AMERICAN
VIOLENT MORAL REGULATION
AND
THE WHITE CAPS

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Sally L. James

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INTRODUCTION

The violent impulse to regulate morality has often been a part of the American behavior pattern. Moral regulators, who employed physical punishment against those not conforming to their standards, have been active from colonial days into the twentieth century. The little studied White Cap movement of the late nineteenth century was one such crusade by moral regulators. Starting with a brief study of moral regulation in America, this essay analyzes the White Cap movement in detail from its inception in 1887 until 1900. Many of the men who suffered from the stress and insecurity of late nineteenth century society gathered together in White Cap bands to defend their values. As the "self-appointed guardians of morality," the White Caps believed they had the authority and the right to physically coerce individuals to obey the precepts of the puritan moral code.

Articles found in the New York Times comprise the major source of information used in this study of the White Caps. It is doubtful that the Times reported all of the incidents in which the White Caps participated. Because this is a limited study and the time involved in microfilm research of an unindexed subject in the Times is extensive, this essay covers only the period from October, 1887, to December, 1900. It is the
impression of the author that White Cap activity appears to decline after the dawn of the twentieth century, but further research is needed to study the actual pattern of development of the White Caps during the new century.
CHAPTER I
THE VIOLENT AMERICAN IMPULSE TO REGULATE MORALITY

Moral regulation has two separate impulses. One impulse is toward using force and coercion to control ne'er-do-wells and deviants from accepted behavior, while the other aspect is one of "do-goodism" or the social impulse to care for segments of society which need help. This study is concerned mainly with the first impulse, that is the use of physical violence to coerce individuals to behave as it is felt they should. This form of regulation has its roots in religion, but the widespread adoption of this practice in the United States results from peculiar American attitudes. American democracy, with its emphasis on individual involvement, gives everyone a feeling of responsibility for improving society. American Puritanism gives man a sense of commitment to upholding rigorous behavioral standards. In times of rapid change, when old values face new challenges, man tends to feel insecure. He seeks to dedicate himself to some abstract ideal to help him retain his identity. Often the puritan moral code becomes his goal, and in order to find himself, he must reject and even punish all that deviates from his ideal. The White Caps of the late nineteenth century were such a group of men; they were disturbed by the changing world and anxious to find meaning in their new environment.
Alexis de Tocqueville stated that Americans do not submit themselves to public officials because of the officials' superior force, but because they represent what is right; they embody justice and law. The criminal is thus the enemy of the human race and all citizens strive to stop him, which explains the spontaneous formation of mobs to pursue and punish offenders. Americans are also taught from childhood to rely on themselves, and they do not tend to call on outsiders to help them with their problems.

Americans are socialized in an atmosphere that condones independent action. Some forms of violence are legitimate in American society; in fact the country was conceived in violence. The law occupies an ambiguous place in the United States. It is not sacred as in Europe but is rather a product of man and can be changed by him. The law often appears inoperative in eliminating activities which are conceived by many to be evil. Since the law is ineffective, Americans often contend that they have a right to supplement it, especially because it is partly their creation. In times of social change and confusion these feelings could manifest themselves in the impulse to regulate morals.

Perhaps at the base of the moral regulatory impulse, so apparent in the United States, is American Puritanism. American Puritanism is influenced by English Puritanism, which came of age in an era ripe with change. When changes occur and traditions are questioned, there are two main reactions. Man either experiences a nostalgia for old ways or he adopts a policy of vigorous self-control and tries to
reshape his personality. The puritans, products of a transitional period, adopted the second policy. They became extremely sensitive to disorder, and they developed a moral authoritarianism which had a tendency to develop into secular repression.

The puritans brought with them to the new world a strong revival impulse. They were the chosen saints, and they were going to build a new Israel. The role of the saint was vital to the puritans. The saint had experienced a new birth. The experience of conversion separated him from the mass of mankind. He was always trying to understand his conversion and to produce it in others. His salvation gave him the right to fight sin. God's absolute supremacy was manifested in the saint, who was his agent and who could thereby be the leader of any crusade in God's name.

The puritans had chosen the policy of strict discipline to cope with change and confusion. Freedom was a value, but in their effort to achieve order their passion for righteousness could on occasion overpower their commitment to liberty. Arbitrary power for the Calvinist would often be the antidote for disorder. Those who had experienced conversion would establish the bounds of accepted discipline and the saints would enforce the discipline on the unregenerate. The elect would discipline themselves strictly, and they would see that the unregenerate at least outwardly conformed to their standards.

Order and conformity were thus positive goals for the
puritans. Since man was always potentially corrupt, reform was a permanent necessity. Life was a perpetual struggle with the devil. The puritan was hassled by his mania for order and his constant fear of sin. "The puritan was always obsessed by his sense of sin. Taught to expect it everywhere, and to magnify it where he found it, he easily fell into the habit of inventing it." The sin which he found was labeled as unacceptable behavior and thereby helped him identify what forms of behavior were permitted. The puritan also believed that any deviation would lead to further deviation, so even a minor offense was infinite. This led the New England Puritans to broaden the range of offenses under the jurisdiction of the law. This also gave the puritan license "to watch over his neighbors or even spy on them, to inquire about their business or disrupt their privacy, so long as the main purpose was to protect the morality of the community." The perpetual vigilant struggle with the devil was the basis for moral regulation. The puritan had to demand conformity to his values, and he felt justified in using force to insure conformity. The role of the saint did not remain dominant in the United States, but his behavior pattern continued to be influential. The puritan tradition of vigilance, self-control, and morality remained important.

The puritan approach to life was a weave of paradoxes. The puritan was both a survival of the medieval past and a protestor against what the past represented. He was
a rebel against tradition. The puritan was a combination of both pride and humility. He was at the same time a base, unworthy, sinner and an angel with a special commission from God. He constantly shifted between conviction and uncertainty. He could never doubt his religion, yet he could never be absolutely certain he was saved. The inner precepts of his faith were often inconsistent with the conditions they promoted. Puritanism generated respect for individual freedom. yet it demanded external discipline. A sense of personal privacy was fostered, but public accountability was vital to puritanism. Discipline and diligent work were positive goals, but also present was erratic fate. These paradoxes have permeated both American society and the law. They have fostered disagreement and dissension among some segments of society as to what has constituted proper behavior and what role the law should play in determining standards. But the generally anti-intellectual puritan has been less bothered by the inherent paradoxes than have other Americans and has thus kept his convictions intact.

Puritanism has affected all parts of the country. The South has been very much influenced by its morality. Puritanism has caused the South to have a paradoxical nature. Wilbur J. Cash characterized the South as being both hedonistic and puritanistic. Unsophisticated Southerners have generally been susceptible to the supernatural and have been greatly aware of sin. Their God was a tribal God without toleration. Southerners have also had a strong love of
pleasure, especially "verboten" pleasure which was manifested in orgiastic religion and violence. The Southerners were thus able to find legitimate pleasure and sensual satisfaction in physically punishing an offender against the puritan moral code. They brought their two contradictory needs together in the process of moral regulation.

The concept of work in the South was made contradictory by the influence of puritanism. Puritanism stressed rational, diligent work, consequently New England had less of a vagrancy problem. There was a strong sense of community in New England, and it was felt that coercion should not be employed to get people to work. Although in both areas it was believed that man was more subject to temptation, sin, and violence while he was idle, Southern society generally had different characteristics. There was little sense of community and a strong emphasis on individualism in the South. Work was not rational but, rather, sporadic. The erratic nature of their work habits made Southerners appear lazy. This bothered many of the Southern colonists and they attempted to force labor from the "idle vagrants" by passing vagrancy laws. This concern with the idle and ne'er-do-wells was also heightened by the need for free white labor. Laziness was thus both an economic and a moral problem.

Laziness was thus an aspect of Southern society, depicted especially by the poor white cracker. These crackers generally had some sense of conviction to puritanism, but they also enjoyed pleasure. Nothing aroused them from their leth-
argy better than witnessing, talking about, or participating in a fight. Augustus Longstreet in his Georgia Scenes said of one of his poor white characters,

There was nothing on this earth which delighted Ramsy so much as a fight. He never seemed fairly alive except when he was witnessing or talking about a fight.\(^\text{18}\)

This proclivity for violence demonstrated by the poor whites helped increase its general employment in society. Violence for the regulators was both a source of pleasure and a way to reaffirm ones beliefs. The violent poor white and the regulator role were both important in southern literature. A quote from Alice French's Knitters in the Sun depicted the violence of both elements.

In "Whitsun Harp, Regulator," the hero was "called" at a camp-meeting to regulate the morals of his neighborhood. This he carried out by "licking" wrongdoers, until one of them shot him from ambush. But these people would pull a trigger over lesser matters.\(^\text{19}\)

Regulation in this case and also in general found its impulse in religious revivalism. One was "called" to regulate morals just as one was "called" to repent his sins. The regulator played a dangerous role for he was usually subject to retaliation from those he regulated.

The moral regulatory impulse has long been part of the American psyche. The strong puritanistic devotion to order and fear of sin, and the Southerners' irrational conviction to puritanism along with their love of pleasure and violence have come together to make the role of the moral regulator influential throughout the country. The moral regulator has been active during much of American history, especially in
times of social disintegration. The White Caps were just one example of this role adaptation. To understand their development and significance one must examine the tradition of moral regulation which preceded the White Caps and made their evolution possible and even predictable.

The puritans had been the leading adherents of moral regulation in the seventeenth century. Regulating morals continued to be a necessity in the eighteenth century. The December 18, 1752 issue of the New York Gazette printed an interesting account of regulator activity.

We hear from Elizabeth-Town, that an odd Sect of People have lately appeared there, who go under the Denomination of "Regulars": there are near a Dozen of them, who dress themselves in Women's Cloaths, and painting their Faces, go in the Evening to the House of such as are reported to have beat their Wives: where one of them entering first, seizes the Deliquent, whilst the rest follow, strip him, turn up his Posteriors and flog him with Rods most severely crying out all the Time "Wo to the Men that beat their Wives." 20

This article aptly portrays the pattern adopted by moral regulators during later periods. The regulators worked by night, they often employed disguises, and they usually informed their victim of his offense. During this era there were many other reports of regulator activity against wife-beaters.

A vast crime wave in June and July of 1767 in the Back Country of South Carolina led to the establishment of the South Carolina Regulators. The dislocation of the Cherokee War of 1760-1761, economic depression, and the lack of strong institutions of authority all contributed to the state of disorder. After the Regulators had reduced the size of the
criminal element, they moved against the marginal element or the "other Idle, worthless, vagrant People."\textsuperscript{21} The following excerpts from a letter written by a man from Peedee in the Back Country about the Regulators were printed in the September 2, 1768 South Carolina Gazette.

Their resolution is, in general, ... to purge, by methods of their own, the country of all idle persons, all that have not a visible way of getting an honest living, all that are suspected or known to be guilty of malpractices, and also to prevent the service of any writ or warrant from Charles-town; ... They have brought many under the lash, and are scourging and banishing the baser sort or people, ... with universal diligence.

Such as they think reclaimable, they are a little tender of; and those they task, giving them so many acres to tend in so many days, on pain of flagellation, that they may not be reduced to poverty, and by that be led to steal from their industrious neighbors.... This, it seems, they are to continue till County Courts, as well as Circuit Courts, shall be rightly established.\textsuperscript{22}

This letter was very revealing for it demonstrated the economic motive as well as the moral regulatory motive. The South Carolina Back Country was in a frontier state, and the Regulators adopted the typical American practice of independent action when they felt that they were not receiving the proper protection from the laws. They would not let the warrants from Charleston be served because they needed to protect their existence.\textsuperscript{23} The White Caps and other regulatory groups also found it necessary on occasion to defy the law which they were trying to supplement.

Lynching was the term applied to corporal punishment in a summary manner in the early nineteenth century. Lynching did not refer to capital punishment until after the Civil War.
Lynching was used on the frontier to try to establish order, and it was also employed in settled regions in time of popular excitement. The Jacksonian era was such a time of popular excitement. The slightest provocation would inflame the imagination of the people who were very susceptible to the moral regulator impulse. In 1834 the Niles Register reported regulator activity in Virginia.

Large nests of gamblers in Richmond and Norfolk were completely routed, a short time ago, by summary process -- numerous bodies of young men having taken the matter in charge. They broke into the gambling houses, and destroyed all the apparatus and furniture -- but farther than this, committed no acts of violence. Although they did not commit any offenses against persons, these young men definitely demonstrated the moral regulatory impulse. The following year the citizens of Vicksburg, Mississippi were also active against gamblers. An anti-gambling society was formed and they whipped and tarred and feathered a gambler named Cakler. They then warned the other gamblers in town to leave the city and when several gamblers defied the regulators, enraged citizens hanged five of the culprits. The decade of the 1830's was one in which society was trying to reach a state of equilibrium. Society was experiencing a battle over accepted values. No one was quite sure what was accepted and the regulator movements were attempts to define the boundaries of permitted behavior.

The 1830's was also a decade of violent religious prejudice. There was a very definite moral regulatory impulse in attacks on religious sects. Just as the puritans had
enacted a law in Massachusetts Bay in 1656 providing for the flogging of Quaker missionaries or those repeating Quaker "blasphemies" and had referred to Quakers as "that cursed sect of heretics," the puritans of the nineteenth century believed that Catholics and Mormons were morally desolate and lawless. Since Catholic monasteries and convents "were dens of vice and iniquity," they deserved to be destroyed in the eyes of the "guardians of society." Thus Protestants felt little remorse for such depredations as the August, 1834 burning of the Ursuline Convent in Boston. 26 The Mormons were also mistreated wherever they went. In Jackson County, Missouri Mormon houses were stoned and haystacks burned in the spring and summer of 1832. The local citizens passed a resolution the following year to try to rid the area of the Mormons. In part it stated,

We believe it a duty we owe to ourselves, our wives and children, to the cause of public morals, to remove them from among us, as we are not prepared to give up our pleasant places and goodly possessions to them, or to receive into the bosom of our families, as fit companions for our wives and daughters, the degraded and corrupted free negroes and mulattoes that are now invited to settle among us.... We, therefore, agree that if after timely warning,... they refuse to leave us in peace... -- we agree to use such means as may be sufficient to remove them. 27

The Mormons only agreed to leave in order to stall for time. When they were still there in November of 1833, burnings and whippings resumed. 28 All of these actions were committed in the name of protecting the moral stability of society. This was a traditional reaction of Americans who felt that their way of life was threatened. They perhaps felt that by
beating the holders of beliefs they feared, the beliefs would
be eliminated. The act of violence gave them some sense of
control over the rapidly changing world.

Violence against Catholics continued into the 1840's. In 1844 a mob started to burn an Irish Catholic neighborhood in New York City. That summer there were riots against Catholics in Philadelphia. In 1848 there were many acts of violence against Catholics and symbols of Catholicism. There were riots in Kentucky and Tennessee. A Catholic church in Boston was stoned, one in Maine was pelted with rotten eggs, and another in Massachusetts was blown up. A priest in Maine was tarred and feathered. This type of violence was still prevalent at the end of the century. The zenith of anti-Catholic organization was the American Protective Association in the 1890's. This was the very era of another moral regulatory group, the White Caps. The APA continually connected Catholics with saloonkeepers, while they depicted Protestants as Prohibitionists. In this period of turmoil it was easy to arouse antipathy toward "immoral" elements. Although the APA was not essentially violent there was violence connected with the group. It is interesting that although the APA was not strong in the South, it was most active in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Texas. These were the very states in the South in which the White Caps were most active.

Moral regulation and vigilantism continued throughout the century. The most highly developed use of extralegal enforcement was against criminals, not offenders of the moral
code. Though the San Francisco Vigilance Committee was not a moral regulatory body their use of summary justice helped to shape the American tradition. Formed in June, 1851 the San Francisco Vigilance Committee had widespread community support. The committee would send notices to offenders warning them to leave town. If the warnings went unheeded the committee would then arrest and try the culprits. The committee was completely open, frank, and public in all of its dealings. Their headquarters was not secret and neither was their list of members. The San Francisco Committee had a record for being judicious, at least as judicious as could be expected of an extralegal body. Unlike any other vigilance committee, each successive re-organization of the committee brought in more conservative leadership and activity.31

Though the San Francisco Committee was neither an example of moral regulation nor the action of an established community, it did have a definite effect on the American proclivity for extralegal regulation. It was an excellent example of the impulse of Americans to regulate their communities when they felt the legal authorities were doing an ineffective job.

Incidents of moral regulation continued throughout the century. In May, 1856 William Hornbeck of Lewis County, Virginia was stripped and then ridden on a rail for ill-treating his wife.32 The citizens of Promontory, Utah formed a vigilance committee and on a Sunday morning in November, 1869 the committee posted a warning to "all loafers, pimps, gamblers, pettifoggers, thieves, and cutthroats to quit the town
within twenty-four hours, or to prepare to be hanged each upon a telegraph pole." The citizens wanted to cleanse the town of its "moral impurities." Vigilance committees were organized in Alma and Fairplay, Colorado to regulate morals. In these towns in the late 1870's men who "act outrageously and make themselves generally obnoxious" would receive letters on which were drawn a man hanging from a tree and a coffin beside the tree. In October, 1877 citizens of a Texas town gave the Reverend Doctor Russell one hundred licks with a leather strap because he was not true to his wife. Moral regulation was also employed in the 1880's. The next major movement was the Bald Knobber movement of southern Missouri. The Bald Knobbers were moral regulators who were concerned about the disorder, confusion, and violence in their communities. They would flog those who deviated from what they conceived to be acceptable behavior.

Moral regulation was thus a very prevalent practice in the nineteenth century. From their puritan forefathers, many Americans have developed a strong need for order. In times of insecurity they turn to this devotion to order and conformity. By demanding and receiving conformity in others man can reaffirm his convictions. One tends to forget that when conformity in behavior comes from force it really does not demonstrate acceptance of that behavior pattern. Perhaps the moral regulator did not see the fallacy in his reasoning, or maybe outward conformity to his demands was sufficient to soothe his insecurity.
Moral regulation has been employed during the present century by the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan originally active in the 1860's again rose to power in the wake of the popular excitement created by World War I. Following the war a crime wave, race riots, and general social restlessness existed. Many people felt the American village and its morality were threatened. The Ku Klux Klan utilized these feelings to organize men to use night-riding tactics to uphold puritanical morality and Protestant fundamentalism. The KKK would whip young couples for riding in cars together, men for deserting their wives, and others for hauling liquor or any such offense which they felt threatening.36

The second Ku Klux Klan was by no means a strictly southern movement. Klan violence was reported in almost all of the states, and several of the most violent acts took place outside of the South. Generally the southern Klan was the most violent, with parts of the Middle West being almost as ruthless. The Klan was against the Negro, the Jew, the Oriental, and the Roman Catholic, but its main thrust was against fellow white Anglo-Saxon Protestants who failed to adhere to the puritan moral code.37 Often members of the Klan occupied an ambiguous place in society and membership in the order was an effort on their part to help them establish their place in their world. Generally a Klansman was a day laborer, a mechanic, or an industrial worker.... He stood at the juncture of the middle and working classes, with middle class identification but without its prestige occupations and status. Their path to self-prestige was through emphasis on differentiation between themselves and the Negro... and organized overconformity to the institutionalized caste patterns
of the South and to one-hundred-per-cent Americanism. 38

These were the very people whom Joseph Kraft would characterize today as "Middle America." They have become moderately successful through the American system so they are devoted to its processes and traditions. Any attack on the American value system they conceive as a personal threat because it jeopardizes the place they are trying to find for themselves in society. 39

As was true in the case of the White Caps thirty years before, Klansmen found the violence they indulged in was an outlet for their appetities. Many forms of pleasure were forbidden to them by their devotion to puritanism, so they found pleasure in whipping persons whom they felt to be degenerate. Often times Klan physical punishments had sexual overtones. Upon occasions their brutality was very extreme. In Tampa, Florida the KKK attacked a labor meeting and one participant "was flogged, castrated, caked with tar, and had his leg plunged into the boiling tar bucket." He died nine days later. 40

The employment of physical force and duress to regulate morality is one of the American traditions. The unique combination of American puritanism and American democracy has fostered the development of the tradition. The puritan adherence to vigilance, order, and fear of sin has become deeply ingrained in the American psyche. Self-reliance and independent action have also become part of the American way of life. American traditions lack the institutionalized
sancity that they command in Europe but instead have a personal and less formal sanctity which upon occasions is much stronger than the formal sanctity. Americans are deeply devoted to their values and feel their values are very vulnerable. In times of intense strain and insecurity Americans instinctively feel that their values are threatened. They must protect their values, and with their strong sense of independence they feel that they can best protect their values in an extralegal, summary manner.

Once a pattern of extralegal regulation has developed it is very difficult to break. In the United States this pattern has itself become a tradition. Thus it is easy to understand how a group of men who felt that their sacred values were in jeopardy could take up arms to protect those values. In the last years of the nineteenth century many men did feel so threatened, so they banded together to use the whip to eliminate the threat. As happened before and did again later these men, who called themselves White Caps, abused the arbitrary power they usurped and before they finally put down their whips they had desecrated many of the values they set out to protect.
CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN OF THE WHITE CAPS

The White Caps were first organized in the rural regions of southern Indiana in the year of 1887. The original impulse of the White Cap movement was to regulate the morals of the community and to make it a better and more harmonious place in which to live. It is not at all illogical that such a movement should originate or that it originated when and where it did. The American proclivity for moral regulation has been widely recognized. Why southern Indiana in particular was the mother of white-cappism can be explained in the context of the traditions of the people. The Hoosiers of southern Indiana were immigrants from the South. They had experienced the isolation of the early Indiana frontier and had become very independent. They were generally Baptists or Methodists and though illiteracy was higher than elsewhere in the state these rugged people knew their Bible.¹

In addition to being religious and highly independent, the people of southern Indiana were not unaccustomed to the use of violence. Thus it was quite logical that they should use violence to enforce values which were important to them. Their homeland had been one of the violent centers of protest during the Civil War. In 1863 Johnson County citizens fired on a federal cavalry squad pursuing deserters, while Brown
County residents broke up a Union meeting and shot a Union soldier. Both state and federal authorities were needed in southern Indiana in the summer of 1864 to quell disturbances caused by draft dissenters. In describing both southern Indiana and Illinois it was said that,

Robbing, stealing, and general outlawry became so prevalent in the southern sections of these states that men went armed, slept with rifles under their pillows, barricaded their houses and places of business, and in a number of cases good citizens rose in their might and without judge or jury put to death many of the outlaws.

Indiana Democrats resented the arbitrary actions of the Union men. Democratic newspapers were raided and destroyed, Democratic leaders were attacked, and election workers were mistreated. Other incidents which further aroused already heated passions included the assault and threatened lynching of a La Crosse man who professed Southern sympathies and a warning to a Democratic legislator from a "Vigilance Committee." Many Democrats wanted to retaliate by organizing their own secret society for mutual protection and preservation of constitutional and civil rights.

Violence and disorder in southern Indiana did not end with Lee's surrender at Appomattox as evidenced by the fact that later that year the Indiana State Legislature renewed the 1852 statute legalizing vigilantism. The early 1850's had been a time of much regulator activity in northern Indiana, while the outbreak of vigilantism after the Civil War was centered in the southern part of the state. The Seymour, Indiana vigilance committee was one of the most active, on several occasions seizing prisoners from jails and lynching
them. Regulator activity continued in southern Indiana through the 1870's, sometimes being the work of mobs and at other times conducted by organized vigilance committees. In the late 1870's the regulators of Harrison County were especially active, warning people to "walk a bee line in the way of good behavior" or face a whipping. As in Ohio where a similar statute was enacted, this law was utilized even into the next century to condone citizen justice. As late as the 1920's this statute was employed by the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana. It has been estimated that the Klan Horse Thief Detectives had over 20,000 members as special constables who attacked gamblers and bootleggers, raided disorderly houses, and stopped cars to search them for illegal liquor or passionate young couples. One can easily understand that Indiana generally, and southern Indiana in particular, both prior to the era of the White Caps and also subsequent to it, were acquainted with the use of violence to enforce their values. It is therefore not at all surprising that this tradition should have an impact on the minds of the Hoosiers and shape their reactions.

Another factor which might have influenced the White Caps' founders was the Bald Knobber movement in southern Missouri. Southern Missouri had also been an extremely violent area during the Civil War. Home guards were organized during the war to protect the citizens from marauding raiders who stole cattle, burned homes, and murdered residents. The raiders, the home guards, and the deep hatreds which were
built up all remained strong in the post war years. In January, 1885 Captain Nat N. Kinney along with ten other respectable citizens of Taney County, Missouri decided to organize a law and order league, which they called the Bald Knobbers, because they first met on a bald knob in the Missouri Ozarks. The Bald Knobber movement, which was formed to punish law violators who eluded the established legal system and run undesirables from the community, spread into Christian, Stone, Barry and Douglas Counties by the fall of 1885. Community sentiment was divided with regard to the Bald Knobbers, with many respectable law-abiding residents in favor of the movement and many opposed. After the movement became more bold and some of the members committed brutal outrages, the movement received national publicity. By March of 1886 the Bald Knobbers of Taney County decided to disband, but Bald Knobber activity continued in other Missouri counties. Local residents resented the publicity that they were getting, but their nightriding activity and their weird black masks with red and white stitching and horns made interesting copy.

A direct connection between the Bald Knobbers, who were active in rural southern Missouri from January, 1885 to late 1889, and the White Caps of Indiana cannot be established, but the similarities must be noted. Both southern Missouri and southern Indiana were poor, rural regions whose residents were predominantly Southern, were highly independent, and were quite religious and knowledgeable of the Bible. Both peoples had experienced violence and lawlessness. Newspaper reports of Bald Knobber activities may have influenced southern Indi-
ana citizens to adopt the same tactics when faced with similar conditions of moral irregularity.

Why should the last thirteen years of the nineteenth century experience an outbreak of moral regulation? This might be explained within the context of the interpretation of deviance. From a sociological viewpoint an act has been defined as deviant if it required the attention of an outside control agency. The important variable then, was not the act itself, but the social audience which analyzed the act and determined whether or not the act was deviant. With such a definition deviance then could be said to have positive effects for society. By defining deviance the audience was also defining what was proper behavior.

As a trespasser against the group, he (the deviant) represents those forces which lie outside the group's boundaries: he informs us, as it were, what evil looks like, what shapes the devil can assume. And in doing so, he shows us the difference between the inside of the group and the outside.

At various periods in time societies have experienced social disorganization which has threatened the values which they hold dear. These periods of social disorganization would alter a society's standards and the people would be unable to determine what was proper behavior. They would experience an identity crisis. Historically in order to solve these identity crises new forms of deviance would be discovered and punished by the society. In studying deviance among the New England Puritans Kai Erikson said,

These (crime) waves dramatize the issues at stake when a given boundary becomes blurred in the drift of passing events, and encounters which follow be-
tween the new deviants and the older agents of control provides a forum, as it were, in which the issue can be articulated more clearly, a stage on which it can be portrayed in sharper relief.\textsuperscript{11}

The closing years of the nineteenth century were just such a time. Rapid change had brought social disorganization and a blurring of the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The country was no longer the simple agrarian society, or the bedrock of puritan morality. Rapid urbanization and industrialization had changed the country and the rural areas were on the defensive. The folk of the countryside were no longer sure of what values the country as a whole honored. In this time of confusion, the people of rural areas decided to re-dedicate themselves to the puritan moral code, and there was no better way for them to demonstrate their values than to label as deviant all those who did not conform to their standards.

The year 1890 has been marked as the closing of the frontier. This meant that there was no longer a wilderness along the fringe of society against which the people in the settled areas had to unite. In other words they were robbed of a socially unifying influence. A new source had to be found for the demons and devils of the universe, and they were found within the community itself. The New England Puritans had experienced this same phenomena, for they had initially defined their location in space by watching the wilderness about them,

And now that the visible traces of that wilderness had receded out of sight, the settlers invented a new one by finding the shapes of the forest in the middle of the community itself.\textsuperscript{12}
Thus the need to find deviance in order to define acceptable behavior plus the loss of a wilderness from which to draw this deviance forced society to look within itself. Since the conflict was predominantly a moral one the agents of social control were not the legally constituted authorities, but private individuals striving to define their own values for themselves. The widespread acceptance of the White Cap movement for social control must be explained through the pervasiveness of the moral conflict in society.

Being deeply concerned over the moral laxity of their community, a group of citizens of Harrison County, Indiana banded together in the fall of 1887 to try to remedy the situation. Harrison County was typical of most of the southern Indiana countries, being relatively poor and peopled by Southern immigrants. The County also had a tradition of extralegal activity. Strongly committed to the moral regeneration of society, these middle class farmers felt they had a special mission to perform. Success in their mission became more important to them than the preservation of individual rights. This band, called White Caps for the white masks they wore, first received national recognition on October 12, 1887 in the New York Times. This article did not cite the original organization of the White Caps in Harrison County, but it told of the first large outbreak of White Cap activities. These initial incidents were almost entirely moral regulatory actions. Among the most prominent incidents were the whipping of Joel Wright and of Aaron Bitner. When the White
Caps whipped Wright, a poor and weakly man from Corydon, Indiana, they told him it was because he was "a sort of no' count fellow and don't provide for yer family." The White Caps also suggested that he had been involved in several recent "stealin" incidents. Bitner was a wealthy farmer in Spencer township who was flogged by the White Caps in early October. The White Caps felt Bitner deserved a whipping because he had treated his seven year old step-son roughly. These two demonstrate the positive value placed on the family and its welfare by the White Caps. One victim was punished for both his laziness and his failure to take care of his family, while the other one was punished for cruelty to his family. Through the use of the lash, the White Caps hoped to further the values of work, responsibility, and kindness.

The White Caps were very active immediately following their inception. They flogged John Hilderbrand, another wealthy farmer of Spencer township, for threatening to kill his wife and daughter. At the Mott railway station they posted the following notice:

NOTICE -- Phil Zeiner, Harvey Emily, John Long, and Robert Mott, the whiskey ring, had better quit the way they are a-doing. If they don't they will be taken out and whipped. Bob Mott had better leave the county.

White Caps

Posting such a warning was to become one of the trade marks of the White Caps. They would leave a notice like the one above, and if not heeded they would then proceed with their whipping.

Probably the most violent early White Cap incident was
the attack on Fielding Berry, a physician at Blue River on the border between Harrison and Crawford counties. Eight masked men seized Dr. Berry and took him from his house. Dr. Berry struggled and broke loose from the White Caps. He then seized a plank and knocked several of the intruders down. The White Caps, unused to such active resistance started to leave, but one in their ranks drew his pistol and shot Berry twice in the leg and once in the side. Later that evening the White Caps returned to whip Berry, but when they were met by Mrs. Berry on the front porch wielding a shot gun, they decided to make another retreat. No reason was cited for the attack on Dr. Berry. This incident was both the first one encountered which employed the use of firearms and was not expressly for the purpose of moral regulation. Unexplained attacks such as this one served to arouse popular indignation and would later serve as the focus for almost universal condemnation. Another early incident which would help arouse anti-White Cap feeling occurred on Saturday, October 8, 1887. On this night the White Caps seized a Harrison County man from his home, tied him up, and whipped him almost to death, before realizing that he was not their intended victim. These two early incidents aptly illustrated the dangers of summary justice such as that administered by the White Caps. Extralegal regulators were more likely to inflict excessive punishment, to act emotionally, and to make mistakes than were the legally constituted authorities. Organized with the intention of purifying society, most of the early actions of the White Caps were relatively prudent,
but always present was the danger of abusive action.

About twenty other incidents involving White Caps occurred in Harrison County in the early autumn of 1887. The men who took up the White Cap cause were not the lawless ruffians of the community but farmers who desired to "eliminate" the lazy and shiftless population. The area was very rural and served by only one railroad. The people appeared to be contented with their situation and not interested in progress or establishing industry. They were thrifty men and since money was scarce they could not see spending it on expensive trials which often did not punish the culprits guilty of the misdemeanors in which the White Caps were interested. So instead of trying to obtain the arrest of the delinquents, the White Caps adopted the lash.17

The White Caps, dedicated to the conservation of the puritan moral code, continued to be active in Harrison County and spread to the neighboring counties of Crawford, Lloyd, and Spencer as well. New Albany, Indiana was the site of much moral regulation by the White Caps in the spring of 1888. On April fourteenth a band of White Caps visited the home of a widow named Mrs. Jones. They whipped her because she refused to work.18 Generally the White Caps were hard working farmers and they resented laziness. Laziness was also equated with sin and degeneracy, and had to be eliminated in order to perfect society. This same band of New Albany White Caps told William Wright to leave the state. A local lawyer was told that he would be tarred and feathered if he did not leave the area immediately. His
offense was that he had been seeing Mrs. Jones' daughter. Laziness and impropriety were offensive to the better elements of society. These actions threatened the aspects of society which they valued. Perhaps they secretly or unconsciously feared that they too would adopt the degenerate behavior patterns of those they whipped. In whipping those deviating from the puritan moral code, the White Caps were perhaps striving to eliminate activities which were temptations to themselves.

Other deviations from proper behavior which received the continued scrutiny of the White Caps were wife-beating and family neglect. In early May, 1888 the White Caps of Grandview tricked Smith Hogan into leaving his house and once outside they seized him, tied him to a tree, and gave him a hundred lashes on his bare back. Hogan was told that he had just received the punishment given to all wife-beaters. At midnight on May sixteenth a gang of masked White Caps from Spencer County flogged Stephen Wardel. Wardel was warned that he would receive another whipping if he did not start taking care of his mother. The family has always been a valued institution in society, but in rural societies its importance has been magnified. Family stability thus became a positive good and had to be protected.

While early White Cap activity was predominantly for the regulation of the community's morals, some deviation in this pattern did develop. In the summer of 1888 a band of White Caps brutally whipped two Mormon missionaries. This incident can not be defined as identical to the other actions of
the White Caps, but in a sense it too was moral regulation. Mormonism with advocacy of polygamy was inherently inimical to the moral code of the New Albany residents. Since Mormonism threatened their values it was evil and had to be suppressed. This could be done by thrashing the agents of this heinous immorality.

By the beginning of 1888 the initial support of the White Cap movement began to wane, and concern began to develop. Inherent to all systems of summary punishment have been the abuses which might develop. The initial acts of the White Caps were not entirely free from such abuses and these would continue. The first case of the White Caps using violence as an act of revenge occurred near Marengo, Indiana on Friday February 3, 1888. During the previous year Thomas Williams had been whipped by the White Caps. Williams had recognized Thomas Courtney, Jr. as one of the gang and reported him to the authorities. Courtney then fled to Fort Scott, Kansas. In early February a telegram from Fort Scott was received telling of Courtney's arrest. The White Caps, greatly enraged over this occurrence, went to Williams to try to force him to sign a statement exonerating Courtney. When he refused he was flogged almost to death. This incident aroused much bitter feeling against the White Caps amongst the local people. The local populace could accept the moral regulation of the White Caps because they were performing a function with which they agreed, but when the organization started using violence for revenge the people
started to become concerned. Actually it was quite logical for the White Caps to use violence for revenge. They whipped Williams the second time because he threatened the existence of their organization. Since they believed they were performing a function which was vital to society it was logical to them that they could extend their range of activities to include those who threatened their being.

The White Caps continued to be active in southern Indiana in the spring of 1888. In May the band from Leavenworth brutally beat Jacob Strice. Strice, a respected and prominent citizen, was charged with being intimate with a neighbor's wife. The same band gave Salem Mckain 150 lashes for failing to support his family. As the White Cap incidents increased in frequency and in brutality the local citizens became quite excited. Because they could not obtain redress for their grievances from the authorities, the people began to think in terms of revenge themselves.23

The citizens of Harrison, Crawford, and Perry counties became so excited about the White Caps that they hired a detective to infiltrate the organization in June, 1888. The detective joined the Harrison County band and found that the group had about 200 members, including some of the most prominent members of the community. The detective stated that the White Caps believed they were acting in the best interest of the community. He also said that the organization had a stiff oath and the penalty for revealing it was death.24

In mid August the White Cap band of Marietta in Crawford
County decided to disband. The apparent reason for this decision was that Attorney General Michener of Indiana was gaining information about the order. Some of the White Caps were divulging organization secrets and evidence of their raids in return for immunity. The White Caps were still very strong and would not be eliminated easily. Too much public feeling was behind them. In September Michener said it was impossible to bring successful cases against the White Caps of Crawford County, because "no matter how conclusive the evidence is, public sentiment is in sympathy with the regulators.

Feelings about the White Caps were thus divided. Many people did not really condone their violence, but they believed the White Caps were serving a useful purpose. No matter what the legal authorities would try to do the White Caps would continue to regulate the morals of the communities until public sentiment would unite against them.

White-capping, the term coined to refer to the activities of the White Caps, did not long remain just the concern of the Hoosiers. The editorial staff of the New York Times discussed the movement in the summer of 1888. The Times said that white-capping was a disgrace and that the citizens would be justified in taking the laws into their own hands to eliminate it if the state remained ineffectual. The editorial stated that the White Caps considered that they were the "self-appointed guardians of morality," and that for their whippings they "single out men who fail to support their families, women who neglect their children, and disreputable
persons of both sexes." The solution offered by the *Times* of citizen action would appear to perpetuate the tendency toward extralegal violence. This solution has been adopted many times to cope with regulator movements and in Indiana several anti-White Cap groups known as "Black Caps" were formed. But as stated before, more effective than counter movements has always been a change in conviction among the citizens, and in 1888 white-capping was only in its formative stage.

Indiana's sister state of Ohio was the next state to encounter widespread White Cap activity. This early Ohio White Cap activity occurred in the southern counties of Brown and Adams. On the night of November 17, 1888 fifty masked men rode into Sardinia, Ohio in Brown County and dragged Adam Berkes out of his house and whipped him. The band of men called themselves "White Caps" and felt they were justified in whipping Berkes "because he had not... lived as they claimed he should." This was the first reported incident of White Cap activity in Ohio.

The organization of White Cap bands in Ohio has been attributed to several causes. There appeared to be a connection between the White Cap phenomena in southern Indiana and the one in Ohio. The connection between the two was probably not direct, but the Indiana outbreak established a background of moral regulation from which the Ohio residents could draw. The race violence occurring in the South had an impact on the people in Ohio. The temperance movement and the Women's Christian Temperance Union
agitation were especially strong both nationally and locally at this time. During the autumn of 1888 Dave and William Walker, the leaders of the Bald Knobbers of Christian County, Missouri, were being tried for murder and their case received much publicity. Joined together all of these incidents produced a social situation conducive to the adoption of violence as a means of moral regulation.

In an editorial the New York Times cited different reasons for the organizations of White Caps in Ohio. The rural areas lacked forms of diversion and excitement for the frolicsome and exuberant youth and after they punished a transgressor of morals they found it extremely difficult to return to the drudgery of routine daily life. This factor of boredom has validity in helping to explain the rise of White Cap activity, but it alone neither adequately explained the initial founding of the White Caps, nor its continuation. The element of boredom might be added to the previously noted factors in order to establish the social situation from whence the White Caps arose.

The Ohio White Caps were very active in December, 1888, posting more notices and whipping more people than they would at any other time. Their concern was predominantly with moral offenses and they acted chiefly against people of poor reputation, wife beaters, immoral women, poor family providers, lazy and shiftless people, prostitutes, and gamblers. In Ohio White Caps were less violent than their Indiana counter-parts, with most of their activity confined
to posted warnings to moral offenders. 31

The accounts of the White Caps in the Ohio State Journal tended to indicate that the White Caps were formally organized in only Brown and Adams counties in southern Ohio. White Cap activity was by no means confined to only these two counties. Before the end of 1888 moral regulation of the White Cap variety had spread throughout the state. The White Caps in the other parts of the state adopted the methods and name of those in Brown and Adams counties, but they seem to have never formally organized. An emotional wave swept the state and in areas where social disorganization was most prevalent and the people were in most doubt about their values, they tended to imitate the activities of the organized White Caps in the southern part of the state. 32

The White Caps in parts of Ohio were influenced by race question; this seemed to center in Clermont County along Ohio's southern border, just west of Brown County. In early December, 1888 White Caps in Felicity tried to force Negroes out of the local schools. 33 Later that month in Batavia another band of White Caps acted against Negro school children. 34 These incidents were the exception, for the real threat felt by Ohioans was not the Negro race but the fear that their moral values were being subverted by the rapid changes in society.

Like the White Caps of Indiana, the group in Ohio was forced to act against people who threatened its existence. The White Caps, like so many organizations, were founded for a stated purpose but soon found themselves taking part
in activities designed merely to perpetuate the group. An example was the attempted assault on Aaron Vance of Sardinia, Ohio, who had been working hard to expose the White Caps of Brown County. One night the White Caps, with white cloths over their heads, went to Vance's house and carved a heart and a skull and crossbones on his door. They also left him a bundle of switches with a tag attached that said,

Aaron Vance, you'd better be careful as to what you says and does. This is a warning. If you try to do us harm you will get the worst of it! WHITE CAPS

Unconcerned over the warning, Vance merely put a sign on his fence saying he did not fear the mob. The White Caps warned him a second time and again he did not heed them, but continued to gather evidence against their band. When the masked mob tried to lash Aaron Vance, they were driven off by Aaron's nephew Eddison who peppered the White Caps with bird-shot. The White Caps were relentless in trying to protect their order from investigation and vowed they would get revenge.35 This incident resembled several that occurred in Indiana and many more that would occur in other parts of the country. It aptly demonstrated one of the weaknesses of a secret extralegal order which was that it had to increase its level of violent activity in order to continue in existence.

The Ohio state government was quicker to react to the outbreak of White Cap outrages than was the Indiana government. In early December Attorney General David Watson conferred with Governor Joseph Foraker, and they decided to
meet with the prosecuting attorneys of Adams and Brown counties to adopt measures to suppress the masked marauders.³⁶

On December 15, 1888 Governor Foraker announced that

The so-called White Cap organization has been permanently disbanded and there will be no more meetings, raids, threatenings, whippings, or terrorizings of any kind by those who composed the membership, but should there be any repetition of any such practices the state is in command of testimony and the facilities generally to enable it to promptly bring the leaders to justice.³⁷

Information against the White Caps was gathered by a detective whom Governor Foraker had hired to infiltrate the organization and obtain secrets of the order and the names of all the members. When the Governor threatened prosecution several frightened White Caps came forward and agreed to disband the organization.³⁸

The agreement made between the Governor and the White Caps was superseded by the passage of a strict anti-conspiracy bill on March 28, 1889. Governor Foraker was the driving force in having this statute enacted. The most important part of the bill was section I, as follows,

An Act to define and punish the crime of riotous conspiracy. Section I. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Ohio, that when three or more persons unite or combine together and commit any misdemeanor, while wearing white caps, masks, or other disguise, they shall be guilty of a riotous conspiracy, and, upon conviction thereof shall each be imprisoned in the penitentiary not more than ten years nor less than two years, fined in any sum not exceeding two thousand dollars.³⁹

This statute was very significant because it mentioned white caps, demonstrating the impact that the White Cap activity was having on the state as a whole. The largest outbreak
of White Cap activity was prior to the passage of this statute. The number of incidents dropped with the advent of 1889, but the passage of this law and the actions of the Governor did not completely eliminate the White Caps, who totally demolished John Messmore's saloon in Hancock County late in the spring. One incident which illustrated the continued community support for the White Caps was the whipping of Frank Gehrline in Cincinnati on April 26, 1889. Gehrline was a worthless, lazy man who refused to support his wife and beat her on occasions. One day he knocked her down in their yard before going to the local saloon. A boy then lured him from the saloon, and the masked White Caps seized him, tied him to a nearby tree, and whipped him. A crowd gathered to observe the flogging and enthusiastically cheered the White Caps on. With such visible support of their actions it was not at all surprising that the White Caps should continue to be an active force in Ohio society.

Even condemnation of the White Caps was often an indirect support to the movement. The editorials which appeared in the Ohio State Journal bitterly denounced the White Caps, but they advocated that vigilantes aid the legal authorities in suppressing White Cap activity. The effect of this was to give an element of legitimacy to extralegal violence. The Journal was following the precedent set by the New York Times which had advocated citizen action against the White Caps in Indiana.

An outbreak of White Cap activity national in scope
WHITE CAP INCIDENTS

- X Single incident
- ○ Several incidents
- Large outbreak of White Cap incidents

SCHOOL SERIES
Outline Map
UNITED STATES
With Rivers
Scale of Miles
MAP NO. 1560
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occurred simultaneously with the outbreak of white-cappism in Ohio. The first incident to occur outside Indiana had actually been in Arkansas. This incident happened in Randolph County along the Missouri-Arkansas border, an area known to be highly volatile. Dr. Henry C. Hite a physician was found guilty of intimidating a witness who was testifying about Dr. Henry's membership in a White Cap band and his participating in the threatened abuse of several local citizens.42

Between November, 1888 and February, 1889 White Cap activity was reported in seven states besides Indiana, Arkansas, and Ohio. None of the outbreaks of white-capping was as extensive as either the Indiana or the Ohio outbreak. The new movements were patterned after the Indiana experience, and the predominant concern of each was moral regulation. Very likely the new White Caps read about the highly publicized Indiana and Ohio incidents and decided to adopt the same procedures for attacking the marginal elements in their communities. This premise can best be demonstrated by studying what happened in New York state in the last few weeks of 1888 and the first part of 1889.

The New York Times had given the Ohio White Cap activities extensive coverage so that the reading public under the sphere of influence of the Times was probably aware of the White Caps. In mid-December, 1888 the first White Cap incident in New York was reported to have occurred in New Rochelle. This report was followed almost immediately by reported White Cap activity in the New York communities of
Amsterdam, Ithaca, and Jamestown. The White Caps gave written warnings to some persons and administered beatings to others. Their victims included young couples who stayed out too late at night, men who neglected their families, and others who offended the moral sensibilities of the White Caps. White Cap activity was contagious, and these New York incidents probably influenced the formation of a White Cap Committee in Red Bank, New Jersey. Red Bank was located on the coast, not far from New York City. The Red Bank White Caps posted a notice on the door of William Lawrence, warning him that he would be punished if he did not secure a job within a week. This notice, signed by the "White Cap Committee", made Lawrence and other idle men in the area nervous.

The citizens of New Salem, New Hampshire founded a White Cap organization in late December and the result was an episode both amusing and pathetic. The local shoemaker named John G. Welch was friendly with Mrs. Monroe George. When Mrs. George left her husband because he treated her cruelly, Mr. Welch invited her to move in with him. The local citizens were suspicious and warned Welch to change his living arrangements. The Times commented that the New Salem residents were no doubt affected by the recent publication of stories of the punishments inflicted upon moral offenders throughout the country. When Mr. Welch failed to heed the White Caps' warning, they burned his shoeshop. This was still ineffective in coercing Mr. Welch to conform to their standards. Thus on December 26, 1888 the White Caps seized Welch from
his house and tied him to a tree. After having done this the White Caps did not know what to do with him next! They were then scared off by the screams of a woman. In January these unexperienced moral regulators were arrested, arraigned and fined. The New Salem White Caps were undoubtedly influenced by the accounts of white-capping in the press, but they were not as experienced in the use of extralegal violence as were their Middle Western brethren. Not only were they unfamiliar with the techniques of flogging, but they also were not as adept at protecting themselves against detection. Thus extralegal violent regulation seems to have been more prevalent, more effective, and more influential when it arose in an area that had a tradition of and experience in extralegal regulation.

Reports of White Cap activity in Texas came next. In December, 1888, a gang of men, each wearing a white cap which covered his entire head, whipped George Anderson of Waco, because he had left his sick and destitute wife and was publicly living with another woman. The band of White Caps pinned a note to a tree near Anderson's house saying that they were law-abiding citizens and were determined to punish guilty people who were not punished by the law. Mr. Rogers, a school teacher in Randolph, was another Texan to feel the White Caps' lash. No reason was recorded for the whipping of Rogers, but an investigation was launched to determine who was in the whipping party. These two Texas incidents demonstrated the paradoxical nature of a movement such as the White Caps. The White Caps organized in order to supplement
a legal system which they felt did not enforce the standards which they valued. Respect for law and order were among the characteristics of the White Caps, but they found themselves having to circumvent the law in order to attain the order which they demanded. This in turn made them offenders against the legal system.

White Cap organizations were reported in the Iowa communities of Dows City, Fort Madison, Ida Grove, Marshalltown, and Sioux City. These incidents which occurred in January, 1889 were predominantly ones of moral regulation.\(^48\) Chestertown, Maryland was also the site of a rash of White Cap activity in January. At first the Chestertown citizens thought the posting of White Cap warnings was a joke, but when more notices appeared they began to take them seriously. The White Caps restricted their activities to only warnings, concentrating such offenses as staying out too late at night and not providing for their families when they were away from home.\(^49\)

In New York and West Virginia White Cap organizations threatened public officials and newspaper men. The mayor of Wheeling, West Virginia, and the editor of the local newspaper received identical letters from the White Caps threatening each one of them with a whipping if they did not obey orders.\(^50\) The Superintendent of the New York Police Department received the following warning,

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Mr. Murrey, Superintendent, Police Headquarters, City,
Look out for us; we are in the city and will kars mischief. Yours so smart
White Caps 51
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These notices seem to demonstrate discontent with the way the officials were handling the question of morality. The West Virginia warnings may have indicated that the White Caps felt that since they had assumed the role of regulating society's morals they should be left alone to accomplish their purpose. The notice sent to Superintendent Murray was rather curious in that the White Caps declared that they would cause mischief. This was not typical and could have been anything from a joke to a serious attempt by a semi-literate person to warn the authorities that the White Caps would be active enforcing morals in the city.

Within a year and a half after their first appearance White Cap bands existed in ten states. The early White Caps were essentially interested in upholding the puritan moral code. In the later years the White Cap movement would diversify its scope of interest, and would employ more extreme measures which would rally opposition to the movement. The movement was not free of opposition in the early years, but the opposition was not as strong or unified as it would later be. Public feeling about the White Caps was mixed. Many people, though not White Caps themselves, sympathized with the movement and did nothing to oppose it. Early government intervention in Ohio and Indiana did much to suppress the White Caps there, but public support of the regulators kept the authorities from being completely successful. The White Caps would continue to enjoy public support as long as they adhered to their initial intention of regulating
societal standards, but once they started to abuse their power and began to intimidate persons for personal reasons they lost their backers. The White Caps then found that they could not exist when the mass of public opinion turned against them.
CHAPTER III

THE WHITE CAPS AS THE GUARDIANS OF MORALITY

The White Caps did not possess a monopoly on the practice of regulating the morals of deviant individuals; they participated in an already prevalent practice. The last part of the nineteenth century was a time when such citizen action was taken against those who committed moral offenses and petty crimes. This period also experienced the attempted revival of corporal punishment within the judicial system. White Cap moral regulation was not then an isolated incident within the context of a quiet, stable society, but rather an additional manifestation of the disorganization and confusion within a rapidly changing social setting.

Moral regulation has been an essentially puritan belief evolving from the contention "that a reprobate spirit must be broken to the routines of a useful life because it cannot be truly redeemed." The soul of a deviant was permanently depraved so the most that could be done was to "contain his reprobate spirit."\(^1\) It seemed that the best way to control a deviant was to whip him so he would refrain from his deviant activities.

One currently accepted theory about deviance states that deviant behavior is most likely to occur when the sanctions governing conduct are contradictory. Individuals are thus confronted by a serious dilemma, for if they observe one set
of demands they might be violating another. This theory can be applied to both the deviants whose morals were regulated and the moral regulators themselves. The social situation in the late nineteenth century was such that most individuals were in doubt about the correct and accepted forms of behavior. The regulators themselves faced a serious dilemma. They were deeply devoted to the stringent puritan moral code at a time when social values were starting to crumble. They were also devoted to law and order, and they found it extremely difficult to remain true to both of these ideals. They, too, became deviators from normal behavior and were labelled such by the rest of society.

By banding together to control the behavior of the depraved, the regulators gained a sense of purpose and reinforced their own values. They became convinced that their cause was above reproach and that it gave them license to become extreme. This desire to promote conformity has always been present in society. One social theory states that societies have required two competing forces, one to promote conformity and one to encourage diversity, and that the tension between these two opposites has defined the boundaries of accepted behavior. What society must always prevent has been the development of extremism by either force, and extremism has been the fault of most every vigilante and moral regulatory organization. Aldous Huxley expressed this problem very well when he said,

Now tidiness (morality) is undeniably good --- but a good of which it is easily possible to have
too much and at too high a price.... The good life can only be lived in a society in which tidiness (morality) is preached and practised, but not too fanatically, and where efficiency is always haloed, as it were, by a tolerated margin of mass (deviance).  

In an attempt to define their place in society many individuals in late nineteenth century America were banding together and narrowing the "tolerated margin" of deviance. Vigilance committees were formed in over a dozen states between 1888 and 1900. Only a few of these were established in the sparsely populated western states. These committees varied greatly throughout the country. Some were formally organized and had special names while others just referred to themselves as the "Vigilance Committee." Several of the committees specialized in trying to control outlaws and petty criminals, while others were concerned with offenders against the moral standards. Incidents of collective citizen action against deviants, though not organized as actions of special committees, have been recorded in over a half a dozen additional states. The widespread pervasiveness of collective regulation has thus been demonstrated.

Between December, 1887, and January, 1888, vigilance committees were established in Mississippi, Alabama, and New Jersey. In all three cases the instigating factor was the presence of thieves and the lack of confidence in the ability of the law to punish the offenders. In each of the two southern states the regulators killed two of the outlaws, while the New Jersey contingent was rather ineffectual. This was an early indication of both the variance in the activities of the
vigilantes and the more violent nature of the southerners, which would show up again in the White Caps.

In the 1890's committees to control crime were established in Indiana, Nebraska, California, New York and Kentucky. In Kentucky there were two rival organizations, one named the "Redstrings" and the other the "Kuklux." Again both the effectiveness and the coerciveness of the various committees diverged markedly with deaths being directly attributed to some committees and no action at all to others.6

Regulation of criminal activities not attributed to formal committees occurred in Idaho, Missouri, Texas, Ohio, and Pennsylvania as well as many other places. In Idaho in January, 1888, aroused citizens captured and arbitrarily tried four robbers. The New York Times applauded the citizen participation in contrast to the apathetic public reaction to the "James boys." "There is no difference in point of lawfulness between the two methods, and the moral difference is all in favor of the people of Idaho."7 In praising this incident the Times demonstrated their approval of the use in violence to enforce values they supported.

Indicative of the extent to which summary punishment and regulation permeated all aspects of society was the tarring and feathering of a fellow student by the students of Wyoming Seminary at Kingston, Pennsylvania. Charles Durchek was suspected to have committed several robberies among the students. A petition was circulated and signed by thirty boys who agreed to punish Durchek and stand together and take the consequences.
They forced a confession from Durchek and then tarred and feathered him. By forcing Durchek to confess, the boys were reinforcing their actions. The confession also served to better define Durchek's acts as unacceptable behavior. At times it seemed easier to punish a culprit oneself than to bother with the law. In May, 1888, a thief who attempted to rob sleeping passengers on the Baltimore and Ohio was caught by the conductor. Rather than hold the offender for legal action, the conductor whipped and then released the felon.

Both slander and libel incited recourse to summary punishment during these turbulent times. In Norwalk, Connecticut, in February, 1891, an engaged couple whipped a butcher who had written a libelous article about them for the local newspaper. A crowd gathered and applauded the actions of the couple, reinforcing the use of extralegal regulation. In September, 1892, in Denver, Colorado an actress named Lizzie Gonzales horsewhipped a newspaper correspondent for writing scurrilous items about her in his papers. Again recourse to summary punishment was supported, this time by other papers which applauded Lizzie's actions. William Crossman was whipped on a public street in Shreve, Ohio by Mrs. Kate Flagie, and her sisters, the Misses Josie and Olie de Miller, because he had circulated damaging reports about their character. All of these occurrences demonstrated that during this era people regarded the lash as the acceptable means of punishing divergence from standard behavior.

In a time when people adopted violent extralegal means to
regulate criminals and libelers, it was not surprising that they should also use these methods to regulate moral offenders. The White Caps were not the only group to formally organize to combat the lapse in moral standards. In Chester County, South Carolina a group of 25 young men organized the "Jay-Hawk Regulators" expressly for "purifying morals and regulating conduct." They whipped Louis Batton, a new resident who recently married Miss Nancy Kee, when it was discovered that Batton had a wife and three children in Rockingham, North Carolina.\(^{13}\) In early 1890 one hundred of the best citizens of Point Township, Ohio established a vigilance committee known as "The Arresting and Jailing Club," which punished offenses including "theft, disturbing schools and church services, wife whipping and drunkenness." The club, which held its first court on February 4th, restricted the bulk of its sentences to fines.\(^{14}\) The citizens of Shaguay, Washington organized a vigilance committee to drive "toughs" from their town.\(^{15}\)

On many occasions less formal action was taken to regulate the morals of degenerate individuals. In Pavillon, New York a band of men beat Fred Wethy because he did not take care of his family.\(^{16}\) In the New York community of Long Island City recourse to summary coercion of a drunkard and wife-beater named John Weibert was averted only by swift action by the police. The cries of Weibert's wife drew a large crowd which tried to prevent him from hurting her any further. Weibert kept the crowd at bay by threatening them with his revolver. The police arrived and took him to the police station before
the crowd could get him. 17

New York was the site of another incident of moral regulation in the summer of 1895. When Mrs. Bert Covey of Jayville, New York, returned home suddenly after allegedly eloping with a local man, she was visited by two men who warned her they would tar and feather her unless she immediately left town. In response to their threat Mrs. Covey swore out warrants for their arrest. She was then seized by a band of men who stripped her and held her down while a group of women dressed as men covered her with tar and feathers. 18 Why did these women who participated in this outrage dress as men? One possible explanation could be that they experienced less role conflict when they were in men's attire. Whippings were essentially a masculine function, and the women might have felt that they were deviating less from their accepted roles by clothing themselves, and also disguising their acts, in the men's apparel.

There were several other recorded lashings in which women participated. In Waldo, Florida a group of women whipped Dan Wiggins for beating his wife. 19 A band of distinguished women regulators from Liberty, Indiana seized George Johnson from his home, beat him with clubs, and tarred and feathered him. These ladies were prominent in church and social circles, and they were upset because Johnson had been visiting their neighbor Mrs. Isaac Burris when Mr. Burris was out of town. Johnson recognized several of the ladies and swore out warrants for their arrest. 20 Thus in a
social situation which threatened the stability of the conventional value system, it was not just the men who had violent reactions. The women too needed to define and punish what was outside the accepted realm of behavior so that they could then identify what was legitimate activity.

Many other occasions arose in which people adopted extralegal actions to regulate morals. The major offenses which these citizen regulators tried to control were wife-beating, adultery, non-support of family, and drunkenness. The states in which moral regulators were most active were the very states in which the White Caps were the most influential. There was very little moral regulation in the West, and most of the activity centered in the deep South, the Midwest, and the Northeast.

Significant to the popular feelings of the times which supported the evolution of a group such as the White Caps was the revival of the whipping post by the judicial system. Ordinances were introduced to re-established the whipping post for punishment for petty thieves and wife-beaters in New York, Virginia, and South Carolina. Though none of these ordinances was passed, judges in these states and in others did sentence felons to corporal punishment. In Gainsville, Georgia the mayor authorized the revival of the whipping post to punish a young Negro convicted of highway robbery. Twice during 1899 the judge of the police court sentenced young boys to be whipped in public. These boys were guilty of petty thievery, and their parents were given the option of having their sons sent to reform school or being publicly whipped. The use of
corporal punishment by the legally constituted authorities served to help legitimize its use by extralegal bodies.

Often times judges and private citizens advocated the use of corporal punishment. When John Dernbar was before Magistrate Mott of Morrisania Police Court in New York for beating his wife, Mott said to him,

I wish that the Legislature had passed the Gerry bill last Winter for the whipping of such men as you. Such punishment would about suit your crime. 24

Judge Joseph D. Fallon of the South Boston District Court of New York also came out in favor of the revival of the lash for wife-beaters. When trying a wife-beater he once said,

If I have any influence with the other Magistrates of this county and State, I will go to the Legislature and ask that a law be passed to allow corporal punishment for wife-beaters. I hope to live to see the day when I can order the lash to be applied to the naked back of men who assault their wives. 25

There appeared to be an excessive concern by the authorities and the regulators with wife-beating. This might lead one to question if there was an increased amount of wife-beating during this period. If this were the case perhaps the explanation would rest with the ambiguous position which women occupied at this time. During the anti-bellum period women were locked in a definitely subservient status, and perhaps since their station was settled less force was needed to keep them there. Today on the other hand one speaks more of the "emancipated woman," referring to women more as equals to men. The new status that women have attained, though not completely settled, is generally accepted. The last part of
the nineteenth century was a time when women were first breaking lose from their dependent position. The social status of women was in a state of transition, and this might have engendered a feeling of insecurity in both the men and the women. Wife-beating might have been an effort on the part of the men to keep women in their lower position. For some women a sound beating might have been a psychological crutch to help them define their role in the changing world.

Private citizens also joined in the cry for the re-establishment of the whipping post to punish persons who violated the conventional code of behavior. An enraged citizen aired his views in the following letter to the editor of the New York Times.

What we want more than anything else is a whipping post in this city for boys especially, and others in general, who outrage decency by their loud profanity, ball playing, crap shooting, & etc. upon our streets.... A whipping post will do more to lessen such outrages than police courts or reformatories and will cost less.... A whipping post for unruly boys would cause them to be as meek as doves, and its introduction will do more to cleanse our streets of their defiant ruffianism than any other device that can be introduced.26

This letter was extremely revealing for it demonstrated many of the feelings of the times. It portrayed the commitment of the citizens to the use of corporal punishment. Also evident from the letter was the belief that defiant and depraved spirits must be made meek and amenable to the prevalent value system. Even if the boys did not accept the standards of behavior, they must be controlled and made subservient to them.

The final decade and a half of the nineteenth century
was one in which extralegal coercion and corporal punishment were widespread. These accepted forms of control gave support to the evolution of such a group as the White Caps. Vigilantism did not arise in a vacuum, but rather in a socio-cultural milieu of acceptance of violence as a form of control. The White Caps were thus only an extension of an already prevalent practice of controlling and regulating morals through the use of extralegal force.

The White Caps felt that they were justified to use force to require persons to conform to the puritan moral code. Conformity and stability became values far more important than personal liberty. They might have believed, as did the Puritans, that those who did not conform were degenerate individuals and by regulating their conduct these deviants were being prepared for what they would experience in the afterworld.27 Thus the White Caps might contend that they were not only helping establish a stable and pleasant society, but they were also helping the degenerates themselves.

The forms of behavior in which the White Caps were especially concerned were those in which the law was either not involved or not effective. Aspects of family life were quite important to them. The White Caps were active against wife-beaters, poor providers, and adulterers. Less flagrant violators of accepted behavior also felt the White Caps' lash.

The White Caps of Louisville, Ohio whipped Chris Miller because he beat his wife. A half a dozen masked White Caps from Rockland County, New York thrashed a man for abusing
his daughter. This incident greatly excited the local residents. James Briley of Rossville, Illinois was beaten and tarred and feathered by White Caps because he spent most of his time in saloons, did not support his wife and small children, and beat his family. His injuries were so severe that it was feared he would lose his life.28

The previous incidents involved direct abuses of the institution of the family which were generally under the jurisdiction of the law but which the legal authorities found difficult to prosecute. White Caps punished other individuals whose offenses were in a more nebulous position with regard to the law. The Reverend Benjamin T. Van Cleave of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Moberly, Harrison County, Indiana was whipped by a band of a dozen White Caps because of his improper relations with some women members of the congregation. The Dunkirk, New York White Caps forced the proprietor of the Driving Park House to take them to the room of Charles Stair whom they dragged from his bed and whipped until he was unconscious. Stair was flogged because of his alleged improper relations with Mrs. George Hamlin. Harry Hamlin and Mrs. Alice Harrison of Covington, Kentucky were dragged from Hamlin's hut by six White Caps, were stripped, and were lashed with heavy switches. Mrs. Harrison had left her husband to live with Hamlin. The home of A. J. Thomas was wrecked by an explosion believed to have been the work of the White Caps. The Cluttsville, Alabama regulators had recently sent Thomas notices warning him to send away the seven women who were living in his house. The notices were signed by
the White Cap Committee. 29

The question of whether an action was legally wrong as well as morally wrong has troubled many persons. There has been a continuous debate on what moral good or right should have legal sanctions. Law must be kept close to the moral sense of the community, but law also has helped shape the community's moral sense. One problem has been that activities which some regard as morally wrong have not been defined as legally wrong. Law can only deal with what can be ascertained on reliable evidence and what can be defined. Law can only deal with outward acts and it must respect privacy. If it were always necessary for enforcement agents to invade and interfere with ones privacy to prove an offense, then that offense should not be proscribed under a judicious legal system. 30 Extralegal moral regulation did not have to respect the privacy of others. If a group of persons believed that an action was morally reprehensible and should be within the realm of the law, but was not, they rationalized that they had the duty to punish the offender of that moral tenet. Moral regulators had much more latitude in defining what was wrong to them than did the legal authorities.

The White Caps soon commenced to punish any personal action which they disapproved. Many of the offenses they punished were quite minor. The White Caps of the village of Westfield, New Jersey met to discuss the activities of Michael Brady, the coachman of Richard Seybold. Brady often took Mrs. Seybold on rides and the White Caps, objecting to this
potentially scandalous action, decided "to run the objectionable coachman out of town." The White Caps seized Brady and put him on the Jersey Central railroad out of town and warned him not to return. The Seybolds were furious and tried in vain to take legal action against the regulators.\textsuperscript{31} Latent in this type of arbitrary action was the use of White Cap force for personal vengeance.

The White Caps were very active around the country punishing minor deviations from the accepted pattern of behaviour. In Bedford, Pennsylvania a band of 20 masked White Caps tried to whip Orange Gordon. Gordon had been spending a lot of time with John Pleassinger's daughter. The White Caps went to Pleassinger's home and tried to seize Gordon who escaped out the back door. The White Caps then whipped Pleassinger's daughter. Gordon was a Negro and one of the few that the White Caps whipped for a non-economic offense.\textsuperscript{32} Herbert G. Bissell an employee of the Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company of Hartford, Connecticut was "whitecapped" for visiting a respectable young lady from West Hartford.\textsuperscript{33} This incident might very well not have been the action of the White Caps as such. It could very well have been an example of how the term "white-cap" spread around the country and was used to define incidents of moral regulation not necessarily the work of a White Cap band. The term was to gain popular acceptance much as the term lynch-law did before it and night-riding would after it.

Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island was the site of moral
regulation directly attributable to the White Caps. Percy Bunce, a 19 year old lad who had a girl friend in Huntington, received the following warning,

Mr. Percy Bunce:
If you do not stop visiting Huntington, we, the White Caps, will have to look after you. A coat of tar and feathers awaits you if you continue. Tell your friend Mahan he will share the same fate. Hoping you will heed, we are

THE WHITE CAPS
Look out for yourself and Mahan.34

This type of intimidation was considered by the White Caps to be moral regulation, but the White Caps were treading on shaky ground. They were progressively deviating from the principles for which they were first established and becoming more arbitrary in their actions.

Threatening and insulting local residents was the offense for which a mob of between 25 and 30 White Caps whipped a Negro named John Pendleton in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The White Caps of Argenta, Illinois sent notices to local residents warning them to change their way of living or they would receive the consequences. Mrs. Price received such a letter instructing her to leave town. She turned the warning over to the authorities. This rash of White Cap warnings aroused the local citizenry and many of the people began to carry weapons around with them. Vineland, New Jersey residents were also greatly aroused by the eruption of White Cap warnings. Threats of whippings were dealt to a prominent young grocery merchant whose manners at a recent party were "actually silly," to a barber who was called a "cad" and was too friendly with the ladies, and to a young lady
who spent too much time with a certain "dude." None of these actions could have ever been punished within the framework of a legally constituted system. Maybe these offenders were not model citizens or excellent examples of morally upright individuals, but neither were they violating any precepts which were necessary to the stability of the society. These incidents were on the borderline between moral regulation and personal disdain and contempt.

Petty thievery was another offense which the White Caps strived to control. The legal authorities often found it difficult to catch and convict petty criminals so the White Caps filled that void. Milt Barclay's Negro tenant was accused of stealing by the White Caps of Louisville, Kentucky. They warned him to leave the area and he complied. Another band of Kentucky White Caps was active against petty thieves. The farmers of Covington were losing much of their poultry to thieves whom they believed to be the Crane men. Twenty-five masked White Caps seized the Cranes from their house, took them to the woods, bound them each to a tree, and gave them each 30 lashes. Afterward the White Caps carefully washed and bandaged the wounds which they had inflicted. This was one of several cases in which the White Caps bandaged their victims after they had administered a whipping, but most often they left them alone at the site of the flogging. In rural areas during the era of the White Caps material articles and farm stock were extremely valuable, and thus petty thievery assumed increased importance. Since
the legal authorities had a difficult time punishing petty offenders and recourse to the judicial system was quite costly, the non-affluent believed that concerted citizen action better met their needs.

The moral regulatory White Caps did not always have complete freedom of action. After their early successes in Indiana they were soon contained. Within two years of their foundation the law was effective against the Marion, Indiana White Caps who "took it upon themselves to regulate the morals and the behavior of the citizens of the locality." When the White Caps whipped a local resident they were generally arrested and tried for assault and battery. The Indiana White Caps retained some influence until about 1893. Claude Matthews, who was elected governor of Indiana in 1892, appealed to the local authorities to assist him with eliminating the White Caps from the state. The Governor was successful after he had mobilized public sympathy in Indiana behind him.

Legal action was taken against the White Caps for their moral regulatory practices in many other places. One most interesting incident occurred in Genesee County, New York when the White Caps whipped Fred Withey because he abused his wife while he was on drinking sprees. After punishing Withey, the White Caps went to a local justice of the peace and complained of themselves. They were held for examination at one hundred dollars bond each. Minor offenses such as the one of which Withey was charged was not significant
enough to be proscribed and enforced by the legal system, but were very important to the White Caps. Also important to the White Caps was the integrity of the legal system. In punishing Withey they censored an act which was offensive to them and by turning themselves in they reinforced the legal system to which they were devoted. Although this particular type of encounter with the law was unique in White Cap history, as time passed the White Caps would have more and more experiences with the judicial system.

Only rarely were murders attributed to the White Caps during their moral regulatory activities. The White Caps of Quincy, Illinois went to the home of Mrs. Kittie Breckinridge to drive away a traveling salesman named Solomon Bradshaw who was living with Mrs. Breckinridge. When Bradshaw slammed the front door in the White Caps' faces, one enraged member of the masked band fired into the door killing Bradshaw. This band included several prominent farmers and the postmaster who were all arrested. Besides showing that an independent regulatory association could easily commit the ultimate atrocity of murder, this episode illustrated the contention that the White Caps were often prominent members of the communities, not local ruffians. The White Caps of Mountain Grove, Missouri were responsible for the deaths of two men in 1897. After the White Caps' warning to a group of petty thieves had gone unheeded, the regulators went to the home of the suspected culprits where a fatal gun battle erupted.

It appeared that publicity had an important impact on
the spread of the White Caps through out the country. The moral regulatory impulse of the residents of northern New Jersey was no doubt heightened by the accounts of White Cap activities which appeared in the New York Times, and probably, other New York City newspapers. August Black of Jersey City received the following warning because he abused his wife,

October 22
Having heard that you were ill treating your wife,
we give you notice to leave town immediately, or
we will tar and feather you.

MISSOURI WHITE CAPS

The White Caps of Jersey City were obviously cognizant of the activities of the White Caps in the Middle West, for why else would they sign their warning "Missouri White Caps"? The White Caps of Watsessing, New Jersey sent and even more curious warning to Earnest Pierson who had been having domestic troubles. The notice, printed on white paper with a black border, stated,

The attention of the National Order of Whitecaps has been called to your conduct. You are doubtless aware of our methods of treating cases like yours. Let the warning suffice.

This was the only incident uncovered which mentioned an organization with any national identity. There appeared to be little likelihood that such a national order ever existed. The White Cap bands were connected only in name and purpose. The band from Watsessing probably referred to themselves as the National Order of Whitecaps to sound more impressive and to invoke the well publicized national trend.

The White Cap technique generally consisted of a written
or verbal warning that if unheeded was followed by a lashing. The White Caps would lure their intended victim from his home or invade it, take him to near-by woods, tie him to a tree and then flog his bare back. Sometimes the White Caps would tar and feather the culprits. Often the White Caps would wear masks.

The White Caps dressed differently in different parts of the country which they terrorized. When they were regularly organized and did the most mischief, they generally had a nearly full uniform. They wore white paper foolscaps, with paper masks and coats of coffee sacking. To make the coats they merely cut holes in the sides of the sacks close to the bottom for their arms, and larger hole in the bottom to put their heads through. This uniform was inexpensive, quick and easy to destroy, had no identifiable marking, and covered up regular clothing that a victim might be able to identify later.44

The White Caps arose in most parts of the country to regulate the morals of the individuals of the community, and as long as they remained true to their original intention they continued to command the support of the local citizenry. As long as the White Caps remained moral regulators they committed fewer capital atrocities. They were often quite brutal, but they only rarely committed murder. If the goal was to control moral values it was necessary only to force individuals to adhere to conventional behavior not to kill them. But usually the White Caps had a difficult problem controlling their own organizations. This problem of control was expressed very well by Ethelred Crozier in a rare little book on the Tennessee White Caps. Crozier said that,

If any organization is necessary to strengthen the weak against the strong, the few against the many, the good against the bad, it is only a question of time when the strong, the many and the bad will dominate and control that organization, and thereby enslave those who originate it.45
The story told by Crozier about the White Caps of Sevier County, Tennessee aptly illustrated this premise. In Sevier County there was much immoral activity in the area which the law failed to punish, hence a group of law-abiding citizens founded the White Caps in the spring of 1892. They left written notices at the homes of the immoral elements threatening them with a whipping if they did not leave the area. The first recorded White Cap raid in Sevier County was the whipping of a half a dozen "lewd" women from Emert's Cove. These intimidated women left the area much to the delight of the local citizens who did not foresee the evil long-run consequence of such a raid.46

The White Caps literally ruled Sevier County for the next several years. In 1894 White Cap whippings were almost a daily occurrence. Public support began to wane, but the White Caps had so much power that it did not matter.47 The moral offenders for which the Sevier County White Caps seemed most concerned were lewd women.48 This was curious for most of the floggers were rough young men. There were two classes of White Caps in the area, the actual raiders, and the "supporters," who were the more affluent men, who hired attorneys for any arrested White Caps. The young ruffians soon gained control of the group, and the more prominent members could do nothing about it because they were bound by an oath on pain of death.49

The story of the White Caps in Sevier County, though they were more extreme than elsewhere, depicted the inherent
weakness of such an organization. Because adulterers and operators of disorderly houses were obnoxious to the better elements of the community it was easy to see how the good citizens could be influenced to join in attempt to control the culprits. As the organization degenerated the "good members kept silent" on penalty of death, and withdrew to neutral positions. 50 The White Caps of Sevier County declined so far that it became a haven for thieves and outlaws. In 1894 a counter-organization known as the Blue Bills was organized, and the two groups waged a running war for several years. It has been estimated that the White Caps had between 600 and 1500 members, while the Blue Bills only had about 200. 51

The Tennessee White Caps demonstrated the extreme case of degeneration from the impulse of moral regulation to that of out and out lawlessness. Most White Cap bands that began as moral regulators did not decline that far. They became increasingly arbitrary but they did not usually become an organization which provided a sanctuary for outlaws. Thus the establishment of an extralegal order to regulate the personal actions of others was really a very poor way to maintain conformity to the puritan moral code, for the bands frequently exceeded their original intentions. Other White Cap bands were established which never really had the moral regulatory impulse. These will be dealt with in the next chapter.
CHAPTER IV
THE DIVERSIFICATION OF WHITE CAP ACTIVITY

As the White Caps spread around the country they appeared to lose sight of the intention for which they were founded. Moral regulation more and more became a secondary function, especially in the southern and western regions of the country. Personal revenge, self-protection, and economic discontent became the instigating forces for White Cap action. Women, Negroes, and Mexicans were to don the White Cap garb and wield the hickory lash. Politicians established White Cap Clubs to intimidate the opposition. This was the course taken by many groups which were originally founded for a "holy purpose," but because of the arbitrary power they usurped they eventually existed only to perpetuate themselves.

In the summer of 1890 a small group of White Caps went to the Anderson home in Tyler County, West Virginia and tried to assault Mrs. Anderson. Mr. Anderson returned home in time to chase the band away. The White Caps decided to return to the house to coerce the Andersons to keep quiet about the incident. Though the masked White Caps beat the couple severely, Mr. Anderson reported the incident to the authorities and a dozen White Caps were indicted. In Dutchess County, New York the blacksmith was whipped because he talked against the White Caps. Several White Caps were
under indictment in Centre, Alabama so the rest of the band burned the Court House to destroy the records. All of these incidents demonstrate that the White Caps were not always moral regulators, and that they were often morally suspect themselves.

The White Caps used their order to coerce neighbors whom they did not like or with whom they disagreed. There were several incidents in which people were whipped because they were involved in litigation with a White Cap. David Handy of Piper, Missouri was beaten by White Caps for this reason. Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Schaad and their daughter were abused by a band of White Caps from Marietta, Ohio because of a case in which they were involved.

There were many occasions when White Caps whipped individuals for no apparent reason. These occurrences usually aroused the local people very much. When Isaac White of Leavenworth, Indiana was beaten almost to death for no reason, his Grand Army of the Republic post announced they would punish the White Caps. Mrs. Wescoe of Hamilton, Ohio was threatened by the White Caps for no real reason. She swore out warrants against the band which included Dan Daub, the star pitcher of the Brooklyn, New York Baseball Club. It appeared that the law was more successful in obtaining indictments against White Caps involved in seemingly senseless raids than in ones involving moral regulation.

The Sevier County, Tennesse White Caps were often involved in robberies. They usually contended that they were punishing persons who had been informing on their organiz-
ation, but they nonetheless committed the criminal acts. Most of these robberies were committed after 1895. They robbed "Old Uncle Andy" Henderson of $2,000, Mrs. McMahan of $1,000, and John Burnett of $72. The Tennessee White Caps had become a haven for criminals, because they were protected from detection by their stiff oath. 6

Sometimes the motive for White Cap activity appeared to be antagonism, disdain, or just meanness. In Worcester County, Massachusetts a farmer named Tuttle killed one of the dogs which had killed several of his sheep. The enraged dog owners sent Tuttle a letter threatening to kill his stock and signed it "White Caps". 7 Those men were quick to retaliate when they felt wronged, and they instinctively neglected recourse to judicial action. The motivational impulse for White Cap activity was being progressively broadened.

Indicative of the diversity that developed among the White Cap organizations was the establishment of a Negro White Cap band in Monroe County, Arkansas. The band was responsible for one death and several floggings. All of their victims were Negroes. 8 Another deviation from the normal White Cap pattern was the "white-capping" of W. J. Boswell by a group of 100 women regulators in Spring Valley, Illinois. 9 These women most likely did not organize a formal White Cap band but the New York Times referred to them as "the skirted White Caps," no doubt because they had adopted the technique of the regular White Caps. Agents for the
"Ring," the Democratic Party political organization of New York City, were called White Caps. They intimidated Republicans and Negroes who supported the opposition candidates. These particular examples of actions which were attributed to White Caps showed how the term gained popular usage, and often referred to groups which were quite different from the original White Caps.

As the scope of activities of the White Caps grew, and they deviated more and more from their original intention, they became less and less successful in averting popular reaction. They were being arrested and convicted with increasing frequency. The trial of five White Caps in West Medway, Massachusetts caused much popular feeling. There were threats that the Court House would be burned by the White Caps. This increased popular feeling against the White Caps and the day before the trial the following note was found on the Court House:

NOTICE TO WHITE CAPS--- Another such case as that of Pratt will entail upon us the necessity of invoking the aid of Judge Lynch. THE VIGILANTES

General economic discontent was often the source of White Cap action after 1892. When times were hard, people resented the employment of Negroes in jobs which they thought fitting for white men. The editor of The Florida Republican, a Tampa newspaper, was brutally beaten and driven out of town because his assistant was a Negro. Mrs. Reuben Flynn of Green County, Tennessee was whipped and her house was burned because she had hired a Negro to do farm work. The
White Caps of neighboring Washington and Sullivan counties in Tennessee were participating in similar outrages and the alarmed citizens armed themselves and prepared to protect their homes.\textsuperscript{12} Economic security has always been a strong need of man. The rural white man's need for gainful employment and the self-respect it provides, coupled with his already hostile attitude toward the black man helps explain how he could adopt physical force as a means to cope with his precarious situation. Besides intimidating the victim, the act of physical violence gave the flogger both a sense of superiority over his victim and a sense of control over his situation.

Other economic grievances gave rise to White Cap action. In Virginia the White Caps set a fire which almost destroyed Keysville, because they disliked the merchants there. Mr. H. C. Potts, the miller at Paint Lick Pike, Kentucky, was threatened with a whipping because the price of his flour was too high. On the bottom of the White Cap warning, which was posted on his mill door, Potts wrote, "I will sell flour as I please, and if you want to see me you can find me at home anytime."\textsuperscript{13} Not everyone was intimidated by the White Caps' threats.

Much of the White Cap activity in the South in the early 1890's was due to economic distress. The Panic of 1893 hit the South especially hard. The average price of cotton had dropped from 11.1 cents per pound between 1874 and 1877 to 5.8 cents per pound between 1894 and 1897. The contraction
of the currency made the Southern farmers' debts even larger.

The annual defeat of the crop market and the tax collector, the weekly defeat of the town market and mounting debt, and the small, gnawing, daily defeats of crumbling barn and fence, encroaching sagebrush, and erosion, and one's children growing up in illiteracy -- all added up to frustration. The experience bred spirit of desperation and defiance in these people. 14

The frustration and desperation they experienced at times erupted into insane violence. 15

White Cap activity was first recorded in the economically depressed areas of the deep South in late 1892, but it was much more prevalent the following year. In January, 1893 Governor John M. Stone of Mississippi signed a proclamation against the lawlessness in the southwest corner of his state. A two year statute was passed providing severe penalties for "white-capping." Governor Stone compared the White Caps to the Ku Klux Klan of the 1870's. In February Governor Stone claimed the outrages had been halted. Jewish merchants who charged exorbitant prices for goods and new Negro tenants were the most common victims. 16 Though Governor Stone claimed victory over the White Caps, the regulators continued to be active. The authorities were able to secure indictments against some of the White Caps, but many of them were still at large. 17

The low price of cotton was the direct motivation for a rash of White Cap activity in southwest Arkansas and northern Louisiana in the autumn of 1893. Initially the farmers received warnings not to sell their cotton at the current low prices or their machinery would be burned. In October several
Arkansas planters were warned that their gin houses would be burned if they did not shut down their gins until cotton prices rose to 10 cents a pound. The planters payed little heed to these warnings until after the burning of Agriculture Commissioner M. F. Lock's gin house. Since the gin houses were all full of unginned cotton, the destruction of which would mean financial disaster, the planters started to obey the White Caps' threats. The area was saturated with fear of bloodshed, and interference by Governor William Fishback was anticipated. This type of economic coercion practiced by the White Caps was very similar to the methods of the tobacco night-riders who were to organize in Tennessee and Kentucky a few years later.

As in the case of the tobacco night-riders, these White Caps felt they had no control over the price of their crop and in the economically depressed year of 1893 the only answer they saw to their problem was the use of brute force.

In the South during hard times illegal stills were a source of income. As moral regulators it would seem that the White Caps would try to destroy these stills. This was not the case in the South, where the White Caps were less often moral regulators. The White Caps of Carroll County, Georgia whipped several persons in March, 1893 for reporting the existence of illicit stills to the authorities. They beat Sam Bowen almost to death, assaulted Mrs. Bowen, beat up Mrs. Mary White, pistol whipped Frank Eason, and knocked senseless 80 year old David Britt. Among this band of White Caps, most of whom were later found guilty, was a deacon in the Baptist
These shocking actions bore little resemblance to the activities of the original White Caps, but as in the case of the original bands the actions of the victims were a threat to the way of life of the White Caps. The economic necessity of the stills, more so than liquor they produced, was probably the reason the White Caps resorted to violence.

The Georgia outrage was not an isolated incident in White Cap history. Amos and Wiley Knott of Yadkin County, North Carolina were each given 100 lashes by the White Caps because they had reported the whereabouts of illegal stills to the revenue officers. William and Wiley Pruett of Cherokee County, Alabama were flogged for the same reason. The White Caps assaultors of the Pruettts were convicted by the federal court and the conviction was upheld by the United States Supreme Court. The convicted White Caps claimed they had lashed the Pruettts, not for reporting the stills, but because "they deserved it on general principles." Most of the incidents of white-capping people for reporting illicit stills occurred in the depression year of 1893.

Several years prior to the Panic of 1893 an outbreak of White Cap outrages occurred in New Mexico. These troubles were related to the land controversies between the native New Mexicans and the American settlers. A large tract of land in San Miguel County, known as the Las Vegas Grant, was believed by the natives to be community property. The heirs of the original settlers in the region started selling their portions of the property in the mid 1880's. The new owners claimed complete ownership of the land and they in-
stigated suits to deny the native occupants of the Grant any of their rights. It was nearly two years before the first of these cases were finally settled in favor of the defendants. But prior to the verdict, the new owners commenced to fence in their land denying the native New Mexicans access to it. 22

Public feeling was extremely tense and the New Mexicans reacted by lashing out at the property of the new owners. On April 20, 1889 the first depredation was recorded. Mr. W. D. Quarrell's fence was destroyed at an estimated loss of $800.00. He repaired his fence and in June it was again destroyed and a hired hand was shot. Throughout June and July these outrages continued and even the fence of the County Sheriff was cut. In October of 1889 several persons were indicted for these crimes, but the witnesses disappeared before the cases were heard at the April term. The witnesses were never heard of again, and there was some indication that the raiders had eliminated them. 23

After the dismissal of the case against the raiders in April, the outrages increased in frequency. The raiders were more formally organized at this time. They were bound by an oath and referred to themselves as The White Caps. The White Caps had approximately 700 members all of whom were native New Mexicans. They were generally poor, ignorant farmers who felt their rights had been violated. A connection between the New Mexico White Caps and the local Knights of Labor was established. The local organizer of the Knights, J. J. Herrera, would travel about the area founding new
assemblies of poor farmers and after he would leave the depredations would begin.24 These depredations were not the formal work of the Knights of Labor as demonstrated by correspondence between Governor L. Bradford Prince and members of the labor organization. Some members had sympathy with the plight of the New Mexicans but did not countenance their violence. This position was aptly explained in the following letter to Governor Prince from John Martin, Frank Ogden, and J. B. Allen of Las Vegas Local Assembly number 4636 of the Knights of Labor,

We think the time has arrived, when some action should be taken to prevent the lawlessness existing at present in this county. In the first place, the land grabbers fenced up our public domain, whatever they chose, without the shadow of a title. Or if they purchased a tract of land with a title, they would fence in ten times as much as they bought.... We commenced fighting them in the courts... Shortly after this fence cutting and house burning commenced.... About this time a renewal of the commission of Bro. J. J. Herrera came to hand, and as organization proceeded, so also did fence cutting. Just how many Assemblies he has organized, we are not prepared to say, but fence cutting and other depredations are by far of too frequent occurrence.... Now who these fence cutters or self called (sic) "White Caps" are, we are not prepared to say. But the Mexican people who are being organized as K.of L. are of the poorer class and consequently they are more ignorant.... Now we, as members of the K. of L. would request that no more Assemblies be organized or charters granted to those.

The New Mexicans felt since their rights had been denied that they were justified in adopting violence to try to gain retribution. Sympathy with their position made suppressing their lawlessness more difficult.

Residents of the terrorized area were concerned deeply about their welfare. They appealed to Governor Prince for assistance. One of the first letters to reach the Governor
was an appeal for rifles from the deputy sheriff in March, 1890.

This is to inform you that a body of men calling themselves "White Caps" and composed for the most part of Mexicans have been and are now creating disturbances all through this section of the country; robbing the stores in the small towns and threatening the lives of those who oppose them. The settlers... have asked me to request of your Honour... one dozen rifles with ammunition for same for the purpose of self-protection as they have been warned to vacate their ranches on pain of death if they remain.

The Governor responded to this and similar warnings by appealing to the Secretary of the Interior, John W. Noble, for assistance, indicating the gravity of the situation. The basis of the Governor's appeal was the stoppage of the mail trains,

Railroad officials ask protection for mail trains. Section men and other employees have been warned to quit work, and some have done so. There are no acts of violence, but the effect is to cripple the railroad service by frightening employees. The only practical suggestion is to have some troops camp or march between Las Vegas and Lamy. The moral effect of their presence would prevent trouble without further action. I earnestly recommend that the War Department, be requested to do this immediately. It would also probably stop the whole white cap business, as they have a wholesome respect for U. S. soldiers.

Secretary Noble, after having a full consultation with the President, the Acting Secretary of War, and the Solicitor-General, responded that "the military cannot be called into operation until the civil force is defied and resisted to a degree that the public peace is overthrown."}

The typical methods employed by the New Mexico White Caps were similar to those used by the White Caps throughout the country. The person whom they wished to intimidate
first received a written warning. At the onset of White Cap activity in New Mexico, and generally throughout the country, the warned person disregarded the threat. In New Mexico the threats were followed by raiding parties who destroyed fences and farm buildings. The residents of San Miguel and the neighboring counties lived in fear of these depredations for over a year. 

New suits continued to be brought by the native New Mexicans against the settlers. Judgments in the litigation were generally for the plaintiffs, and this ameliorated much of the discontent and gradually the violence faded. As happened during the panic three years later and would happen at other times in the 1890's, economic distress and social change which threatened one's way of life had severe repercussions on one's behavior pattern. Violence became an outlet for the stress of the times. By physically molesting people the White Caps regained a small sense of control over their precarious position in the changing social order.

Social change and economic distress were the motivating forces behind the founding of White Cap bands in the territory of Oklahoma in the early 1890's. There was no central organization among the Oklahoma White Caps, but they made similar threats and the punishments they employed were the same. Whippings attributed to the White Caps were first recorded in 1893 and continued for the next several years. The impetus for these whippings was generally property rights, though sometimes there were incidents of moral regulation.
The White Caps were active against Sooners and claim jumpers. In 1893 at Kremlin seven Sooners were told they would be hanged if they did not leave. The mayor of Pound Pond was similarly warned. Conversely, Sooners from Skeleton Creek were hanged for driving settlers off their claims, and in November, 1893 a White Cap band was organized at Enid to force settlers off of valid claims. These White Caps would strip their victims and lash them with switches. During the last few months of the year the White Caps were very active in the central part of the Oklahoma strip. Several White Caps from this area were arrested, but this did not calm the populace because so many other "protection organizations" existed in the area.

Though the majority of the White Caps' activity was directed toward disputes over claims, there were some incidents of moral regulation in Oklahoma. In January, 1894, John M. Deal was visiting Mrs. Hannah Charles, a widow with three children, when White Caps broke into her rented room. The White Caps tarred Deal and then horsewhipped him. Mrs. Charles was treated even more brutally.

They disrobed her completely, placed her upon the bed, and while several of them held her, another in the most disgusting manner applied the black mixture to her body. She was subjected to the most revolting treatment. Then, weary of the mode of outlawry, they beat her quivering body with whips. She was fearfully lashed and afterward turned out of the house.

The Oklahoma White Caps displayed excessive brutality upon this occasion. Another incident of violence against a moral offender occurred in March, 1896 in Cushing, Oklahoma, when
the White Caps whipped W. S. Hull because he was a drunk and abused his family. Among the White Caps arrested but not convicted for the assault were four of Hull's best friends.\textsuperscript{33} That a man's friends would whip him for a moral offense demonstrated their deep conviction to the accepted values of the community. This conviction transcended personal friendship.

Another outbreak of white-capping occurred in Texas during 1898. Though most of the victims of the White Caps were Negroes the actual impulse for the outbreak was economic. The White Caps were especially active in the blackland countries in north central and northeastern Texas. Cotton was very important to the economy of the area and during this year the price of that staple was about 5 cents a pound. The large planters could no longer afford to employ white laborers, so they replaced them with cheaper black labor. This heightened the tensions between the two races.\textsuperscript{34}

Violent aggression was often the result of frustration with either society or one's place in society. The Texas White Caps suffered many frustrations, as did the other White Caps around the country, and the violence they employed helped them discharge their tensions. In the same year as the outbreak of Texas White Caps there was another source for the release of dissatisfaction. Enthusiasm for the Spanish-American War was partially a manifestation of the moral frustration of some of the Protestant religious sects, the advocates of the Social Gospel, and the labor radicals.\textsuperscript{35} Perhaps this frustration which found release in advocating
the violence of war had an impact on the psychology of the discontented farmers, making their adoption of violence a little easier.

From late July to the middle of September of 1898 in Texas there were almost daily reports of outrages by the White Caps. Though most of the white-capping occurred in the rural areas around Dallas, there were White Caps elsewhere. Hostilities between the white and colored laborers of the southeastern city of Port Arthur were heightened when White Cap notices were posted around a town warning all the colored people to leave. Violence was averted because the local shipping officials rallied to the support of the Negroes. In August reports of White Caps in the southern county of Wharton were received.36

Negroes were whipped and their houses destroyed by worried white laborers in the blackland counties of Texas. The White Caps' main intention was to drive the Negroes from the economically depressed counties. The laborers wanted back the jobs which the Negroes held. White Cap activity in August was reported in Lamar, Franklin, Hill, Denton, and Rockwall counties. The county with the greatest amount of White Cap activity during this month was Grayson County. All of these counties were fairly close to Dallas.37

The White Caps in the Bells area of Grayson County were one of the most active groups in Texas. For several months prior to the August outbreak of violence anonymous notices were posted to Negroes warning them to leave. Ten-
sions were increased when a new railroad section foreman in the area began replacing white laborers with Negroes. On the morning of August 1, 1898 twenty-five or thirty White Caps rode into the Negro section of Bells and commenced shooting. About 100 to 150 shots were fired resulting in the serious injury of one Negro woman. The Negroes were much excited about the incident and began to arm themselves. Both Negroes and the foreman employing Negroes continued to receive notices from the White Caps. Many of the Negroes living in Bells were so frightened that they left the area.38

The pervasiveness of the intimidation of Negro laborers by the White Caps led Governor C. A. Culberson to issue a proclamation on August 31, 1898 saying, that "in many parts of the state individuals have threatened to kill or injure peaceable citizens in their persons, rights and property, the acts being popularly known as whitecapping," and calling for a reward of $150 "for the arrest and conviction of each person guilty of such offense." The proclamation also provided a $250 reward for the incarceration of any White Cap who committed assault with the intent to murder and a $500 reward for the arrest and conviction of a White Cap who committed murder.39

Responses to the Governor's proclamation were mixed. George M. Martin, the County Attorney of Atascosa County wrote the Governor that he believed the proclamation had a "stimulating" effect on the law enforcement officers. J. C. McBride, an attorney from Alvin, Texas, wrote the Governor that the proclamation was not effective because the rewards covered only the major offenses. He said that many Negroes
in his area were still being ordered to leave and others were being "whipped and otherwise maltreated." The Governor was informed of the white-capping of white residents of Leon County. B. D. Dashield wrote Culberson that several white families had left the area because of fear of white-capping and that the reward had little effect. Dashield called for the aid of a detective. S. P. Pounders of Mt. Pleasant, Texas, evidently unaware of Culberson's proclamation, called for the Governor to establish rewards for capturing White Caps in a letter dated September 10, 1898. He stated that the local law officers tried to protect the intimidated Negroes, but the Negroes were too afraid to talk. 40

There were two main types of crusades conducted against the White Caps in Texas: (1) White citizens held mass meetings to rally opposition to the White Caps and to protect the Negroes who were threatened by the band. Mt. Pleasant in Titus County was the site of one such anti-White Cap meeting. 41 (2) Negroes organized themselves to counsel members of their own race about the White Caps. Two prominent Negroes from Sherman, Texas spoke to a mass gathering of Negroes about the cause of the recent white-capping. Referring to the speech by J. W. Walters and John Brown, the Dallas Morning News said,

They attribute all the discontent among white people to the presence of so many loafers among the negroes and the main object of the said talk is to get the industrious, law-abiding colored people to cut loose from the indolent class in order that at a glance the good can be separated from the bad.

If this was the case then the White Caps of Texas also had
a moral regulatory impulse besides their economic motive. Often the White Caps did not attack the established, independent Negro farmers, because these were less of a threat than the laboring class. That these few diligent Negroes were unmolested added to the impression that the White Caps were active against the shiftless. On the whole, however, the main thrust of the Texas White Caps was against the economic threat of unskilled Negro labor.

There was an exodus of Negroes from the blackland counties into Dallas in 1898 in response to the White Cap threats. It has been estimated that between one and two thousand Negroes settled in that city. The Dallas Morning News stated that though the influx of Negroes caused no significant increase in Negro crime, there was much concern in the city.43

The reactions of the contemporary publications were quite varied. The Trenton News stated that the "Whitecaps have given the negroes notice to leave Bells or suffer strangulation. While we do not favor this method of dealing with the negro problem, no place would benefit more from the negro exodus." This article was quoted in the Dallas Morning News and the editor of the Dallas paper condemned this position.44 The Brenham Banner claimed that the White Caps were active only because of the widespread Negro rapes, thefts, and burglaries, and the paper approved of the White Caps.45 The Texas Farm and Ranch condemned the White Caps.

Recently mob law has taken on a new feature. Instead of the frenzied mob of open daylight, midnight marauders prowl about the country under cover of darkness and disguised by masks, threatening the lives of citizens and following warnings with assassination.... It is the mob
spirit degenerated, if possible. Under these conditions any citizen (except the wealthy and influential) may find the skull and cross-bones tacked upon his gate, as a warning that he flee for his life, for the crime of having offended a midnight assassin.46

E. G. Sender, liberal publisher of the Fort Worth Weekly Gazette, also criticized the practices of the White Caps.47 It appeared that some of the small local publications were more in sympathy with the White Caps than were the more progressive city papers.

Texas White Cap activity was the result of the frustrated hopes of poor whites. The Negroes, and on a few occasions the Mexicans, threatened their source of livelihood. They were no longer masters of themselves, and perhaps the physical release of whipping the Negroes was as fulfilling to them as was actually driving the blacks away. Violence seemed to them a legitimate way to cope with their problems.

Of the 26 deaths directly attributed to the White Caps most of them occurred when they were not involved in moral regulatory functions. Nearly half of these deaths happened in Tennessee and most of those were in the violent county of Sevier and were discussed in the book by EthheRED Crozier. Several of those killed in Sevier County died in a battle waged between the White Caps and the Blue Bills, while others who lost their lives were persons who opposed the White Caps.48 Many of the other deaths around the country which were the work of White Caps came as a result of economic grievances.
That the White Caps should commit murder was indicative of the inherent weakness of such an extralegal, arbitrary organization. Uncontrolled by the constituted authorities, the White Caps in many communities were able to assume vast powers. They became the sole judges of their own actions. In such a situation it was not long before the White Caps became interested in other areas than moral regulation. Economics, politics, and personal vengeance entered their sphere of interest. As their sphere of interest broadened so did their range of accepted activities. Generally when the White Caps were not involved in moral regulation their community support was weakened. By broadening their scope of action, they weakened their base of support which was vital to their very existence. Community support, or at least sympathy, had nurtured the White Caps and when that support died, the White Caps would probably follow.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The White Cap movement was not an isolated phenomenon in the sociological or historical culture of the United States. The moral regulatory impulse that fostered the White Caps was part of American tradition. The Protestant Reformation and Puritan Revolution gave great impetus to the role adaptation of moral regulator. This role adaptation was again and again utilized during times of rapid change and disorder. For the moral regulator to gain prominence several conditions usually existed. The regulator usually had a devotion to an abstract ideal, was conditioned in a milieu of acceptance or at least ambiguity toward violence, some forms of violence were legitimate, and usually the law appeared to be inoperative in eliminating an activity which he conceived as evil. These conditions existed in the late nineteenth century when the White Caps were active.

Urbanization and industrialization had transformed stable, rural America into a complex society. The change had come so rapidly that the people were generally not prepared to cope with it. The result was disorder and confusion. It was only natural under such trying circumstances that the people clung to the values of the puritan moral code. Their devotion to the puritan moral code was uncompromising. This devotion to
morality came from the Puritan Revolution in which God was defined as the absolute sovereign. The belief that man must love God totally and do whatever He willed had a tendency to grow into moral reform movements, because as God's agent these men had to rebuke all wrongs and had to be "brotherkeepers."¹

Violence had always been part of the American behavior pattern, and it was usually of especial importance in the areas where the White Caps were most influential. Many of the moral precepts which the White Caps valued were also part of the legal system, but these were the minor offenses which the authorities had trouble enforcing. Thus the tradition of violence and extralegal enforcement in addition to the apparent lack of success of the legal system led the White Caps to adopt their own means to regulate society.

The unique regard that Americans have for the law has also influenced their proclivity for extralegal regulation. Unlike the Europeans who regard their law as a sacred institution, Americans have felt that the law was a device to secure freedom, it was not sacred, it was made by men, and thus could be changed by men. This lack of sacredness made Americans more prone to take the law into their own hands.²

In spite of their brutality the White Caps perhaps served a social function. In the late nineteenth century when there was much change in one's traditional way of life, and there was an erosion of the points of reference with which one defined his place in society, membership in a White Cap band might have
helped restore a man's identity. Thus the White Caps could have been a socially unifying force. Any act which they defined as deviant would give a focus to group concern, and that act "makes people more alert to the interests they share in common and draws attention to those values which constitute the 'collect conscience' of the community." For the rural people who felt their ways and values were being challenged, the White Caps helped them redefine and reemphasize their role in society and saved them from their own insecurity.

It was interesting to note that the White Caps were often moderately prominent members of the community. This has been documented by many references in this study. Though these men were prominent, they were often the newly prominent. In the case of the Bald Knobbers this was also true. Nat Kinney, the founder of the Taney County Bald Knobbers, had become a prominent citizen only just before he founded the order. Robert Catlett, a leading White Cap in Sevier County, Tennessee and an accomplice in a dual murder committed by several other White Caps, was a well-to-do farmer, but he was a self-made man. This was typical of many of the moral regulators. They were prominent and successful, but they had attained success, not through inheritance but through their own effort.

Kai Erikson quoted historian Charles Park as saying that "there are no enemies so bitter as variants of the same species." This might be a possible explanation for the newly established class having antipathy for the lower class.
They were essentially the same people, but the new middle class had successfully elevated themselves. The lower class and ne'er-do-wells thus represented a constant reminder to them of what they had once been. This engendered a great hate and revulsion in the middle class for their poorer brothers. The lower class also reminded the successful that if they did not continue to work they would fall back into the ranks of the poor. Thus the lower class represents that which was inimical and that which was threatening to the established element. Perhaps by using physical force against this segment of society, the middle class psychologically felt that they were eliminating the potency of the threat.

To increase understanding of the White Caps some statistical analysis is helpful. Table I includes all the White Cap incidents uncovered during the years 1887 to 1900. This chart shows the number and type of incidents each year. Four main classifications of White Cap activity are utilized. Moral regulation was directed against such offenses as non-support of family, laziness, wife-beating, drunkenness, and adultery. Also included in this category are the offenses of attempted assault of women, petty thievery, poor character, threatening and insulting citizens, disgraceful manners, illicit affairs between unmarried couples, and generally offensive behavior. The classification encompassing the economic impulse for white-capping includes land reform and homesteading problems. Reporting illicit stills, 


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blacks during economic crisis, and merchants charging too much for goods are in this category. The amorphous category designated "other" embraces such diverse causes for white-capping as revenge, mistaken identity, religious prejudice, and even jokes. Political white-capping and activities by women and Negro White Caps are contained in this grouping. This heterogenous class also includes the occasions when White Caps were themselves robbers. When the source material provided no cause for the white-capping that incident is put in the column marked "No Reason."

Except for three years during this fourteen year span moral regulation is the dominant impulse for white-capping. There are special explanations for the three years in which moral regulation is a definite minority. In 1890 the economically motivated White Cap troubles in New Mexico dominate the number of incidents on record, while in 1893 the panic incited White Caps to act for economic reasons. The Texas labor troubles explain the abundance of economic white-capping in 1898. In the three years of 1887, 1888 and 1892 moral regulation explains a clear majority of the activities of the White Caps. Three years during this span should be disregarded because of the paucity of incidents. These are 1891, 1899 and 1900. In the remaining years moral regulation explains more activity by the White Caps than does any other single cause.

This fourteen year period can be divided into two stages with 1893 being the first year of the second stage. When
this is done one can clearly see that moral regulation is the prime motivating force in the first stage. There is only one year in this early period in which moral regulation accounts for a clear minority of the incidents. In 1889 moral regulation would probably have accounted for a clear majority of the incidents had not it been for the start of the White Cap troubles in New Mexico. The second stage, starting with the panic year of 1893, is characterized by a more diverse impulse for white-capping. Economic problems seem to be the dominant motivating force. It is significant that in no year during this second period does moral regulation explain a majority of the incidents. On the whole this table seems to indicate that as time passed the White Cap movement became less and less a movement to regulate morals and more and more a movement with a common name but diverse functions.

Analysis of White Cap activity in relation to the states in which it occurred is quite fruitful. Table II breaks down White Cap incidents according to states and years. Although white-capping occurred in twenty-eight states, Table II includes only the sixteen states in which there are at least four incidents. Table II-A provides a listing of white-capping in the twelve states with three or less incident. Four divisions are utilized, the South, the Territories, the Middle West and border states, and the Northeast. This table indicates that the White Caps developed later in the South. The Panic of 1893 seems to be the pivotal point with Southern white-capping developing in its wake. The Oklahoma Terri-
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|            | 6    | 44   | 29   | 18   | 1    | 17   | 22   | 7    | 13   | 12   | 9    | 36   | 1    | 2    | 217 |

|            |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 94  |      |
TABLE II-A  
WHITE CAP INCIDENTS IN OTHER STATES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>Incidents</th>
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<td>MIDDLE WEST</td>
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<td>NEW ENGLAND AND NORTHEAST</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
tory conforms to the southern pattern, while the New Mexico outbreak is centered in the early years. The White Caps were founded in Indiana as is shown in this table. For the first several years of the movement white-capping is shown to be centered in the states close to Indiana. This Table also shows that white-capping continued in the Middle West and border states throughout the period, but it concentrated in the period prior to the panic. Proclamations from the state governments, enactment of statutes and concerted citizen action against the White Caps all united to lead to the demise of the White Caps in the Middle West. Analysis of the activity of the White Caps in the Northeast is somewhat more difficult, for it appears to spread out across almost the whole time period. The activity in New York seems to be greater in the pre-panic years, but there is no sharp break between these two stages. Generally this table seems to indicate that the White Caps were first active in the Middle West and Northeast, but with the passage of time the White Caps spread to the South. As shown in Table I the Panic of 1893 seems to divide the era of the White Caps into two stages.

Table III analyzes the type of white-capping which occurred in each of sixteen states in which the White Caps were most active. The same classifications for the motivating force for a White Cap incident are used as are used in Table I. The state groupings are also identical to those in Table II. This table points out that in all the Southern states but Tennessee moral regulation was of distinctly lesser
### TABLE III

**TYPES OF WHITE CAP ACTIVITY IN MAJOR STATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Moral Regulation</th>
<th>Economic</th>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td>74</td>
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significance as an impulse for white-capping. The Tennessee totals are skewed toward moral regulation because of the use of Ethelred Crozier's book on the Sevier County White Caps. As Crozier pointed out the White Caps degenerated from their role as moral regulators, but he still cites many of their moral regulatory incidents. He often mentions their other interests, but only the specific incidents which he cited could be used in this table. In all the Southern states but Tennessee economic white-capping seems to be predominant. The Territories also seem to fit the Southern pattern of economic white-capping.

Moral regulation appears to be the prime reason for white-capping in the Middle West and in the border state of Kentucky. In every state in this group but Iowa moral regulation accounts for a majority of the incidents, or at least equals the combined total for all other types of White Cap activity. The economic impulse for White Cap activity is practically non-existent. What is the explanation for the emphasis on moral regulation in this area? The southern portions of Indiana and Ohio, where the White Caps were most active, were peopled by Southerners mainly from Virginia and Kentucky. These people had a violent heritage. These plain, simple Southerners were also puritans. They retained their adherence to the puritan moral code as they moved West. It is not at all illogical that they should adopt violent methods to enforce their standards during times of stress and insecurity.

Though there was little White Cap activity in the north-
ern sections of the Middle West, that area did have a moralistic temperament. Immigrants from New York and New England settled in the northern areas of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Upstate New York has been known as the "burned-over district," because of its inordinate concern with religious, humanitarian, and moral crusades. Many of these crusaders moved west. There was not a direct parallel between these transplanted Yankees and their New York brethren, but they did retain a similar religious fervor. Although the interaction between the Southern and Yankee immigrants can not be determined and was probably limited, the presence of moral crusaders just to their north might have increased the already puritanical and passionate Southern immigrants' likelihood of adopting violent moral regulation as a means of coping with their troubles.

In the Northeast the White Caps were almost strictly moral regulators. Table III demonstrates this point and also indicates that there is no economic white-capping at all in the two northeastern states in which the White Caps were most active.

The White Caps were responsible for twenty-six deaths. Table IV shows when and where all of these deaths occurred. These deaths all occur in just ten states; all but one are among the sixteen states in which the White Caps were most active. There are two conclusions which can be drawn from this table. There appear to be practically no deaths attributable to the White Caps in the first five years. The only
TABLE IV
MURDERS BY YEARS AND STATES

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100
death during this period was the freak killing of a Negro named Dempsey in Norfolk, Virginia. One night in 1889 Dempsey went to the home of a black named Harding and pretended to be a White Cap. The frightened Harding shot and killed Dempsey. The other conclusion is that the South was more violent in its white-capping than was any other section. Of the twenty-six murders, twenty-one occurred in the South, four in the border states, and only one in the Middle West. The number of murders recorded in Tennessee is probably out of proportion because of the study of Sevier County movement. Several of the deaths on this chart are those of White Caps who were killed while on raids.

Taking all of these charts together, they seem to support the contention that as the years passed the White Caps became less and less a moral regulatory movement and more and more a night-riding movement with many diverse interests. Also supportable is the belief that Southern white-capping developed later and was more an economic concern than a moral concern. The capital atrocities attributed to the White Caps occurred only after the movement is established. This reinforces the premise that as an extralegal movement becomes established it tends to become increasingly arbitrary and violent. The original motive for which the order is founded is submerged, and the perpetuation of that group becomes a prime impulse for action. Herein is the real danger of any extralegal organization. An extralegal body has no built in control mechanism and can easily develop into a tyrannical force.

Did the White Cap movement have any social significance
in its period? It certainly had sufficient impact to require the attention of many state officials. The pervasiveness of the White Cap activity in Indiana inspired the Attorney General to instigate an investigation. Citizens fearful of the destructive powers of the Arkansas White Caps hoped that Governor William Fishback would interfere. They appealed to him for aid. White-capping became so serious in Texas that Governor C. A. Culberson issued a proclamation condemning the practice and offering rewards for the arrest and conviction of White Caps.

The outbreak of White Cap activity in New Mexico territory was brought to the attention of the Federal government. Even President Benjamin Harrison was involved in a conference with several other government officials about the White Caps. The President's involvement came from the fact that the outrages were being committed in a federal territory, but the fact that he was involved indicated the significance of the White Cap movement.

White Cap outrages led to enactment of anti-White Cap statutes in Ohio, Tennessee, and Mississippi. The Mississippi statute, which was reaffirmed by a proclamation signed by Governor John M. Stone, called for severe penalties for "Kuklux" outrages. The statute was to remain in effect for two years. The Ohio statute, which was passed on March 28, 1889, specifically mentioned White Caps and was one of the few to do so. The Tennessee legislature passed an anti-conspiracy bill on March 24, 1897. Though the law did not mention the White Caps it was adopted because of the widespread white-
capping in the state. The law made it a felony to enter into a conspiracy to take a human life, to inflict corporal punishment, or to burn or destroy a persons' property. This bill also disqualified people guilty of conspiracy from serving on a grand or petit jury.\textsuperscript{15}

Indicative of the impact that the White Caps had was the proliferation of the term white-capping. Governor Stone of Mississippi continued to use the older term "kukluxing" in his proclamation, but he did state that, newer term was in vogue and that term was "white-capping."\textsuperscript{16} In talking about the moral regulatory activities of a group of women in Spring Valley, Illinois, the \textit{New York Times} referred to the women as "the skirted White Caps."\textsuperscript{17} It appeared that the practice of regulating morals with force was more and more often being referred to as white-capping.

The White Caps had sufficient national social impact to be the basis of the conflict in Booth Tarkington's popular novel \textit{The Gentleman from Indiana}. Judge Briscoe, one of the main characters, made a revealing statement regarding the White Caps.

They choose to call themselves "White-Caps," but I guess it's just a name they like to give themselves. Usually White-Caps are a vigilance committee going after rascalities the law doesn't reach, or won't reach, but these fellows are not that kind. They got together to wipe out their grudges --- and sometimes they didn't need any grudge and let loose their deviltries just for pure orneriness; setting haystacks afire and such like; or, where a farmer had offended them, they would put on their sillery toggery and take him out at midnight and whip him and plunder his house and chase the horses and cattle into his corn, may
Judge Briscoe contended that the White Caps from the "Cross Roads" were different from the normal White Caps, but actually they represented the White Caps in their degenerate activities. The Judge mentioned the "toggery" worn by the night-riders. Upon occasions the real White Caps would wear capes and caps. Whenever the White Caps were mentioned in the novel, the people would be frightened which indicated the impact they had on the community. John Harkless, the hero of the novel, sarcastically remarked that the White Caps' raids were a source of entertainment and diversion. This was similar to the explanation given for the White Caps of Ohio in an editorial in the New York Times. The Gentlemen from Indiana did demonstrate that the White Caps were a source of tension and strain in a community.

This study has stated that a group such as the White Caps did often have the positive function of being a focus for social solidarity and of helping to define society in a rapidly changing world. As moral regulators and establishers of order, the White Caps though, were not, on balance, successful. The White Caps had a tendency to become extreme and all too often this provoked reaction. Thus instead of establishing order they often spurred disorder.

The White Caps were a manifestation of the strains, the tensions, and the insecurities of the times. They also evolved in the context of the American proclivity for moral regulation. Moral regulation has been a folkway in American society, and when the times were right the moral regulatory
groups emerged. American liberty and freedom would then play a subservient role to the desire for conformity and order. The moral regulator, though often popular, would not command universal support. The extremes and abuses of the White Caps and the other moral regulators would rally support for those already opposed to their activities. Though laws and proclamations could limit some of the moral regulation, it could not be eliminated until the beliefs of the people changed. When the people felt less threatened and then had less of a need for a source of social solidarity, they could condemn the practice of moral regulation. All this was true of the White Caps.
NOTES

CHAPTER I

1 Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York: Scatcherd and Adams, 1839), Volume I, pp. 89-90.

2 Ibid. p. 185.


5 Ibid. p. 225.


13 Simpson, Puritanism in Old and New England; p. 91.

14 Erikson, Wayward Puritans, p. 170.

15 Ibid. pp. 50-53.


19 Alice French, Knitters in the Sun in McIlwaine, The Poor White From Lubberland to Tobacco Road, p. 156.

20 Cutler, Lynch-Law, p. 46.


22 Cutler, Lynch-Law, pp. 57-58.

23 Brown, The South Carolina Regulators, p. 50.


28 Ibid. p. 176.


31 Mary Floyd Williams, History of the San Francisco Committee of Vigilance of 1851 (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1921), pp. 184, 251, 260.

32 Cutler, Lynch-Law, p. 119.


34 Ibid. p. 98.


38 Ibid. p. 354.

39 Joseph Kraft, "The Conflict Between Middle America and Educated America," Lecture delivered at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, April 17, 1969.

40 Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, pp. 111, 312.

CHAPTER II


3 Ibid. p. 239.


7 Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, p. 162.

8 Morris, The Bald Knobbers, pp. 29-69.


10 Ibid. p. 15.

11 Erikson, Wayward Puritans, p. 69.

12 Ibid. p. 157.


14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.
19 Ibid. p. 1.
27 New York Times, August 1, 1888, p. 4.
29 Brown Transcripts.
31 Columbus Ohio State Journal, December 1 to December 21, 1888. Brown Transcripts.
38 New York Times, December 18, 1888, p. 3.
CHAPTER III


3 Ibid. p. 18.


7 New York Times, January 24, 1888, p. 3.


There was no further explanation about the inhabitants of Thomas' house; it was not told whether he was running a house of prostitution or not.


32 New York Times, February 20, 1890, p. 2. The article in the Times did not indicate whether Miss Pleassinger was white or black. If she were white then one might assume that Gordon was whipped because he had challenged the race barrier. Otherwise if Miss Pleassinger were a Negro, the attack on her and Gordon was probably because their relationship was either illicit or believed to be illicit.
38 H. S. K. Bartholomew, "Governor Claude Matthews," Indiana Magazine of History XXVI (December, 1930), 274.
43 New York Times, May 1, 1895, p. 10.
46 Ibid. pp. 10-12.
47 Ibid. p. 17.
48 New York Times, October 27, 1894, p. 3.
51 Ibid. p. 22.

CHAPTER IV

3 New York Times, March 15, 1891, p. 2, December 12,
1895, p. 6.


8 New York Times, October 18, 1896, p. 4.

9 New York Times, September 22, 1897, p. 4.


11 New York Times, July 1, 1891, p. 5.


14 C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South 1877-1913 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), p. 188.

15 Ibid.


20 New York Times, April 19, 1893, p. 11.


22 Governor L. Bradford Prince to United States Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble, Sante Fe, New Mexico, August 12, 1890. In "The White Caps, 1890-1893." Brown Transcripts.


24 Ibid.
25 John Martin, Frank Ogden, and J. B. Allen to Governor Prince, Las Vegas, New Mexico, August 8, 1890. In "The White Caps, 1890-1893." Brown Transcripts.


29 Governor Prince to Secretary Noble, Sante Fe, New Mexico, August 12, 1890. In "The White Caps, 1890-1893." Brown Transcripts.


31 Ibid. pp. 7-8.

32 Ibid. p. 9.


34 E. G. Seuter, "Rifle Balls," Texas Farm and Ranch, October 1, 1898. Brown Transcripts.


40 Letters to Governor C. A. Culberson, June 1 to December 31, 1898. Texas State Archives, Austin. Brown Transcripts.


There was a discrepancy in the reports of the deaths that resulted from the White Cap-Blue Bill battle at Henderson Springs in late 1894. Crozier said the battle occurred in November and that Elijah Helton, Laban Latham, and Isaac Keeble were killed. The October 27, 1894 issue of the New York Times said the battle happened on October 25, 1894. According to the Times two White Caps were killed. The Times agreed with Crozier about the death of Laban Latham, but reported the other dead White Cap to be John Kibble. The Times also reported the death of a Blue Bill, named Elithnam Allen. Since Crozier compiled his book by using mostly personal recollections, the Times account should probably be accepted.

CHAPTER V

1 Cross, The Burned-over District, p. 205.
3 Erikson, Wayward Puritans, p. 4.
4 Morris, The Bald Knobbers, pp. 40-42.
6 Erikson, Wayward Puritans, p. 126.
7 Cross, The Burned-over District, p. 355.
10 San Antonio Daily Express, September 1, 1898, p. 3. Brown Transcripts.
11 San Antonio Daily Express, September 1, 1898, p. 3. Brown Transcripts.

12 Secretary of Interior Noble to Governor Prince, August 19, 1890, Washington, D. C. Brown Transcripts.


19 Ibid.

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