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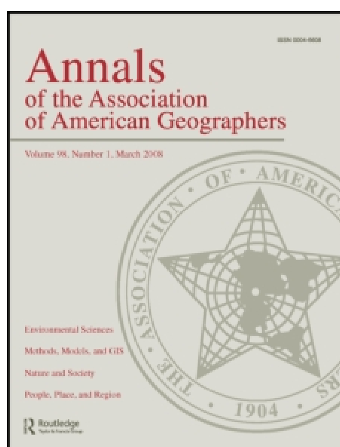

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Bending the Bars of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival: The Black Panther Party's Radical Antihunger Politics of Social Reproduction and Scale

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Bending the Bars of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival: The Black Panther Party's Radical Antihunger Politics of Social Reproduction and Scale

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Among the most important political achievements of the Black Panther Party (BPP) was the success of their Free Breakfast for Children Program. At the Breakfast Program's peak in late 1969 and early 1970, the BPP and other volunteers fed thousands of children daily before they went to school across the country. The historic importance of the BPP's Breakfast Program rests both in the fact that it was imperative for the social reproduction of many inner-city communities and that it was both the model for, and impetus behind, all federally funded school breakfast programs currently in existence within the United States. At the heart of the BPP's Free Breakfast for Children Program and the spatial practices that led to its ultimate success are a set of scalar politics that played out as a result of (1) the failures of the U.S. national welfare state, (2) the BPP's evolved scaling of their revolutionary praxis, and (3) the local spatial practices they employed to serve the poor. All of these processes occurred despite attempts by the state to sabotage the BPP's political efforts. *Key Words: Black Panther Party, geographic scale, school breakfast program, social reproduction.*

黑豹党(BPP)最重要的政治成就之一就是他们的儿童免费早餐计划。在 1969 年后期和 70 年代初期，黑豹党儿童免费早餐计划的高峰期，黑豹党和其他志愿者每天为全国各地学校数以千计的儿童在他们上学之前提供食物。BPP 的早餐计划的重要历史意义在于下述两点事实，它是许多内城社区社会再生产的当务之急，它也是美国目前存在的联邦资助的学校早餐计划的模型和背后动力。BPP 的儿童免费早餐计划和地域实践导致其最终的成功，其核心是下述尺度政治学所发挥的结果（1）美国国家福利的失败，（2）BPP 革命实践的演变，以及（3）所实行的为穷人服务的地域空间的实践工作。尽管国家企图干扰破坏 BPP 的政治努力，所有这些进程还是发生了。*关键词：黑豹党，地理尺度，学校早餐计划，社会再生产。*

Uno de los logros políticos más importantes del Partido de las Panteras Negras (PPN) fue el éxito de su Programa de Desayunos Gratis para Niños. En la cúspide del Programa de Desayunos, a finales de 1969 y principios de 1970, el PPN y otros voluntarios alimentaron diariamente, antes de ir a la escuela, a miles de niños por todo el país. La importancia histórica del Programa de Desayundos del PPN estriba tanto en el hecho de que fue imperativo para la reproducción social de muchas comunidades de la ciudad, como en haberse constituido en el modelo y acicate para la implementación de todos los programas de desayuno escolar que hoy existen en los Estados Unidos, con financiación federal. Detrás del Programa de Desayunos Gratis para Niños del PPN, y de las prácticas espaciales que condujeron a su éxito final, se encuentra un conjunto de políticas que entraron en juego como resultado de (1) los fracasos de la gestión de bienestar social del gobierno, (2) la propia evolución de la praxis revolucionaria del PPN, y (3) las prácticas espaciales locales que ellos emplearon para servir a los pobres. Todos estos procesos se dieron a pesar de los intentos del estado para sabotear los esfuerzos políticos del PPN. *Palabras clave: Partido de las Panteras Negras, escala geográfica, programa del desayuno para escolares, reproducción social.*

In July 1969, from exile in Algeria, Black Panther Party (BPP) Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver wrote an essay for *Ramparts* entitled "On Meeting the Needs of the People." He wrote, "If we understand ourselves to be revolutionaries . . . we can then move beyond the halting steps we've been taking and gain the revolutionary audacity to take the actions needed to unlock and focus the great revolutionary spirit of the people. . . . Then there will be a new day in Babylon" (E. Cleaver 2006, 217). Another article published in the Party's newspaper, *The Black Panther,* in 1969 suggested, "the capitalist, imperialist,

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doggish, pimping of the People must cease by this wanton, sadistic country or perish like *Babylon*" (Serving the People, 14). Yet another suggested:

> It [the Black Panther Community News Service] tells the story of what happens in the concrete jungles of *Babylon* when brothers and sisters off the block, workers, and members of the petty bourgeoisie decide to cast aside their petty personal goals and aspirations, and begin to work unselfishly together with a common goal in mind: to serve the people and liberate the colony, by the only means necessary—the GUN. (L. Williams 1970, 9)

Many Panthers, especially Cleaver, evoked the historical power and utopian political promise of Babylon. Babylon was a spatial metaphor used to describe the United States primarily, but it was also used at a variety of other spatial scales having primarily to do with notions of the "black community." Sometimes Babylon referred explicitly to bodily survival within the black community and at other times it represented national-level revolutionary transformations as experienced within and through the black community. Despite the flexibility within the metaphorical rendering of Babylon, or more likely because of it, the notion played an important role in the Black Power movement for articulating, and responding to, the contradictions of U.S. capitalism, imperialism, and empire within Babylon.

Although metaphor played an import role within the BPP's politics, at the heart of the organization's success were the material politics that evolved out of the Free Breakfast for Children Program. It was feeding hungry children within their community, they began to see, that would give them the strength to bend the bars that imprisoned them within the Babylonian ghettos and escape the oppression of U.S. empire. Their attention to the social reproduction of the people in the black community, especially children, was important because, as Mumia Abu-Jamal[1] (2004, 70) suggests, "as the Breakfast program succeeded so did the Party, and its popularity fueled our growth across the country." According to E. Cleaver's *Ramparts* article (2006, 213), "Breakfast for Children pulls people out of the system and organizes them into an alternative. Black children who go to school hungry each morning have been organized into their poverty, and the Panther program liberates them, frees them from that aspect of poverty. This is liberation in practice." He then went on to say, "It is very curious that the Breakfast for Children program was born in West Oakland, which can be categorized as one of the most oppressed areas in Babylon" (214). This connectedness of the BPP to West Oakland, because of the ways their direct action politics evolved through this spatial context, proved to be important both at the beginning and end of the Party's success.

The first Free Breakfast for Children Program was initiated at St. Augustine's Church in Oakland in September 1968 and by the end of 1969 the BPP had set up kitchens in cities across the United States. Having seen the local ramifications in Oakland, Bobby Seale, after discussing the logistics of the program with Father Earl Neil and Ms. Ruth Beckford, sent out a directive in late 1969 to make the Breakfast Program a mandatory action that all BPP chapters were required to carry out. At its peak, approximately forty-five chapters across the country participated in the Breakfast Program, with some chapters doing so at multiple sites. Volunteers associated with the Breakfast Program, although not always "officially" members of the BPP, fed thousands of children across the country daily before the children went to school.[2] The content of the breakfast was in line with what the BPP considered nutritionally well-rounded and often included eggs, bacon, grits, toast, and orange juice. As a result of the political power, hope, and possibility realized through reproducing their black communities at the level of individual children in alternatively local and autonomous (from the state) ways, the BPP went on to use the Breakfast Program as an engine through which to push revolutionary politics at other scales. When I interviewed Father Earl Neil, in whose church the first Breakfast Program began, he told me:

> This was in '68, and you remember obviously what happened in '68, you know in April, Dr. King was assassinated, and then Bobby Kennedy, and so forth, and so the party was focused on developing further points of their ten-point program, and one of the things that Bobby [Seale] and Huey [Newton] used to ruminate about and discuss, is that when they went to school and then they noticed a lot of the children go to school hungry, so there was the idea of starting a breakfast program. . . . We started out with 11 youngsters, and by the end of the week it was up to around 140. We didn't need to advertise, we just had to say "Do you want a free breakfast?" Of course the word spread.

Although the details of BPP history have been presented through rich biographical projects (Newton 1972, 1973; Seale 1978, 1991; Shakur 1987; Brown 1992; Abu-Jamal 2004; Hilliard, Zimmerman, and Zimmerman 2006) and important edited collections (Hilliard and Cole 1993; Jones 1998; K. Cleaver and Katsiaficas 2001; Hilliard and Weise 2002; Lazerow and Williams 2006; see also Jeffries 2002), there is less analysis about the ramifications of direct action and

how it influenced their radical politics for supporting and reproducing their Black communities. Drawing on Marxist, feminist, and antiracist traditions, I investigate the everyday politics that connected social reproduction and the geography of hunger within the BPP's Free Breakfast for Children Program. Similar to Tyner's (2006) discussion of the BPP, but based on firsthand empirical data, I provide an accounting of what Katz (2001, 710; also see Katz 2004) describes as the "fleshy, messy and intermediate stuff of everyday life" through the context of the BPP's direct action antihunger politics.

This article is based on several types of primary data, including more than thirty interviews with former BPP members from Oakland, Chicago, Boston, Milwaukee, and New Haven between May 2004 and June 2005. In addition to former members, interviews were also conducted with people who worked with the BPP, who, although not "official" members, still played a vital role in the party. Additionally, while they do not appear often within this particular article, more than 1,400 pages of FBI documentation that I collected over four years through a Freedom of Information Act request have provided me with deep insights into the BPP as a political party as seen by the state (FBI). It is important for me to be clear, though, that unlike Pearson's (1994) work, which used FBI documents in very literal and problematic ways, all of my engagement with these documents has been critical, based on my understanding of how through their COINTELPRO project, the FBI manipulated and lied about the efforts of the BPP in an effort to destroy them; a project that, according to many, was ultimately successful (see Churchill and Vander Wall 1990).

Most of my interviews were explicitly based on the struggles around social reproduction, which served as a catalyst for the BPP's organizing strategies. All interviews started off discussing the BPP's Free Breakfast for Children Program. The details of how the BPP responded to the contradictions of childhood hunger within the black community and the ways the program connected individuals, households, communities, cities, states, and nations all under the banner of the black community was another thread of discussion that I explored in many of the interviews. Although I rarely explicitly discussed "the politics of scale" beyond some introductory comments about what I was interested in, important scalar relations came out of many of the interviews; however, scale usually served as a backdrop to complex classed, raced, and gendered moments of conflict and collaboration. Most important is the fact that I was able to interview the three individuals who together did the initial organizing work that created the Free Breakfast Program, including Bobby Seale, Father Earl Neil, and Ms. Ruth Beckford.

Geographies of Urban Hunger

The immediate, horrifying reality of hunger is one of the most corporal sociospatial conditions geographers could investigate and work to ameliorate through our theory and political insights (see Heynen 2006a, 2006b, 2008). The fact that more than 850 million people across the planet suffer from hunger and an estimated 25,000—18,000 of them children—die daily from hunger and malnutrition-related complications warrants substantially more attention (see Morris 2007). Urban hunger, which is rarely talked about independently of hunger more generally, fundamentally transforms urban space. Yet the lack of existing literature requires theorizing it within the context of political economy, social reproduction, and poverty more generally.[3] Lefebvre's extensive, albeit underdeveloped engagement with everyday life is useful for situating urban hunger within this context. Lefebvre (1991b, 18) suggested:

> Everyday life is made of recurrences: gestures of labor and leisure, mechanical movements . . . hours, days, weeks, months, years, linear and cyclical repetitions, natural and rational time; the study of creative activity leads to the study of re-production or the conditions in which actions producing objects and labour are re-produced, re-commenced, and re-assume their component proportions or, on the contrary, undergo gradual or sudden modifications.

Lefebvre began to demonstrate that those who study the foundations of repressive society in everyday life are obligated simultaneously to focus on social reproduction. He suggested, "the field of repression covers biological and physiological experience, nature, childhood, education, pedagogy and birth" (1991b, 145). He also suggested that the philosophy of everyday life has been reduced to the dreary and demoralizing fact that people need to eat, drink, be clothed, and so on, to survive, and that everyday social relations have only been examined through the labor necessary to meet these biophysical needs under capitalism.

The power relations that manifest under the tyranny of hunger relate explicitly to how capitalist societies, and the proliferation of free market forces, rely on access to food as a negotiating chip to maintain domination and coercion. As Engels (1881) suggested, "The

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Capitalist, if he cannot agree with the Labourer, can afford to wait, and live upon his capital. . . . The workman has no fair start. He is fearfully handicapped by hunger. Yet, according to the political economy of the Capitalist class, that is the very pink of fairness." This contradictory notion of capitalist *fairness*, that is, that so many should go hungry amidst such material abundance, is hard to imagine as a result of its brutality. The spatial contradictions within this notion of fairness and justice are vital for articulating the interrelated and interconnected processes inherent in urban poverty and hunger, and how both impede social reproduction.

Scholars (see Swyngedouw 1996, 1997b, 1999, 2004; Swyngedouw and Kaika 1997; Keil and Graham 1998; Gandy 2002; Swyngedouw, Kaika, and Castro 2002; Keil 2003; Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003; Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006) are beginning to theorize more robustly the complexity of urban metabolic processes. The logical underpinnings of Harvey's (1996, 186) notion that there is nothing fundamentally unnatural about New York City, and that "sustaining such an ecosystem [NYC] . . . entails an inevitable compromise with the forms of social organization and social relations which produced it" can be mobilized to argue that food eaten by hungry children (for instance, via the BPP's Breakfast Program) is not at all unnatural either. Swyngedouw, Kaika and I (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006, 6) offer an explanation of these metabolic processes by suggesting:

> The interrelated web of socioecological relations that bring about highly uneven urban environments as well as shaping processes of uneven geographical development at other geographical scales have become pivotal terrains around which political action crystallises and social mobilisations take place. The excavation of these processes requires urgent theoretical attention. Such a project, of course, requires great sensitivity to, and an understanding of, physical and bio-chemical processes. In fact, it is exactly those "natural" metabolisms and transformations that become discursively, politically, and economically mobilised and socially appropriated to produce environments that embody and reflect positions of social power. Put simply, gravity or photosynthesis is not socially produced of course. However, their powers are socially mobilised in particular bio-chemical and physical metabolic arrangements to serve particular purposes; and the latter are invariably associated with strategies of achieving or maintaining particular positionalities of social power and express shifting geometries of social power.

Like understanding gravity or photosynthesis, my examination starts from the maxim that without food, humans cannot meet their biophysical needs for survival. Human bodies cannot exist without food; they must die. The metabolic processes that are so often unevenly produced within cities inhibit the fundamental survival of children when they have no direct access to adequate quantities of healthy quality foods. These relations can go unnoticed within our geographic imagination as a result of their mundane, taken-for-grantedness. Take, for instance, how skipping breakfast leads to increased cognitive error, causes slower memory recall, and reduces children's ability to distinguish among similar images. Although these details do not fit tidily into our explanations of urban space, they can serve to illustrate the importance of everyday life Lefebvre was talking about. The blunt gnawing in the pit of the stomach of a child who has not eaten, although mundane, can be used to think through the varied political dimensions of everyday life and metabolic processes within which they exist.

Children must eat to survive materially, but eating is also a socionatural process that is learned, often in particular kinds of community settings. Walter Benjamin's notion of *mimesis* is useful for understanding eating and antihunger politics as a set of material practices of social reproduction that are socially produced. Benjamin (1986, 331) suggests that "Nature creates similarity. . . . The highest capacity for producing similarities, however, is man's [*sic*]." Benjamin's notion of "big N nature" here is problematic given how it essentializes nature in ways many of us in geography have long sought to disrupt. That said, there is still some value in his notion of mimesis, which was grounded on a redefinition of the ancient Greek notion of imitation via portrayal in aesthetic theory. Instead of portrayal, Benjamin shifted the discussion toward material relations of imitation that occur within everyday social practice under capitalism. We can use his own notion of mimesis to disrupt his essentializing notion of [N]ature by showing in some quite specific ways how eating and not eating are both socionatural processes that are produced through uneven power relations. Herein lies a substantive critique Lefebvre (1991a, 162–63) makes about everyday life when he suggests, "The human being's many needs and desires have their foundation in biological life, in instincts; subsequently social life transforms them, giving the biological content a new form. On the one hand needs are *satisfied by society;* on the other, as history unfolds, *society* modifies them both in form and content."

Without using the language of mimesis, another scholar associated with Frankfurt School social theory,

Ernst Bloch (1986), illustrated the link between Benjamin's notion of the mimetic faculty and the connections among hunger, social reproduction, and political economy in his *The Principle of Hope*. Bloch suggested that the primary "natural drives" that have historically led people to eat and avoid hunger have been transformed through the contradictions of capitalism:

> Even for hunger there is no "natural" drive structure, for the simple reason that the kind of perception assigned to it, and consequently the stimulus-world, is also historically viable. Even this is no longer a biologically maintained basic direction in man, no longer one which remains rooted in the fixed instinct of searching for nourishment down firmly established paths. Rather, it interacts as socially developed and guided need with the other social, and therefore historically varying needs which it underlies and with which for this reason, it is transformed and causes transformation—the more, and the more sophisticatedly, further and further layers are added to the appetite. (11)

A distinctly scalar set of processes underlies the politics of eating, which we can imagine necessarily starting at the body but embedded within scales related to how food itself is produced and distributed. Related to the embedded relations of hunger in the broader circulation of food, Marx (1844/1964,181) suggested:

> Hunger is a natural need; it therefore needs a nature outside itself, an object outside itself, in order to satisfy itself, to be stilled. Hunger is an acknowledged need of my body for an object existing outside it, indispensable to its integration and to the expression of its essential being.

Here, given the context, we can determine that Marx is referring to the material, biophysical basis of life when talking about nature in this way. This passage could be interpreted as yet another case of the reification of nature; however, it is important to note that Marx is trying to connect the material basis of survival with the dialectical swirl of other socionatural power relations that too often impede human survival under capitalism. Central to Marx's notion are the scales through which we can understand hunger explicitly linked to the material foundations of human life (food), to the everyday lives of those who do and do not have access to food.

Marxist analysis of scale as a necessarily relational set of interrelated and interdependent processes helps illustrate that to understand the political economy of hunger we must also consider the metabolic processes that connect "hungry bodies that eat" to "households where they eat" to "communities within which they learn to eat" to "cities that have stores that sell the food they eat" to "states that regulate or deregulate markets that impact the food that goes into the stores that sell the food the hungry bodies eat" (i.e., the food system understood via scale), and so on. These important connections between everyday hunger and capitalism can be used empirically to support Swyngedouw's (1997a) notion that no particular geographical scale commands theoretical or political priority, but instead the processes through which particular scales become (re)constituted are the most important aspect for considering scalar relations.

All that said, one thing that has largely been missing from the literature on the politics of scale is the recognition that scalar politics have long been at the heart of revolutionary political moments in world history. The ways in which the BPP struggled for social reproduction through their Breakfast Program in their black communities, and how it allowed them to organize chapters across the United States, and then produce an internationally recognized moment of revolutionary potential, exhibits how individual actors transform and reproduce the material foundations of life in scaled ways, and transform the geographies of survival. I now turn to how the BPP's Free Breakfast for Children Program was used as a political program for ensuring survival and social reproduction but also how it was central to a dynamic rendering of utopian politics around the black community.

Struggling for Social Reproduction and the Right to Survive

With its cofounding by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland in 1966, the BPP developed into one of the most significant radical political movements in U.S. history, fighting to establish revolutionary socialism through grassroots organizing and the implementation of their community-based "survival programs." The BPP's mutual aid and direct action programs were posited as necessary given the contradictions inherent in the Keynesian welfare state or, to be more precise, the historic unwillingness of the U.S. government to provide viable welfare services to unemployed African Americans and other minorities living in inner cities (Sugrue 1996). In light of the fact that many African Americans living in inner cities lacked adequate resources for survival, the BPP took up arms, first to protect themselves from the Oakland police but then for the sake of creating a viable black national welfare state as articulated in the first of their Ten Point Political

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Platform: "We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community" (Seale 1991).

The BPP's survival programs consisted of direct action political strategies for meeting their communities' day-to-day needs by providing food, health care, education, and other welfare services. The popularity of the BPP's ideology and spatial practices, especially as manifested in their survival programs, resulted in approximately 5,000 active BPP members in more than forty-five chapters and branches across the country.[4] In line with Kropotkin's (1995) revolutionary attention to the political power of antihunger politics, direct action, and mutual aid, the Free Breakfast for Children Program gained the most support from the black community and the most attention from J. Edgar Hoover's FBI. Perhaps most pertinent to recognizing the importance of this particular survival program (one of more than twenty different survival programs) is that it was both the model and impetus for all federally funded school breakfast programs in existence within the United States today. Although the U.S. Department of Agriculture established a School Breakfast Program (SBP) in 1966, it was a spatially and population-limited two-year pilot project designed to provide grants to help fund schools serving breakfasts to "nutritionally needy" children. It was not until 1975, however, after individual states and the federal government felt the political pressure through the success of the BPP's Free Breakfast for Children Program that the SBP received permanent congressional authorization.

An ironic and illustrative side note here is that the implementation of school breakfast programs in California occurred as a result of the pressure that organizers of the BPP's Breakfast Program put on then Governor Ronald Reagan, whose administration spearheaded the implementation of the state's development of a school breakfast program; ironic, of course, because as president, Ronald Reagan would lead to the production of widespread urban poverty and despair through his neoliberal budget cuts. History shows that Reagan clearly was not interested in feeding hungry children but rather in coopting the political power the BPP were building up through "serving the People." This same cooptation of BPP power led to more widespread adoption by states and the federal government of free breakfast programming.

The fundamental role that food, hunger, and the politics of social reproduction played for the BPP was conveyed to me by former chairperson of the BPP, Elaine Brown, in an interview when she told me:

> Because we are so used to the capitalist construct, it doesn't occur to us that we have a human right to eat; because if you don't eat you will die, it's not complicated. So, if there is a price tag to eating, then there is a price on your head, because the minute you don't have enough money to eat, you're slated for death. And, so this government and this society has set up a construct, and what we offered there, or did with the breakfast program. What I also believe today and what I see is important about this, is the right to eat. It's not just the question of, am I dealing with hunger, because I could set up a thousand charities that will feed a bunch of people. The question is, do I as a human being in this society, or in this life, have a right to eat. And does this society have any duty at least with children to make sure that they eat. And that was the other principle that was important; because it isn't whether the Black Panther Party feeds you or not, or if anyone else will feed you. 'Cause that is a hit and miss idea. The question is: are we prepared to make a commitment, at least, to our children that we will not put a price on their lives by denying them food unless their parents have the money to pay for it.

At the most basic level, the implementation of the BPP's Breakfast Program can help us more critically consider the visual forms, sounds, smells, and, most important, the implications of spaces produced through direct action for mutual aid. The Breakfast Program can also help us understand the revolutionary potential of feeding hungry children and of direct action politics more generally. The power relations embedded within the BPP Breakfast Program, which link social reproduction and the production of particular kinds of space, demonstrate the BPP's utopian vision in profound ways. Moving from the mundane space of the fork, mouth, and table (read as bodily spaces) to the church or school (read as black community spaces) where BPP members helped feed hungry children helps to elucidate the power of everyday political struggle dialectically in subtle yet profound ways. This dialectic struck me intensely when a former Panther told me:

> But to see the smiles on their faces; to see them leaving, walking to school with hot chocolate in their hands, you know, and stuff like that. . . . Or asking for seconds or thirds for some people, you know, because, there is no issues with how much you can eat, you know; if you are hungry, you going to eat! So, you know, I kind of put myself in, those kids' place, because I've seen. . . . I'm from Alabama, and, I was born there, and I know what direct poverty is.

As the official story goes, Bobby Seale initiated the first Breakfast Program in Oakland with Father Earl Neil of St. Augustine's Church and one of Father Neil's

parishioners, Ms. Ruth Beckford. Once it was established, Seale insisted that all BPP chapters operate a Breakfast Program, if nothing else. Minister of Defense, and another cofounder of the BPP, Huey Newton supported the program when factions began to form within the BPP, despite the fact that he was in prison during the initial stages of the program's development. David Hilliard, as Chief of Staff of the BPP, helped initiate and organize Breakfast Programs throughout the country. Despite the fact that these men were central to initiating the program and making it successful, in-depth interviews and archival material suggest that the women of the BPP were much more involved in the everyday delivery of the Breakfast Program yet took little of the credit for its success. Once more, one of my interviews suggests that in fact the recruitment of neighborhood mothers in Oakland who lived near St. Augustine's Church and were active in the local parent–teacher association were the most responsible for getting the very first Breakfast Program going. But also, as my interview with Ruth Beckford indicates, the cultural relations between older African American mothers and younger female African American Panthers led to considerable tension in getting the program off the ground at all. Beckford told me:

> [W]hen it was first in the church, and before the little crazy radical girls came in there, and I told Bobby, I said "Bobby, if these little girls continue to come in here unclean, stinking [chuckling] and using foul language" what, which I came up in an era where you don't curse, and I said, I'm not gonna have them talking like that around my parents I said because these mothers are valuable, these kids don't know how to cook. And they would come in there and they would say "power to the people," you know, and they'd say we're gonna do some chants or something before breakfast. I said no we're not, we're gonna sit down and eat and then we're gonna go to school. . . . So I told Bobby, I said "Bobby, if these girls, if you can't control 'em," I said, "I'm letting you know now these mothers aren't gonna stick around." Well, they kept coming in, that's when they would wear uh, wear combat boots and camouflage clothes and they'd go up in the hills and have training and all that stuff. I said, "This is all crazy," . . . so I told Bobby I said, "You know what, I'm resigning and when I resign all the mothers resign." So now, you can take your choice. Well, he said "Oh but Sister Beckford I don't have . . . you know what . . . I am gonna do their part. . . . " I said, "Well that's up to you." When we were doing it the school principal came down and told us how different the children were. They weren't falling asleep in class, they weren't crying with stomach cramps, how alert they were and it was wonderful.

Although no attention was paid to the role of the neighborhood mothers in this program, it is clear that the discursive telling of history has served to mask many dimensions of the uneven gender relations that largely figured into the form, function, and evolution of the of the BPP's survival programs. Many biographical accounts of the early years of the BPP show that gender relations were deeply uneven. Jones and Jefferies (1998, 33) discuss how male members of the BPP established disempowering patriarchal relations that set in motion everyday interactions between men and women. In their support of racial solidarity, many women initially accepted truncated equality, thereby reinforcing these patriarchal relations. Male tendencies to view female BPP members as sexual objects played an insidiously powerful role in those early years. As such, these issues of social reproduction, linked back to the Benjamin and Bloch-inspired discussion, necessitate a feminist lens, especially an African American feminist one, through which to understand the BPP (see Davis 1989; hooks 1989, 1990; James 1999; explicitly about BPP, see Brown 1992; K. N. Cleaver 1997). When I asked one female former Panther about the prominence in photographic archives of men serving food to children in various Breakfast Programs around the United States, she responded:

> Well, ultimately, you had more of a percentage of women in the party than men [at a particular time]. As far as the Breakfast Program, you always had a lot of women helping out. I think that whoever was taking the pictures might have been selective in the fact that they only show these big, macho, men. I pretty much believe it might be as simple as that, you know, the photographers, were just "Oh wow, look at these macho men." But what about these women?

An example of the blurred boundaries between women as sexual objects, women as central to the processes of social reproduction, and women as equal partners in a revolutionary struggle resulted from sentiments articulated in a speech Eldridge Cleaver gave at Stanford University in October 1968. He said, "You [women in the audience] have the power to bring a squeaking halt to a lot of things that are going on, and we call that pussy power. We say that political power, revolutionary power grows out the lips of a pussy." Perhaps as a result of both youthful hubris and gravitas, many women, including some of the most powerful in the Party such as Elaine Brown, embraced this slogan (see Sheehy 1971). By accepting the slogan, however, some recognized and embraced their revolutionary

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power in ways beyond sexual objectification; that is, they eventually learned how to coopt the term. They did so with an eye toward their role in social reproduction more broadly.[5]

In an autobiographical account of her life, Elaine Brown further demonstrates the multifaceted relations among sexual objectification, social reproduction, and the degree to which commitment to the revolutionary struggle were bound together by race and gender within the BPP. Brown (1992, 189) recalls an incident whereby Bobby Seale had introduced a young woman who had recently joined the BPP. Because of her "dedication and toughness," she was one of only a few women assigned to a security squad. When asked "what a Brother has to do to get *some* [emphasis added] from you," the young woman responded, "First of all, a Brother's got to be righteous. He's got to be a Panther. He's got to be able to recite the ten-point platform and program, and be ready to off the pig and die for the People. . . . Can't no mother fucker get no pussy from me unless he can get down with the Party." After being encouraged by Seale(according to Brown) about what "a Sister got to do," the young woman responded to the room filled with male BPP members and Elaine Brown: "A Sister has to learn to shoot as well as cook, and be ready to back up the Brothers. A Sister's got to know the ten-point platform and program by heart. . . . A Sister has to give up the pussy when a Brother is on the job and hold it back when he's not. 'Cause a Sister's got pussy power."

Unpacking the audacity inherent to notions of pussy power as often discussed within the BPP makes the most sense through the context of social reproduction. Much more explicitly, this notion is best understood through mothering. Making this link through a feminist perspective highlights some of the tensions female Panther members dealt with. The connections to activist mothering also help better demonstrate the metabolic rhythms that connect both socialization and nature serve to build community in particular historical geographic ways. Naples's (1998, 124) discussion of activist mothering as connected to radical community engagement and social reproduction helps situate the power relations inherent in Cleaver's, Seale's, and Brown's discussions. Naples suggests that despite the fact that many mothers engage in community activism, often they do not see their work as political but rather construct their efforts around notions of community caretaking. She suggests that often fusing their community work and family-based labor meant opening their homes to those in need and doing "what needed to be done" (129) to secure economic and social justice for their local communities. The "power" Cleaver and Seale talked about, it seems, was connected to a sense of community, as an explicitly nurturing set of relations if we are to understand Naples's discussion of other forms of activist mothering. Here, we see the social construction of gendered power relations that might help us to imagine the logic that surrounds "pussy power" in much more nuanced ways.

As the Breakfast Program grew and received national attention, it not only became a major source of political power for the BPP but also helped to transform gender relations away from earlier notions of "pussy power." This is something that Brown also stressed to me:

> The Breakfast Program represented the beginning of breakdown within the party ranks of the roles between men and women. You can believe me, there was resistance to this shit. These men did not want to work; I mean breakfast for children, why do you think Eldridge [Cleaver] himself said this wasn't even manly. Remember, revolutionaries are men [laughter], they don't cook breakfast. . . . I mean what else could you do that was less manly, quote-unquote, than getting up in the morning and fixing food, and yet not only that, but for children. But yet every single person that was ever in the Black Panther Party in the day that they operated in the so called rank-and-file, including people like me, had to work in the Breakfast Program. And that was the beginning of the change in dynamic in terms of how we viewed our roles. I would say that you could almost tag the discussion within the party of gender to the Breakfast Program because food, cooking, kitchen, come on, that's all women. So for men, here you came in, you wanted to fire your gun and kill some pigs, kill some white people, whatever your thought was, and you ended up with a spoon in your hand and apron on, and serving some kids in the community . . . no uh uh! This is not a man's thing, so this was a very big dividing line issue . . . the most amazing part was that everybody accepted it. You could have a thousand dialogues on gender issues and you would have never gotten that result faster than you did by saying look, if you love these children, if you love your people, you better get your ass up and start working in that breakfast program.

It seems that much of the criticism of patriarchal power relations within the BPP is warranted, as it appears to be within much of the civil rights movement more generally. Despite at times being disempowering to female BPP members, gender was a very powerful dimension of the strength of the BPP. As a revolutionary group struggling to help facilitate social reproduction of the black community amid dire inequality, this discussion of gender and survival gives insight into the internal political struggles of defining the BPP revolutionary

praxis, but also has external ramifications. The power of the state over our bodies, either to help sustain them or discipline and punish them, has been a main staple of modern political discourse (see Foucault 1978), and the context of "pussy power" directly embeds the BPP's struggles with these politics. It does so because, as we see, it helped the BPP push existing political discourse to better integrate the materiality of childhood hunger within their understanding of social reproduction. Doing so was key to their success, as this move better positioned the BPP to deal with the passive lack of concern for their children by the State, as well as the active repression that came along with the Breakfast Program as these politics became more embedded within BPP politics. Although the tensions brought on by gender relations are of central importance to understanding the BPP's politics of social reproduction and community formation, the influence of the state in attempting to challenge the BPP's self-determination also offers powerful insights.

The sweeping influence of the Breakfast Program, as a central achievement of the evolution of "pussy power" within the party, had led to increased strategic interference and infiltration by the FBI in an attempt to "disrupt, discredit, and destroy" the BPP through its COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program) operation (see Churchill and Vander Wall 1990). It was a result of the growing popularity of the program that in 1968 J. Edgar Hoover vilified the BPP as "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country" (Churchill and Vander Wall 1990, 123). On 27 April 1969, Fred Hampton, who cofounded the Chicago chapter of the BPP, gave a fiery polemic that embodied "what the Black Panther Party is about." Hampton's speech began with a discussion of the BPP's Breakfast Program and linked the starvation of children across American inner cities to the destructive contradictions inherent in capitalism and the uneven development it produces. He discussed the revolutionary steps the BPP was taking to ensure that poor children had enough food to meet their basic material requirements for survival. In so doing, Hampton articulated the ideological conflict that had materialized between the BPP and the U.S. government. He stated:

> What are we doing? The Breakfast for Children Program. We are running it in a socialistic manner. People came and took our program, saw it in a socialistic fashion not even knowing it was socialism. . . . What'd the pig say? He say, "Nigger—you like communism?" "No sir, I'm scared of it." "You like socialism?" "No sir, I'm scared of it." "You like the Breakfast fo' Children Program?" "Yes sir, I'd die for it." Pig said, "Nigger, that program is a socialistic program." "I don't give a fuck if it's Communism. You put your hands on that program motherfucker and I'll blow your motherfucking brains out." And he knew it. (Hampton 1969/1995, 139)

Shortly after Hampton's speech, on 27 May 1969, a memo signed by J. Edgar Hoover, although actually written by Domestic Intelligence Chief William C. Sullivan, was sent to Charles Bates, the Special Agent in Charge of the San Francisco office of the FBI. The memo, emblematic of the degree to which the United States saw the BPP as a threat to its notion of empire, declared:

> You state that the bureau should not attack programs of community interest such as the BPP "Breakfast for Children Program." . . . You have obviously missed the point. The BPP is not engaged in the program for humanitarian reasons. This program was formed by the BPP . . . to create an image of civility, assume community control of Negroes, and fill adolescent children with their insidious poison. (Churchill and Vander Wall 1990, 145)

Like anarchist traditions in which organizing was or is not simply about scaled tensions between the state and the local groupings of people collectively producing alternative ways of life through direct action, the BPP's organizing recognized the power of mutual aid politics within the local environment like never before seen in the United States. As the pressures from the state continued to build in both rhetorical and material ways, BPP organizers in Chicago, including Bobby Rush, Fred Hampton, and others, were able to harness the attention in productive ways related explicitly to the Breakfast Program.

One female former Panther who worked in Chicago told me about how efforts to disrupt the Breakfast Program backfired, and only served to rally support and increase grassroots mobilization around the program. She told me:

> It was a lot of organizing because of course we had to go out and find people to give us food for the program and all that. . . . Anyways, the night before it [the first breakfast program in Chicago] was supposed to open, the Chicago police broke into the church where we had the food and mashed up all the food and urinated on it. So we had to delay the opening. But what that caused was just all kinds of attention, and people were just lining up to give us donations.

Urinating on food designated for children is callous and speaks to how the ideological struggles around social reproduction were intensifying, but efforts to impede

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the success of the Breakfast Program, as well as their other self-help programs, took a dramatic turn on 4 December 1969 when Fred Hampton was assassinated by the Chicago Police in coordination with the FBI. At approximately 4:30 a.m., Chicago police officers kicked down the door to the apartment in which Hampton and several other Panthers were sleeping and immediately shot Mark Clark, who was on guard duty at the time, point blank in the chest. Clark responded to the impact of the gunshot wound by firing one shot at the police just before he died. The spray of automatic gunfire that followed from the police penetrated the walls of the apartment and a bullet pierced Hampton's shoulder while he was passed out in bed with his pregnant girlfriend, after having been slipped some secobarbital[6] by an FBI informant within the BPP. Next, two police officers entered Hampton's room and shot him at point blank range in the head. The bullet from Clark's gun was the only one discovered to have been fired at the police by BPP members. The attention the murder of Hampton and Clark brought, especially because of Hampton's visibility around the Breakfast Program, helped to marshal increased grassroots support among African American radicals but also liberal whites. The program became a vehicle, therefore, not only for providing sustenance to children but also as a cause around which to organize the space of the black community in particularly scaled ways.

The Black Panther Party's Revolutionary Intercommunalism as a Scalar Project

The BPP's metaphorical use of Babylon entailed an everyday lived knowledge about the destructive ramifications of material inequality, racism, and patriarchy on the one hand and the utopian roots of emancipatory political action on the other (see Van DeBurg 1992; Carby 1999; K. Cleaver and Katsiaficas 2001). New Testament scholars suggest that Babylon was used to symbolize the power of the Roman Empire, which had oppressed the growing church, just as the Babylonian Empire had oppressed the Jewish people in the Old Testament (see Leick 2002). Self (2003, 14) suggests that the adaptation of Babylon by the BPP and others involved in the Black Power movement "captured the profound cynicism engendered by decades of liberal failure as well as the remarkably optimistic belief in rebirth, in beginning again." Thus, the discursive multiscalar uses of Babylon by the BPP dovetail with Barnes and Duncan's (1993, 11) discussion about the ways metaphors appeal "to our desire to reduce the unfamiliar with the familiar; in other words, metaphors persuade by saying that things that we thought were outside our ken . . . are really a lot like other things we know very well." Getting past the too often apolitical placeless and timeless use of geographic metaphors like "locality," "positionality," "displacement," "territory," and so on, the deliberate spatiotemporal context that permeates the BPP's use of Babylon evolved through a series of fervent historical and geographically situated political moments that were ultimately grounded in the importance of social reproduction.

Part of realizing the historical geographical importance of scale is realizing how embedded it has been for so long as a political organizing strategy. This recognition, however, brings with it the risk Smith (2005) points out when he suggests "if scale is everything, scale is nothing." With this risk in mind, however, the theoretical value of politics of scale will also be blunted if we do not continue to engage it as a lens to better understand social reproduction and, in this case, survival.

Related to scale, in one interview Bobby Seale suggested to me that, "We realized that regarding hunger, the breadcrumbs they [U.S. Keynesian welfare state] were throwing at us was only to pacify us, to keep us quiet. It wasn't to sustain us." As such, the BPP's survival programs were both initiated to sustain the social reproduction of their black community, starting at the scale of the individual body but also for the sake of building a political base that could be used to resist the hegemonic repression of the U.S. government and capitalist interests more broadly. The antagonistic relations regarding organizing at multiple scales but mostly grounded in the notion of the black community as they evolved through the BPP's history and tied directly to the Breakfast Program is really important for this story.

In a seminal intervention about the politics of scale, Smith (1993) details some of the more commonly discussed spatial scales and shows how they relate to each other. About the "community scale," which is theoretically important for thinking about how the BPP used the notion of the black community with scaled slippage and the way in which Babylon bounced between scales, Smith (1993, 105) suggests "the community is properly conceived as the site of social reproduction, but the activities involved in social reproduction are so pervasive that the identity and spatial boundaries of community are often indistinct." He goes on to say, "Community is therefore the least defined of spatial

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scales, and the consequent vague yet generally affirmative nurturing meaning attached to 'community' makes it one of the most ideologically appropriated metaphors in contemporary public discourse."

During another interview, Bobby Seale illustrated how the BPP realized the importance of the Breakfast Program early on, when he suggested that in the first instance, feeding individuals was required for them to survive; in the second and third instances, these individuals, through different kinds of organizing, together provide the political basis of their black community. Seale used this term at different scales in different ways. He talked about how feeding children helped organize the black community within particular neighborhoods, helped organize the black community in cities, helped to organize the black community across states and in regions, and helped to organize the black community in nations across the world. Although never using the word "scale," Seale told me how the scalar relations inherent in antihunger politics and social reproduction are a result of the universality of human needs and how, by looking at different scalar configurations of these needs, we can imagine new forms of political organizing. This kind of organizing scalar logic is at the core of why the BPP talked about their survival programs within the context of "survival pending revolution." To this end, Newton said in 1970 (2002) "In order to exist, we must survive . . . if the people are not here revolution cannot be achieved, for the people and only the people make revolutions." Although that sounds just like "We need people for a revolution," it has deeper significance when we think of it within the context of how Newton began to talk about community and the notion of revolutionary intercommunalism in 1971 and 1972.

Huey Newton, as chief theoretician and strategist of the BPP, began to discuss the scalar interconnectedness of the oppression of individuals in Oakland with the oppression of collective communities within which those individuals lived.[7] These were the earliest notions of what would be a short-lived endorsement of Black Nationalism. The connections he discussed were based both on the lack of basic welfare provision and the disciplinary tactics initiated by local, state, and federal law enforcement. Newton associated these local processes with the need for oppressed people in the United States to form their own imaginary national identity and to support each other collectively.[8] Notions about the welfare state became explicitly concretized within the everyday discussions of "survival" and articulated with the absence of concern among U.S. elites about the survival of inner-city minority residents. To survive and ensure social reproduction at a community scale, to, on the one hand, help sustain their communities and, on the other, begin to build a political base, the survival programs were initiated through not only considering the local impediments to organizing but also with an eye toward organizing nationally.

While imprisoned for manslaughter following a shootout with Oakland police (the charges were later dropped), Huey Newton spent twenty-two months thinking about the foundations of the BPP's revolutionary praxis. Newton's commitment to the notion of the black community, perhaps because of the scaled slippage that it contains, allowed him to imagine the black community to exist not just in the local contexts of Oakland or Chicago but in more collectively organized ways that could increase the impact of the BPP. His ideas evolved into what would remain one of his most provocative notions, that of revolutionary intercommunalism. Newton argued that the United States was no longer a nation-state but had transformed into a boundless empire controlling all the world's lands and people through the mobilization of disciplining technologies and everyday mechanisms of the state. Because people and economies had become so integrated within the American Empire, Newton suggested it was impossible for them to "decolonize." Thus, spatially, collectives of people living in colonized ghettos who were the most likely to support the BPP's political vision were stifled to such a degree as to make them politically ineffective. As such, new scalar formulations and efforts to mobilize grassroots support through the discourse of "you are connected to that rebel in Mozambique, so fight with us here in Oakland," for instance, were necessary because all the old models were useless given the degree to which the empire had globalized. That is, Newton began to detail a spatial model in which the oppressed people of the world had to struggle in a collectively global, revolutionary way. They had to organize from the base of their local communities to take back the control of economic, political, and cultural institutions. The spatial logic of this notion rested, for Newton, in the fact that because oppressed people were scattered through a dispersed collection of communities, each with its own set of institutions geared toward serving the people and facilitating social reproduction, this dispersion had to be made whole through some sort of imagined spatial construct.

David Hilliard (1993) summarizes Newton's notions of revolutionary intercommunalism as follows:

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> In prison, Huey has developed an analysis of the present political movement. Nation-states, he argues are things of the past. Nationalist struggles, even revolutionary ones, are besides the point. Capital dominates the world; ignoring borders, international finance has transformed the world into communities rather than nations. Some of the communities are under siege—like Vietnam—and others conduct the siege, like the United States Government. The people of the world are united in their desire to run their own communities: the black people in Oakland and the Vietnamese. We need to band together as communities, create a revolutionary intercommunalism that will resist capital's reactionary intercommunalism. (319)

As Newton theorized the idealized organizing spatial framework for the BPP, the amended formulation results in an interesting splicing of the global and national scales in an effort to confound the hegemony of U.S. empire. This was because, according to Newton, nation-states did not matter anymore beyond their ceremonial function. The complicated imagined scalar configuration that resulted bolstered the BPP's revolutionary praxis by situating local communities, which they had already been fighting to command, as the premier sites of struggle. Here we see what Andy Jonas (1994, 262) has discussed as the "the language of scale is an anticipation of the future."

Although the spatial practices inherent in Newton's ideas obviously precede Smith's (1990) notion of "politics of scale," they can be understood through them; these specific political struggles and social reconfigurations led to interactions at a higher scale and over a wider, global terrain. Before a political, ideological, or material reconfiguration of politics at the global scale could occur, however, the BPP required a rearticulation of the local via community. Moving from an unconsolidated power base, they attempted to expand their territorial domain through many locally dispersed spatial units. Newton's resulting notion of a global network of interrelated communities "making spaces for themselves" via struggling against the oppression of U.S. empire is quite extraordinary. Beyond the importance of Newton's political thinking about scale are the material foundations and everyday relations of social reproduction on which his thoughts were based.

To be sure, the Panther politics of scale as outlined by Newton had many negative ramifications for the BPP's ability to organize. Many who were in attendance when Newton initially discussed revolutionary intercommunalism, most notably in a two-and-a-half-hour speech at Boston College in February 1971, felt that he was out of touch with what was happening on the street with the people. A former Panther who knew Newton well suggested to me, "I mean Huey, in many ways, was the troubled genius, but how do you think about revolutionary social change in the U.S.? That's the ongoing issue, and on the one hand there was for me, a fascinating theory of revolutionary intercommunalism but then somewhat more practically, there was the idea of the survival programs." Other interviews I have conducted suggest an inability of many BPP members, potential BPP members, and others interested in the BPP, to see the linkages between Newton's scalar theorizations and the survival programs. When I pressed one male former Panther about whether there was a link between Newton's scalar theorizing and practice within the BPP, he suggested:

> Frankly, I don't think so. Unless Huey had a deeper vision than I'm aware. There's a quote by George Jackson about building an infrastructure capable of fielding a people's army, and I always thought that was in some part the essence of what the organization was trying to do, and how do you build that infrastructure? You built the infrastructure through the survival programs. And it's amazing, if you want poor people to be at a certain place at a certain time, give away free food. It works. . . . It was about organizing.

Another female former Panther, who also knew Newton well and was very involved in operating a Breakfast Program, suggested:

> We believed in "practice was the criterion for truth." Now that, I do remember! So no matter how much you talked, no matter how much you theorized . . . you were like, "Did you read Huey Netwon's treatise on blah-blah-blah?" "Uh, no." [laughter] You know, because you're already there: feeding children, you're walking door to door selling the paper, . . . people are asking you . . . maybe they're having a community meeting about something that's paramount to them in the neighborhood at the center . . . you're living it. So whether or not he saw that, you know, being in jail, and not really being at the onset of the Breakfast Program physically and all that, whether or not he actually saw these things in practice from his own organization and theorized about it, or whether it came first, I'm sorry, I couldn't tell you. But I do know that once you engage in community programmatic activity, there's just nothing like it in this world, and I think that it's a major, it's solved so many problems, it really could. Like I say, now children do have lunch in schools, which is major! Major. And if it hadn't been . . . I actually believe the breakfast for school children program . . . young people getting up . . . knocking on the doors of stores, going in stores, and literally, not begging, but trying to

> encourage the store owners to give us a pound of bacon, which they faithfully did. So now you have our tax dollars at least going towards something that's positive, in one respect.

These comments highlight the problematic divide within revolutionary praxis, between theory and practice more generally. But then again, I guess revolution is messy business!

While the connections between theory and organizing practice as related to revolutionary intercommunalism were ramping up in complex ways in 1971, by 1972 the BPP tried to articulate the spatial organizing practices that would be necessary for an actually existing revolutionary intercommunalism to come into being. Interestingly, in so concretizing their plan, they simultaneously highlighted how Newton's imagining of spatial politics was explicitly based in scaled slippages and the elasticity of community. This moment is most importantly marked by a headline that was on the front page of *The Black Panther* newspaper in the summer of 1972: "Oakland—A Base of Operation!"

As the base of operation for the BPP's revolutionary intercommunal politics, Oakland served as an ideal local example of what to strive for in other communities that sought solidarity with this spatial strategy. Here, the BPP undoubtedly positioned itself spatially, as it had done previously in other rhetorical ways, as the vanguard of "the" revolution. Because of Oakland's history as a colonized local space, which through grassroots organizing had created alternative models of social reproduction through their survival strategies, their example of community in this sense was very important. They were able to put forth a model that demonstrated local solidarity and a much energized grassroots base.

Despite the confusion that people read into Newton's discussion of revolutionary intercommunalism in 1971 and early 1972, it seemed it simultaneously, and to some degree in contradiction, made progress through the connection to on-the-ground politics in Oakland. Newton made headway through the case of Oakland because as an organizer he was committed to the visible politics carried out to shape local space. Although this vision is inherent in some of the logic of the survival programs, it became even clearer as larger solidarities and networking, beyond the BPP, began to occur. For instance—and Self (2003) does a splendid job of going deeper into this moment—there emerged a conflict in political philosophy between the BPP's desire to engage in public, very visible politics, and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), which argued that revolutionary politics had to occur underground through more subversive and violent means. Newton's dismissal of an underground and violent approach was based in what he perceived to be the disconnection between the material impact of those kinds of politics and how everyday grassroots people discursively understood their impact. As Self (2003, 302) suggests about this tension, "But Newton and other party insiders had long believed that the principal problem with late-twentieth century radicalism was its abstractness and distance from the material experience of ordinary people."

This emphasis on visible direct action politics, as a means of organizing from a local base and stretching the spatial boundaries of the black community to include all the other communities oppressed by empire, demonstrates an interesting set of thinking about scale. I would argue, however, what is more important about this spatial logic is that it is grounded in the social reproduction and survival of the people that make up a community, however defined, at any scale.

Perhaps one of the most clear political or scalar discourses I came across within this organizing context related to Eldridge Cleaver's (n.d.) outline of the dimensions of "community imperialism." The historical context suggests it came before Newton's full unveiling of revolutionary intercommunalism, but the similarity of logic surrounding the elasticity of community offers insight into the spatial connections among the U.S. state, the black community, the white suburbs, and the kinds of collective consciousness about these scaled relationships necessary for meaningful political progress. Cleaver (n.d., 1) began his essay by suggesting, "In our struggle for national liberation, we are now in the phase of community liberation, to free black communities from the imperialistic control exercised over them by the racist exploiting cliques within white communities, to free our people, locked up as they are in Urban Dungeons, from the imperialism of the white suburbs." He went on to say:

> We say that we are working for our national liberation, and in order to achieve that we must have a universal national consciousness within our people. But before we can really tackle that monumental job, an essential step is to achieve community liberation, we must have a solid community consciousness. A community that year in and year out allows itself to be raped politically is not consciousness. (1)

Given the rendering of the ghetto as a colonized space, the revolutionary and anticolonial thinking by

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theorists including Marx and Engels, Lenin, Mao, Fanon, Guevara, Castro, and Nkrumah seems like a logical stream of thought to have influenced the BPP. Although the overall influence of these thinkers, and their own political struggles, might have been limited in its internalization by BPP members, the history of revolutionary struggle is easy to connect to when living in such oppressive conditions. Through engaging in their revolutionary intercommunalism, they contributed to producing new revolutionary groups working against oppression across the world. Bobby Seale told me that as one of the main organizers of the BPP, he infrequently talked to international organizers and grassroots political activists about how to set up free food programs. In at least England, Bermuda, Israel, Belize, Australia, and India, groups claiming to have emulated the revolutionary praxis of the BPP set up free food programs (also see Clemons and Jones 2001). So although theory is always important at some level, the necessary connection between thinking and action is made clear in the BPP's history, just as within the biographical struggles of Marx, Castro, Guevara, and Nkrumah. Interesting, as far as thinking about the gender politics of the BPP, but not surprising given the patriarchy projected through the BPP, is the lack of noted influences of revolutionary women like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Luxemburg, Emma Goldman, or Lucy Parsons.

Conclusions

The conception of Babylon mobilized by the BPP was a utopian multiscalar imaginary through which people who had been locked into ghettos by the destructive, uneven development of capitalism worked to "bend the bars" that kept them prisoners of poverty and inequality and to create alternative spaces where the amelioration of hunger and poverty could facilitate social reproduction. The fact that their conception of prefigurative politics was wrapped in utopian metaphor speaks volumes about why I have argued they both failed and succeeded. Like the very notion of impossibility in which utopian politics are based, the dismantling of the BPP amidst a world still dealing with hunger, inequality, and oppression shows that ultimately their conception of "the" revolution did not occur. More in line with Raymond Williams's (1961) discussion of "the long revolution," the BPP succeeded in reshaping antihunger politics both in the short term through their Breakfast Program and in the long term through essentially forcing the United States to do a better job of feeding hungry children because it saw the revolutionary potential of radical antihunger and antipoverty politics and sought to protect empire.

The production of the BPP's Babylon metaphor must be seen first and foremost as a struggle for the right to survive in the material world in which sufficient food, adequate housing, appropriate health care, and other human welfare necessities could be provided. The evolution of Babylon as a metaphor developed temporally and spatially through a succession of fierce moments and was lived through local struggles for survival and social reproduction. To this end, in his *Ramparts* essay, Eldridge Cleaver (2006, 214), when linking Babylon to the BPP's Free Breakfast for Children Program, said, "Here people are fighting for the essentials of survival, fighting for food for children, fighting for what it takes just to survive." Because of the forbidding sincerity contained within this notion of survival, the metaphoric rending of Babylon provides a useful case through which to build on Smith and Katz's (1993, 80) suggestion, that "[t]he point here is to enable an explicit consideration of the meaning and politics of metaphor by investigating the connectedness, the imbrication of material and metaphorical space."

Interestingly, when I asked Ms. Beckford why so few people know anything about the significance of the BPP's Breakfast Program, she told me, "Well, because, um, I think people just shut down when they'd hear the words 'Black Panther' and they wouldn't go on to hear 'Free Breakfast Program.' And so many people were, were frightened of, of it because they didn't fully understand what the program was for." Her point illustrates perhaps how sad it is that the Free Breakfast for Children Program was utopian at all, especially because it seems *unthinkable* that approximately 12.6 million children (that is, 17.2 percent of all U.S. children) live in households without sufficient food, as opposed to impossible to end these destructive processes.

Most central to the BPP's direct action antihunger politics of scale is the grounding of their political efforts in social reproduction, survival, and everyday life. It should not have been surprising that given the political connection to the "black community," the scaled foundations of Babylon in BPP rhetoric would slide from the national scale to, especially after 1972, the ghettos of Oakland. This slippage is based both in the elasticity of the very notion of community but also in the need to focus on the immediacy of human life when that immediacy is called into question through extreme inequality.

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The radical spatial practices and metabolic processes initiated by the BPP, through which so many children were fed and biologically and socially reproduced, should also be used to expand on the rich geographic literature that seeks to complicate the interrelated and interdependent processes of race, gender, social reproduction, and everyday political struggle (see Rose 1971; Sanders 1991; Woods 1998; Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Pulido 2000, 2002, 2006; Gilmore 2002; Peake and Kobayashi 2002; Mitchell, Marston, and Katz 2004). They also point to the fact that through the mobilization of critical social theoretical engagement with these kinds of historical-geographical materialist moments, geographers can provide considerable insight into the social processes and spatial practices that reproduce urban space in emancipatory ways. This case is bolstered by the fact that history has validated the BPP's politics of scale in some useful ways.

The notion of "pussy power," as discursively used in competing ways along gender lines by BPP members to particular ends, offers productive insight into the connections among everyday radical politics, social reproduction, and the geography of hunger. It does so due to the way it both connects and blurs the materiality of corporal needs as a biological reality and the societal power relations that shape our ability to respond to dire inequalities of all sorts. Pussy power, within the rhetoric of the BPP, is all about the imposition of gendered hierarchy at first blush, but then through paying close attention to the working evolution of the idea, it helps us see more clearly what kinds of cooperation and mutuality are necessary for survival under the weight of a repressive and hegemonic state apparatus.

Although the BPP's struggle to feed hungry children within U.S. ghettos preceded similar processes of state devolution that continue to destroy the quality of life within cities across the United States today, the emancipatory political agenda of the BPP might help us to better understand the "trapdoor of community" that Herbert (2005) discusses regarding the neoliberalization of urban space. If, in fact, the state is going to continue to disassociate itself with the well-being of its citizens, more radical political action will be necessary. Just as Fred Hampton's signature warning that "You can kill a revolutionary, but you can't kill a revolution" was proven somewhat correct through the success and lasting ramifications of BPP's Free Breakfast for Children Program, perhaps we should not only be focusing on the failures of the state but also what kind of emancipatory political agenda based in direct action can compensate the everyday life worlds of those at the margins of society.

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Notes

1. Abu-Jamal is likely the most well-known and publicly contested death row inmate in the United States.
2. Estimate provided by Bobby Seale was over 200,000; this estimate is higher than some other estimates, some of which are as low as 10,000, but ultimately the number was high enough to merit much more attention than the issue has received.
3. Although not urban in perspective, there does exist a small and important geographic literature on hunger mostly comprised of work by Watts (see Watts 1983, 1991; Watts and Bohle 1993) .
4. These numbers were provided to me by Bobby Seale. Because he was the chairman of the BPP at its peak, he is likely the best and most reliable source. In his memoir about his experience as BPP Chief of Staff, David Hilliard put the Party's peak membership at "over 4,000 members."
5. I talked about this issue with Elaine Brown and it is touched on in her book (Brown 1992).
6. Secobarbital is a barbituate that depresses brain and nervous system activity.
7. See Tyner (2006) for a discussion of the BPP's scalar territorial politics within public space based in Cox's notions of "spaces of dependence" and "spaces of engagement."
8. Anderson (1991) is quite useful for grappling with this notion.

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