

Rioters are different. They stand in sharp contrast to the majority of Detroit Negroes who did not participate in last month's violence and who feel that violence can only hurt the civil rights movement.

Though small in numbers, the admitted rioters in the Urban League survey represent a bitter reservoir of resentment and black racism.

Their attitudes are typified by the 16-year-old girl who told the interviewer: "I hate to see people looking different from me. I like my own kind."

Their feelings are expressed less vehemently by the 25-year-old man who said: "Negroes have been angels. If people have been oppressed and kicked around like my people and haven't rebelled yet, they deserve medals."

Both of these young people were looters. The most striking feature of the riot-prone group in the survey is its youth.

Fifty-nine percent of the rioters were between 15 and 24 years old. Only four percent were over 50. This finding bears out the impressions of persons at the scene who reported large numbers of teen-agers.

Sixty percent of the rioters were male.

They were raised in the north. Nearly half the rioters, 46 percent, were born in Detroit, compared to only 23 percent of the non-rioters who were native Detroiters.

This explodes whatever remained of the theory that race riots are caused by Southern Negroes who can't adjust to the pressures of big city life.

The rioters were more likely to have been unemployed. Fifty-six percent of rioters who were breadwinners told the interviewers they had been unemployed for at least a month during the past two years. Only 27 percent of the non-rioting breadwinners had been unemployed.

There was also a relationship between rioting and the length of unemployment. Those who had been jobless for more than a year were more than three times as likely to be rioters as those who were unemployed for only a month.

That finding fits the popular image of the rioter as someone who is at the bottom of the socio-economic barrel. But some other things in the survey do not give quite so neat a picture.

There was no relationship found between education and rioting.

Rioters were to be found in about the same proportions across all income brackets. There was no pattern to directly link rioting and low income. Those with incomes under \$2,000—and there were a lot of them, 16 percent of all those willing to reveal their income—showed no more tendency to riot than those earning \$10,000 and up.

These findings, though surprising, are consistent with a recent study of the Watts riot by sociologists at the University of California at Los Angeles.

In the Detroit study, however, one thing was found that clearly sets the riot participant apart from his fellow Negroes: a distinctive set of attitudes.

These attitudes suggest alienation: not only from whites, but from other Negroes.

One question in the survey was designed as a quick gauge of an individual's feeling of protectiveness toward others. It was:

"Suppose a bill collector came around asking where a former neighbor had moved. If you knew, would you tell him, probably tell him, or not tell him where the neighbor lived?"

The majority of Detroit Negroes—77 percent—gave the conventional, normal answer. They would not tell

on their neighbors. But those who would tell were twice as likely to be rioters as those who would not.

Here is a significant indicator that rioters tend to be angry with people around them — including other Negroes. Outwardly, they may be sociable. Rioters are more likely to visit the neighbors often than are non-rioters. But inwardly, they feel no sense of protection for others.

In their alienation, the rioters display some similarity to hippies. Both feel that the world is wrong, and they want to set themselves apart from it. But hippies accept their share of the world's guilt while rioters project it. The hippie hands you a flower and says, "Peace." The rioter shouts, "Get Whitey," and throws a rock.

Like hippies, rioters profess to shun the American dream. Whether they mean it is something else. The survey probed for this point and brought up conflicting answers.

Negroes in the survey were asked: "If the United States got into a big world war today would you personally feel this country was worth fighting for?"

Among all Negroes, 67 percent said this country is worth fighting for and only 15 percent said it isn't—reassuring evidence that the Negro community at large is not rebellious.

But there was a significantly different response from the rioters. Of those who had opinions, 84 percent of the non-rioters but only 66 percent of the rioters would consider their country worth fighting for.

Younger Negroes, rioters and non-rioters alike, tended to be highly vocal on this point.

"I think the United States is on its last leg, and I don't intend to fight for something that isn't worth preserving, and this country's ideals are not worth preserving," said a 19-year-old girl.

A 21-year-old Vietnam veteran, who described himself as "very active" in the rioting, disagreed. He would fight again for the U.S. because "we have some kind of freedom. If communists were here, there would be no freedom at all."

Among Vietnam veterans, the survey turned up an uncertain, disturbing note. Three veterans of the current fighting were in the sample, and two of them said they were "very active" rioters.

Statistically, such a finding is meaningless. But it does offer a reminder that there are special frustrations for the returning Negro veteran.

In the Army, he achieves equality and possibly even distinction, and then he returns home to resume his old second-class citizenship. But this time it is different. He has known a more fulfilling existence and he has learned the heady feeling of difficulty overcome through hard work and effort.

Is such a person a potential rioter? The level of riot participation among the veterans in the survey suggests that he is. And there is some confirming evidence elsewhere in the survey.

Two questions were designed to measure the extent to which Detroit Negroes accept the traditional American belief that people with ability and drive get ahead and that people who are unsuccessful in the conventional sense should blame their own mistakes.

Seventy-one percent of the Negroes in the sample believe that the unhappy things in peoples' lives are due to their own mistakes. Sixty-nine percent believe that ability is more important in getting ahead than in being in the right place at the right time. These are not the answers of people who have turned their back on the

American dream and they contradict the picture of hopelessness in ghetto life that is so often painted.

And what of the rioters? Surprisingly, they do not differ significantly from the rest of the Negro community in this respect. What difference there is shows that rioters lean even more strongly toward these traditional American beliefs than the non-rioters.

It appears that the rioter, then, is someone who does not let the anger he feels for the society around him prevent him from accepting the responsibility for his own fate. He believes he can overcome his disadvantages. Rioting may be one way to do it. Or rioting may be a protest against the difficulty of overcoming disadvantage in a society that still discriminates against Negroes. The rioters themselves are not sure.

Everyone interviewed was asked whether he felt Negroes had more to gain or more to lose by resorting to violence in the civil rights movement. Rioters were evenly divided on this issue: 40 percent said Negroes would gain, 40 percent said lose, 10 percent were not sure.

There was also division of opinion on this issue among non-rioters, although most — 56 percent — said Negroes had more to lose from violence. The other 44 percent of the non-rioters was equally divided between those who thought Negroes would gain and those who weren't sure.

Looking at these figures another way, 19 percent of those who thought Negroes had more to gain from violence were rioters; only nine percent who thought there was more to lose were rioters—a two-to-one difference.

That rioters would be more likely to see potential gains from rioting seems obvious. What is not so obvious is exactly what sort of gains they were seeking.

Many possible grievances were explored in the survey. The ones that were associated most strongly with rioting were of a notably short term nature: Gripes against the local businessmen, mistreatment by police, lack of jobs, dirty neighborhoods, lack of recreation facilities.

The long-term goals ascribed to the Negro—color-blind treatment by employers, desegregated housing—are not the special goals of the rioters. Interviewers probed for awareness of discrimination in jobs by asking: "If you were employed to do the same work as a white person, do you feel you would likely get less pay, about the same pay, or more pay?"

Most—58 percent—said they would get the same pay. Rioters were slightly more inclined to believe they would get less pay, but the difference was statistically insignificant.

On the question of housing, there was a highly significant difference—but in a direction that will surprise anyone who thinks that people riot because they want a home in a white suburb.

"Would you rather live," people were asked, "in a neighborhood with only Negro families or in a neighborhood that had both Negro and white families?"

Most Negroes — rioters and non-rioters alike — said they would prefer an integrated neighborhood. But the rioters were significantly less likely to express this preference than were non-rioters.

A preference for segregation—a preference that deviates from the majority opinion in the Negro community—proved to be one of the strongest factors associated with riot activity.

Partly this reflects the fact that so many young people were rioters. Racial awareness and a preference for avoiding whites were somewhat stronger among the

younger generation, which tends to rebel against what it calls the "Uncle Tom" stance of its elders. Youth is by no means the entire explanation, however.

A series of questions was asked to determine to what extent Detroit Negroes tend to think in terms of racial stereotypes. Persons interviewed were asked whether they thought Negroes or whites were smarter, better behaved, braver, nicer, and more dependable.

Most replied that Negroes and whites were about the same on all of these factors—with one exception. Fifty-three percent said Negroes are braver.

While most Negroes reject most of the stereotypes and tend to think of the races as about equal, there is a strong tendency for rioters to accept the stereotypes and to believe that Negroes and whites are unequal.

Those who saw such differences tended to be twice as likely to be rioters as those who did not. Oddly, it made little or no difference whether they considered whites or Negroes to be superior. Most were like the looter who said, "All black is beautiful." But even those who thought whites superior were more likely to be rioters. Stereotyped thinking, regardless of its direction is the key factor. Opposite extremists travel full circle and end by being alike.

The survey used another measure of racial attitude, testing for the amount of sympathy for black nationalist doctrine. Negroes were asked if they agreed or disagreed with this statement: "Civil rights groups which have both Negro and white leaders would do better without the whites."

Overall, the response was overwhelmingly negative. Twenty percent agreed, 65 percent disagreed, and 15 percent did not know. Among those who agreed that civil rights groups should get rid of the whites, there was a higher proportion of rioters—almost two to one.

These, then are the rioters: Young people, raised in the North, with little concern for their fellowmen and a frustration in meeting near-term goals—people susceptible to the black nationalist philosophy that the law and order of a white-built society is not worth preserving.

In contrast, look at Detroit's Negro community as a whole:

Only 10 percent of the Negroes in the survey believe their situation is getting worse. Fifty-one percent say they are better off than they were three years ago.

Despite the many consumer grievances—explored in detail elsewhere in this section—most Negroes think most businessmen give them a fair shake. The response to questions on other kinds of complaints shows that there are problems but they are not overwhelming. Most are optimistic about the future.

"Jobs are opening up, and we're beginning to work together," said a 51-year-old father.

"It wasn't a racial riot, but just a crazy mess," said an 82-year-old man on the west side.

These are the voices of the older generation which is now in the majority. The young people are not quite so optimistic, though fully half of the persons in the 15-24 age group believe that white attitudes toward Negroes will improve.

"I've talked to a lot of white girls," said a Negro career girl, "and I think that they understand Negroes and see no differences. Eventually the rest will come along, too."

This is the Negro beyond Twelfth St. He represents the majority. The problem now is to reach the riot-prone minority and move them, with the rest of the community, into the future beyond Twelfth St.