technically defined as such, the Kerner Report views it as a self-contained Negro slum surrounded by an intangible, impregnable wall of white hostility. However, later in the report it becomes clear that White America is not the only guilty party. In examining the attitude of the rioter, the report states that the typical rioter is "almost equally hostile toward middle-class Negroes ... his hostility is more apt to be a product of social and economic class than of race."

The Report notes, "While the civil disorders of 1967 were racial in character, they were not interracial .... [they] involved action within Negro neighborhoods against symbols of White American society — authority and property — rather than against white persons .... most of those who attacked white authority and property seemed to be demanding fuller participation in the social order and the material benefits enjoyed by the vast majority of American citizens."

These facts appear to contest the Commission's dramatic indictment of prevailing, although unconscious, white racism as the underlying source of violence. These conclusions put the cause of violence in a socio-economic context rather than a racial one. Yet we know, two out of three Americans below the poverty level are white. This opens the way to new and deeply disturbing questions. Why don't impoverished white Americans riot? Could it be that they know they will not meet with sympathy, that collective white lawlessness will not be tolerated?

The Kerner Report is a study in black and white, in a world that is primarily grey. This explains its fascination and its flaws. It has opted for sweeping generalizations that produce drama but sacrifice reason.

Who then is the rioter? According to the Kerner Report "The typical rioter in the summer of 1967 was a Negro, unmarried male between the ages of 15 and 24 .... He was not a migrant." He was likely to be a school dropout. If employed, "his employment was frequently interrupted by periods of unemployment." "He feels strongly that he deserves a better job and that he is barred from achieving it, not because of lack of training, ability or ambition, but because of discrimination by employers."

Removing racial identification, this could be the profile of a classical troublemaker, the malcontent who abuses society for his own failure. If this is the typical rioter, I cannot believe he is any more a representative of the Negro majority than the Ku Klux Klansman is symbolic of white America.