispatch* gave a behind-the-scenes background story of its operation in connection with “National Newspaper Week” and “Newspaperboy Day” in October of 1960: “The selection of which stories will be used in the finished product and where they will be placed is the job of experienced editors. From the hundreds of stories, the editors select only a small percentage and these are judged on their newsworthiness, timeless, proximity, prominence and human interest value to our readers.”29 These newsmen did not just write articles with bullet points. Their articles and images may seem far away from the opinion page but they very much pushed an agenda to justify, criticize, sympathize, and question the sit-ins, the participants, and the bodies they targeted. In comparing the two newspapers, we must examine how they used rhetoric, language, and images in the sit-in coverage, who and what they chose to write about, why they placed an article or image where they did, and why they chose an image to accompany a certain article.

Although the *Times-Dispatch* was not “just” for white Richmonders or the *Afro-American* solely for African American Richmonders, the daily *Times-Dispatch* catered to “white” interests and perspectives. Despite the fact that the African American community in Richmond relied on this paper for their morning daily news, the *Times-Dispatch* nevertheless had a predominantly white, powerful, and conservative readership. In reading front-page to front-page of the *Times-Dispatch* for a full year, there were almost never pictures of African Americans, especially never in any ads as models and nothing sold specifically to African American Richmonders. There was little general news about African Americans in Richmond except in relation to white Richmonders. Appropriately, the weekly *Afro-American* provided a rare voice and outlet for African American Richmonders to see their community interests acknowledged and represented in the media. These two newspapers are important to compare because they have such different advertisers, readership bases and intended audiences, funding sources, and commitments to stories and community ideals. These features meant they approached and wrote about the sit-in demonstrations distinctly, gave them variant amounts of coverage and visibility, and had separate goals in why they were writing about them.

Moreover, it is important to compare a representative “black” and “white” newspaper, rather than just the two white Richmond papers *Times-Dispatch* and the *News Leader*, because their comparison displays the struggle of ideology between the two larger communities. Even during its time of publication, the *News Leader* was recognized as more conservative than its sister paper, the *Times-Dispatch*. The *New Leader* was extremely critical of the Civil Rights Movement, especially in regards to public school integration. Even though the *Times-Dispatch* was by no means a supporter of the sitdown
movement in Richmond, it was more sympathetic and reflected the traditional Virginian approach to race relations, paternalism. Within the pages of the *Times-Dispatch*, one can glimpse the inner-struggle of a white community trying to be sympathetic and benevolent while still clinging to its tradition of white elitism and racial oppression. By placing the *Times-Dispatch* side by side with the *Afro-American*, the stark contrast to the *Afro-American* further illuminates the discrepancy between values and reality, while also providing a fuller representation of the sitdown events and inner-conflicts within the African American community.

In respect to the *Times-Dispatch*’s stance on race relations, the close relationship between the *Times-Dispatch* and *News Leader* is indisputable and, more importantly, crucial to recognize in order to understand its effects on the *Times-Dispatch* news coverage. Even though both papers were kept in print with the *Times-Dispatch* in the morning and the *News Leader* in the evening, the *Times-Dispatch* and *News Leader* merged into a single corporation in 1940 under the Bryan family, who have been the head publishers of the *Times-Dispatch* since 1886. While the papers tried to keep separate, Tennant D. Bryan was the publisher and John Dana Wise was the general manager of both papers. In fact, the *Times-Dispatch* was merely “separated by a wall from the *News Leader*.”

Consequently, as chief editor Kilpatrick of the *News Leader* vehemently endorsed Massive Resistance strategies against school integration after *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1955, the *Times-Dispatch*’s editor Virginius Dabney also came to support, or at least meet, those views. “Working in the same building as Kilpatrick,” according to Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, “Virginius Dabney was blocked from opposing massive resistance by Tennant Bryan, the principal owner of Dabney’s *Times-Dispatch* as

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well as Kilpatrick’s *News Leader.*”\(^{31}\) Virginius Dabney was certainly conservative but, unlike his counterpart Kilpatrick at the *News Leader,* he “championed labor unions and increased rights for blacks.”\(^{32}\) Regardless of his personal views on race relations, the *Times-Dispatch* joined in with the *News Leader* in supporting Massive Resistance to racially integrated schools. *Times-Dispatch* journalist, Earle Dunford, summed up the positions of the papers contending that the *Times-Dispatch* was “not all-out a ‘resister’ as its sister paper” because principally “*The News Leader* attacked; the *Times-Dispatch* wrung its hands.”\(^{33}\) Therefore, the *Times-Dispatch*’s attempt to deliver unbiased and objective news must be assessed in the light of the conservatism of the paper’s controllers and close association with the *News Leader.*

Alternatively, the *Afro-American*’s background and history placed the paper in a unique position from the *Times-Dispatch* to provide more racial news and take into account more minority viewpoints in Richmond. The *Afro-American* “blanketed much of the mid-Atlantic seaboard”\(^{34}\) and was “published weekly in thirteen local and regional editions, and twice a week in Washington, DC, and Baltimore.”\(^{35}\) The *Richmond Afro-American,* like its fellow editions, gave local Richmonders news on developments in the civil rights struggle rarely given detail in the white dailies. The *Afro-American* follows the legacy of protest of African American newspapers since Reconstruction. Even as white papers offered mostly general-interest news, Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff contend, “their Negro counterparts remained loud, clear instruments of protest, by turns educative and provocative. And for virtually all of their history in the 1950s, they had the

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\(^{32}\) Dunford, *The Story of a Newspaper,* 293.

\(^{33}\) Dunford, *The Story of a Newspaper,* 349

\(^{34}\) Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat,* 94.

\(^{35}\) Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat,* 78.
race story all to themselves." As the *Afro-American* was more of a regional paper, the *Times-Dispatch* combined both daily reports from staff and city reporters, its twelve news bureaus throughout the state, and the *Associated Press* and *New York Times News Service*. The *Afro-American* provided crucial perspective of the sit-in movement that the African American population in Richmond would not have otherwise had because the *Times-Dispatch* usually allotted one article daily of local sitdown events and often next to an *Associated Press* article of national sit-in news for a few months during the sitdown movement of 1960. Therefore, the *Afro-American* provided the images and news necessary to rally support and bring the Richmond community together.

Another factor that deserves consideration is the role of advertising in the *Times-Dispatch* because its biggest advertisers were also the biggest targets of the Richmond student sitdown movement, Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads department stores. Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads had particularly close ties to the *Times-Dispatch*, with all three being over hundred years old and local Richmond businesses. Their relationship is evident in the fact that when they eventually closed their operations for good, with Miller and Rhoads in 1990 and Thalhimers in 1992, "it hurt The Times-Dispatch and The News Leader financially." These companies, which blanketed the pages of the *Times-Dispatch* daily and particularly heavily on Sundays, were the same institutions that denied black Richmonders food service and arrested students. Although the *Times-Dispatch* viewed itself as objective and unbiased, this was a significant conflict of interest that potentially skewed the news coverage.

38 Dunford, *The Story of a Newspaper*, 446.
The *Times-Dispatch*, as with all newspapers, is first and foremost a business. Even though any respectable newspaper would not allow advertisers to influence their coverage, “an axiom of the newspaper business is that circulation pays for only paper and ink.... The presses, the typewriters, delivery vehicles, the wages and the health benefits are paid mainly by advertising.”

Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads bought significant amounts of ad space in each daily edition because the half of every other page was either Thalhimers or Miller & Rhoads. On Sundays, each had supplemental magazines featuring sales items, often a dozen pages long. Although the Richmond boycott was still under way and sitdown protests in other parts of Virginia had grown to include “wade-ins” at beaches and town pools, sit-ins at libraries and movie theaters, and other demonstrations, the *Times-Dispatch* dropped all news of the boycott of Richmond’s downtown stores at the end of June and over Fourth of July weekend. Although speculative, it is worth noting that this was also the same time Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads were advertising particularly heavily with its holiday sales. Thalhimers also had Easter sales, Memorial Day weekend sales, a Warehouse Sale, its annual Fall sale, and Founders Day sale throughout the year; each sale meant more advertisements.

Whether or not there was direct pressure from these companies on the *Times-Dispatch* to portray them in favorable light is irrelevant. What is relevant, however, is the fact that the *Times-Dispatch* was strategic in its placement of the sitdown stories. The sitdown articles never appeared on the same page or even opposite on the next page as a Thalhimers or Miller & Rhoads advertisement no matter how many pages they used that day. As a result, sitdown articles were not only buried as they lost “newsworthiness,” but

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39 Dunford, *The Story of a Newspaper*, 446.
40 *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 June- 10 July 1960.
also buried so they would not be visually connected to Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads. In particular, Thalhimers almost always was in the first few pages of the paper and the sit-in news would start on the fourth page or later. By keeping the ads and stories as separate as possible from each other, the *Times-Dispatch* was enabling these stores to preserve their image that it was “business as usual.” In addition, even within the sitdown articles, the *Times-Dispatch* always gave a voice to business interests and often interviewed business spokespersons. For instance, the first article covering the beginning of the sitdown events of VUU students quoted William B. Thalhimer Jr., general manager of Thalhimer’s reassuring the public, “We don’t plan to close the store. The balance of the store is open and it is still business as usual.”⁴¹ Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads aimed to restore confidence to the (white) public and investors that these sitdowns were just temporary and were not affecting business or profits. Although the *Times-Dispatch* interviewed VUU student leader, Charles Sherrod, in the same article on the sitdown, the *Times-Dispatch* financial dependency on these very stores limits the degree to which it could engage in a thorough appraisal of the events.

Furthermore, the *Times-Dispatch* was either continually quoting store spokespersons to purport optimism of the boycott or minimally discussed the economic implications of the boycotts. Both tactics helped preserve the image of these companies. While the *Afro-American* did not have many interviews with the white department store spokespersons, it utilized national interviews and press releases to reveal the regional and national implications of the boycotts. A huge headline across an entire page dedicated to sitdown updates read “Sitdowns Bring Chain Store $$ Loss,” which detailed the

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economic effect of the sitdown strikes in the South and nationwide picketing. S.H. Kress and Company, another store being targeted, reported nationally that “in some stores business has been cut by as much as 15 to 18 percent since the picketing and sitdowns started three weeks ago….Stock exchange figures show that Kress stores lost 1 ½, down 50 cents, last week.”42 Covering this side of the sitdown movement allowed the Afro-American to illustrate the economic power of African Americans, convince the community to continue the boycotts, and reveal a crucial part of the movement that was being conveniently left out or downplayed in the white newspapers. The stark contrast to the Afro-American, which did not rely on these department stores financially, suggests a big discrepancy in the Times-Dispatch’s reporting.

III. History

In order to understand the events both newspapers covered in 1960, it is necessary to investigate some of the historical and contemporary factors that contributed to their beginning. Although Richmond and Virginia’s sit-in demonstrations did not receive significant national coverage as other states and communities farther south, the Civil Rights Movement was still very active in the Old Dominion. Since the 1940s, middle-class African American leaders attempted to chip away at de jure segregation through establishing race relations committees with liberal white leaders. The African American community appeared to be making progress against segregation in the 1940s and 1950s. For example, “the Richmond Public Library voluntarily desegregated in 1947; the city hired its first black firemen in 1950 and its first black policemen in 1953; and

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Richmond’s buses were voluntarily desegregated in 1957.⁴³ Even though elite white leaders still controlled politics and society and used these cases to maintain a façade of being a progressive city with good race relations, these efforts were small victories that helped set the stage for mass community participation and mobilization.

Virginia’s race relations stemmed from white Virginia elites creation of a system of paternalism in dealing with African American Virginians. White elites promised to provide a minimal amount of basic services for black educational and economic uplift, but “in return, white elites demanded complete deference.”⁴⁴ Additionally, Virginia’s political elites never supported the Ku Klux Klan because “the Klan’s very presence threatened paternalistic notions of noblesse oblige that formed the foundation of Virginia’s claim to friendly race relations. In short, elites considered the Klan crass and embarrassing.”⁴⁵ Hence, Virginia’s system of oppression was different from most southern states because it was not based on violence and blatant intimidation.

Nevertheless, Virginia was just as committed to segregation as other southern states. In fact, by not practicing race-baiting, white Virginians attempted to convince themselves and African American Virginians that they had progressive race relations. As J. Douglas Smith contends, “Fewer African Americans were lynched in Virginia than in any other southern state in the twentieth century, a dubious distinction that nevertheless reinforced for white Virginians the superiority of their system of race relations.”⁴⁶ Such a system of managed relations between the races enabled white elites to maintain power and absolute control while appearing to encourage African American advancement. In reality, the

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⁴³ Randolph, “The Civil Rights Movement in Richmond,” 64.
⁴⁵ Smith, Managing White Supremacy, 41.
⁴⁶ Smith, Managing White Supremacy, 156.
attachment to paternalistic race relations "encouraged black advancement but denied the possibility of equality." Consequently, such benign racism meant Richmond was one of the most stratified cities in the South. As a result, by the mid-twentieth century, "Richmond’s white political elites’ refusal to accommodate the changing social and political milieu resulted in antagonism between themselves and blacks."

Despite the still prevailing, absolute control of white elites, Richmond had a dynamic and politically engaged middle-class African American community. Although poverty and dislocation of the poor was evident, for Richmond’s size, the middle class was large. According to Megan Taylor Shockley, "Virginia Union University was one of the most respected black universities in the country, and the number of black businesses in Richmond before World War II was second only to that in Durham. Sororities and social clubs flourished in the middle class." In contrast to many other cities in the South, Richmond has had a fairly early representation of African Americans on city council. Its first black councilman, Oliver Hill, was elected in 1948. Furthermore, Virginia was home to powerful chapters of historically black institutions. The Richmond NAACP was particularly active in major state litigation and often received national recognition under lawyers like Oliver Hill. The presence of the NAACP was apparent in Richmond because "the local chapter boasted an impressive 2,672 members by 1951." In addition, Virginia Union University was a small, private, African American institution of higher education located several miles northwest of downtown Richmond, which

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47 Smith, Managing White Supremacy, 8.
48 Lewis A. Randolph and Gayle T. Tate, Rights for a Season: The politics of Race, Class, and Gender in Richmond, Virginia (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 142.
49 Megan Taylor Shockley, "We, Too, Are Americans": African American Women in Detroit and Richmond, 1940-54 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 19.
51 Shockley, "We, Too, Are Americans," 16.
would later become “the center of the Richmond sit-in movement” in 1960. These two institutions in Richmond facilitated the relationship between two crucial groups, lawyers and students, in the fight against segregation.

While the local demonstrations were part of a longer history of civil rights struggle and protest culture in Virginia, the student-led sitdown facet of the Civil Rights Movement was directly inspired by the most recent student sit-ins in North Carolina. The sitdown stage of the Civil Rights Movement consisted of a multitude of people and events. This stage gained popularity from town to town across the South and into the North in 1960 in part because it was attacking such a visible aspect of segregation. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward emphasize that “one of the most conspicuous symbols of southern caste arrangements was the segregation of bus and train terminals—from waiting areas, to eating facilities, to restrooms.” Challenging racist cultural practices ultimately changed the ways Americans lived their lives.

When four men from North Carolina A&T State University decided to sit in at a Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro on February 1, 1960, they had no comprehension at the time that their action would ignite sit-in demonstrations throughout the South and across the nation. Although sit-ins were a part of African American protest history and tradition, “their sit-ins not only detonated a movement within a movement but hurled an entire generation onto a radical path. In less than a decade, students would become the catalysts of a movement that forced a nation to examine its most fundamental

52 Peter Wallenstein, Blue Laws and Black Codes: Conflicts, Courts, and Change in Twentieth-Century Virginia (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 115.
values.” From this point on, the sit-ins shook the South like a tidal wave. Building on the momentum of the 1940s and 1950s, “the era of accommodation and paternalism gave way to political resistance and protest” in the 1960s. The Greensboro sit-ins stirred students to mobilize in their own communities, with the adult members scrambling to keep up:

Within a week, sit-ins had spread to 15 southern cities in 5 states. By March, San Antonio had become the first southern city to integrate its lunch counters, and soon after, 4 national chains representing 150 stores in 112 cities announced that they were integrating their lunch counters. White students also joined the movement. In less than 2 months, 1,000 demonstrators were arrested. The sit-in movement not only spread through the South but touched northern states as well. All told, the action involved more people than any other Civil Rights Movement in history. Within 18 months, some 70,000 people participated in sit-ins. After more than 3,600 arrests, 101 southern communities desegregated their eating places.

As a result, the student approach drastically changed the course of the movement, but, to the surprise of many, was highly successful. These student activities not only added to the greater Civil Rights Movement’s momentum, but also heightened the level of struggle. When the VUU students launched their own local initiative in late February, they were joining a part of a larger sitdown movement spreading throughout the South. Further, Martha Prescod Norman observes, “it was the adding up of these local movements, which stayed in motion and kept happening all over the South, that created a situation in which change had to be made.”

56 Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 274.
developed specific strategies and models that could be replicated and adapted to different communities.

Building off a deep tradition of resistance and obtaining encouragement from other recent student activities in the South, the Richmond student sit-ins on February 20, 1960 sparked a new stage of Richmond’s Civil Rights Movement. At 9am on Saturday, ministerial students Frank Pinkston and Charles Sherrod, “inspired by the Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins, decided to show their solidarity” by marching with about 200 Virginia Union University students down Chamberlayne Avenue to Woolworth’s Department Store on Broad Street in downtown Richmond. They selected this Saturday, nineteen days after the North Carolina sit-ins began, as the first day of their sit-ins because “classes were not held on weekends, so no one would have to miss class to participate. And the stores would be busier than during the week, so that anything the students did would prove more disruptive and would gain the attention of more people.”

At the Woolworth’s, they sat at the lunch counter, asked for service, and left only when the counter was closed. The students also targeted and protested five other stores, which had Jim Crow policies of not serving African Americans.

Two days later, on February 22, the news of the sit-ins had spread across campus and 400 students skipped class to join in the protest in downtown Richmond. Most of the targeted stores closed their lunch counters for the day but store officials in Thalhimer’s Department Store called the city police to issue warrants for the arrest of thirty-four students in the tea room and lunch counter on charges of trespassing. Of the thirty-four

59 Wallenstein, Blue Laws and Black Codes, 117.
60 Silver and Moeser, The Separate City, 75.
arrested that day, twenty-four were men and ten were women.\textsuperscript{61} As the students were escorted to jail, five hundred American flag-waving supporters cheered them. They were released on $30 personal recognizance bonds for hearings in Police Court March 4. The \textit{Times-Dispatch} noted that "each time the door opened and someone walked out, the group waiting outside cheered and clapped."\textsuperscript{62}

After prominent African American businessmen posted bond for the thirty-four, the students returned on Tuesday, February 23, "demanded a boycott of Thalhimer’s, and they implored all black patrons to turn in their credit cards and stop buying from the store."\textsuperscript{63} Students installed picket lines and recruited volunteers. The students "became determined to open the lunch counters and restaurants of the city to both races. Grievances centered on downtown shopping and included restrictions on trying on clothes. Lunch counter sit-ins and an economic boycott that involved ‘selective buying’ were launched against Thalhimer’s and Miller & Rhoads until the stores agreed to serve blacks on the same basis as whites."\textsuperscript{64}

Although the African American community was outraged over the arrest of the students, the arrest of Ruth Tinsley electrified the public into united action. The day after the thirty-four students were arrested, on February 23, Ruth Tinsley was arrested outside the Thalhimers Department store in downtown Richmond where student demonstrators from mostly Virginia Union University were picketing. Both white and African American spectators had gathered to watch the picketing underway and Ruth Tinsley was in the crowd. A police officer approached her and asked her to move to keep the crowds

\textsuperscript{63} Randolph and Tate, \textit{Rights for a Season}, 182.
\textsuperscript{64} Tyler-McGraw, \textit{At the Falls}, 288.
moving and the streets clear. She refused and was arrested and dragged to jail. Although
the arrest of the students angered much of the African American community, the arrest of
such a socially acceptable, motherly figure stirred the older adult public into action:
“Tinsley’s arrest signaled to the black community that they had suffered enough.”

Therefore, in response to both the student arrests and arrest of Ruth Tinsley, the
larger African American community expressed outrage and held a mass rally at the Fifth
Street Baptist Church on the evening of February 24. The *Times-Dispatch* interviewed
“spokesmen” who said, “the meeting would be an effort to beef up the students’ hopes for
a boycott at Thalhimers and would be in protest of Monday’s arrests.” Over 3,000
attended to hear such speakers as Oliver Hill who was a prominent NAACP lawyer and
previous Richmond councilman, Wyatt Tee Walker who was president of the Petersburg
chapter of the NAACP and would later become the first executive director of the
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and Charles Sherrod who helped
initiate the student sit-in from VUU. The *Afro-American* reported, “the spirit was
intensified at the meeting Monday night attended by the majority of the 900 student
body” from Virginia Union. A picture of the mass meeting denotes its prominence
because two men are bent over outside a window looking into the church. “So
overcrowded was the church mass meeting... that these attendants had to resort to
listening through the church window.” At the meeting, African American Richmonders
vowed to boycott Thalhimers and other segregated eating facilities, signed up by the

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hundreds to join the picket line, and established the Richmond Citizens Advisory Council (RCAC). This fifteen-person committee became the “local movement center” and planned the strategy for the Richmond movement. At the mass rally, the African American community agreed that the success of the protest depended on both picketing and boycotting because they would draw attention to the stores’ policies and “bring economic pressure to bear.”

Contrary to local lore, the sit-ins were not spontaneous. Two weeks before the downtown Richmond sit-ins, Frank Pinkston, Charles Sherrod, and Woodrow Grant met to discuss the recent Greensboro sit-ins. In that meeting, “the three men discussed how to mobilize the campus and the wider community….The students discussed how to prepare for the demonstrations they had in mind. By the end of the week, they had begun training in nonviolent direct action and had held mock demonstrations. Taking turns playing all the roles—protesters, store personnel, police, hecklers—they acted out various scenarios that they might confront.”

Frank Pinkston and Charles Sherrod, who were ministerial students, met with Richmond ministers to explain their plans and garner support. The students also contacted Nat Eggleston, owner of the Eggleston Hotel, “who offered his establishment as a meeting place for the protesters” and “took the lead in rallying other black businessmen in support of the protest.” Nat Eggleston provided the students with transportation back and forth between campus and downtown. “When the protests began,” according to Peter Wallenstein, “black taxi drivers supplied transportation for many students, who signed tickets for their fares. The taxi drivers or companies covered

69 Randolph and Tate, Rights for a Season, 184.
70 Wallenstein, Blue Laws and Black Codes, 116.
71 Peter Wallenstein, Blue Laws and Black Codes, 115-116.
some of the costs, and so did various other black businessmen." In addition to reaching out to church leaders and businessmen, the students also collaborated with the NAACP and local black lawyers. In particular, Martin A. Martin, Oliver W. Hill, and Clarence W. Newsome mentored the demonstrators in Virginia law as it might applied to demonstrations, secured funds for bail, and pledged to represent them in court if they students were arrested.

Thalhimers became the focus of the picketing and boycott because it was the first store to arrest student sitdowners. Yet, Thalhimers became a powerful and convenient symbol to protest because, as Peter Wallenstein stresses, it “represented ‘Old’ Richmond and the ‘Old Power’ of racial domination.” Even though the middle-class African Americans were of a higher economic status than most of the white patrons, Thalhimers still degraded middle-class African Americans in denying them service at lunch counters and allowing white sales clerks to humiliate them. Additionally, Thalhimers was particularly vulnerable to an economic boycott because middle-class African Americans patronized the store more than other department stores in Richmond. Most stores in Richmond degraded African Americans by enforcing “buy-blind” practices whereby they were not allowed to try clothes on inside the store and could not return or exchange the clothes if they did not fit. Thalhimer’s was the only Richmond store that did not impose the “buy-blind” policy so middle-class African Americans made up a significant portion of Thalhimers sales.

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72 Wallenstein, *Blue Laws and Black Codes*, 116.
75 Randolph and Tate, *Rights for a Season*, 185.
IV. Race

Of the four lenses applied to these newspapers, race was by far the most visible and apparent. This is in part, of course, because the fight to desegregate lunch counters and the goal of the larger Civil Rights Movement was geared towards breaking down the barriers of racial inequality. Accordingly, the activists and African American community aggressively spotlighted racism in all spheres of public life. Although both newspapers addressed the overt and visible racism with the segregated lunch counters and other community spaces, each newspaper employed race differently to chronicle the events. For example, racial language, rhetoric, and stereotyping wove their way throughout the articles in the Times-Dispatch. Whether or not the Times-Dispatch was writing about the events in a sympathetic manner, its racial language continued to reinforce the institutionalized inequality and oppression along racial boundaries. Seeped in the Virginian tradition of paternalism, the Times-Dispatch's racially coded language endorsed racism even as it recorded events, groups, and individuals fighting to break it down in the most public way they could.

Despite the Time-Dispatch's claims to be neutral and objective, its language was one-sided in its support of the white Virginian system of oppression. For instance, a major issue in the Times-Dispatch's language was the word choice for the participants in the sit-ins. The students were often called “Negroes” or “the 34,” rather than “student demonstrators” or “persons” or even “Negro persons.” A March 7th article was titled, “Danville Negroes Eye Boycott,” and begins the article: “The possibility of a Negro boycott of a Thalhimers branch department store here arose Sunday after a meeting of Negroes at a downtown church. Such a boycott would be the outgrowth of picketing
carried on by *Negroes* at Thalhimers in Richmond” (emphasis added).\(^7\) The use of the word “Negro” as a noun instead of an adjective draws attention to the activist’s racial identity, which to the *Times-Dispatch* was the most important part of one’s identity if one was not white. However, this practice was not equally applied to all groups because whenever white college students participated, they were rarely called just “Whites.” Rather, they were described as “white students” or “white persons,” if there race needed to be mentioned at all. A March 8\(^{th}\) article was titled, “To End Injustice: Seminary Students Tell Reason For Picketing.”\(^7\) The article focuses on a “group of white seminary students who have joined a Negro protest.” The *Times-Dispatch* piece mentions the seminary students’ race in the first paragraph and then proceeds to call them “students” throughout the rest of the article. Yet, in the same article, African American students are always labeled in conjunction to their race: “34 Negroes” and “Adult Negroes.” This discrepancy between African Americans and white participants or white attackers is evidence of the racial treatment of African Americans as “the other,” and white Americans as “the norm” or standard. In this way, unless one is mentioned as “Negro,” one can assume the person or group that is being described is white even in an African American-sponsored protest.

Furthermore, by labeling African Americans as only “Negroes,” rather than demonstrators or students who happen to be “negro,” reduces and confines an entire group of people to one facet of their identity and denies them their humanity. Even if the *Times-Dispatch* argues this word usage of “Negroes” for African American activists is polite and proper compared to the humiliating label of “nigger,” the fact that white

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participants or spectators were called “white persons” (if there racial identity was mentioned at all) confirms and reasserts traditional white beliefs that African Americans are less than human and inferior. This word choice further is important to reflect on because it encapsulates the entire fight for civil rights: It’s not about eating at the lunch counter, it’s about being recognized as human in white society’s eyes. Richmond NAACP attorney, Oliver Hill, summed up this belief in the *Times-Dispatch*, “We want to be accepted or rejected as individuals.”

The fact that the *Times-Dispatch* was sustaining racist ideologies through its language while documenting the Civil Rights Movement suggests conflicting messages. On the one hand, this racial word usage reveals racism was so deeply ingrained and internalized that such language had become habitual and subconscious. By the same token, this racial language illustrates conscious and meticulous decision to frame the people and movement in such a way that despite all the lip service to promote good race relations, white society (and by extension the *Times-Dispatch*) was hypocritical and ultimately refused to change. The question that arises, then, is how does one fight language? The *Times-Dispatch* and other white newspapers are the closest to representing the physical institution that sets forth racial language and codes of behavior. Yet, these newspapers are products of the white society that endorses and expects this kind of language. The power of language and rhetoric is immense because it is powerfully coded and entrenched in white society.

The *Afro-American* was also very aware of the power of language and employed words carefully to reveal double standards and raise solidarity. The *Afro-American* promoted the word, “colored,” in contrast to the *Times-Dispatch*’s “Negro,” which

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exemplifies the pro-active and deliberate effort in the African American community to claim its identity, rather than letting themselves be labeled. Although “Negro” was used in place of “nigger” because of the stigma in the *Times-Dispatch*, “colored” instead of “Negro” in the *Afro-American* was an intentional effort to distant African Americans from stereotypes, find a more middle-class appropriate term and downplay blackness in order to show common humanity with white Americans. Because the *Afro-American* was geared towards a predominantly African American readership base, the paper usually described the participants as “student demonstrators” or “ministers” and whatever else was a group’s post in the movement. The assumption was that participants were most likely African American. Besides, race was only revealed if there was more than one race participating in an event and was described on equal terms such as “colored persons” and “white persons,” not “Negroes” and “white persons” as in the *Times-Dispatch*. When the *Afro-American* did describe the racial identity of its subjects, it would assert “colored persons” and “white persons.” A February 27th article was titled, “Sit-Ins Vow To Go To Jail For Justice” which is deliberately ambiguous.79 The students are both African American and white, which the *Afro-American* describes as “college students of obvious membership in both the colored and white race.” Race as an adjective, not a noun, signifies race is only one trait and one’s humanness and actions as an activist are more important.

In both newspapers, white picketing or “sympathy protests” always made headlines or merited mention in a sitdown-related article because of and in despite of African Americans picketing everyday. In the *Times-Dispatch*, African American demonstrators quickly became “boring” and un-newsworthy. White activists and

sympathy protests not only secured a few lines in stories that focus on the African American movement, but also had their names stated in the articles. Whereas white participants were treated as individuals, black participants tended to be reduced to a faceless, indistinguishable mass without independent views. “Sympathy protest” was an obvious code for whites who empathized and supported the African American students but were not “true” participants since it was not their battle to fight. Regardless of how much white students believed in the cause for racial equality, the term, “sympathy protest,” made white groups paternalistic and gave white groups the power to pity those less fortunate, thereby undercutting the movement’s attempts to create equals among the races. The *Times-Dispatch* ran an article on March 23rd that discussed the “mushrooming sympathy protests by New England college students.” 80 The article recounts how eight Brown University students “distributed petitions” and University of Connecticut students formed “a campus civil rights committee to raise fund for Southern Negro students affected by the demonstrations.” In this example, white “sympathizers” appear enlightened for partaking and helping the demonstrators, but all in all white groups and individuals did not actually have to commit and invest as much as African Americans. The white college students and other white groups were recognized for minimal efforts, getting credit but not having to keep the boycott and picket lines going in the day-to-day struggle. Thus, white participants were guaranteed news coverage and publicity. This glass-escalator effect occurred because demonstrators were assumed to be African American and therefore not interesting or out of the ordinary after the first incident. “Rather than mirroring the realities of the times, the media seem to have attended to persons or agencies with the ability and motivation to call attention to particular issues by

creating 'news,' and to have decreased their attention to other issues as related events (even though possibly increasing) started to seem like 'the same old thing.' As such, white participants and endorsements were considered newsworthy because white readers wanted to read about white activities and how these events affected white interests and because, ironically, whites were “different.” They are the minority in such a situation so they received extra attention. Therefore, African Americans never win in being recognized as humans and trapped in a double bind: white media and society usually ignored African Americans for the minority, but even when they are the majority (as in the Civil Rights Movement), the white minority still gets the attention.

Even in the Afro-American, whites were written about, but continual mention of white students, colleges, and religious organizations throughout the nation joining in accentuates that this is a collaborative effort of one community, not just black and white as separate.

V. Gender

The Richmond Times-Dispatch and Richmond Afro-American were very aware of the power of gender to promote a certain view of the sitdown events. The Times-Dispatch used gender along with race, age, and class to enforce white middle-class ideals of respectability and criticize the use of “weaker” elements of the population to fight segregation. In contrast, the Afro-American used gender in conjunction with age, race, and class to promote solidarity and raise awareness about the injustices of segregation. Overall, in both newspapers, African American and white men either gained from their status as males or were judged neutrally on the basis of their achievements as activists

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and not their gender identity. Alternatively, African American and white women were not judged on their contributions alone because both newspapers emphasized their gender identity and interpreted their merits through the lens of their gender. As a result, most women mentioned in the articles were placed in relation to their father or husband’s status and often had their femininity emphasized over their own activism.

The motivations of both papers to use gender to privilege male figures and distort women figures differed because the Afro-American not only wanted to garner sympathy or follow societal notions of gender roles, as with the Times-Dispatch, but also to underscore the respectability and femininity of African American women and masculinity of African American men. “As regards the depiction of proper gender roles within this code of respectability,” Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward remark, “the black press essentially endorsed patriarchal authority, and consigned women to traditional and subordinate domestic roles.”82 The Afro-American employed gender, along with race, class, and age, to establish the participants as good citizens who cohered to white gender standards. Accordingly, Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward further stress how “the whole style, tenor and symbolism of black protest was carefully orchestrated to appeal to mainstream white sensibilities about proper behavior in pursuit of legitimate goals.”83 In doing so, the gendered sitdown movement and roles of men and women helped legitimize the African American community’s claims to equality.

82 Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, “‘Dress modestly, neatly...as if you were going to church’: Respectability, Class, and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” Gender in the Civil Rights Movement, ed. Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), 75.
83 Chappell, Hutchinson, and Ward, “Respectability, Class, and Gender,” 70.
Both the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* maintained a narrow definition of "leader," assuming that a participant in the movement was either a leader or follower. Although women were often leaders, they received relatively little recognition compared with men and their contributions were often further obscured in the news coverage. Paula Stewart Brush observed that because the Civil Rights Movement "exhibited 'explicit, overt, institutionalized sex inequality,'" women "held secondary rather than partnership roles." Within the movement itself, sexism was prevalent but both papers rarely recognized the contributions women made. The *Times-Dispatch* presented men as the legitimate leaders and failed to recognize that women did in fact perform as leaders even though they rarely achieved official status as such. In fact, African American women were "instrumental to the movement in their roles as organizers, fundraisers, and leaders in orchestrating tremendously successful grassroots campaigns that advanced black liberation and attested to their leadership capabilities." Although women were rarely the spokespersons or public figures, Richmond women had a high proportion in organizing and staffing the local movement, let alone the frequent participants of the Civil Rights Movement were largely comprised of women, children, and students. The *Times-Dispatch* depicted the men as the leaders and spokespersons and the women as supporters. For example, the article, "NAACP Branch Leaders Stand In for Pickets," illustrates this obedience to the idea that men led and demonstrated, whereas women supported and were behind-the-scenes. It states, "Once or twice during the morning and early afternoon, adults appeared in the line. One Negro woman who appeared to be in her

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84 Paula Stewart Brush, "The Influence of Social Movements on Articulations of Race and Gender in Black Women’s Autobiographies" *Gender and Society* 13 (February 1999), 124.
mid-60s walked for about an hour in the line." By highlighting gender-related differences between leaders and participants, the *Times-Dispatch* was implicitly suggesting that these women were less serious participants than men in the movement. Hence, their contributions were simultaneously being dismissed as less important and exaggerated because they were seen as anomalies. This observation in the *Times-Dispatch* was not only considered newsworthy because of the presence of adults in a student-initiated picket line and boycott, but that the entire community was in support of it if even the women were joining. While the *Times-Dispatch* did not utilize many photographs in covering the sitdown movement, African American women were often treated as a faceless mass of followers. The article, "Wives of Negro Doctors, Lawyers Relieve Student Pickets Here," effectively reduces women to appendages of their husbands and denies them their own agency in participating in the movement. The article asserts, "Wives of Negro doctors, dentists and lawyers took the place of Virginia Union University students picketing Thalhimers department stores yesterday." Such examples reveal how the *Times-Dispatch* ignored and misrepresented the contributions of women who made up a major part of the student movement.

When the *Afro-American* camera captured men and women, the images were used to push an agenda to either build support and empathy or legitimacy. Male leaders were almost always depicted in the photographs as speaking at a rally, church event, or media gathering. Photographs of the male leadership have the men posed often times behind a podium, lecturing, or actively picketing in demand of their rights, whereas women

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considered worthy of news coverage were being arrested, marching, or singing hymns but never speaking at podiums. The many pictures of African American women cast them as followers and listening to speakers. Among several pages of sit-in images and articles in the March 5th edition of the *Afro-American*, one picture has the caption that reads, “Mass Meeting—Listening attentively to speakers denouncing the wholesale arrest of sitdown demonstrators, are these young ladies, attending a mass meeting at Fifth Street Baptist Church. Citizens voted that the protest would continue.”

The captions stresses they are “young ladies” and the picture depicts eight female students sitting at desks listening to a speaker outside of the shot. Some are taking notes and they are all nicely dressed with their legs politely crossed, looking patient, proper, orderly, and dignified. Furthermore, an image on the same page exhibits the *Afro-American* attitude that, for the big, public protests and events, men are the rightful leaders and activists. The image captions states, “Two Virginia Union University students, left, wait patiently as a magistrate completes warrants for their arrest in a local Department Store. Several students, at right, chat amiably after their warrants had been served. Thirty-four were arrested.”

The picture is taken on the other side, or serving side, of the lunch counter so that the two African American male students are positioned toward the counter but have their heads turned to the right side facing the police and magistrate. Both men are nicely dressed with hats, coats, and suits. They look collected and calm in the face of white authority. Hence, as men were characterized as activists and patriarchs to certify their masculinity and status as men among white men, women were first characterized as mothers, wives, and daughters rather than as leaders who happen to be mothers, wives, and daughters.

If and when African American women were acknowledged, the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* often treated them as larger-than-life icons, failing to present African American women in their own right. The most prominent role allocated to women in these papers was that of allegory. In doing so, Owen J. Dwyer contends, “this role echoes the longstanding tradition within Western art of the female form being employed, not to memorialize individual women, but rather to embody some feminized virtue or vice, in the process confirming an individual’s masculinized character and destiny.”  

The news coverage of Ruth Tinsley distinctly illustrates the use of African American women as symbols for the battle against injustice. The arrest of Ruth Tinsley made headlines in both the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* because her story elicited outrage and sympathy from both the white and African American community. This victim-focus follows the tendency to take a group movement and concentrate on one person to emphasize the racial oppression and to humanize the cause.

Although most African American women were rarely mentioned in the *Times-Dispatch*, Ruth Tinsley made it to a page one story with a big time staffer byline. In an article that initially focuses on the progression of the student protests, “Store Is Picketed; Negroes Ask Boycott,” substantial space discusses the events around Ruth Tinsley’s arrest. Three people were arrested that day, but only Ruth Tinsley is remembered. Her arrest for failing to move became newsworthy compared to the mass of student protestors because she was old, middle-class, and a seemingly innocent bystander. Her story was newsworthy and “sexy” because it achieved several purposes for the *Times-Dispatch*: it generated compassion, shame, and indignation from both the white and black

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90 Dwyer, “Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement,” 664.
communities and revealed the hypocrisy of the paternalistic image white Richmond elites had of the city’s race relations.

In the *Afro-American*, Ruth Tinsley served to legitimize the nascent sitdown movement and her maltreatment became a call to action to older, middle-class members of the community. Because she was not a demonstrator per se and was middle-aged, middle-class, and female, her story became even more unjust. Although Ruth Tinsley was a youth coordinator of the local NAACP chapter in Richmond, she was stripped of her personal achievements and contributions to the movement and, in turn, crafted into a larger-than-life personification to stand in for the “best” of the African American community, namely the educated, older, middle-class, leading African American families. The *Afro-American* only ever described Ruth Tinsley in relation to her marital status and what her husband did in the community and local movement. Ruth Tinsley was the wife of Dr. J.M. Tinsley, a local dentist and former president of the Richmond branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.92 The emphasis on her marital status and marital partner’s deeds undermined her activism and reduced her to a victim. The *Afro-American*, along with the *Times Dispatch*, also always noted Ruth Tinsley’s age, which was never mentioned for major local male leaders like Oliver Hill and Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker.

The *Afro-American* further utilized Ruth Tinsley’s arrest of her gender, age, and class advantage because if she had been college-age and lower-working class, her arrest would not have elicited the same outpouring of support from the black community.

“Students Picketing the stores FLASH!!!” was a page one story in the first addition after the Richmond sit-ins, but shifts from recounting the student demonstrators, who are

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supposed to be the focus of the article as the title suggests, to Ruth Tinsley. This shift in the article symbolizes the shift in focus of the community from the students to adult participants. Moreover, in the following week, the *Afro-American* had a page one picture of her next to a picture of student picketers. The caption reads: “Mrs. Ruth Tinsley, 58, is followed by her husband, Dr. J.M. Tinsley, former NAACP president, as they left the police building. Mrs. Tinsley having been arrested for failing to obey a police order to move on, as she watched the students picket.” Ruth Tinsley, even in her “own” picture and article, is described via her gender, her husband, her age, and her class, but never described as an activist. By saying that she “failed to obey” a police order, the article and caption downplayed her decision to stand her ground and dismissed her conscious action to choose to disobey. Thus, the implication is that the student demonstrators *chose* jail; she was *forced*. The picture portrays Mrs. Tinsley walking downstairs outside of the police building with her husband behind her, looking respectable in her skirt and hat, elderly with her glasses, and feminine with her purse hanging on her left arm. In this way, this image encapsulates her appearance (frail), personality (dignified), and private life (wife) rather than her activism. Such depictions effectively incite sympathy and shame that it would take both an older person and a woman to challenge segregation.

Additionally on the bottom of this page one, the article, “Mrs. Tinsley In Spotlight After Arrest,” has the first paragraph declare: “Sharing the applause spotlight with arrested Virginia Union students at last week’s mammoth mass meeting was Ruth Tinsley, also a jail victim of the anti-segregation demonstration.” Yet, the student demonstrators are

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never described as a “victim” and such a label undercuts her agency. As such, she was treated as a symbol, a convenient martyr, rather than as spokesperson.

Tokenism was definitely present in many of the news articles of both papers as with the case of Ruth Tinsley. The few African American women who were given more detail beyond a name were the same women found in all the articles and images. In addition to Ruth Tinsley, Bettie Johnson most notably had several articles and photographs taken of her. In order for Bettie Johnson, one of the thirty-four VUU students arrested, to even get an interview in the *Times-Dispatch*, her story had to reach national coverage. In the *Times-Dispatch*, Bettie Johnson was featured in an article because she had appeared on network television, not because of her participation at Thalhimers or her arrest: “A Virginia Union University student appeared on the Dave Garroway show yesterday morning in a nationally televised discussion of Negro demonstrations against segregated lunch counters.” 96 This demonstrates the prevalent double standard for women to need to prove themselves worthy beyond the local movement because men were deemed the traditional and proper leaders.

In the *Afro-American*, Bettie Johnson served to solidify appropriate female involvement in the sit-ins. The article, “Hometown Coed On National TV Show,” in the *Afro-American* covered the story about a local Richmond female demonstrator, Bettie Johnson, who was interviewed on Dave Garroway’s TV program, “Today.” 97 Although, Bettie Johnson was “speaking up for our race” on the NBC program, she was described as “beautiful, brilliant, and beaming with the poise of a princess.” The article noted her “alert, quick, and intelligent answers” and “was quite at home on the panel.”

Accompanying her in the interview was fellow demonstrator, Lacey Streeter, an Air Force veteran from North Carolina State College. The article described that “Streeter, who plans to go into the field of medicine, demonstrated unusual courage, intelligence, confidence, and civic acumen.”\(^98\) With this illustration, the *Afro-American* not only conveyed the public’s perceptions of femininity, but also promoted its own judgment of women leaders and icons. Bettie Johnson was also described in relation to her father’s activism when it stated, “Miss Johnson is the daughter of our local dentist, Dr. Ford J. Johnson, former NAACP president of Brunswick County.”\(^99\) Bettie Johnson may have been one of the original thirty-four VUU students arrested, but she was evaluated not by her credentials as an activist or achievements like male student leaders Charles Sherrod or Frank Pinkston, but assessed by her appearance and femininity. Even though Bettie Johnson was featured in this article, the *Afro-American* ended the last half of the article with a tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr. who was featured after the TV program, but had no direct connection to the local Richmond movement.

One of the major differences between the two newspapers’ use of gender was that the *Times-Dispatch* rigidly enforced gender roles even when reality blurred the boundaries. In the *Times-Dispatch*, an article relating the news of the African American community’s mass meeting the night before focused on the prominent speakers of the rally, NAACP lawyer Oliver Hill, student leader Frank Pinkston, and other male church, NAACP, and business leaders. Although women had inserted themselves into the picket lines and into the heart of the events, the only reference to women’s contributions was


from J. Rupert Picott, executive secretary for the Virginia Teachers Association. Yet even
his remarks regarded women as merely homemakers, not activists. He advised “the
women in the audience to wear their old Easter hats this year and told everybody they
should cancel any social activities they had planned. The money, he said, should be used
to support the Negroes’ cause.”100 By quoting his remarks over many of the other
speakers there, the Times-Dispatch reinforced the notions of current gender roles
whereby women were caregivers and consumers for the family, not demonstrators.

In comparison to the Times-Dispatch, the Afro-American made a more concerted
effort to acknowledge the contributions of women in the community because older
women did walk the picket lines on a day to day basis and female students were just as
eager to go to jail as their male peers. Case in point, ten of the thirty-four student
demonstrators were women and they marched to jail right alongside their fellow male
students. Consequently, the Afro-American juggled between the reality of women
activists and rigid gender ideologies: “The black press was eager enough to report on
inspirational black women....Yet, when it did so, it was careful to stress the importance
of maintaining the integrity of conventional gender roles and domestic responsibilities
alongside a successful career.”101 Covering the same mass meeting, the Afro-American at
least noted all the speakers at the rally, which included one woman, “Mrs. R.B.
Sampson.”102 Despite the fact that she was “speaking for women” as the sole female
voice in the mass meeting and in the article, the Afro-American attempted to encompass
as many contributing groups as possible.

101 Chappell, Hutchinson, and Ward, “Respectability, Class, and Gender,” 77.
The Afro-American's displays of masculinity and femininity conform to other African American newspaper and social practices. Emphasis on gender was yet another tool to fight racial oppression. "The black press devoted considerable effort towards encouraging black women to downplay the affront to patriarchal norms which their peculiarly prominent social and economic profiles within the black community appeared to represent. Black women were certainly counseled that, in no circumstances, were they to make their men appear inadequate, or to ridicule them, if they proved unable to fulfill their proper patriarchal functions as provider and protector for their womenfolk and families."\(^{103}\) This effort to highlight African American conformity to white gender roles was crucial in presenting the male leaders as equal men to white male leaders and in presenting female participants and community members as ladylike peers to white female elites. Hence, within the pages of the Afro-American, African American men were interviewed in the articles justifying their masculinity and positions at the head of the movement, community, and family. African American women were also sought out but were photographed in ways that justified their femininity and cast them in positions as supporters to the male leaders. This employment to the white ideals of respectable, civilized behavior confirmed how unjust segregation and racial oppression was because it attempted to humanize African Americans for whites.

Thus the use of gender in the Times-Dispatch and Afro-American newspapers allowed the white community to invalidate the goals of the sitdown movement whereas the African American community was able to justify the sitdown movement. The Times-Dispatch and Afro-American definitely exhibited the sexist customs of the greater (white) society with sexist hierarchies and gendered responsibilities. Yet, the African American

\(^{103}\) Chappell, Hutchinson, and Ward, "Respectability, Class, and Gender," 76.
community also recognized that African American women had always been active in all of society and worked alongside men regardless of white gender ideologies. As a result, the *Afro-American* struggled to balance acknowledging and appreciating the efforts of African American women while also making sure not to make African American women equal to men because it was necessary to convince and prove that African American men were men like white male elites with patriarchal control over their community.

Accordingly, the *Times-Dispatch* had an easier position than the *Afro-American* in displaying men as leaders and women as followers because it saw and interpreted the movement through the lens of dominant white gender expectations. When the *Times-Dispatch* noted women among the participants or victims, this recognition was usually a criticism that African American men would allow their wives and daughters to defy traditional ladylike behavior. In contrast, the *Afro-American* had to and did recognize women, but did so in a way that distorted their contributions so as not to make them opposed to white standards of gender. Whether dismissed as mere rank-and-file status in the picket lines or turned into grand symbols of the racial injustice, African American women were still presented as feminine as possible.

VI. Class

Unlike race and gender, class was the most subtle and hard to detect in the news coverage of the sitdown movement, but also had depicted a major disparity between the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American*. The *Times-Dispatch* employed class as a weapon to confirm stereotypes and discredit the movement, whereas the *Afro-American* utilized class as an asset to show African Americans as equals to white Americans and justify the movement. Yet, neither paper ever addressed why poor and working-class African
Americans were not mentioned in the events or what their contributions were to the movement. Instead, both newspapers focused on the middle-class African Americans who were most visibly the leaders, spokespersons, and who occupied both the victim and hero status. Case in point, everyone who interviewed in both newspapers was either a reverend, lawyer, a civil rights organizational leader—all having specialized secondary education. Even the older women were often club women or married to prominent men, and the students were usually in college.

The fight for desegregation was coded as a fight for all African Americans and racial uplift, but in reality the middle class had the most to gain. African American Richmond elites "formed the nucleus of a growing middle and professional class; like whites, they were lawyers, doctors, dentists, ministers, newspaper editors, and educators.... Without a doubt, this group of blacks, almost all men, were the ones with whom white elites communicated."

Poor and working-class African Americans were also the most vulnerable to economic retribution because they often worked for white employers and therefore hindered their participation. Church leaders, students, lawyers, dentists, doctors, and other business owners often served only black clientele and were therefore more insulated from economic vulnerability and did not depend on white Richmonders for income. Furthermore, the fact that this entire movement was based on economic buying power is significant. Poor and working-class African Americans often could not participate to the same extent as middle-class groups because picket lines were held during the week when they had to work. Some African Americans could not even afford to shop or eat at the department stores being picketed, so the issue of lunch counter integration was not as vital as integrated public transportation. "Middle-class blacks were

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passive about segregated buses also because many perceived the closing of public schools as a graver threat. Because middle-class blacks rarely rode public transportation, they could avoid the indignities associated with a segregated transit system. But most poor and working-class blacks had no alternative. Middle-class blacks were aggressive on the Thalhimer’s boycott as it could be seen as a class action by the only blacks who could afford to shop there.\textsuperscript{105}

Movement leaders tried to frame the civil rights struggle in the language of white, middle-class respectability and anyone who did not fit that image could discredit the entire community. Even when working-class and poor African Americans were able to participate in the boycott and picket line, they were often steered away or barred from formal leadership positions and visibility. Just as women faced discrimination on the basis of their sex, “men, too seem to have been excluded on the basis of their education.”\textsuperscript{106} Class discrimination further was compounded by gender because African American women were disproportionately poorer than African American men. In an \textit{Afro-American} article titled, “Ministers, Supporters Join March,” prominent middle-class adults showed solidarity with Virginia Union students by partaking in the picket line for a few hours. “Virginia Union students were bolstered by adults of many professions as they began their second week of department store picketing. Ministers, businessmen, homemakers, and educators are carrying placards this week. And on Saturday, 26 NAACP branch presidents relieved the students and took up the picketing.”\textsuperscript{107} Another similar statement a two weeks later recalled the event: “A much more tangible endorsement came from adults in Richmond in support of the students who picketed the

\textsuperscript{105} Randolph, “The Civil Rights Movement in Richmond,” 68.
\textsuperscript{106} Robnett, “Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization,” 1688.
department store where they were arrested. Adults from all segments of the community helped them carry on a continuous picket line: ministers, professional men, wives of professional men, club women and other responsible citizens took turns parading in front of the store" (emphasis added). ¹⁰⁸ These examples reveal the Afro-American’s admiration for the activities of the middle class and complete exclusion of the contributions of the working class because all of the professions listed are of the middle class. Illustrating well dressed, established adults not only gave credence to the student movement, but also demonstrated the ridiculousness of barring such upstanding citizens from lunch counters.

Although poor and working-class African Americans were never recognized in the movement in either paper, the Times-Dispatch was actually the one to mention lower-class status, but only did so to undermine the legitimacy and image of the movement. Joyce A. Ladner underscored how “black families are more often measured against the white ideal than the white reality.”¹⁰⁹ For that reason, the Times-Dispatch vigorously recorded any instance of African Americans in the Richmond and national movement not being dignified or upright. “Being poor” or “acting poor” was used negatively to distort the movement and confirm stereotypes of African Americans as inferior.

Alternatively, the Afro-American ignored and purposely dismissed the poorer and working-class elements in its conscious effort to dispel stereotypes and portray the events as a local and national movement of educated, cultured, and proper people. “Reports in the press and on television vividly rendered the movement as not only a battle between black rights and white wrongs, but also a clash between accepted notions of decency and

respectability, and those of vulgarity and barbarism." The *Afro-American* further elevated the elites to showcase the African American embodiment of middle-class American ideals. "In a world where whites routinely judged all blacks according to the lowest common black denominator," according to Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson, and Brian Ward, "the black better classes often sought to distance themselves form the more disreputable behavior of some from the black lower orders." With this logic, the *Afro-American* referenced the contributions of only the middle class and enthusiastically spotlighted their involvement. Two pictures of Virginia Union students in department stores had an accompanying caption that read, "Before arrests—The scenes shown here were photographed on Saturday when Virginia Union University students staged a sit-in at G.C. Murphy's Variety Store and at Thalhimers Department Store....As the students sat, they studied or chatted quietly....The students were orderly and well-groomed." This caption demonstrates the weight on appearance and conduct. The *Afro-American* shows the students being "orderly" and non-confrontational which reveals the absurdity and irrationality of arresting the students on charges of trespassing and "disorderliness." In concentrating on the middle class, the *Afro-American* not only was helping support white middle-class standards in the African American community, but also compelling white Americans to recognize African Americans as equals. An extension of the Civil Rights Movement, the *Afro-American* aggressively absorbed and then set forth middle class values. For example, powerful imagery in the *Afro-American* captured students highly composed, in their best outfit, and polite and dignified. Publicizing such well-mannered students attested to the humanness of African Americans and confirmed that

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110 Chappell, Hutchinson, and Ward, "Respectability, Class, and Gender," 69.
111 Chappell, Hutchinson, and Ward, "Respectability, Class, and Gender," 72.
segregation by race is nonsensical. Thus, the local movement may have been substantially fragmented within itself along socioeconomic lines that marginalized lower working-class participants, but the image in the news projected a unified, upstanding and dignified community.

The _Afro-American_ also intently juxtaposed images of white adults attacking students in other parts of the South to both motivate the African American community into action and show the hypocrisy of white society’s middle class ideologies. A Raleigh, North Carolina image near pictures of the Richmond movement depicts two African American men dressed nicely in suits and coats walking towards the camera with a younger white girl running towards them with arms out and distasteful slogans written on her outfit. The caption under the image states: “Two pickets, protesting segregated eating facilities at stores here, ignore a young white girl, dressed in a dry cleaner’s bag, as she races by them with anti-Negro slogans printed on her bag. Pickets were orderly in all cities where sitdown demonstrations were held.” 113 This example suggests that the African American men are exhibiting more white American civic and dignified attributes than the young white girl. Later on, the _Afro-American_ quoted a young African American female student on the sit-ins in South Carolina. She said, “They (white crowd) were saying all sorts of nasty things and at one time I felt like talking back. But when I looked around and noticed the dirty clothes of the white men, how they needed haircuts and shaves, I felt real good and superior. All of us were well dressed and clean. It was the first time I really felt important.” 114

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114 Staff Correspondent, “‘We’ll Be Back’ Vow Sitdowners,” _The Richmond Afro-American_, 27 February 1960, sec. A13.
Consequently, the *Times-Dispatch* only interviewed and observed the middle-class, as noted in its frequent observations of how “middle-class” the African American demonstrators appeared.

**VII. Age**

**VIII. Conclusion**

Therefore, the focus of the analysis of these two newspapers is twofold. First, it is useful to understand how newspapers were products of their societies and what they reflected about the communities they claimed to represent. Second, it is valuable to investigate how newspapers influenced their communities with their own racial, gendered, class, and age agenda. In doing so, this thesis aims this thesis does not necessarily intend to give a voice to the voiceless, nor try to counterbalance or counteract all the scholarship or attention given to the elite male spokesmen of the community. Instead, this thesis explores how race, gender, class, and age affected all groups involved in the demonstrations through newspapers. Understanding how the newspapers covered the events and why they portrayed them in such a way will provide a fuller understanding of the local Richmond movement, its players, and its source of energy. Although the sitdown movement was a collective experience, group contributions and roles in the movement were differently valued and recognized. The privileged groups in media spotlight were the legitimate spokespersons and leaders of the movement, which mostly contained older middle-class African American males, even though they were not the original instigators of the sitdown movement and were not the majority of picketers and behind the scenes mobilizers. The discriminated groups were often invisible in news coverage and so we must analyze what forces influenced their exclusion and what forces
influenced the rare times they received hyper-visibility. Thereby examining the city of Richmond’s Civil Rights Movement is crucial to understanding the national movement and climate, but specifically observing the time period in one city through newspapers provides an important lesson in self-preservation. Two distinct stories emerged from the pages of the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American*, suggesting that “‘Reality,’ as it relates to public issues, is yet more enigmatic, since the realities of human affairs are not only difficult to measure, but are further confounded by sliding scales of expectations of what those realities ought to be.”115 Although civil rights organizations and prevalent societal practices of discrimination determined who was recognized as a visible leader, the newspapers also facilitated the elevation of some contributions at the expense of others’ marginalization, through their allocation of hero and victim status. Thus the legacy of the *Times-Dispatch* and *Afro-American* lies not in the fact that they were a leading source, often an only source, for many Richmonders to understand the events as they unfolded, but in the fact that they, as a record of public memory, influenced popular and cultural memory thereafter. Ultimately, “no honest and holistic account of the civil rights movement can or should exclude men. The civil rights movement was the struggle of a people, of grandfathers and grandmothers, of brothers and sisters, of husbands and wives. …No account of our history is adequate without inclusion of us all.”116

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115 Funkhouser, “The Issues of the Sixties,” 63
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