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Revisiting *City Gangs*
Scott H. Decker

It is an old story, one that still happens today. A heinous crime occurs. The media covers the lurid details. There is a public outcry. A committee is formed to “do something”. There are debates over different approaches. In most communities, that is the end of the story. Only rarely does the public outcry over juvenile delinquency lead to something meaningful. The Boston Special Youth Program was an exception. In 1953, United Community Services of Boston formed a special committee, the Greater Boston Council for Youth, to respond to the problem of juvenile delinquency, specifically gang delinquency. The murder of a Rabbi generated considerable public outcry. After meeting for over a year, the committee decided to engage in a three year experiment “to demonstrate the potential effectiveness of concentrating an intensive program of delinquency control measures in one limited geographical area” (Miller, 1957). Thus was born the first federally funded gang outreach program in the United States.

The Special Youth Program was an autonomous agency with authority to coordinate functions across existing public and private agencies. The Program ran from June 1954 to June 1957. The goal was to conduct “a multiple, co-ordinated approach to the problem of delinquency in the community” (391) instead of relying on a single technique. There were to be four primary efforts:

1) Group work with adolescent groups with high levels of delinquent behavior,
2) Casework with families that had presented problems for city welfare agencies,
3) Research designed to understand community culture and social organization, that was to be focused on evaluation, and
4) Community organizing that would strengthen local community organizations as well as enhance cooperation among existing welfare agencies so that the program could be sustained beyond the duration of the Program.

A specific focus of the direct service component was work with “corner groups”. This work was to be oriented toward an emerging approach in social welfare, the “area-worker approach” (Witmer and Tufts, 1954) that was to become the forerunner for street outreach work (Austin, 1955). This approach was believed to hold “great promise” but had yet to be evaluated. The targets of this approach were seven corner-group units, gangs that were found in Roxbury, a large Boston neighborhood. Two of the groups were compromised primarily of African-Americans (“Negroes” in the 1950s) and five were white ethnics, primarily Irish. The goal of group work was to re-orient the energy of the individuals in the group toward constructive activities. One of the groups was highly delinquent, but the remaining six were described as “fairly typical working-class street corner groups for whom occasional acts of theft, truancy, gangfighting and vandalism represent normal and expected behavior” (Miller, 1957: 392). There were both boys and girls groups, though over time, area workers spent more time with the boys in groups, and girls were dealt with individually and in the context of their family.

Acknowledging that little was known about the effectiveness of the area worker approach, Miller and his research team set about an evaluation that could assess both the program process as well as outcomes. Their outcome measures were changes in the frequency and seriousness of behavior that violated official norms. Miller and his team immediately found considerable difficulties conducting the evaluation, as the tasks of area workers were not clearly understood or widely shared. There were also uncertainties about changing individual behavior versus changing the behavior of the group itself. Funding was secured for the evaluation from the National Institute of Mental Health as well as the Greater Boston Council
for Youth. The evaluation relied on five separate sets of data, group worker logs, the journal of the program director’s meetings with area workers, interviewees with the area workers, direct observations of groups and tape recording of group meetings. Control groups were selected and an analysis of group differences over time was to be the key focus of the evaluation.

This study presages most gang programming to follow. The intervention had a well-defined geographic focus, in recognition of the importance of dose size. It had a well-defined control group, for comparison purposes to the program group. Boys and girls were both included. There was a comprehensive approach to both the program as well as the evaluation. The program and the evaluation were given sufficient time for development, implementation and outcomes to occur. A process evaluation was conducted to understand the service delivery model, and deviations from the area-worker approach. Group context was an important focus in the evaluation; indeed, it came to be a significant component of the evaluation. The intervention itself was based on the area-worker approach, which became a major impetus for the use of street outreach workers in the future. Much of the gang intervention and programming efforts of the last twenty years has struggled to achieve the key features of the Boston Special Youth Program. There are dozens of gang programs that are based on or are explicit replications (even unwitting) of the model that Walter Miller and the Boston Council for Youth piloted over fifty years ago. It is ironic that the study was never published and the results of the detailed evaluation also never saw the light of published day. Miller and his team prepared a detailed outcome analysis report using commitment of male juveniles to the State of Massachusetts Youth Service facilities as the outcome measure. Miller’s team found that while commitment rates dropped fourteen percent from the pre-program year to the last year of the program (1955-1956) rates in the non-Program areas of the same district area rose 46% and that commitment rates increased by 107% in a contiguous district that had been matched to the program area. These reports
remain unpublished, but provide some evidence of the impact of the program on at least one outcome measure.

But what became of the study? There is of course the classic Miller article published in 1958 about the generating milieu of gang delinquency. But aside from that all too little has made its way into the published record about the Program, the effect of street outreach workers and what was learned of Boston gangs in the mid-1950’s. Walter had prepared a manuscript, *City Gangs*, which was submitted to John Wiley and Sons, publishers, and scheduled for publication. This book was to be his account of the gangs and individuals in the seven corner groups that had been studied as part of the Boston Special Youth Program. But the original manuscript was extremely long; it ran more than 600 pages and the publisher wanted substantial cuts in the length of the manuscript. Walter responded to this by adding several more chapters to the book, increasing its length to over 900 pages. The book was never published. Until now.

*Walter Miller the Scholar and the Person*

The work of Walter Miller focused on how relationships and culture impact daily activities. Born in Philadelphia in 1920, Miller attended and subsequently earned degrees from the University of Chicago, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and Harvard. He was defined not only by his approach to gangs – members as mere youth engaging in the normal behaviors of their communities – but by his prolific involvement with government agencies and public service. Miller served as a member of committees for the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice and as a research consultant on projects by the National Education Association and various U.S. cities. He was truly a scholar, working with such academics as James Q. Wilson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and while notable for his study of gangs, Miller was also involved in the areas of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), youth delinquency, and poverty studies. He also played a mean trumpet, and used his musical prowess as a way to break down barriers of
income, race/ethnicity and culture between himself and many of the gang youth he worked with.

He served as a lecturer and researcher at various institutions, including Harvard, Brandeis University, Boston University, and MIT. Beginning in the mid 1970’s, Walter Miller directed the National Youth Gang Survey. Later, with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, he worked closely with the National Youth Gang Center. This brought his work full circle, evolving from his days with the Special Youth Program in the early 1960’s and “the generating milieu” in one U.S. city to a national strategy in exploring gang membership. It should not come as any shock, given his education and the peers with whom he worked, that Miller focused on relationships. Drawing on the rich tradition of social science at Harvard (Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, William Foote Whyte) and the history of the city of Boston, Miller brought these relationships to life in a manner few have achieved.

Making City Gangs a Book

On March 28, 2004 Walter Miller died. His collected papers became the property of Hedy Bookin-Weiner, a criminologist who had published an article about the end of the “Youth Gang Fad” in 1983. Hedy sought “applications” from individuals who were willing “curate” Walter’s papers. I was lucky enough to be the recipient of all eleven boxes of his papers and “other things”. Apparently, after Walter had died the furnace in his Cambridge (MA) home had failed, spewing ash and soot over all of his papers. What I inherited in 2006 was a treasure chest of voluminous and detailed material. Several boxes of latex gloves later, we were able to inventory what we had. There were 615 papers with author names, an additional 775 newspaper articles and papers without authors, and 20 photographs, including the one of Walter that is at the front of this book. There was also the City Gangs manuscript, typed on onionskin paper, bound in thirteen separate notebooks, one for each chapter. The manuscript was accompanied by nearly 100 tables, most in
longhand. The final piece of the treasure was more than 20,000 contact cards, detailing the results of every contact between an area worker and a gang member.

In the summer of 2007 we hired a typist to re-type the manuscript. Three doctoral students worked on the manuscript in the summer of 2008 and 2009 and didn’t make much progress. In the fall of 2010, I managed to find a doctoral student who inventoried all the materials, sorted them by author last name within year of publication, and began to type the tables. The manuscript was proofed in the spring and summer of 2011 and prepped for publication by yet another PhD student, Richard Moule. Richard played an important role in the ultimate publication of this work. We faced a choice early on about how to publish *City Gangs*. If the manuscript was too long for a publisher in the 1960’s when Walter was alive, and the force of his personality and name meant something to a publisher, it was certainly far too long in 2011. Our decision was to publish the manuscript, intact and as Walter had written it, on the web. That is what follows this Foreword. The manuscript is 948 pages, inclusive of all the tables. We have not changed terms or concepts that seem outdated, nor have we corrected or changed what we thought were phrases or sentences that were too long. We have attempted to clarify passages that didn’t have a clear meaning. It is also clear that the book was written in two sections, the prose is different and some of the concepts become more modern in the second part of the book. The book is as Walter left it, detailed, long and chock full of great information about the three year study.

*Putting City Gangs in Context*

Why should we care about a book that was written in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, based on a study that took place in the mid 1950’s? What possible relevance to contemporary criminology and gang work can such a book have? We share Laub and Sampson’s (2003) response to similar questions posed about their study of the “Glueck Men”. The underlying social processes that produce gangs and delinquency share a number of common features across time. This alone may make
City Gangs important to the understanding of contemporary gang processes. But a large number of common features are shared by Miller’s work and contemporary gang research. These similarities alone make City Gang a compelling and important contribution to our understanding of gang behavior, culture and programming. We see the following as the key points of continuity between City Gangs and contemporary gang research.

Concordance with Current Gang Research

City Gangs presents the most extensive treatment of gang members and their families. The book describes in great detail the relationships between individual gang members and their families. In addition, there are extensive discussions of the impact of gang membership on family functioning and the role of the family in shielding delinquents from gang members. While early gang researchers, most notably Thrasher (1927) examined the importance of family life for gang members, the field has since paid scant attention to this issue, a topic that would have been productively examined for its value for prevention and intervention programs, as well as risk factor and life course approaches to understanding gangs, gang membership and families. Chapters 5 and 7 discuss the importance of family ties to gang involvement, as well as the role of “pseudo family” that the gang plays for its members.

City Gangs offers a discussion of the role of social institutions in the lives of gangs and gang members. Gang members interact with a number of social institutions outside the family. These social institutions provide a broader context of both pro-social and anti-social norms and support. Miller’s book identifies and discusses the role of school, law enforcement, social workers, city agencies, recreation, and area adults in the lives of delinquent gang members. His discussion of the relationship between gangs and schools provides a foundation for understanding the positive and negative ways in which the two groups can interact. Much like the work of Venkatesh (2008), Miller highlights the intersection between
pro-social institutions and the gangs. Chapter 5 points to the importance of neighborhood stores – variety shops, pool halls, and other local establishments – where gang members could hang out or conduct informal business. Notably, the Bandit’s were protective of their local corner store (Ben’s), and would prevent the store from being robbed.

*City Gangs provides an extensive discussion of the roles of race, ethnicity and immigration in gang membership.* These are key topics to understanding the formation of gangs at the macro level, but also their functions at the group and individual level. We have virtually no understanding of the role of immigration status in gang joining and gang behavior. Miller’s explicit focus on this (albeit with a 1950's background for reference) calls attention to a key issue in understanding gangs that is lacking in contemporary research. It should not be surprising that many of the gang members in the Special Youth Program were lower class Irish Catholics, but also lower class German immigrants. In some cases, it seems that shared faiths brought these individuals together. In other cases though, there were instances of impoverished English Protestants joining the ranks of these gangs.

*City Gangs provides an in depth treatment of the role of the “corner” or the street.* Indeed, a good number of definitions use a “street orientation” as a key defining element of what a gang is, without much discussion of what such an orientation is. The explicit corner focus in the Boston Special Youth Program, as seen in the work of the street outreach workers lends depth to this concept. As previously mentioned, the street, the corner, and area businesses were all important to life in the gang. Taken with the work of Whyte (1943), Miller provides insight into why the corners matter; whether it was a place to hang out, conduct business, or get into trouble, these places were intimately familiar to gang members.
The gangs discussed in the book are age-graded groups. Our understanding of gangs as segmented groups has not advanced far enough to be useful. Miller identified three distinct groups in each gang, based on age. Juniors, Members and Older Gang members provided an insight into how roles were determined, whether there was a succession order in the gang, and where gang members went when they “aged out”. This emphasis on the maturation process is important for understanding how gang membership changes across the life course, and in what ways it may close off other opportunities. There is also a discussion of desistance from gangs in *City Gangs* that predates by at least forty years serious discussions of the desistance process. In Chapter 5, the discussion of each gang specifically focuses on the evolution from junior to senior members. Each sub-unit was often composed of brothers who would rise up through the ranks. Miller’s work serves to emphasize the informal, age-grading that occurs among gang members and gang cliques (see also McGloin, 2005), and how this type of social structure can cause problems for the organization.

**Girls are an explicit focus in the intervention program and study of gangs.** A legitimate complaint about many studies of gangs before the turn of the century is that girls are paid little or no attention (Miller, 2001). Girls are an explicit focus of *City Gangs*, indeed two of the seven gangs that comprise the groups in the study are girl gangs. These two gangs, the Molls and the Queens, come from diverse backgrounds. A female subgroup of the Outlaws is also present in the study. As with the processes of age-grading in the gangs, the presence of female groups is also important to the understanding of group structure and process. In some instances, the female groups are relatives to the male members. In other instances, they are neighborhood girls trying to “get in good” with the local boys. Miller’s notes (not included in this book) also discuss marriages between some male and female gang members.
*City Gangs provides a comparative study of gangs.* Klein (2005) has been critical of contemporary studies of gangs owing to the lack of a comparative focus. Most studies of gangs have been of a single gang or comprised of a large number of gang members from diverse and often undefined gangs. Knowing more about gangs has become a high priority in the inventory of gang research, and a comparative approach, whether across nations, cities, or gangs within cities adds considerably to our understanding of gangs. Miller integrates a study of seven gangs into the book. Each gang is compared across a variety of crimes, with a focus on theft, violence, and drinking behaviors (see Chapters 10 – 13).

*City Gangs integrates a strong cultural element to the understanding of gangs.* Miller was a cultural anthropologist whose earlier work had been with the Fox Indians of Iowa, conducted as a graduate student at the University of Chicago.\(^1\) His anthropological background and grounding in understanding cultures led him to focus extensively on values and beliefs. Such an approach has been largely missing from American understanding of gangs, particularly since the end of the century (Decker and Pyrooz, 2011). The intersection of the comparative approach, with the attempt to understand cultural elements of gang life, produces important findings that distinguish Negro gangs from their Irish counterparts.

**There is an explicit focus on the role of outreach workers.** The Boston Special Youth Project represents one of the most extensive attempts to employ outreach workers; indeed, the project was explicitly built on the efforts of such workers. This approach has been replicated across numerous gang intervention programs, and receives support from the National Youth Gang Center as well as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Despite the initial attempt to formally evaluate this component of the program, there is little in the way of published material on the impact of this part of the program. Chapter 13 talks

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\(^1\)This information is posted on Walter’s Facebook page; [http://www.facebook.com/pages/Walter-B-Miller/133100133391944](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Walter-B-Miller/133100133391944). You could look it up, as they say.
explicitly about what are currently called public health approaches to dealing with violence: the role of public norms to condemn violence and re-socialize behavior based on changes in norms. In addition, it should be noted that some outreach workers (who also served as graduate assistants under Miller), went on to have distinguished careers in academia themselves. Such a list includes, among others, the late David M. Austin and A. Paul Hare.

*City Gangs provides a contrast between gang experiences on the street and in prison.* Walter provides descriptions of gang life on the street in the community, but also contrasts that to the experiences of many of the young men who end up in juvenile hall or adult prisons such as Walpole. We know all too little about the transition from street to prison and back again. Walter’s understanding of these processes, and his description of the prison, represents one of the first attempts to describe and account for these issues. While certainly not the first or last to do so, Miller’s work on male sexuality, specifically in the prison context (Chapter 9), serves as an early exploration on the role of masculinity in the criminal group context. The contrast between the values and behavior of gangs on the street and in custody is an important yet little understood topic.

*City Gangs adds considerable methodological innovation to the study of gangs and gang members.* While formal network analysis and the software to support such an analysis would be forty years away, Walter clearly understood what a social network was, how such relationships could be constructed and the significance of such networks for influencing behavior. He discusses the role of “nodes” in a gang, and their influence in building solidarity as well as influencing behavior. It is also clear that Walter had a solid grasp of the concepts of a Relational Data Base. The “contact cards” contain codes from the “Records Coding Manual”, a 58 page coding manual that details how each contact between an outreach worker and a gang member is to be coded. These codes are broken into two distinct categories Object of Orientation and Actor Orientation. The Object
Orientation includes a) functions, roles and institutions, b) action groups, activity and procedures, c) cultural processes, and d) qualities. The Actor Orientation includes their “interactant” and group contacts. Each of the 20,000 contact cards contains a minimum of twelve fields of information, and information can be coded that is part of the group as well as an individual behavior. In addition, Walter makes it clear that there is a need for national survey data on the number of gangs and gang members (Footnote 107). He lays out a strategy for the development of a methodology to estimate the number of gang members nationally. Later, Walter would be a primary force behind the creation of the National Youth Gang Center.

In *City Gangs*, Miller made numerous theoretical contributions to the understanding of gangs and delinquency. The book provides considerable discussion of identity theory, the nature of multiple identities and the conflicts that arise for groups and individuals in the effort to manage those identities. This is particularly important for juveniles who are engaged in the maturation process. There is also a discussion of the role of social capital, particularly the ability to have relationships and contacts that transcend the gang and can provide a link to another world and a different set of actors. Walter also discusses changes over the life course of individual gang members, a consequence of having three years of observations of young people at a critical stage of their physical, emotional and social development. There is an extensive discussion of the role of personal autonomy, reflecting the concern with agency in the Laub and Sampson (2003) work. Walter knew the importance of balancing individual agency against the powerful social forces at work in the lives of juveniles. He juxtaposed behavior and attitudes, noting that particularly for juveniles at the fringes of conformity there are considerable inconsistencies between the two concepts. A case in point may make this clearer. Most juveniles knew that it was wrong to steal, especially from church. Many of them stole from the collection plate or from the poor relief, but justified it as being appropriate only when a friend was getting married or having a birthday and the money was used to buy them a present.
Miller made several contributions to our understanding of fights and violence. Despite the generally low levels of violence (certainly by contemporary standards) there are a number of important findings and conceptual contributions about this topic. Our theoretical understanding of how gang fights get started is advanced considerably by the book. Presaging the work of Short and Strodtbeck, he discusses the group process involved in gang fights. Walter highlights four distinct stages in this process: a) the initial attack, b) strategic planning for a retaliation, c) mobilization and d) counter attack. His discussion of this in Chapter 13 would have advanced our understanding of the retaliatory nature of street violence considerably. The discussion of the role of honor and status in Chapter 13 resonates with current gang research. Walter also identifies violence as a key focal concern of the gang, but not its dominant activity. He identifies that most gang violence occurs within the gang, another finding that is concordant with current gang research. His discussion (also in Chapter 13) of means and end violence is theoretically important and fully consistent with the instrumental/symbolic continuum used in contemporary violence research.

City Gangs provides two full chapters discussion sexual behavior of juveniles. Sexual behavior is an aspect of youthful behavior that is notably absent in contemporary gang research. The salience of sexual activity in the lives of teenagers – males and females – is difficult to miss. Despite this, with few exceptions, and most of them focused on girls being sexed into a gang, there is scant consideration of this important aspect of post-adolescent behavior. Girl gang members expressed the concern that their boyfriends were having sex with other girls during the meetings of the girl gangs – having a “sneaky” as they termed it. This led to a change in the meeting time so that the girl and boy gangs meeting times coincided, so as to reduce the amount of unsupervised time on the part of the boys. In Chapter 9, Miller discusses the “dirty boogie,” a type of dance between two males, one of whom acted as a female participant. The book (Chapters 8 and 9) also provides a discussion of homosexuality within the gang as well as sexual abuse of
children by their mothers, a practice known as “playing house” among the gang members.

**Discordances with Contemporary Research**

Despite these many strengths and their concordance with contemporary gang research, there are many issues that don’t receive treatment in *City Gangs*. Ironically, in spite of the fact that the Boston Special Youth Program was built on an area approach, there is little discussion of the role of turf or neighborhood. This may reflect a shortcoming in the research or a distinct difference in the behavior of gangs in 1950’s Boston. To be sure, many of these gangs originated in the same, or spatially proximate neighborhoods. An issue missing from the discussion of race is attention to the role of racism in the segregation and creation of black gangs. Such racism served to restrict the areas where African-Americans could live, work and shop. The omission of such a consideration detracts from a full consideration of the broader social constraints on the lives of gang members. There is a good deal of sexism throughout the book as well, reflecting a patriarchal treatment of girls relative to boys. Given Miller's inclusion of female graduate students as researchers and analysts, it seems this is a reflection of the times rather than of Miller himself. In 1950 the role expectations for girls may well have been to have a baby or get married as a way to fulfill their lives. The book reflects this in its treatment of girls, and while it is a credit that girl gang members and girl gangs receive considerable attention in the book, they clearly are viewed largely in relation to boy gangs and gang members. There is no discussion of sexual abuse of young girl gang members, either within their family or at the hands of the gang. It is inconceivable that a contemporary study of girl gang members could ignore so important a topic.

*City Gangs* depicts the gangs of the mid-1950’s. In many respects, particularly with regard to violent offending and victimization patterns, the levels of violence seem tame. Indeed, in 1955 Boston had 13 murders and 105 aggravated assaults. The gang members didn’t have guns or ready access to guns; knives,
chains and brass knuckles were the weapons of choice. Indeed, there were no reports of firearm use and only nine of knives. While there was lots of fighting, and even more talk about fighting, the violence seems tame by contemporary standards. Similarly, there is no discussion of drug use or sales. While there is an entire chapter devoted to drinking behavior, there is no mention of drugs. As with violent crime, this seems a reflection of the times. Many of the key issues about group process that were introduced nearly a decade later by Short and Strodtebeck (1965) are also missing from the book. Such a discussion would shed light on the process of joining, being initiated into the gang, joining fights, and leaving the gang.

_The Gangs of City Gangs_

_City Gangs_ is a study of 204 gang members who belong to seven different gangs. 154 of the gang members were males and 50 were females. The two Negro gangs were the Kings and the Queens, their female counterparts. Collectively, these two groups were known as the Royals. The other five gangs were comprised of white European ethnics, largely of Irish heritage and Catholic religious background. Additional members were drawn from English, German, and northern European countries, as well as French immigrants from Canada. These gangs include the Outlaws, whose younger members were known as Junior Outlaws. The female auxiliary to the Outlaws was known as the “Rebelettes.” The Bandits, whose younger members were known as the Junior Bandits were the third major boy gang studied. The female counterpart to the Bandits was the Molls. Chapter 5 discusses each gang to some depth, explaining their social spaces, general practices, and preferred means of living. Future chapters discuss each gang’s respective criminal practices.

_How to Read City Gangs_

This is a book that can be read for a variety of purposes. It is an in depth study of the lives of 204 gang members in the early 1950’s in Boston. But it is also a

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2 The older members were known as Marauders, but they weren’t a focus of study.
case study of what an action research/intervention program can be. Walter wanted to improve the lives of the corner boys (and girls) that formed the basis for this study. His work to monitor the program and the work of the outreach workers is evidence of that.

We suspect that very few people will read the book from cover to cover. The manuscript is far too long and too dense for that. We have provided a detailed Table of Contents with a variety of levels for ease of moving through the text. In addition, we have indexed the manuscript so that specific topics can be found more easily.

The early chapters focus on providing context for the book. First, a history of the city of Boston is presented, followed in subsequent chapters by a summation of Miller's focus on delinquent subcultures (no doubt influential on the development of his 1958 article). Beginning in Chapter 5, the gangs draw the attention of Miller. Following their description, the text then turns to various behaviors, norms, and attitudes the gang members possess. Specific attention is paid to the motives and methods of theft, the importance of place and space to the gang, and the role of the workers in the Project.

Conclusion

It is a shame that City Gangs wasn't published in a timelier manner. Had it been, our understanding of urban culture, delinquency and gangs would have been advanced considerably. But fifty years later, most of the points hold. City Gangs is more than an interesting historical curiosity; it is a study of gangs and urban culture whose findings and insights remain instructive today. Cullen (2011) calls attention to the work of Miller and other sociological criminologists, and notes the absence of “hard data” accompanying those writings. City Gangs represents an attempt to publicize the efforts of Miller in collecting data and understanding how context influenced gang behavior. Had this book been published in a timely manner, it would have preceded the work of the “Gang of Three” who have defined gang research for the better part of forty years: Malcolm Klein, James F. Short, Jr,
and Irving Spergel. As such, it would have helped to shape these important works and thus our understanding of gangs. At a gang conference in the 1990’s, Irv Spergel joked that Mac Klein had set gang research back 20 years by taking a hiatus from gang research in the 1970’s. I think it is safe to say that had City Gangs been published in a timely manner, it would have advanced gang research significantly. We hope that the availability of Walter’s book will add to the body of understanding of gangs and gang intervention programs in ways that will aid in their understanding as well as the response to them.

References.


An Urban Lower Class Community

The annexation of Midcity to Port City has not proved an unmixed blessing. She lost control of her own affairs, being completely swallowed up in a large municipality in which her influence is necessarily small. Even her name, interwoven as it is with history, has fallen into disuse...

Francis S. Drake, 1878

I feel kinds funny about telling people where I live. As soon as I say “Midcity”, they say-- “Ain’t that where Dooley’s Dump is?”

Junior Bandit, 1957

Why all the bad publicity for Midcity? One girl is strangled here, but eight were strangled in Port City. Does this not indicate that Midcity is no worse than the rest of Port City? We are respectable people, and we live in a quiet respectable neighborhood. Midcity is a good place to live.

Letter to Port City newspaper, 1963

Introduction

Every human act is at the same time unique and universal. Every form of human behavior shares countless characteristics with countless other forms simply because it is performed by humans and must, therefore, share those special characteristics which distinguish behavior which is human from that which is not. At the same time every human act is a totally unique event - performed at one particular point in time by one particular place and under one particular set of
circumstances. At the heart of every illumination and of every obscurity in the scientific study of human behavior lies the essence of this apparent paradox-- that all human behavior embodies, in abundant measure and simultaneously, the logically opposing qualities of universality and uniqueness.

The central concern of the present volume is the behavior of a group of young people who belonged to street corner gangs during the 1950’s in an urban community here called “Midcity.” As human beings, they shared in common with all other humans a host of universal human characteristics.” They were engaged in a variety of pursuits focused on learning, on productive labor, on the bonds of kinship; they searched for meaning in life; they were thus constrained to cope with the consequences of growing older. As one particular group of adolescents in one central city slum in the 1950’s they engaged in many pursuits and manifested many characteristics which were not shared with many others. Their natural habitat was the streets, the parks, the alleys, the neighborhood stores of a metropolitan center; they did not hunt or farm or herd flocks. Nor did they cleave to the hearthside as a refuge and secure haven, but congregated nightly in clusters on the street corners of the city. With considerably greater frequency than most they engaged in behavior which violated the legal statutes of the political units under whose jurisdiction they lived.

This latter circumstance comprises the central problem of the present volume. Why did members of Midcity gangs commit crimes as often as they did, and in so regular a fashion? Insofar as criminal behavior is a universal phenomenon, as indeed it is, the criminal behavior of Midcity gang members was a universal phenomenon--responsive to the same manner of influences which have moved humans everywhere and at all times to infringe the established standards of the societal units to which they belong. Insofar as particular forms of crime are impelled by particular motives and animated eras, the criminal behavior of Midcity gangs was a unique phenomenon--responsive to a set of circumstances that existed only in their city, in their time, in their life-sphere, for them.
The present chapter, which describes in some detail the physical and social characteristics of Midcity, focuses on that particular milieu which provided the effective context for the behavior of Midcity gang members. This context itself embodies both change and stability. Midcity in the 1950’s was the product of over three hundred years of continuous development of a European-founded city at that locale; during this time it underwent many striking changes. At the same time the community retained a remarkable degree of stability in fundamental respects--over the three centuries during which it was composed primarily of manual laborers, over the decade during which it experienced its most recent immigration of one ethnic group and out-migration of another. The active concerns of the space-age citizens of Midcity, with its drinking, crime, immorality, and “race problem” echoed, in reminiscent tones, the almost identical concerns of its Colonial citizens. Corresponding to the seeming paradox of simultaneous universality and uniqueness was a seeming paradox of simultaneous change and stability.

A truly comprehensive portrait of an urban community of one hundred thousand people would require the presentation of a body of information so vast as to be virtually infinite. In selecting from the enormous multiplicity of facts for present purposes, the major criterion of selection will be relevance to the life conditions of members of Midcity gangs, and, in particular, their propensity for engaging in criminal behavior. Even with this criterion as a limiting device, however, the amount of life-context information of actual or potential relevance to the criminal behavior of urban adolescents is so great as to impel a process of selection which becomes almost arbitrary.

The present chapter will organize its presentation of the effective community context of gang life around four topics: first, an impressionistic overview of the face of Midcity in the 1950’s, based primarily on field observation; second, an examination of major demographic characteristics of the community as a whole, based on federal census data; and third, an examination of the demographic characteristics of a set of intra-community social-status levels, also based on census
Midcity in the 1950’s

The community of Midcity, during the decade of the 1950’s, was in many ways similar to other central city districts of large American metropolitan areas, and in some ways unique. Midcity was a municipal district of Port City, a major metropolitan center whose population numbered over two million. The central business district of Midcity was located about three miles from the banks, theaters, department stores, and tall office buildings which formed the heart of Port City. In common with most other central city districts in the United States, Midcity lost population during the 1950’s; at the beginning of the decade it numbered over 112,000; by the end, about 85,000.

A substantial majority of the residents of Midcity belonged to what is known as the “low income population” and, in fact, Midcity was regarded throughout Greater Port City as the low-income slum of the entire metropolitan area. Physically, however, Midcity did not conform to the conventional picture of the classic slum with its unbroken rows of dreary tenements, treeless streets, and littered back alleys. A tangled network of streets wandered through the community like a country stream with many branches. Scores of short and intimate dead ends and byways emerged suddenly from around unexpected turns. The stone and steel of its buildings and the asphalt of its streets could not conceal the rolling terrain upon which much of the community stood; there were numerous hills and bluffs, and an occasional prominence from whose heights one could catch a panoramic glimpse of the metropolitan center with its tall buildings.

The physical face of Midcity was diverse and heterogeneous. It was predominantly a residential community, containing dwelling units of many kinds: colonial plantation houses converted to multi-unit dwellings; farm houses converted
to city residences; ornate and grandiose single homes from the post-civil-war period; rows of Victorian three-decker red-brick town-houses; rows of three-decker wooden tenements; solid blocks of high-rise and low-rise public housing projects; scores of single houses of many shapes, sizes, and styles. Interspersed among the dwelling units and occasionally in semi-separate districts was an equally wide variety of industrial and commercial facilities: numerous small factories and commercial outlets; several large manufacturing plants; broad lots packed with used cars; massive old stone warehouses; garages and filling stations; retail stores of every variety. There were also scores of public building-- post offices, a courthouse, elementary schools, high schools, vocational schools; public recreational facilities-- parks, playgrounds, pools; churches of numerous denominations-- Catholic, Protestant, Jewish; all the complex and heterogeneous panoply of the modern American city.

Midcity was segmented into scores of sub-neighborhoods, each with its own sense of local community. Small variety stores were scattered throughout the district-- serving, in many cases, as the center of the sub-neighborhood. The variety store owners were important figures in these areas-- performing functions for the local populace limited only by their own talents and predilections. The more gifted proprietors acted as counselors, priests, psychiatrists; the more enterprising as bookies, bankers, employment magnates.

Although the residents of Midcity were regarded in some quarters as “deprived” of important opportunities available to other Americans, it could not be said that they were deprived of the opportunity for religious involvement. Midcity was rich in churches, chapels, temples, cathedrals, shrines, and houses of worship in an unusually wide variety of sizes and sects. There were close to seventy different houses of worship-- a fair number for a community of about 100,000 souls. During the 1950’s, as the population of Midcity declined, the number of churches increased.

Some proportion of the seventy places of worship comprised modest storefront or single-story churches belonging to a great variety of fundamentalist sects, such
as the Holy Catholic Zion Pentecostal Church of God in Christ Tabernacle. On summer nights many of the streets of Midcity rang with the intense and exuberant sound of excited voices and rhythmic handclapping of the fervent worshippers of the fundamentalist churches. The bulk of Midcity’s houses of prayer, however, were large stone churches of the major American religions-- Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. There were five major Jewish Synagogues, ten Roman Catholic Churches and Cathedrals, and more than thirty Protestant churches of the major denominations-- Episcopal, Presbyterian, Unitarian, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist.

Midcity boasted an extensive complex of monumental stone buildings which included a grand and elegant cathedral along with major administrative and educational facilities of the Archdiocese of the Greater Port City area. Here were housed the offices and worship facilities of the top-ranking clerics of the Roman Catholic Church. Monasteries, convents, and sizable large churches not directly affiliated with the major denominations-- as, for example, the large white-domed-and-pillared Second Church of Christ Scientist. During the decade many of the six-pointed stars which had graced the Temples of Yeshivas of the orthodox Jews, who had comprised a good proportion of Midcity twenty years before, were replaced by the crosses of the African Baptist and similar Protestant churches. Finally, at the end of the decade, there appeared on the façade of a former Protestant church a bright blue neon sign proclaiming “The Muslim Church of Ali Muhammed.”

An established feature of all American slum communities is an extensive system of formally organized associations whose aim is to help and to change the ways of community residents-- with varying degrees of stress on these objectives. Midcity was no exception. In 1798, a group of well-to-do landowners met to establish the “Midcity Charitable Society,” dedicated to the “immediate relief of the poor.” By the 1950’s there were scores of social welfare enterprises operating in or for the community, supported by a variety of different sponsoring agencies, public, semi-public, and private.
Included among these were family counseling agencies, psychiatric clinics, health and health education services, a large Boy’s Club, a branch of the YMCA, Church-sponsored recreation centers, and five active settlement houses. Midcity also contained a busy office of the state Public Welfare department and a growing number of rest and nursing homes for the aged. While those citizens, local and non-local, who engaged in social welfare and community betterment enterprises could not complain that they had too little work, their specific activities in the community were not as visible as those, say, of storekeepers or bartenders. Nonetheless their presence and work was made manifest through an occasional glimpse of a blue-uniformed public health nurse making her rounds, a social worker mixing with adolescents on the street corner, or a settlement house worker rounding up his charges for the morning excursion to the summer day camp.

As ubiquitous as the churches and social agencies were the bars, taverns and night clubs of Midcity. These were present in a great variety of sizes and kinds, each catering, in general, to a particular category of client. The great majority were neighborhood bars, on the model of the English pub, where local residents could “drop by” at almost any hour on the knowledge that “some of the crowd” could be found. The prevalent adolescent street gang and the adult barroom crowd were in many respects analogous forms, both providing a stable locus of out-of-house peer companionship and social activity. Many of the bars served as centers for betting and gambling of different kinds; horserace betting and “policy,” or playing the numbers, were particularly prevalent and carried on quite openly, despite the fact that the numbers pool and off-track betting were prohibited by law.

The bars were most active in the evenings, although they were assured of some clientele throughout the day. Daytime clients included young mothers who dropped in for beer and conversation with one another, frequently accompanied by their young children, who, in general, waited quietly while their mothers enjoyed a brief respite from the tasks of the day. As the workday drew to a close the bars began to fill with men, many of whom spent at least an hour at the bar to ease the
transition from the world of work to the world of wives and children. Much of the
drama of community life unrolled at the taverns--heated discussions among the
men of local and national sports, of the races, of their jobs, of world affairs. Many of
the demanding problems of man-woman relationships came to a head at these times
before an audience of peers--the eruption of smoldering husband-wife disputes, the
working-through of the ever-present love triangles, the tearful regrets and the
emotional reconciliations.

Insofar as the churches and social welfare agencies symbolized one major
thrust of the life of Midcity--the dedicated attempt to bring and keep its people into
an orbit of moral, controlled, and law-abiding behavior, and the bars another--an
area for the experiencing of the dangerous and delicious, fighting, flirting,
gambling--a symbolic resolution of these thrusts could be found in the Midcity
Court. The Midcity General Court was one of the busiest in the entire state.
Through this formidable building of dark red brick there moved an unceasing
stream of Midcity residents, day after day, year after year. Offenses ranged from a
very occasional spectacular murder through a multitude of petty offenses--
drunkenness, disorderly behavior, non-support, building code violations, automobile
violations, and, most prevalent of all juvenile delinquency. For ten of the eleven
years, from 1950 to 1960, the juvenile session of the Midcity court sent more
children to state correctional facilities than any other court in the state. The
citizenry of Midcity was funneled into the court through the medium of two busy
precinct police stations. A large portion of the residents of Midcity, by the time they
had reached mature adulthood, had spent from a few to many hours on the long
wooden benches outside the court hearing rooms, awaiting their appearance before
the judge. As might be expected from its volume and its predictable continuity, the
processing of criminal behavior was strictly routine business for the Midcity court.
Although an occasional flash of drama intruded itself into this businesslike
atmosphere, all the actors in the legal drama--judges, lawyers, bailiffs, clerks,
probation officers, parole officers, and the offenders themselves--went through the
motions of inquiring and pleading, fining and being fined, jailing and being jailed, in
the routine, accustomed, and mechanical manner of those for whom involvement in
criminal behavior appeared as an inevitable and intrinsic component of human life.

Midcity Center, the major shopping district of the community, was clustered
around the ancient and rambling station of the Port City elevated railway, as it had
clustered around the horse-trolley station which the elevated had replaced. Midcity
Center was a teeming shopping center whose volume of retail trade was second only
to that of the central Port City shopping district. A massive supermarket built in
the late 1940’s was always busy, as were many smaller groceries, butcher shops,
and other food stores. Midcity Center contained over a dozen restaurants,
cafeterias, and lunch counters, several doctors’, dentists’, and lawyers’ offices,
several fair sized department stores, specialty shops, two large dance and/or
meeting halls, scores of taverns, a pet shop and a newspaper office, along with many
other retail and service facilities.

A casual visitor to Midcity Center, observing the bustle of its market place
and the heavy volume of its business, might have cause to wonder why Midcity was
so widely regarded as the Catfish Row of the greater Port City area, and as the last
refuge for the beaten and apathetic poor. When “Poverty” and its amelioration
became a fashionable movement in the 1960’s, the bulk of Federal and other public
money, allocated to the entire area for housing, employment, education, and general
rehabilitation programs, was earmarked for Midcity. To non-residents, Midcity was
the seat and exemplification of urban poverty in modern America.

One clue to this apparent anomaly could be found in the dozen banks which
were located in Midcity. Of those, six were clustered near one another in or near
Midcity Center. For a community known as the “type” slum of the area, the mere
existence of this number of banks was noteworthy. The bulk of bank business was
transacted by local residents-- the same people who provided the customers for the
churches, social agencies, bars, and court. During certain days of the month crowds
of Midcity citizens arrayed themselves in long lines before the bank tellers’
windows. As befits a community which in 1960 was just about half white and half Negro, whites and Negroes were found in virtually equal numbers in the long queues. In the hand of most of bank patrons were the familiar green oblong punch cards stamped with the legendary “Treasury of the United States of America.” These government checks represented payments of many kinds: social security benefits for the old; unemployment compensation for those out of work; support for the dependent children of husbandless mothers; pensions for the disabled and ex-servicemen. The majority of check-holders converted their checks into cash for immediate use; a few made deposits at the savings account window; few had checking accounts. Within the next few hours and days, most of this money had found its way into many stores of Midcity Center--clothing stores, five-and-tens, record shops, hardware stores, and, of course, the many bars with their betting facilities.

While some important part of the total income of Midcity residents came from publicly-collected tax dollars, another greater part came from their own labor in the factories, stores, hospitals, restaurants, and private homes of Midcity and the surrounding area. Although designated as a prime recipient of Federal “poverty” funds, Midcity manifested few external signs of real poverty. Its children, whose noisy play rang through the city streets, appeared well-fed and well-dressed. Its babies were fat and smiling. The streets around its housing projects and tenements were lined with parked automobiles. The flight to the suburbs of its wealthier citizens had left scores of dwelling units available to those who remained. Compared to their opposite numbers in countries like India, Haiti, or Argentina, the majority of the low-skilled manual laborers of Midcity were adequately-housed, adequately-clad. If poverty is meant by an existence on the bare edge of subsistence--vulnerability to cold and exposure, and the ever-present spectre of hunger--then poverty was a stranger to Midcity. Midcity was not a hungry slum of the depression, a tobacco road of the rural south, a favela of Latin America. It was a residential
community of low-skilled but not impoverished laborers in a prospering American city during the “affluent society” era of the 1950's.

**What is a Lower-Class Community?**

The community of Midcity, during the decade between 1650 and 1660, was a rural hamlet of about 500 persons. The principal occupation of its residents was farming. Politically, it was one of a small number of scattered settlements making up a minor colonial holding of a powerful overseas empire; the safety of its inhabitants was not yet secure from attack by natives whose lands had been appropriated. Three hundred years later, during the decade between 1950 and 1960, Midcity was an urban community of about 100,000 persons, containing about one-seventh of the population of the major metropolis of which it was a part. Its residents pursued a wide variety of occupations; none farmed. Politically it was a district of a large city within a populous state of a powerful and independent nation. The safety of its inhabitants was not yet secure from attack by members of the community itself.

For a substantial part of its three-hundred year history, as a consequence of a historical evolution to be described, Midcity had been in the language of the present work, a “lower class” community. The term “lower class” has already appeared, and will appear frequently, in these pages. One of the most pivotal concepts of the study, it is also one of the most controversial. What does the term signify, and does it provide a useful way of characterizing and understanding a large and heterogeneous community? A comprehensive treatment of the term “lower class” would require extensive discussion of the larger field of study known variously as social class, social stratification, and social status. Such a discussion is beyond the scope of the present volume, and there are, in fact, many volumes devoted, in whole or in part, specifically to this subject. Nevertheless, since this concept is central to

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3 Ref. to works on social class; see library, bibliography
the methods and interpretations of this volume, it is necessary at this point to include a brief discussion of its meaning and use. The use of the term “lower class” as a major basis of description and analysis derived from the elementary notion that there is utility in conceiving large differentiated societies as comprising differentially positioned estates, classes, strata, or social levels. Present-day American social analysts generally employ two principal models for analyzing such classes.\(^4\) The first, which underlies the great bulk of writing and research in this area, is based on the notion of a statistical scale or series. A population characteristic which is readily expressed as a number is selected, a mathematically-convenient class interval decided upon, and a set of numerical classes delineated. The most common example of this approach underlies the delineation of “income classes.” A number of yearly income categories are selected, generally separated by one thousand dollar intervals, and sets of cutting points used to divide the total population as a set of differentiated “income groups.” This form has been common usage for centuries; during the 1960’s the device experienced a sharp upsurge in popularity as a consequence of a national concern over “poverty,” which made the delineation of a “low income” class directly germane to central domestic policy issues.

The “numerical interval” approach to social classes is also applied to a variety of other quantifiable characteristics such as years of schooling, cost of dwelling units, rent, home ownership, and so on. A major advantage of this approach is that it is based on an extremely simple notion, and can be applied in a routine and easily communicated fashion. Frequently several numerical measures are combined to delineate numerical interval classes. The application of this method at once introduces a major disadvantage of the numerical interval approach; the several

\(^4\) This distinction is made in L. Gross, “The Use of Class Concepts in Sociological Research”, *Am. Jnl of Sociological* 54 (1949): 409-21. Gross calls the two models “classificatory” and “substantive”, and delineates “ideal-type” characteristics of each. What is probably the best and most comprehensive discussion of this issue is contained in Madeline Engel, _______(book title), 196_. Engel presents a careful review of sociological approaches to social class, and delineates two major “themes” in sociological work; a “major” (statistical classes) and a “minor” (subcultural) theme.
indexes virtually never show a direct correspondence. While there is always a
general tendency for statistical measures such as dollar income and years of
education to “cluster,” such correspondence is never perfect, and the more indexes
are used, the worse becomes the degree of mutual correspondence. It is common
knowledge, to take one example, that while most people with less education also fall
into lower income brackets, there are enough poorly educated people with good
incomes, and enough well-educated people with low incomes to greatly complicate
the task of delineating “consistent” social classes by the device of combining
numerical-interval measures. It is relatively easy, in many cases, to demonstrate
the low correspondence of the several indexes by use of simple correlational
measures\(^5\); however, the particular statistical test one chooses to apply can produce
either better or worse correspondences, according to ones’ objectives.

A second model for conceptualizing social classes is based on the notion that
designated sectors of a society maintain complex patterns of life practices which
differ sufficiently from those of other sectors as to consider them as belonging to a
distinctive “class.” Such classes are sometimes referred to as “style-of-life” classes.
The conceptual model of underlying style-of-life classes involves two major
elements; a designated category of persons, and a particular set of conceptions,
concerns and definitions of appropriate practice, or “subculture.” This model does
not apply solely to classes based on differentiated social status levels, but is rather a
particular application of a more general model described at length in in later
chapters. According to this model, a “ranked social station” class is one particular
type of “status class”, and the “way of life” of such classes is one particular kind of
subculture. An analogous status class, for example, is the sex-based class called
“males”, and the set of conceptions, concerns, and definitions of appropriate practice

\(^5\) See example, H. Freeman and C. Lambert “The Identification of ‘Lower Class’ Families in an Urban
Community” in A. Shostak and W. Gomberg Eds., *Blue Collar World*, Prentice-Hall, 1964, pp. 584-591. This issue is discussed further in later chapters.
maintained by persons by virtue of their identification with that class is called the “male subculture.”

Which of these models underlies one’s approach to social classes, either implicitly or explicitly, has a marked influence on the picture resulting therefrom. Only a few aspects of this influence can be noted here. The first concerns the extent to which classes are seen to be unified or “integrated.” The numerical interval model, by its very nature, produces a fragmented, atomized, and disjointed picture of social classes. The “unity” of the system lies in the “vertical” dimensions which provide the parameters of the class intervals. For example, that sector of the population here characterized as “lower class” appears as a particularized collection of discrete items such as low income, low education, low rent, and so on. The “horizontal” relationships among these items appear but dimly. The subcultural model by contrast stresses the inter-related nature of the various features which characterize a class, and sees these features as most meaningfully related to one another, rather than to corresponding features at higher or lower levels. Conversely, the subcultural model is less efficient with respect to the analysis of relationships between the several classes.

One reason for the clear dominance of the numerical interval model in the United States relates to the fact that the model accords with and supports a number of central features of American ideology far more effectively than does the subcultural model. It is frequently to the interest of middle class adults to represent lower-class life as “disorganized”; the numerical interval model serves this interest by its capacity to accentuate relationships between classes at the expense of those within classes. It is frequently in the interests of middle class adults, including many sociologists, to emphasize the degree to which the United States is a “unified” society with a high degree of commonality in basic values and orientations among its many, many sub-sectors. The numerical intervals approach the several sub-sectors of society in terms of numerical values, along a graded scale with reference to such characteristics as wealth and educations, which lends itself readily to the
derivation of an all-society “average”; the statistical concept of the “average” converts readily to the sociological concept of “norm,” and sub-sectors, which depart most evidently from such norms, appear easily as ab-“norm”-al.

Similarly, the fact that some values in a range of values must deviate mathematically from the average leads readily to the concept of “deviance,” which then acquires distinctly non-mathematical overtones of pathology or moral dereliction. The numerical interval model also fits well with a high American valuation on social reform or planned social change. Insofar as persons characterized by lower numerical values are seen as occupying variable positions on an ascending scale, a rationale for a policy of providing means for moving upward along this scale follows directly from the model. The subcultural model, in contrast, with its emphasis on the linkage and interconnections between class characteristics along a “horizontal” dimension, is far less hospitable to the assumption that the elevation of the lowly can be achieved with relative ease.

Another reason for the popularity of the numerical interval model is that it is quite easy, relative to the subcultural model, both to conceptualize and to apply. The numerical data which constitute its most fundamental element can be collected quite readily by persons with little training in methods of behavioral observation (e.g., income information obtained by direct question-- “What was your income last year?”). The items themselves are familiar and easy to conceptualize (e.g., years of school, cost of house). By contrast, many of the characteristics which constitute the basic elements of the subcultural model are either difficult for the untrained person to conceptualize, or to gather information on, or both. These include characteristics such as speech patterns (dialect, inflection, grammar, vocabulary), gestures and body movements (use of hands in speech, deference gestures), characteristic associational patterns (kinship, peer associations, occupational associations), customary practices (piano lessons for children, playing the numbers, fox hunting), characteristic age of life-cycle events (marriage, cessation of formal education, age of “peak” occupational achievement), and conceived role of natural vs. supernatural
forces (value of immediate inner experience, psychic significance of the “family,”
importance of organization and order). These kinds of characteristics, furthermore,
are often far more difficult to express as numbers than items such as savings or
amount spent on food.

Another feature of the subcultural model which makes it more difficult to
conceptualize and apply relates to the way in which such classes are defined and
referred to. A term such as the “poor” is an easy one; it refers simply to people with
little money. Similarly, common terms such as the “underprivileged” or the
“unskilled,” are based on relatively simple ideas. But how does one refer to a total
style of life which contains many intricately interrelated elements, none of which is
seen as paramount? It is possible, of course, to characterize such a life style
according to one or more selected characteristics which may be seen on some level
as more “central” than others; this practice will be followed in later sections which
refer to the subculture of “low skilled laborers”. However, to a considerably greater
degree than in the case of the numerical interval model, the use of any single
feature to characterize the whole does violence to the basic concept of a subcultural
class. The term “lower class” which is used here, is less unsatisfactory than others,
but still does not avoid this difficulty. It would follow, furthermore, that the task of
identifying and defining subcultural classes would be more complex than in the case
of numerical interval classes. Some significant number of the defining features of
the class must be denoted directly and described in concrete detail; the process of
designating the class is thus one of descriptive itemization rather than one of
generalized definitions.

It is the subcultural model, as is evident, which underlies the present
examination of the community context of gang life. At the same time this
examination, particularly in the present two chapters, leans heavily on the very
numerical measures which form the basis of the numerical interval model. What is
the relationship of standard types of demographic data to the subcultural model of
social classes? The relationship is indirect, but nonetheless important. A major
advantage of the numerical interval model, as has been noted, is the relative ease of collecting and recording its base data; this feature is related to the fact that the federal census collects and makes available tremendous amounts of statistical information pertaining to entire populations, including lower class populations. This vast body of data may be used as part of an examination of subcultural classes on the basis of the assumption that demographic characteristics, while seldom providing direct information with respect to subcultural classes, may serve usefully to “detect” or “locate” those populations which manifest given subcultural characteristics.

If one assumes the existence of populations which manifest a life style characterized by a great variety of features, most of which are not recorded by the federal census (e.g., use of non-school grammar and vocabulary, distinctive local dialect, habitual week-end drinking, street-corner congregation as customary adolescent practice), along with a few features which are recorded (e.g., low income education, manual jobs, low income), it is reasonable to suppose that where one finds features of the latter kind there will be a fair probability of finding the former. Within the present demographic context, therefore, the term “lower class” is used quite simply to refer to these urban residents who live in areas which fall into the lowest census categories with respect to education, occupation, income, rent-payment, and the like. More specifically, as will be shown, the term will refer to those persons living in areas where 50% or more of the adults have failed to complete high school, and 60% or more of the males are employed in manual occupations.

In light of this definition, it is important, in interpreting the findings of this and the following chapter, to keep in mind three considerations. First, the unit of examination is a geographically located population; the “census tract” and “area” are primary units of analysis.6 Unlike Chapter Four, which examines known

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6 See F. Sweetser The Social Ecology of an (Urban Center) 1962, for an excellent discussion of the use of census tract data in sociology analysis.
persons related to one another in known ways, present data refer to persons whose residence locale is known but whose identity is not. Thus, a geographical area characterized as “lower class” because a substantial portion of its residents fall into the lower educational and occupational categories will generally include others who do not fall into these categories. For example, a tract designated as “lower class” because two-thirds of its residents have failed to finish high school will also contain one-third who have, and census data do not permit one to know which persons fall into which category. Second, none of the demographic characteristics used to “locate” lower class sectors of the population serve as direct or adequate characterizations of “style of life” classes; they are indirect “indexes” to such classes, and quite imperfect ones. Third, as will be discussed further, the term “lower class” in contemporary usage often incorporates an evaluative connotation as something inferior, of low quality, or immoral; it often embodies a set of metaphorical connotations in which social status is conceived in terms of differential altitude—of elevated or depressed spatial position. In interpreting the term lower class as a way for referring to population groups in the lower educational, occupational, and income categories, care should be taken not to read into connotations or inferiority—whether spatial, qualitative or moral.

The following sections will attempt to show what a subculturally lower class community “looks like” through the medium of demographic data available in federal census reports. Data will be presented as the numbers and proportions of persons included under a number of conventional demographic categories—age, sex, race, educations, occupation, income, and the like. To give some comparative perspective, equivalent data will be presented in selected instances, for the rest of Port City. This section will employ a statistical convention to facilitate the task of comparing various characteristics of the community to one another, and to derive an approximate time period which is treated as the effective temporal context of gang behavior. As already mentioned, important changes affected the community of Midcity between 1950 and 1960. Prominent among these were an overall decrease
in population of 25%, and an increase in the percentage of Negroes from 22% to 43%. The present section will artificially “stabilize” changes of this kind, as well as others of much lesser magnitude, by the simple device of averaging. The major base data of this analysis were derived from the figures of the full Federal census, conducted in 1950 and in 1960, but not during intervening years. In order to describe social and economic conditions during this time, as well as to facilitate demographic comparisons, statistics for a theoretical “middle” period will be obtained by the simple process of adding figures for 1950 and 1960 and dividing by two. Unless otherwise specified, all demographic characteristics discussed in this section will be based on this type of statistic. In a later section, which deals with change and stability during the decade, the two decadal figures will be considered separately, with the nature and magnitude of decadal differences as the primary analytic concern. The “middle period” also has the advantage of most closely approximating the time during which the gangs were studied most intensively.7

**Population and Age Distribution**

Midcity during the 1950’s contained somewhat fewer than 99,000 persons—approximately one-seventh of the population of the municipal area of Port City. Table 1.1 categorizes the population according to five classes: children, 0-9; adolescents, 10-19; younger adults, 20-44; older adults, 45-64; the aged, 65 and over. The table shows the numbers and proportions of each of these age classes in Midcity and Port City. In Midcity, children comprised about 20% of the population, adolescents about 15%, younger adults about 35%, older adults about 20%, and the aged about 10%. These same age classes were represented in the population; the largest difference, less than 4%, was obtained in the case of children, where Port City showed 16.2% in comparison with Midcity’s 19.6%. With 13% of the total municipal population, Midcity contained 15% of its children, 14% of its adolescents,

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7 Credit to R Boum
13% of its young adults, and 12% of its old people. Thus, while children and adolescents were present in Midcity in slightly higher proportions, and adults and old people in slightly lower, the two areas were essentially similar with respect to the distribution of the several age classes.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Class</th>
<th>Midcity</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
<th>Portcity</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
<th>Percent in Midecity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children (0-9)</td>
<td>19,444</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>105,381</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents (10-19)</td>
<td>14,972</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>87,942</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Adults (20-44)</td>
<td>34,368</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>234,122</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adults (45-65)</td>
<td>20,022</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>151,459</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged (65+)</td>
<td>10,121</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>71,489</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ages</td>
<td>98,927</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>650,393</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a 1950-’60 Averages
b exclusive of Midcity

*Tables and charts are numbered as follows: Table Number, Chapter Number

Population and Sex Distribution

Roughly half of the babies born in Midcity were females and half males. Infant mortality was not significantly different for the two sexes, so that among children up to ten years old there were approximately equal numbers of males and females. Between childhood and adolescence, however, this relatively balanced situation altered materially. Among those between 10 and 19, there were only 92 males for every 100 females--almost 10 fewer than during childhood. This sexual imbalance became more pronounced during adulthood, and continued into old age; among those 65 and over there were only 65 males for every 100 females. Table 2.1 shows the ratios of the two sexes during five age periods for Midcity, along with comparable figures for Port City. The directional trend of the sex ratios for Port City was similar to that of Midcity; as age increased, the proportion of males to females
decreased. However, the decreases in Midcity were considerably more pronounced, and the two areas differed particularly with respect to young adults; among this group the 96:100 ratio for Port City compared to a ratio of only 85:100 for Midcity.

Table 2.1
Population by Sex and Age
Midcity and Port City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Class</th>
<th>Percent female</th>
<th>Number of males per 100 females</th>
<th>Percent female</th>
<th>Number of males per 100 females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children (0-9)</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents (10-19)</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults (20-44)</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adults (45-65)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged (65+ over)</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ages</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for this situation do not emerge clearly from available data, and the following interpretation is suggestive rather than conclusive. The general tendency for the ratio of women to men to increase with age is common to many kinds of urban communities; as is known, men tend to die earlier and to be more vulnerable to work-connected accidents. The magnitude of this decrease in Midcity, and in particular the extent of female over-representation in the adolescent and young adult populations is, however, unusual. Students of demography generally locate reasons for such conditions in one or some combination of three factors--fertility, mortality, and migration. There is little evidence for significant fertility differentials in Midcity. Further, there is little doubt that higher male mortality among the old accounts for much of the imbalance among the aged; it is likely that work-connected deaths contributed in some degree to male mortality among adults,
because many Midcity males worked in construction, a high-risk occupation. However, differential in-movement and out-movement by the two sexes offers the most likely explanation.

It is important to stress, however, that such movement in Midcity was not primarily of the “migration” type, if this term is used in the sense of large-scale movements to or from foreign countries or from rural areas in other regions. A small amount of this did occur in Midcity during the 1950’s, but it was too limited to have affected the sexual ratio to any significant degree.\(^8\) Much of the movement reflected a process which was very characteristic of the laboring class population of the Port City area--a shifting around of residential locale within the metropolitan area as such.

Two major types of population movement probably contributed to the female excess among adolescents and adults; that of males and that of females. A substantial number of males left the community during their late teens for service in the armed forces. Some of these married and/or remained in areas where they were stationed, and did not return to Midcity. There was also some additional proportion of males at these age levels who were incarcerated in extra-community correctional facilities. It is also likely that Midcity attracted women in child-bearing years from other parts of the city. For low-income rents, low food prices, work opportunities near home, an ample supply of good-sized apartments and houses, and other aspects of a community milieu geared to the problems of raising children with limited financial resources. Some additional numbers of women in the younger and older adult categories were attracted by job opportunities as nurses,

\(^8\) A study conducted in 1958 by Dr. Morton Rubin showed that among a 20% sample of white and Negro heads of households in three Midcity neighborhoods of lower, medium, and higher social status, (340 persons) only 14% had migrated to the Port City area since 1950. About 30% were native to the city and another 40% had come to the area prior to World War II. (Rubin, Morton, "Negro Migration and Adjustment in Port City", Table II. Unpublished Research Report, 1959.)
secretaries, dieticians, etc., in the large medical complex in the northern part of the community.

As will be shown, the major population shift affecting Midcity in the fifties involved a movement to the suburbs of its higher-status families. This process, however, had little effect on the sex ratio, since most of the out-moving families contained males and females in about equal numbers. It is also possible that the relatively limited immigration to Midcity during the decade from other regions may have been selective females—as, for example, in-movement of a southern Negro population consisting mostly of young adult females. If this had happened one would have expected, since the total number of young adults declined during the decade, that the number of adult females would have declined less. This was not the case; between 1950 and ’60 there was a net loss of 7,300 young adult males, but a loss of 7,900 females. It would thus appear that, in general, most of the factors influencing the preponderance of females over males were related to relatively “stable” aspects of Midcity’s status as a low-skilled laboring community.

**Race, National Origin, and Religion**

There are several popular conceptions of the ethnic character of the urban slum. One of these, inherited from the pre-1920’s high-immigration era, pictures the slum district as a “melting pot”—a conglomeration of foreigners in varying stages of assimilation—a heterogeneous mixture of foreign tongues, customs, and cuisines. A second picture, originating in the same era, sees the slum as a “ghetto”—a solid bloc of Poles, Chinese, Irish, Jews or other group. A large slum area might be seen as comprising various mixtures of these two types. A third image, dating primarily from the post-World War II era, also sees the slum as a ghetto, but now consisting almost exclusively of dark-skinned people; generally Negroes, but often including Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, or others.
Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Category</th>
<th>Midcity</th>
<th></th>
<th>Port City</th>
<th></th>
<th>Percent Ethnic Category in Midcity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent of Midcity Population</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent of Port City Population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>31,017</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>20,594</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born</td>
<td>14,475</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>112,554</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45,492</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>133,148</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Midcity in the 1950’s conformed to none of these conceptions. As shown in Table 3.1, 85% of its residents were native born Americans; further, of the 15,000 “foreign born,” about a third had been born in English Canada, whose national culture is quite similar to that of the United States. Midcity was thus even less “foreign” than Port City as a whole, with 17% of its population born outside of the country. The fact that less than one-third of the residents of Midcity were Negro is particularly notable in the face of a widespread impression, already mentioned, that Midcity was an unrelieved Negro ghetto. Midcity did contain a much higher proportion of Negroes than Port City, and six out of ten of Port City’s Negroes lived in Midcity. However, even though the proportion of Negroes in Midcity was high relative to the rest of the city, the majority of its residents were native-born white Americans.

The fact that one-third of Midcity’s residents were Negroes deserves some additional comment, in consideration of the perceptions engendered by this circumstance. During this period the average white resident of Midcity and its environs visualized Midcity as a Negro ghetto. When asked to estimate the
percentage of Negroes in the community, figures ranged quite consistently between 80 and 95%. Midcity Negroes on the other hand, tended to see themselves as located in relatively small and scattered enclaves within a predominantly white community, and to estimate their own numbers as between 10% and 20% of the population.

Part of the reason for the white overestimation of the proportion of Negroes in Midcity is indicated by the data of Table 3.1. Port City as a whole contained many fewer Negroes than most northern cities during this period--about 3% of its total population. Some 30,000 of Port City’s 50,000 Negroes lived in Midcity. Thus Midcity, with about 30% of its population Negro, had, in relative terms, about 10 times as high a Negro concentration as Port City. In addition, the proportion of Negroes in Midcity increased from 23% to 43% between 1950 and 1960--an increase resulting to some extent from an in-movement of Negroes, but to a considerably greater extent from an out-movement of whites.

This factual bases for the conception of Midcity as a Negro ghetto were, however, only partly responsible for the misperception. Equally important were a set of concerns by both whites and Negroes with respect to the race-relations situations of this period. It was to the interests of many Negro civil rights leaders to see the Negro community as small, scattered, and powerless vis-à-vis the whites. It was to the interests of many whites, both for and against an expansion of Negro rights, to see the area as a Negro ghetto. Groups favorable to the rights movement found it useful to point to Midcity with its high crime rate, heavy welfare rolls, and numerous badly maintained dwellings as an example of Negro failings. Groups championing the cause of Negro rights saw these same characteristics as a documentation of their belief in the debilitating consequences of prejudice and the denial of opportunity.

Most Negro residents of Midcity were, in fact, fairly well satisfied with the community. Consistent with its history of amicable race relations, Midcity during the ‘50’s was relatively free of conspicuous signs of racial conflict. Some of its
neighborhoods were genuinely “mixed,” in the sense of having whites and Negroes living in adjacent dwellings on the same street. White and Negro primary school pupils walked arm-in-arm to school, and played in mixed groups after school. Young mothers of the two races met and shopped together in Midcity Center. While its adolescent corner groups tended to the racially homogeneous, racial conflict as such seldom provided a primary basis for gang fights. Despite the fact, or because of the fact, that this aspect of its racial situation received little public notice, Midcity in the 1950’s was probably as close to a successfully “integrated” residential community as could be found in the United States.9

While fewer than 15% of the residents of Midcity in the 1950’s had been born outside the United States, the national origins of the “foreign born” group reflected quite directly the national backgrounds of the native born. As shown in the previous section, Midcity’s inhabitants were predominantly of English background between 1620 and 1840, at which time a large group of Irish laborers took up residence in the community. Jews began to settle in the area around 1880, and Italians soon after. Persons of English, Irish, Italian, and Jewish background were still, in the 1950’s, the major white ethnic groups of Midcity.

Of the approximately 15,000 foreign born persons in Midcity, about one-fifth were Irish, one-fifth Jewish, one-fifth English Canadian, and one-tenth Italian.10 The remaining 30% comprised small numbers of various nationalities, such as Scandinavians, Germans, and Poles. There was no Spanish American population of any significance.

9 R’s (note)
10 Tables showing the actual numbers and percentages of the various national-origin groups are omitted from this chapter, primarily because of a change between 1950 and 1960 in the method of recording national origin used in the Federal Census. In 1950 and for some decades previously, the census reported the numbers of “foreign born” by census tract for the community. In 1960, the census used instead the category “foreign stock”, which included along with those born abroad persons either or both of whose parents had been abroad. Figures for the two decades were thus not comparable, since it was impossible to know in 1960 how many of the combines category “foreign stock” were also “foreign born”.
The ethnic composition of Midcity in the ‘50’s, considered in terms of the national origins of its ancestral population, showed proportions not dissimilar to that of its foreign born population. Roughly one third of its residents were Negroes, and another third of Irish background. Between ten and fifteen percent were English Canadian, mostly from the Maritime Provinces. About ten percent were Italian and another ten percent Jewish. The proportion of Jews in the native born population was smaller than their proportion in the foreign born population because the majority of the younger Jews had left the community by 1960. Most of those who remained were older men and women, the latter frequently widows, who wished to remain close to the familiar community of their earlier years.

The proportion of Midcity residents affiliated with various religions was related quite directly to its national origin composition. Most of the Negroes and almost all of the English Canadians were Protestant, so that Protestants constituted about 45% of the community. There was a small but clear trend toward conversion of Catholicism among the Negroes with Protestantism to any substantial degree. Jews made up about 10% of the community. Catholics comprised about 40% of Midcity, and made up what might be termed a “multi-national-Catholic” group.

The bulk of Midcity Catholics had Irish backgrounds, and the next largest group had Italian backgrounds. There was, however, a decided trend toward intermarriage among Catholics of different national origins, duplicating an earlier trend toward intermarriage among Protestants of English, Dutch, Scandinavian, German, and other backgrounds. Thus many Midcity residents had an Irish mother and Italian father, or one of many possible combinations of Irish and Italian ancestry. Other smaller groups of Catholics, as for example French Canadians, Slavs, and German Catholics, also participated in the pattern of multi-national intra-Catholic intermarriage.
Educational Status

Formal education as a life concern and arena of experience figures importantly in the subculture of ranked status classes; what did the demographic data show as to the educational circumstances of Midcity residents? It is generally held that residents of lower class communities have less formal education than those of higher class communities—particularly with respect to advanced or “higher” education. The data of Table 4.1 support this notion. About one-quarter of the adult residents of Midcity had failed to complete grammar school, over 40% had never attended high school, about two-thirds had failed to complete high school, and fewer than five percent had completed college. While these data do not reflect the fact that educational levels in the United States have been rising steadily during the past 30 years\textsuperscript{11}, they are quite striking when viewed against an image of native-born urban Americans as well-educated. The educational level of Midcity was considerably below that of Port City, with the former showing a median figure of 8.3 years compared to a figure of 11.3 for the latter. Differences in the proportions of persons at various educational levels are not, however, as great as one might expect; in four of the five “cumulative” categories the two areas are within five percentage points of one another.

Significant for later purposes, the largest difference occurs at the level of high-school non-completion. These relatively low differences reflect the fact that Port City, despite its generally higher status, did contain a number of other areas

\textsuperscript{11} Statistics as to the educational status of present day Americans tend to be misleading unless carefully controlled for age. Many older Americans who were born abroad and/or in rural areas have had little formal education, whereas those born more recently within the areas governed by the compulsory education laws have generally attended school for at least eight or ten years. Available census tabulations use “persons 25 and over” as a base population for reporting education, and this statistic is used here. The inclusion of older persons of rural and/or foreign background tends to depress the statistics on educational level; a more meaningful base population might comprise those between 25 and 45, but this statistic is not derivable from available census data. Figures in Table 4.1 show both the percentage in each of the six categories and the cumulative percentages—that is, the total percentage in a particular category plus all those in lower categories.
quite similar in social status to Midcity. Similarly, a comparison of Midcity’s educational status with that of the nation as a whole shows that the Midcity figures were generally lower than national figures, but not markedly so. This also reflects the fact that national figures include many communities educationally similar to Midcity, as well as areas such as the rural south with its low educational levels.

A much more significant perspective is attained by comparing the educational status of Midcity with that of a group of high-status residential suburbs of Port City. Figures for ten “high status” suburban towns\textsuperscript{12} show medians ranging from 12.7 to 14.8 years (Midcity - 8.3), high-school completion rates ranging from 70\% to 85\% (Midcity - 36.4\%) and college completion rates ranging from 20\% to over 40\% (Midcity - 4.5\%). Midcity’s position as a lower class community emerges with particular clarity out of these sharp contrasts in educational status between it and the high status suburbs of Port City.

\textsuperscript{12} Reference to “Suburban Delinquency” study
### Table 4.1

**Adult Educational Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Schooling</th>
<th>Midcity N = 55,915</th>
<th>Port City N = 393,503</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent at this level</td>
<td>Cumulative Percentage</td>
<td>Percent at this level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar school not completed</td>
<td>23.1 23.1</td>
<td>18.5 18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar school only (8 years)</td>
<td>18.4 41.5</td>
<td>16.6 35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school not completed (1-3 years)</td>
<td>22.1 63.6</td>
<td>19.6 54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school completed (4 years)</td>
<td>26.2 89.8</td>
<td>30.3 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College not completed (1-3 years)</td>
<td>5.7 95.5</td>
<td>7.5 92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College completed; and/or more</td>
<td>4.5 100</td>
<td>7.5 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median School Years</td>
<td>8.3 11.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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From: “An Urban Lower Class Community.” *City Gangs*, Chapter I

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**Occupational Status**

The occupational characteristics of ranked status classes, particularly those of males, are of central importance to the lifestyle of these classes. Previous sections have shown that occupational factors played a major role in the historical development of Midcity; how did the community stand in this respect in the 1950’s? The task of presenting even relatively simple descriptions of occupational status is not easy; problems of classification and data-collection in this area are enormously
complex, as are problems of relating occupational prestige and rewards to social status. Nonetheless, research in this area has established the fact that different kinds of urban communities differ substantially with respect to the proportion of residents who report jobs in different categories. The use of a particular set of standard demographic categories to characterize the occupational circumstances of Midcity facilitates comparison with many other communities.

In recent years the federal census data has employed a method of classifying the non-farm labor force which delineates nine very general major “occupational groups,” arranged roughly in order of the prestige and remuneration circumstances of each category. These nine categories are as follows: 1 - professional, technical, and kindred workers; 2 - managers, officials and proprietors; 3 - clerical and kindred workers; 4 - sales workers; 5 - craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers; 6 - operatives and kindred workers; 7 - private household workers; 8 - service workers, except private household; 9 - laborers. Table 5.1 shows what proportion of males in Midcity reported their occupations as falling under each of the nine categories. To facilitate comparability with Table 4.1, the categories are arranged with the lowest occupations at the top.

The largest single male occupational group in Midcity, about one-quarter of its male workers, fell into the category “operatives.” Covering a wide range of different kinds of vocational pursuits, this group includes, among others, the men who operated the many different kinds of factory machines--drill and punch presses, cutters, Sanders, grinders, etc., which turned out the manufactured products of Midcity’s many factories. The category “craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers” which comprised the next largest occupational group (18.6%) is likewise extremely heterogeneous, and includes many kinds of workers in jobs quite different from those traditionally seen as “crafts”--as, for example, cement workers, telephone linemen, and automobile mechanics, who often work in a variety of non-specialized jobs.

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13 A brief discussion of some of these problems is included in Chapter 13: also references to works on occupational and social class, e.g., North, Hatt, Reiss, etc.
pursuits such as dishwashers, restaurant busboys and waiters, service-station attendants, parking lot attendants, and so on. The category “laborer” includes a variety of manual jobs such as dock workers, stevedores, pick-and-shovel workers in construction and maintenance, and so on. About 70% of all employed males in Midcity occupied jobs in these categories (along with an insignificant number of “private household” workers). As will be shown, this kind of occupational involvement had important implications for the “style-of-life” subculture of Midcity.

Of the thirty percent in the four “white collar” occupations, the largest number (10%) fell into the “clerical” category. For male workers many “clerical” jobs, as in the case of the “craftsmen” category, did not require very much special skill, and included jobs such as messenger boys, bill collectors, bus dispatchers, and baggagemen. The category “sales” similarly included jobs such as show store clerks, hucksters, peddlers, and newsboys. Fewer than 15% of Midcity’s male workers were classified as professionals and managers. Of the latter, many were owners of small neighborhood shops—grocery stores, butcher shops, variety stores, and the like.

Comparing male occupational involvement in Midcity to that of Port City shows, as in the case of educational levels, larger proportions of persons in the lower categories and smaller proportions in the higher. Approximately 60% of Port City’s male workers fell into the lower five categories, compared to 70% for Midcity. Among the lower occupations Port City showed 20% in the “operative” category, compared to Midcity’s 25%; and 8% listed as “laborers” compared to 11% for Midcity. In the higher categories, 11% of Port City’s workers were recorded as “professionals,” compared to 7% for Midcity, and 10% as “managers,” compared to 7% for Midcity. These differences are not great, but show, in general, that the occupational status for Midcity’s male workers was consistently below that of the larger metropolis.¹⁴

¹⁴ Data on female occupations, not presented here, show a different relationship to life-style status levels than male. In Midcity, there were relatively more males in the “craftsmen” category, fewer females; there were relatively more females in the “clerical” category, fewer males. More females in “clerical” and “sales” categories follow lower class life style, particularly sales (e.g., ten-cent-store
Thus, while 70% of males in lower 5 categories, only 54% of females; “white collar” break for females probably between sales and clerical, 60% of Midcity females are sales or below. The largest group is “operatives”, 27%, much larger percent of females are operatives than males. This is in considerable contrast to Port City, with 18% female operatives. Port City has 44% sales or below, compared to Midcity’s 60%.

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Table 5.1  
Male Occupational Status 
Midcity and Port City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Midcity</th>
<th>Port City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent cumulative in this category</td>
<td>Percent cumulative in this category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Workers</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Household</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen and Foremen</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Collar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Workers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers, Proprietors</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Techn</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( ^a \) 1950-’60 Average  
\( ^b \) Fuller descriptions in text
Income

Education and occupation are related in a complex fashion to style-of-life social classes, but these relationships are relatively simple compared to that of income. Although the most common and least objected-to term for referring to lower status populations in the United States is “the poor”, income as an index to life-style subcultures is perhaps the least satisfactory of the major demographic indexes. Nevertheless, it would be useful in describing the community to present information on income which is directly comparable to the educational and occupational data already presented—that is, using 1950-1960 averages to delineate a set of income levels and to compare Midcity figures with those of Port City or other units. Unfortunately, the nature of available data as to income makes such a procedure impossible.

A major reason for this, along with others, is that in 1950 the census took as its reporting unit “families and in-related individuals”, without differentiating between these; in 1960 it reported family income only. Thus there is no way of determining from published data how many of the 1950 units were families, making 1950 and 1960 figures incomparable and ruling out the use of averages. Because of this difficulty and others, present data on income can provide only a very rough idea of the income of Midcity residents during the decade of the 1950’s.

Table 6.1 reports the income of Midcity residents in 1949 and 1959 under categories. In 1950, 40% of the reporting units reported yearly income of less than $2,000; 60% reported less than $3,000; and 80% reported less than $4,000. Only 7% reported $6,000 or more. Median income was recorded as $2,476. In 1960, about 15% of the reporting units reported yearly incomes of less than $2,000, 30% less

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15 Further discussion of difficulties with income as index to lower class in next section and in discussion of lower class III subculture. Include insensitivity, high variability, etc. Expenditure as a more sensitive index.

16 On technical problems with “income” as an index here or later. Include adjustment to constant dollar values, “purchasing power” problems, etc. In later section discussion of income changes, can’t tell if increases are a result of “real” changes in income, changes in value of dollar, difference in identity of reporting unit, or any combination of these or others.
than $3,000, and 40% less than $4,000. About one-third of the units reported
incomes of $6,000 a year or more. Median income was recorded as $4,112.

At first glance these figures would appear to indicate that Midcity’s residents
experienced a tremendous increase in wealth in the brief span of ten years; this
impression is, of course, insupportable, and will be discussed further in the section
on decade changes. The very presence of striking differences in the decade figures
points to several conclusions as to the income status of Midcity. The first concerns
the highly complex issue of whether Midcity as a lower class community was also a
“poor” community and involves the controversial issue of what “poverty” is. On the
basis of the 1949 finding that almost two-thirds of Midcity residents reported
incomes of less than $3,000, one might conclude that relative to most other
American urban communities Midcity was rather poor. On the basis of the 1959
finding that about half of Midcity’s families reported incomes of over $5,000 a year,
only 15% reported less than $2,000, one-quarter reported $6,000 or more, and the
median income was over $4,000, one might conclude that Midcity was rather well
off. If nothing else, these figures would indicate that the existence of “poverty” in
Midcity was somewhat problematic.

A second point concerns the relation of income to other indexes of life-style.
The apparent increase in the income of Midcity occurred during a period in which
the proportion of workers in the lower occupational categories was on the increase.
This fact would suggest a rather complex relationship between reported annual
income as such and occupational status as a basis of differentiating levels within
lower class status of Midcity and Port City. In this respect the income figures accord
with educational and occupational figures in showing that Midcity’s population was
on a lower level than that of the remainder of the city. Median income for Port City
in 1949 was $2,634; for Midcity, $2,476. This rather small difference was amplified
in 1959, when Port City showed a median figure of $5,747 compared to $4,112 in
Midcity. Whatever the meaning of the income figures, it would appear that while
reported income in current dollars rose substantially in both communities during
the decade of the 1950’s it rose much less rapidly in Midcity, thus increasing the income gap between the larger city and its district. These figures will be discussed further in the section on change trends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1000</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 - 1999</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 - 2999</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 - 3999</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4000 - 4999</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 - 5999</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6000 - 6999</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7000 - 7999</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8000 and over</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Medians: Midcity $2,476 1950 Families & Unrelated Individuals N = 31,525 1960 Families N = 19,975

Port City $2,643

$4,112

$5,747

a Medians only for Port City
b Gross income reported for previous year: “current” dollars

From: “An Urban Lower Class Community.” City Gangs, Chapter I
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Summary: Demographic Characteristics of Midcity

As a fairly typical urban lower class community, Midcity differed from the larger urban area in some respects and resembled it in others. There was little difference between Midcity and Port City in the distribution of age groups; Midcity contained slightly higher proportions of younger people and slightly lower proportions of older. Quite a distinctive characteristic of the lower status community was its high concentration of females; there were 114 women for every 100 men in Midcity, and among the old there were 135 women for every 100 men. This high ratio of women was seen to be related to particular economic, occupational, and family-type circumstances characteristic of lower class communities. Ethnically and religiously Midcity was quite mixed. While the majority of its residents were native-born whites, it did contain a fair number of persons of Irish, Italian, English, East European, and African background. Those of Irish background, comprising about 30% of Midcity, were the largest group of European origin, and Negroes, also comprising about 30%, the largest non-white group. The remainder was comprised mostly with individuals of English Canadian, Jewish, and Italian backgrounds. The three major American religions, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism, were all represented. A truly “mixed” community, Midcity was far from an isolated or homogeneous “ghetto”; despite the presence of the various racial and religious groupings, racial or religious conflict was not a serious problem.

Gauged against an image of modern urban Americans as well-educated, the educational status of Midcity was surprisingly low. The fact that almost two-thirds of its adult residents had not graduated from high school, let alone attended college, is a circumstance of the most direct significance for the whole way of life of the community. The bulk of Midcity’s male workers were employed in manual occupations; of the 30% not so employed, a good proportion worked in jobs which required little specialized training. Professionals and managers comprised less than
15% of the population. The income status of Midcity was difficult to determine on the basis of available data. While income levels were in general lower than those of the rest of city, income data produced a most inconsistent picture, particularly in contrast with the consistent picture obtained from educational and occupational data. Whatever their meaning, available data as to income provide no firm basis for stating that “poverty” was a central characteristic of lower class life in Midcity.

Demographic differences between Midcity and Port City, as well as the United States as a whole, while consistent in direction, were not particularly marked. This is due to the fact that many sections of lower class resemble Midcity with respect to characteristics typical of such populations. The real contrasts occur, as the limited data presented here suggest, between communities like Midcity and the higher status suburbs. For example, differences in educational status between Midcity and selected higher status suburbs of Port City were striking.

A brief picture of Midcity as a whole--based on a limited number of demographic characteristics selected because of their relevance to subcultural status classes--has been presented. The question now arises--what kinds of demographic differences existed within the community? Data just presented give some idea of the heterogeneity of Midcity with respect to race, religion, national origin, and other features. Is it possible to “order” this heterogeneity through analysis based on the concept of ranked social status classes? The following section will explore the distribution of the above demographic characteristics, along with a number of others, through a number of differentiated “status levels” within the community of Midcity.

Social Status Levels within a Lower Class Community

It is widely recognized that those sectors of American society referred to by the terms “upper,” “middle,” and “lower” class are far from heterogeneous. At present, however, there is little agreement among scholars as to how many subclasses could or should be delineated within these gross categories, or on what
basis such delineations could or should be made. Popular terminology has for many centuries distinguished at least two subclasses within what is here called the lower class—one referred to by terms such as the “poor but honest”, the “respectable poor”, and the “stable working class”; the other, often identified more by implication than denotation, comprising, one must assume, the poor but dishonest, the disrespectful, and the unstable. This traditional twofold distinction has also been popular among scholars. W. Lloyd Warner, in his pioneering work on social class in America, delineated an “upper lower” and a “lower lower” class. August Hollingshead, a follower of Warner, used the designations “IV” and “V” to denote classes generally equivalent to Warner’s upper lower and lower lower classes.

Hollingshead also used another set of terms which have remained popular with more recent writers, such as J. Kahl, Herbert Gans, S.M. Miller and Frank Reissman—“working class” for the higher level and “lower class” for the lower.17

During the period following the initial dissemination of Warner’s studies there was considerable sentiment to the effect that the delineation of two subclasses within each major class entailed overly refined distinctions; during recent years, however, most sentiment has supported the contrary notion that considerably more than two intra-class distinctions are essential to accurate generalizations. In his study of dialects in New York City, W. Labov distinguished five levels within the lower class. S.M. Miller distinguished four subtypes, which he calls “The Stable

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Poor”, “The Strained”, “The Copers”, and “The Unstable.” The present work goes only a little beyond popular conceptualization and the Warner school in delineating three levels within a lower class population--initially for purposes of demographic analysis, later as the basis of “life style” analysis.

The method used in the present chapter for delineating intra-lower class subclasses is simple and crude. It utilizes only two defining indexes, and is based on simple percentages. It delineates “levels” on a unidimensional basis rather than subculturally differentiated types. This simplicity, however, makes the task of examining and presenting demographic characteristics of the several levels relatively easy. The examination would indicate, moreover, that there is the minimum number of intra-class distinctions which must be made to permit sufficiently sensitive (detection) of subcultural differences of relevance to gangs, youth crime, and their community context.

The designations and defining criteria of four social status levels are given in Chart 1.1. Two criteria are used to differentiate classes and subclasses: the proportion of males employed in non-white-collar or “manual” occupations and the number of adults failing to finish high school. Occupational status and educational status are among the most commonly used indexes to social status, and served to distinguish classes in Midcity as in many other communities.19

The particular “cutting points” used here were chosen because they proved to distinguish well between levels within the lower class. Income, another commonly-used index, was not used, since, as already mentioned, it did not serve to “locate” subcultural classes nearly as well as the educational and occupational criteria.

The latter criteria, in addition, are indexes to patterns of life practice of


19 Reference to Shevsky-Bell System system.
central importance to social class subcultures. A major distinction is made between the “middle” and the “lower” classes.

Census tracts in which fewer than 60% of the male labor force worked in “manual” occupations and 50% of the adults had failed to complete high school are designated “middle class”; those with over 60% manual workers and 50% non-high-school-graduates are designated “lower class.” Since only about 10% of Midcity’s population lived in middle class areas, no further subdivisions of this class are used. Within the lower class three levels are distinguished. These are designated, from lowest to highest, as lower class III, lower class II, and lower class I. Areas designated as lower class III are those in which 80% or more of male workers held manual jobs and 70% or more of adults failed to complete high school. Lower class II areas are those with 70-80% manual laborers and 60-70% non-high-school-graduates; lower class I areas are those with 60-70% manual laborers and 50-60% non-high-school-graduates.

The rationale behind the use of these particular cutting points is related more directly to a particular set of empirical findings than to theoretical considerations or sophisticated scaling methods. In 1950, the base for present computations, the 21 census tracts of Midcity were grouped into four “natural” clusters whose cutting points approximated those of Chart 1.1, with educational and occupational criteria showing an excellent correspondence; the majority of lower class tracts fell directly and unambiguously within one of the three 10-percentage-point levels. In 1960 these clusters were somewhat less distinct; the data were,

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20 Two indexes generally show good concordance; ref. to Jaffe study, reported in NY Times, 1965 or 5.
21 These definitions were first published in “Impact of a . . . Delinquency Project”, 1962, op. cit. They have been used in at least two studies since that time. In Cleveland they were employed in a slightly modified fashion to delineate urban service areas for a large-scale demonstration project in delinquency control. They were also used in analysis of low-income child-rearing units in “Hannah Square”, an all-white lower class neighborhood of Port City.

(Both of these studies resemble the present work in showing direct associations between status levels and various other demographic and subcultural characteristics)
however, readily analyzable on the same basis, and the use of the same essentially arbitrary ten-percentage-point categories facilitated inter-decade comparisons.\(^{22}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percent Males in Manual Occupations (^{a})</th>
<th>Percent Adults failing to Complete High School (^{b})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>80% or more</td>
<td>70% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>70 - 80%</td>
<td>60 - 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>60 - 70%</td>
<td>50 - 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>60% or less</td>
<td>50% or less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\) Occupational categories 5 through 10, U.S. Census, 1960, PHC (1) Table P-3

\(^{b}\) Years of School categories 1 through 5, U.S. Census, ibid., Table P-1.

“Adults” are persons 25 years old and over

Method discussed in text

From: “An Urban Lower Class Community”. City Gangs, Chapter I

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\(^{22}\) (Methodological aspects: 1) “Stability” issue, with figures 2) inter-decade correspondence of census tracts; see “stability FN” material). Extension of this type of analysis to other communities and/or a wider spectrum of social levels would require a more sophisticated development of intervals and cutting points. A logical extension of this system to middle class communities would involve a delineation of Middle Class III, II and I areas. It is evident that the defining criteria of the social levels follow a curvilinear rather than a linear distribution; it is highly likely for example, that the size of the class intervals for the educational criterion would grow progressively smaller as one moved from lower class III to middle class I; the shape of the distribution would have to be derived from a series of studies based on far more sophisticated design than that used here. The object of the present classification, however, was not to develop a general method for analyzing demographic correlates of social status levels, but rather to show in a relatively simple descriptive fashion the relationship between social levels in a particular community and certain demographic characteristics of relevance to youth crime as well as the relationship between these levels and youth crime itself.
Demographic Characteristics of Different Social Status Levels

Having presented a method for delineating status levels within the lower class, it now becomes possible to address a central question: To what extent and in what ways did the demographic characteristics of the several levels differ? The present section examines eleven demographic characteristics—the eight already used to characterize the community as a whole, along with three additional ones—unemployment, room occupancy, and rent. The examination brings data to bear on a major issue in the analysis of social class and subculture: Where does one locate the “cutting points” of most direct significance to subcultural differences between the several levels? This issue was of concern to Warner, who discussed the difficulty of making “clean” distinctions within the “common man” class—his “upper lower” and “lower middle” status levels.

Different authors have put the “significant” cutting point at different places—depending on the purposes of their studies and the defining criteria they have used. Some claim that the really basic life-style differences occur between the “rock-bottom” lower class (Marx and Hegel’s “lumpenproletariat”; social works “underprivileged”; economics’ “unskilled” or “marginal”; education’s “culturally deprived”) and the rest of society. In present terms, this would mean that lower class III populations would differ significantly from lower class II, I and middle class. Others feel that the more fundamental split is between the lower and middle class; on this assumption one would look for low differentiation among lower class III, II, and I relative to differences between the lower and middle class. Others feel that life-style differences between “stable” or “skilled” workers on the one hand and the less stable or less skilled on the other are of the greatest importance. On this basis one would look for a major split between lower class III and II on the one hand, and lower class I and middle class on the other.

Which of these various positions is most valid depends in large part, as is obvious, on the nature of the population under consideration and the criteria one
chooses to emphasize. One would expect, for example, for certain populations, in certain locales, and for certain criteria--that lower class II populations would be closer to lower class I in some respects and to lower class III in others. The following sections show which social status levels in Midcity clustered with others with respect to the particular demographic characteristics examined here.

*Population, Education, and Occupation*

What proportion of Midcity residents lived in areas falling within each of the social status levels, and what were the educational and occupational characteristics of each level? Table 7.1 shows the distribution of the population among the several levels, the percentage of adults who failed to complete high school, and the percentage of males holding manual jobs. Of Midcity’s total population of approximately 100,000 persons, about one-fifth lived in lower class III neighborhoods, one fifth in lower class I, and one-tenth in middle class. The “modal” resident of Midcity thus lived in a lower class II neighborhood; the number of lower class I and III residents was about equal and about four-fifths as large as the number of lower class II residents.

Since educational and occupational criteria were used to delineate the several social status levels, one would expect to find a direct correspondence between these characteristics and social status. Over three-quarters of those in lower class III areas failed to complete high school, compared to two-thirds for lower class II, 57% for lower class I, and somewhat less than half for middle class. Differences between status levels become larger as one moves from middle class to lower class III.

More than 85% of male workers in lower class III areas were employed in manual occupations, compared to 75% for lower class II, 63% for lower class I, and 45% for middle class. Differences between levels become larger as one moves from lower class II to middle class, with the differences between lower class III to middle class, with difference between lower class I and middle class almost as great as differences among the lower class levels. The occupational criterion thus
differentiates more sensitively between the lower and middle class, while educational criterion differentiates more sensitively within the lower class. This suggests that the specific nature of ones' educational background might be more closely related to subcultural differences within the lower class than the general nature of ones' adult occupation.

Table 7.1 Midcity Population by Social Status Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>Number Persons</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
<th>Adults(^b) failing to complete High School</th>
<th>Percent of all Adults</th>
<th>Male Manual Workers</th>
<th>Percent of all Male Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>19,028</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>7,909</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>2,979</td>
<td>85.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>49,966</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>17,683</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>7,571</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>18,017</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>6,219</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>2,621</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>11,916</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3,758</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity</td>
<td>98,927</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>35,569</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>14,504</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) All figures based on 1950-60 averages

\(^b\) Persons 25 years and older

From: “An Urban Lower Class Community City Gangs, Chapter I
Not to be used in published references without permission W. Miller June 1966

Age and Social Status

Lower Class III communities are often pictured as containing disproportionate numbers of the young and the old. The lower class slum, according to this conception, swarms with young children and adolescents, and provides a last refuge for the aged and infirm. From this one would expect to find significantly larger numbers of the young and the old in the lower status levels. The data of Table 8.1 furnish some support for this notion, but not very much. Only in the case of children (ages 0-9) are the data directly concordant with the image, with substantially larger proportions of the young found in the lower levels. The cutting point in this instance falls, however, not between the “welfare” population (lower
class III) and the others, but between the two lower and two higher levels. In the case of older adults and the old (44 and over), the distribution runs counter to the image, with larger numbers of older people living in the higher status areas. Here again the cutting point falls between lower class II and I. Old people (65 and over) are distributed surprisingly evenly among the status levels (all levels fall within 1.1% of the community average), and the proportion of elderly residents in different areas does not discriminate well between levels. The relatively even distribution of adolescents among the status levels is also somewhat surprising; the degree of concentration of children found in the lower levels is considerably lower in the case of adolescents; none of the status levels varies more that 2.5% from the all community figure of 15%. This would indicate that the substantially greater tendency for lower class III adolescents to form corner gangs, to be discussed in the next chapter, is not due simply to the fact that there are many more of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status level</th>
<th>Children Age 0-9 %</th>
<th>Adolescents Age 10-19 %</th>
<th>Young Adults Age 20-44 %</th>
<th>Older Adults Age 44-64 %</th>
<th>Aged Age 65+ %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower class III</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower class II</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower class I</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity N= 98927</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another image of the lower class slum involves economic productivity; lower status slums, it is said, contain a dearth of persons in the economically-productive years, and a preponderance of those who are economically dependent. There was little evidence of this phenomenon in Midcity. While the percentage of those in the maximum-productivity years from 20 to 64 was somewhat higher in the higher
status levels, the percentages even in the lowest levels were still very close to equivalent figures for the United States as a whole (Midcity lower class III 53.5%; U.S.A., 52.2%).

Furthermore, differences between the several levels in this respect were relatively small, especially and particularly with the young adults.

**Sex, Family Heads, and Social Status**

The special role of the adult female in urban lower class communities has been noted by many authors, and matters such as the relative prevalence of females in the community and the prevalence of households headed by females relate directly to the social class subcultures which form the context of gang life. Of particular relevance to lower class life-styles is a type of household or child rearing unit referred to variously as “matriarchal,” “matrifocal,” “mother centered” and “female based.” Some see this form of unit-- one in which a male acting in the father role is either absent from the household or (plays a relatively inactive role)-- largely as a racial phenomenon, characteristic of Negroes rather than whites. Others see it largely as a social class phenomenon -- characteristic of lower rather than higher status populations.

Data on the prevalence of females and of female-based households at the various social levels of Midcity shed some light on this latter issue, since the community contained both whites and Negroes of lower social status levels.

Table 9.1 shows the status-level distribution of four demographic characteristics relating to women as residents and mothers in Midcity. As already shown, the sex ratio was decidedly overbalanced on the side of females; Midcity as a whole contained 116 females for every 100 males, compared to 106 females in Port City. It was also shown that this imbalance increased with age. Somewhat unexpectedly, there was virtually no association between social levels and the

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25 References to works on female-based households. Include Herzog, St. Clair Drake, All Ison Davis, Whiting, Moynihan, Kunstadter, Heller, Parratur, WBM '57, '58, S&M Chapter. Leibour
degree of female concentration. Females of all ages and marital statuses comprised about 54% of the population, and none of the status levels departed by more than 2% from this figure. The slightly higher proportions of females which were found appeared in higher rather than lower status levels. No general explanation for this phenomenon is indicated by the data; it would appear rather to be related to particular characteristics of Midcity as a multi-status-level community.

As already shown, a substantial part of the sex imbalance was accounted for by older women, and these women were distributed quite evenly throughout the status levels. Another factor involves a status-level “balancing-off” phenomenon. Several of the higher status neighborhoods of Midcity bordered on an extensive hospital-medical-research complex which employed large numbers of women as nurses, secretaries, dieticians, and the like. Many of these women lived in adjacent middle class and lower class I neighborhoods, thus contributing to the 55% female preponderance figure of these areas. Few of these “white collar” women lived in lower class II or III neighborhoods, but in the latter areas another circumstance operated to produce a disproportionate number of female residents; this was the form of the child-rearing unit.

Unfortunately, available census data provide no direct measure of the number of female-based households in Midcity—that is, child rearing units in which a female or number of females engage in the task of rearing and supporting children without the consistent presence and/or assistance of an adult in-household male. Table 9.1 does, however, include two sets of figures which provide indirect measures. These are, first, the number of heads of “primary” families who described themselves as other than “wife of family head,” and second, the number of women who told census interviewers they were divorced or separated. About 30% of

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26 Neither of these measures is satisfactory; the first is available only for 1960, so the averaging device could not be used, making this measure less congruent with the others. Logically, those family heads who described themselves as other than “wife” of head could either be females who headed families without husbands, or males who headed families without wives. Using this measure as an index to “female headed families” involves the assumption that the latter category of persons was negligible, as it probably was. Further, it should be noted that the census-derived category “female-
Midcity’s family units were headed by females. This compares with a figure of about 10% for the country as a whole, and 20% for Port City. [On the basis of the 30% figure one might make a rough estimate that the actual number of “female based households” in lower class III Midcity ranged between 50% and 70%.] The prevalence of female-headed families is clearly and directly related to social status, with figures ranging from 35% for lower class III to 23% for middle class. Each lower level contains 4% to 5% more female-headed units then the next highest. No clear cutting point emerges; however, the gap between levels III and II is somewhat larger than the others, and differences became greater as one approaches lower levels. The distribution of families with female heads thus runs directly parallel to that of manual laborers and persons who failed to complete high school.

The number of divorced or separated women also shows a direct relation to social status within the lower class; figures range from 15% for lower class III to 5% for lower class I. The cutting point, as in the case of age, falls between lower class II and I. Middle class rates were slightly higher than those of lower class I; this was due, in part, to the prevalence of divorced or separated females among the “career women” who worked for the hospital complex and lived in middle class areas.

headed primary family unit” is not coterminous whit the structural category “female-based household”; one would assume that units of latter type were considerably more prevalent than the former—perhaps twice as prevalent—so that the “female-headed family” figures presented here represent the minimum number of possible female-based households. With reference to the “divorced and separated” measure, one would suspect that the large proportion of lower status white women who were Catholic would be much less likely, whatever the reality of their marital status, to tell census takers that they were “divorced”, and somewhat less likely to say they were “separated”, than Negro women of equivalent status. The relation of this measure to the “family head” measure is also indirect; those designated as separated or divorced might or might not be raising children.
Table 9.1
Female Prevalence, Family Heads, Marital Status & Family Size by Social Status Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>Number Persons</th>
<th>Percent Female</th>
<th>Number Female Units</th>
<th>Percent with Female Heads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>19,028</td>
<td>53.30</td>
<td>4,449</td>
<td>35.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>49,966</td>
<td>53.10</td>
<td>10,669</td>
<td>30.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>18,017</td>
<td>55.70</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>26.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>11,916</td>
<td>54.50</td>
<td>2,848</td>
<td>23.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity</td>
<td>98,927</td>
<td>53.80</td>
<td>19,567</td>
<td>29.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>Females over 14</th>
<th>Percent Separated or Divorced</th>
<th>Number of Children Under 18 Family Units</th>
<th>Average Number of Children per Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>8,231</td>
<td>15.40</td>
<td>6,378</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>17,882</td>
<td>11.70</td>
<td>15,585</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>3,290</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1,946</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>5,184</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>2,846</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity</td>
<td>34,587</td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>26,755</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. 1960 only; 1950 data not available

The data of Table 9.1 also bear directly on another issue of direct relevance to lower class life style—the size of the lower class family. That “the poor have children” is a virtually axiomatic tenet of the conventional wisdom. This conception represents lower class parents as helplessly caught up in a profligate and...
uncontrolled child production; the more lower class the family, the larger the brood. Stories of lower class families with six, eight, or ten children are common. Census data from Midcity provide no support whatsoever to this image and run counter to it in some respects. The average lower class family in Midcity had fewer than two children, this figure is only slightly higher than the figure for the average American family (U.S., all families, 1960, 1.42 children). While the figure for Port City as a whole (1.16) was lower than that of Midcity, the number of children per family in many of Port City’s residential suburbs exceeded that of Midcity; several prosperous middle class suburbs showed figures of 1.5 or more.

Thus, while some of Midcity’s lower class families were undoubtedly large, as were some of Port City’s middle class families, these data give no evidence that the number of children produced by the average lower class white Catholic and Negro family in Midcity exceeded that of the average American family. Moreover, the largest number of children per family were found not among the “welfare level” families of lower class III, but among the better-off-families of lower class II. Higher status families in Midcity (lower class I and middle class) did produce fewer children than those of lower status, so that there was, within the community, some relationship between lower status and larger numbers of children.

With respect to the role of females at different levels, then, differences emerge not in connection with the prevalence of females as such, but with their prevalence as wives and mothers. Lower levels contained larger proportions of female-headed families and women who were separated or divorced. Lower status families also had larger numbers of children, but the average was close to that of the nation as a whole, and the lowest status families had fewer children, on an average, than families in many of Port City’s middle class suburbs. The data showing direct relationships between family structure and social status do not, however, bear directly on the question of whether it was social status or race which

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27 Ref. to U.S. Figure
played the more important part. This question will be addressed in the following section.

**Race, National Origin, and Social Status**

The urban lower class community is commonly conceived as heavily ethnic, with its lowest status areas peopled largely by recent arrivals from foreign lands, Negroes, or some combination of these. This conception would lead one to expect the highest concentration of Negroes and those of recent foreign origin at the lowest levels. Table 10.1 shows the distribution of Negroes and foreign-born persons by status level. The expectation with respect to Negroes is supported; the majority of those in lower class III areas were Negro, and the proportion drops as one moves from lower to higher levels within the lower class. However, the expectation with respect to the foreign-born is not supported; the distribution runs directly counter to expectation, with smaller proportions at the lower levels and larger at the higher.

Why did the lowest levels contain the fewest numbers of foreign-born?[^28] No general explanation is indicated by the data; this phenomenon appears rather to be related to the particular foreign groups found in Midcity. As already shown, these were primarily Irish, Italian, Jewish, and English Canadian individuals. The bulk of the foreign born were of Jewish and Irish descent. The Jews, with few exceptions, lived in the higher status areas. Many of these people had achieved considerable success in business, enabling their children to move out and away from Midcity via the route of advanced education, and to settle in middle class areas. The older Jews, who preferred to stay in their old community, were thus quite closely tied to a middle class life-style. The Irish were found in both higher and lower levels. Some substantial proportion of this group had, however, achieved considerable success in

[^28]: On For. Bn. And For. Stock. For. Stock not given in 1950, so couldn’t get averages. Also impossible to distinguish born and stock (viz., 1st and 2nd gen’n) in ’60 by national origin. In ’60, ca. one-third of community either foreign born, or one or both parents foreign born; thus, two-thirds of community at least second generation Americans; remember, “foreign” includes Canadians.
the area of politics, held non-manual jobs of the civil-service variety in the fields of
local government and public service, and tended to concentrate in the higher status
areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>Negro Population</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>11,403</td>
<td>59.9 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>14,524</td>
<td>29.1 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>2,774</td>
<td>15.4 ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>3,316</td>
<td>19.5 ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity</td>
<td>32,017</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tendency of these higher status Jews and Irish to live in higher status
areas, then, was primarily responsible for the inverse relation between foreign
status and social status. Most of the Italians lived in lower status areas, but their
numbers (1.4% of the foreign-born population) were too small to offset the opposite
pattern of the Jews and Irish. The English Canadians were scattered rather evenly
throughout Midcity, and thus had little effect on the status-level distribution of the
foreign born.

The data on the proportion of Negroes at each of the several status levels
bear directly on a central issue: the relative roles of class and race in the life-style
here under consideration. Starting from a fairly well established fact – that the
proportion of Negroes who follow a lower class life-style is larger than that of most
other American ethnic groups – many people then go on to assume that the “central
city slum problem” and the “Negro problem” are virtually coterminous. This
assumption, seldom called into question, provided much of the impetus for the
massive federally-supported domestic social change programs of the 1960’s. To what
extent is the lower class life-style of Midcity a Negro life-style?

Table 10.1 shows a clear relationship between social status and the
prevalence of Negroes within the lower class. Sixty percent of the residents of lower
class III areas could boast of African origins; the proportion in lower class II areas
(30%) was just half of that, and the proportion in lower class I (15%) of that. In
middle class areas, however, the proportion of Negroes rose to 20%. These figures
point to the central importance of using as refined status-level distinctions as
possible when making general statements about Negro behavior. Many of the
characteristics customarily attributed to Negroes are in fact characteristics of those
at lower status levels, regardless of race. The fact that Negroes in many
communities, as in Midcity, are disproportionately represented at lower levels,
leads to the common fallacy of attributing to race what is in fact attributable to
social status.29 For example, any characterization of Midcity’s “whites” or “Negroes”
which failed to distinguish social status levels would risk distortion in light of the
fact that while only 30% of its population was Negro, over 80% of its Negroes were
lower class.

At the same time, it is of equal importance to recognize that Midcity was far
from a “caste” community, with race serving to define rigid status levels. Nor was it
an unrelieved black ghetto—a term frequently applied during the civil rights
movements of the 1960’s. Although Midcity contained the largest number of
Negroes in Port City they comprised, in the 1950’s less than one-third of its
population. Negroes and whites were found at every level in Midcity; in only one
level were Negroes a majority, and even there whites comprised a substantial 40%
of the population. While over one-third of Midcity’s Negroes lived in lower class II areas, it should be noted that about one-fifth lived in lower class I and middle class neighborhoods. Midcity’s middle class Negroes—including well-established professionals such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and career military officers—were an important element in the community and played an active part in its affairs.\textsuperscript{30}

The presence of middle class Negroes in Midcity, as well as the presence of Negroes at every status level, provides an opportunity to examine briefly the relationship of race and class in the community. The common notion which links female-based households and Negroes cited in the previous section, is but one of a set of similar notions which assigns to the Negroes a host of life-style characteristics such as low income, high unemployment, low education, crowded housing, and the like. Many studies, including much of the statistical underpinning of the “poverty” movement of the 1960’s, appear to show that that sector of American society which most completely embodies the core attributes of an impoverished proletariat in the Negro, and particularly the urban Negro.\textsuperscript{31} What was the relation, in Midcity, between being Negro and manifesting the classic characteristics of the “underprivileged”?

Table 11.1 presents ten characteristics traditionally associated with urban slum dwellers: high unemployment rates, crowded housing, renting rather than owning homes, occupying the cheapest rental units, low income, low educational attainment, low occupational status, female-headed families, and large numbers of children. It then “tests” the question of whether these attributes were associated more closely with race or social status by use of a measure of statistical correlation.

\textsuperscript{30} A careful study of the reaction of Midcity’s middle class Negroes to an urban renewal program is reported in Watts, Freeman, et al. Brandeis University School of Social Welfare, 1964, \textit{The Middle-Income Negro Family Faces Urban Renewal}. Starting with the “depressed black ghetto” assumption, the researchers were surprised to find that when middle class Negroes were offered an excellent opportunity to move to an attractive residential area outside the community, 96% of a study group of 250 families choose to remain in Midcity.

\textsuperscript{31} See, for example, U.S. Department of Labor, \textit{The Negro Family March}, 1965—generally referred to as the “Moynihan Report”.

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The indicators of social status—failure to complete high school and pursuit of manual occupations—are the same as those used to define social status levels (Chart 1.1).

The findings of Table 11.1 are clear and consistent. For every one of the ten classic slum-dweller characteristics, social status shows a substantially better association than race. Findings are particularly striking with respect to unemployment, room-crowding, low education, and occupancy of the cheapest housing; the statistical association between these factors and social status ranges from +.75 to +.93, while associations with race are negligible. While the level of association in the case of some of the social status indicators is not statistically significant, the pattern of association is the same for each characteristic; low education shows the best association, low occupation slightly less, and Negro status the poorest association.

The findings with respect to family size and prevalence of female headed families are of particular interest. The relation between being Negro and having larger numbers of children is almost zero, the lowest value in the table. In the case of female-headed families, while the +.33 correlation coefficient is not statistically significant, it is closer to its nearest social-status association figure than in any other instance. This would suggest that the influence of race relative to that of social status was slightly greater with respect to female-headed families than was the case for the other characteristics. However, a comparison of relevant figures in Tables 9.1 and 10.1 shows that the prevalence of female-headed families in Midcity was by no means a direct reflection of the prevalence of Negroes. The percentage of Negroes in lower class I, II, and III areas was 15%, 30%, and 60% respectively. The percentage of female-headed families was 26%, 30%, and 35% respectively. The increasingly sharp rise in the proportion of Negro residents was not paralleled by equivalent rises in the proportion of female-headed families, which showed relatively small increases of approximately equal size. Moreover, as the proportion of Negroes rises from 15% to 20% between lower class I and middle class, the
The proportion of female-headed families falls from 26% to 23%. Clearly, in this latter instance, social status differences are of greater import.

Table 11.1
Race, Social Status, and Selected Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>% Adults failing to complete h.s.</th>
<th>% Males in Manual Occupations</th>
<th>Percent Negroes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male unemployment</td>
<td>+.88**</td>
<td>+.82**</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room Crowding</td>
<td>+.72**</td>
<td>+.61**</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent $50/month or less</td>
<td>+.75**</td>
<td>+.66**</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not owning own home</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Income $3000 or less</td>
<td>+.75**</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to complete high school</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to complete grammar school</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual labor</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-headed Families</td>
<td>+.58**</td>
<td>+4.5*</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. young children per family</td>
<td>+.52*</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Spearman's Rho
** significant at .01 level
* significant at .05 level

21 Midcity census tracts
1960 figures only; others, 1950-60 averages

From: “An Urban Lower Class Community.” City Gangs, Chapter I
Not to be used in published references without permission W. Miller June 1966

These data indicate, then, that Midcity Negroes as a group were not the worst educated, the poorest, the lowest skilled, or the most crowded. How can one explain the absence of the association between Negro status and the traditional characteristics of the slum dweller? A key to the difference is the presence in Midcity of a sizable group of middle class Negroes, whose general patterns of life approximated those of like-statused whites. It is possible that the Midcity of the 1950’s was an augury of the urban community of the future. Negroes were found at each of the social status levels, with a sizable group at the highest levels. The Negroes in the United States are currently in the process—a process which will continue over the next 40 or 50 years—of dissipating their heavy concentration at
the lowest status levels and spreading throughout the wider range of levels. As this process proceeds, as it is doing in many eastern cities, the traditional association between the attributes of slum life and Negro status will melt away. Midcity in the 1950’s may well represent an early manifestation of a forthcoming eventuality.

**Income and Social Status**

The relationship between income and social status is highly complex, but through the ages the bulk of those following a lower class style of life have earned less than those following a higher. The term “the poor” is of great antiquity. In the United States during the 1960’s, following a period in which terms such as “lower-socio-economic groups,” the “disadvantaged,” and the “culturally deprived” experienced considerable vogue, the ancient term, “the power”, enjoyed a surprising comeback. Income level as such became a central criterion for the delineating population groups to serve as targets of extensive programs of social and behavioral change. To what extent was there correspondence, in Midcity, between low income and the life style of the several social status levels? The philosophy of the poverty movement pictured a chronically depressed “lowest” stratum whose income level was markedly lower than that of those above; this philosophy would also lead one to expect a clear and direct relationship between lowness of status and lowness of income.

The data of Table 12.1 show a fairly good association between lower status and lower income. However, as in the case of the community-wide income figures the nature of the relationship between income level and status levels is not at all clear—particularly by contrast with characteristics such as education and occupation. Differences in the identity of the reporting units in 1950 and 1960 make it impossible to use the averaging device which forms the basis of most of the other tables. In 1950 the “under $3,000” figure—used as the defining level of “poverty”

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32 See “Income discussion in last section, the footnote
by the poverty movement—distinguished three major groups: lower class III, with about 80% below this figure, lower class II and I with about 60%, and middle class, with about 40%. For the $6,000 figure, the major cutting point occurs between the three lower class levels on the one hand and middle class on the other. Quite different groupings emerge from the 1960 data. On the basis of the $3,000 figure, the largest difference occurs between lower class II and I, where the smallest difference was found in 1950. The proportion of middle class residents with income below $3,000 is actually higher than that of lower class I, with the difference between the two levels considerably smaller than in 1950.

Table 12.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>Percent under $3000</th>
<th>Percent under $6000</th>
<th>Percent under $3000</th>
<th>Percent under $6000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a gross income reported for previous year: current dollars

From; “An Urban Lower Class Community.” City Gangs, Chapter I
Not to be used in published references without permission W. Miller June 1966
These data lend further support to the finding that income levels reflect style-of-life differences less sensitively and less directly than characteristics such as education, occupation, and, as will be seen, expenditure. It is noteworthy that one set of figures shows residents of middle class areas to be less well off than those of lower class I. Moreover, the radical contrast between the very lowest level and the others, predicted by the poverty movement, fail to emerge. Although there are evident differences between lower class III and II in each set of figures, in none of the four sets do the largest differences occur at this point. Neither in 1950 nor in 1960 did the “poverty level” figure distinguish a strikingly poorer lowest level.

What do these data imply, in fact, as to the issue of poverty and lower class life? In 1950, some 80% of the families and unrelated individuals in Midcity reported incomes of under $3,000 a year. In 1960, however, with poverty a national issue, only 40% of the families at this level reported incomes of less than $3,000; 60% of lower class III families and 70% of lower class II families reported $3,000 or more. In order to derive percentages roughly equivalent to those based on the $3,000 level in 1950 it was necessary to use the $6,000 level for 1960. It is obvious, as already mentioned, that the actual proportion of Midcity residents who earned less than $3,000 did not drop by half in a period of 10 years; the differences, which cannot be analyzed here, were due to some combination of changes in the value of the dollar, differences in the reporting units, and some actual rise in income levels. These figures indicate the ease with which income figures can be used to present quite contrasting pictures of the same populations. They also call into question the validity of characteristics as “poverty-stricken” a community in which 60% of the families living in the very poorest areas reported incomes of over $3,000 a year, and more than 20% reported incomes of over $6,000. To see such populations as “poor” requires rather extensive stretching of the concept of “relative” poverty.
Unemployment and Social Status

It is commonly held that the highest rates of unemployment occur among the lowest skilled and educated. This contention is borne out by data on male unemployment in Midcity. Table 8.1 shows that about 9% of the male labor force in Midcity was unemployed, on an average, during the 1950’s. This compares with the national figure of 4.8% for the same period. The relationship between status levels and unemployment was direct and consistent; rates for the several levels, were, respectively, lower class III, 11%; lower class II, 10%; lower class I, 7.5%; and middle class, 5%. As in other cases, the rate of unemployment in the lowest status levels does not sharply mark off this level from others; in fact, the difference between lower class III and II is the smallest, and the degree of difference increases as one moves from lower to higher levels. In this respect unemployment resembles the occupational criterion, and differs from the educational. No clear cutting point is indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>1161</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity</td>
<td>2149</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{33}\) Statistic is not too good; insensitive to fluctuation. Number who were unemployed on two days—census-taking day in 1950 and 1960.
**Housing and Social Status**

Housing conditions of low status populations have for many years been the subject of national concern, and to many people the external appearance of the urban lower class residential area—due to its high degree of visibility—is seen as a central (if not the central) condition of lower class life. It is no accident that the term commonly used to refer to such areas—“the slum”—refers primarily to the physical state of dwelling units and their environs. In the great expansion of public programs aimed at changing the life circumstances of low-status life populations during the 1960’s, the two features of lower-class which received the greatest attention were the educational and occupational circumstances of low-status urban Negroes, and the physical conditions of low-status urban communities.

The set of adjectives customarily used to characterize the physical form of such communities have become highly standardized; they include “dilapidated,” “run-down,” “dirty,” “overcrowded,” “deteriorated,” “blighted,” and the like. These terms are not used merely as polemic pejoratives; some are actually employed quite seriously as descriptive terms by the federal census. What did census data show as to housing circumstances of Midcity and their relationship to different status levels? Table 14.1 presents selected figures relating to three aspects of housing—renting and owning, living under crowded conditions, and rent payment. Midcity, as shown in column 1, was predominantly a community of renters. Only 15% of its residents owned their own dwellings; in this respect Midcity was typical of many other lower class communities. Somewhat less expectedly, there was little difference between status levels with respect to renting or owning. Only three percentage points separated the highest and lowest levels; lower class III was closer to middle class than to the other lower class levels. Insofar as there was any tendency toward more home ownership, it was found in lower class I and II areas. These data would indicate that preference as well as income level influences the fact of owning or renting; the income of residents of middle class areas was substantially higher than
that of lower class III areas, and yet they both choose to rent rather than buy in about the same proportions.

One of the classic characteristics of the urban lower class community represents it as teeming, densely packed, and congested with masses of people. Favorite stories of those who have emerged from slum life--half boasting, half lamenting--center on unimaginably overcrowded living conditions -- three and four children to a bed, friends and relatives sleeping in every room, and the impossibility of privacy. Whatever the reality of such stories--and there is little doubt as to the prevalence of crowded quarters in some communities during some periods--as such these conditions did not prevail in Midcity in the 1950’s. The census distinguishes four categories of room occupancy with respect to crowding: the most “crowded” is more than one person per room.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Renters</th>
<th>Percent Renters</th>
<th>Percent units with more than 1.01 persons per room</th>
<th>Percent Controlled Rent Under $30 per Month</th>
<th>Percent Controlled Rent under $55 per Month</th>
<th>Percent Gross Rent Under $80 per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1950b</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N units = 28, 378a</td>
<td>N = 25, 606</td>
<td>N = 456c</td>
<td>N = 20,631</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* all occupied housing units, 1950-60 averages
b average contract rent; current dollars
c city blocks, average rent/block basis of computation
d not available for 1950

From: “An Urban Lower Class Community.” City Ganges, Chapter I
Not to be used in published references without permission W. Miller June 1966
Column 2 of Table 14.1 shows that fewer than 85% of Midcity’s dwelling units fell into this category; furthermore, there was little difference among the several status levels in this respect. Lower Class III areas, in fact, were slightly less “overcrowded” than lower class II. There was some tendency for room crowding to be somewhat less characteristic of the middle class areas; a high of 93% of middle class dwelling units contained less than one person per room, compared to a low 85% for lower class II.

In a community composed primarily of renters, the amount one pays for accommodations is an issue of some importance. Information concerning rent is of particular value in a study which seeks to discern “life-style” characteristics of different status levels, since all of the demographic characteristics thus far examined—the amount one chooses to pay for rent, given a particular income—provided the most direct evidence of the “values” which influence the allocation of that income. The nature and allocation of expenditures and “output” measures reflect status differences much more sensitively than income, an “input” measure.

Data on rent involve equivalency considerations similar to those encountered in the case of income; inter-decade changes in the value of the dollar, increases in general rent levels, and the like. Despite the greater availability of rental units in 1960, a unit which rented for about $40 a month in 1950 rented for about $55 in 1960. For these and other reasons, rent figures are presented separately for 1950 and 1960 rather than being averaged. It is of interest in this connection to note that in the former year, over 75% of the residents of lower class III areas paid less than $30 a month contract rent. This fact at once gives some indication of the power of rent to discriminate social levels. As shown in Table 14.1, this characteristic differentiated between levels with far greater power than any of the characteristics thus far examined.

In 1950, the percentage of Midcity residents paying $30 or less contract rent varied from 6% for middle class areas to 76% for lower class III. This gap of 70
percentage points between the highest and lowest levels is the widest of any of the characteristics examined here. Each level is markedly different from the others, with the biggest differences obtained between lower class III and II (28%), and lower class I and middle class (29%). The division of the Midcity community into different status levels is thus reflected sharply and distinctly in the amount of money people contracted to pay for housing accommodations. Despite the general rise in rents between the years of 1950 and '60, the tendency of those at different status levels to pay markedly different rents was little affected; basing computations on $55 a month in 1960 as roughly equivalent to $30 in 1950, the data show that the gap between lower class III and middle class actually increased from 70% to 75%, and intra-level differences remained similar in character and magnitude.

One might suspect that “true” differences are accentuated by the fact that the measure used in columns 3 and 4 of Table 14.1 is “contract” rent; this figure may or may not include additional dwelling-connected expenses such as heat and utilities, and it is conceivable that those in lower status areas might agree to a low “contract” rent, but actually end up paying as much as those in higher status areas whose rent include some or all of the several utilities. Census data makes it possible to test this assumption. The 1960 census included, along with contract rent, a second measure called “gross rent” defined as “contract rent plus the average monthly cost of utilities (water, electricity, gas) and fuels such as wood, coal, and oil if these items are paid by the renter in addition to contract rent.”34 The final column of Table 14.1 presents data as to gross rent, based on the $80 per month level. While inter-level differences are somewhat less marked down than those based on contract rent, the general picture given by the two indexes is essentially the same. Lower class III and middle class are separated by a gap of 55%; the differences between lower class III and II, and between I and middle, are over 20% as was the case for contract rent.

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34 Census, SMSA, 1960, p. 7.
The consistency and magnitude of these differences in rent payment among status levels, originally distinguished on the basis of education and occupation, is quite striking. One possible interpretation of these findings is that rent payment is simply and directly related to income; the more money one earns, the more one is able to pay, and willing to pay, for rent. References to Table 12.1, Income and Social Status, show that this assumption is not adequate to explain the actual distribution of rent payment shown in Table 13.1. Comparing the “under $3,000” column of the former table with the “under $30” column of the latter shows that lower class III and II differed by 6% in income, but 28% in rent; lower class III and middle class differed by 37% in income, but 76% in rent.

It is thus evident that the amount of rent paid by the residents of Midcity was far from a simple reflection of their income. Other influences were at work— influences at once less concrete and more compelling than the number of dollars one earned. Rent payment as an index to subculturally differentiated status classes taps these influences far more sensitively than income, since the way one chooses to allocate what he earns is determined by a highly complicated set of conceptions and preferences as to more and less appropriate objects of expenditure, more and less pressing “needs”, more and less justified kinds of financial outlay. For the residents of Midcity, the conceptions and preferences which guided their financial allocation decisions were derived in large measure from the subculture of the particular status level they were affiliated with. It is most significant that the demographic index which most directly discriminates is most sharp and sensitive among status levels.

Status Levels, Cutting Points and Subcultures

Two principal questions were posed at the beginning of this section: To what degree and in what ways can evidence based on standard demographic materials support the notion that a lower class community can be seen as comprising a set of subculturally-differentiated status-levels? And, insofar as differentiated status-levels may be located, where are the subculturally-salient “cutting points” among them? Findings may be summarized as follows.
Despite the fact that census data provide what are, at best, limited and indirect indicators of a ramified style of life involving many hard-to-quantify features, the statistical data support an unambiguous conclusion: there were clear, direct, and systematic differences among the several social status levels with respect to major demographic characteristics. In addition to the educational and occupational criteria used to delineate the status levels, the following characteristics were associated directly and in a linear direction with social status levels: the number of females separated and divorced, number of foreign-born, low income (1950), moderate income, male unemployment, and rent payment. It is important to note, since many of these characteristics are often associated with the prevalence of Negroes rather than with social status, that none of the above characteristics were strongly associated with social status levels. Some characteristics which were strongly associated with social status showed virtually no association with Negro prevalence (male unemployment, percent renters, low rent, and failure to complete high school).

The following characteristics showed good relationships with social status, but were linear in character: low income 1960 (lower class I higher than middle class), proportion of Negroes (middle class higher than lower class I), degree of room crowding (lower class II greater than lower class III), number of children per family (lower class II more than lower class III), and proportion of divorced and separated women (lower class I lower than middle class). The following were poorly associated with status levels; the number of adolescents, young adults, and old people, the ratio of females to males, and the number of home owners. It is highly significant that those characteristics which most directly reflect subcultural “value” conceptions were best able to discriminate sensitively among status levels.

The second issue—where do the subculturally-salient cutting points life?—is clarified but not resolved by these data. Warner’s question of where to draw the line within the class of the “common man” remains. For some characteristics no clear cutting point emerges; this was particularly true in the case of characteristics such
as female headed families which showed a direct and linear-type relationship with social status. For those characteristics where it was possible to delineate cutting points, four rough clusters could be distinguished: 1. the two lower versus the two higher levels (children, adults, old people, sex ratio, divorced and separated women); 2. the bottom level, the rest of the lower class, and the middle class (foreign born, low income in 1950, medium income in 1950, low rent); 3. the bottom level, the second lower class level, and the highest lower class and middle class (Negroes, medium income in 1960); 4. the two lowest levels, highest lower class, and middle class (number of children per family, room crowding).

None of the clusters was clearly more common. The two bottom levels were close to one another and different from others with respect to age and sex distribution, marital status, unemployment, family size, and room crowding. The bottom level differed from the others primarily with respect to economic characteristics. Little support is afforded with the “lumpenproletariat” position, or the notion of a sharply differentiated lowest level; in some cases the “bottoms” are lower class III; in others, III and II. Nor is there evidence for a lower class which is homogeneous vis-a-vis the middle class. The fact that groupings based on economic characteristics did not correspond to those based on age, sex, and kinship further documents the finding that economic status and life-style are by no means directly linked. The fact that different criteria produced different groupings of levels indicates the importance of sufficiently refined intra-class distinctions; as already suggested, it would appear that three intra-lower class distinctions are the minimum necessary to adequate subcultural differentiation.

It would thus appear that the issue of subculturally-salient cutting points cannot be resolved on the basis of this type of demographic data, since different kinds of characteristics produce different cutting points.\textsuperscript{35} It is unlikely that the answer to Warner’s “common man” question can be found in the kinds of data ordinarily gathered by the federal census. The solution will require extensive and

\textsuperscript{35} See Freeman and Lambert.
systematic collection of information on a wide range of customary behavioral practices relevant to the subcultural circumstances of the populations under consideration.

Summary: The Urban Lower Class Community as an Organized Form

The city gang, in an important sense, is a product of the urban community in which it comes into being and passes its existence. A major object of the present chapter has been to illuminate the nature of the particular community which provided the effective context for the behavior, criminal and otherwise, of Midcity gangs. The chapter has gone into considerable detail as to this community context because of its relevance to a major issue in the study of gang behavior and gangs criminality: To what extent is gang crime the product of a life environment which is disorganized, un-integrated, and unstable?

A basic conception of the American urban lower class community, brought to fruition in the 1930’s but maintaining wide currency today, centers on the concept of “disorganization”, and accounts for many of its characteristic features by the assumption that the way of life of its inhabitants differs markedly from that of other communities in lacking cohesion, integration, and ordered patterns of existence. The easy formula--disorganized communities produce disorganized behavior--follows readily. One important reason for the nature of this conception is that much of the investigation which engendered it occurred during a historical era when the American city was serving as a kind of cultural induction center--a way station along the route of two massive sets of population movements--foreign lands to the United States, and country to city.36

36 A second important reason behind the “disorganization” concept is psychological and perceptual rather than historical. The majority of writers and observers operating out of the middle class scholarly and literacy tradition to characterize as “disorganized” or deviant” those forms of behavior and social organization which vary from those seen as appropriate to conventional middle class adult...
The “melting pot” image of the city slum-- one which penetrated American historical consciousness too deeply to be easily eradicated-- derives from the period when such communities served as a place where persons of many diverse foreign origins established residence during a temporary period of assimilation in which they and their children learned from language and ways of American society. These same communities, although not in obvious and dramatic a fashion, also served as cultural induction centers in the more gradual but equally massive movement from country to city, which has taken place during the last century. In the slum the country boy learned the ways of the city, and the farm laborer the ways of the factory.

The student of city life of the 1910’s and ‘20’s, sensing himself in the midst of a swirling flood of population movement, absorbed and communicated an image of the urban lower class community as a seething and motile realm of change and transition, and of conflict between old and new ways. The slum was emergent, transient, a temporary product of particular circumstances, which would change as its engendering circumstances changed. The terms used by this school reflect this conception: “zones of transition,” “zones of emergences,” “interstitial,” and “culture-conflict.” It was hardly surprising, given these perspectives, that the possibility that the urban lower class community might be a relatively stable social form was seldom entertained. Within this framework the slum was seen as disordered, transitional, disorganized, and many of its most characteristic features--low education, low occupational skills, widespread drinking and gambling, unschooled

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37 Handlin works, the Immigrant Tide, poss, others. A good discussion of the center status of the “disorganization” concept is included in Wilensky, H.L. “A Second Look at the Traditional View of Urbanism”, 1958, in Warren, R.L., Perspective on the American Community: Rand McNally, 1966; the contemporary situation with respect to the earlier immigrant groups is presented in N. Glazer and D.P. Moynihan Beyond the Melting Pot, M.I.T. Press, 1963.

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language, corner gangs--were seen as “deviant” or “disorganized” forms produced by deviant or disorganized environments.38

By the mid-1950’s, the era of the gangs of Midcity, all these forms of practices were still flourishing, while the social circumstances which had, presumably, engendered them, had all but vanished. Legislation in the 1920’s had effectively closed the door on further substantial immigration; the massive shift of the population from predominantly rural to predominantly urban had substantially slowed. Midcity in the 1950’s was affected by one of the secondary waves produced by the closing stages of these movements--an influx of Negroes which raised their percentage in the community from 23% in 1950 to 43% in 1960; however, this immigration was a direct product neither of the foreign-native nor rural-urban movements. The large majority came not from the country towns of the south but from cities in other parts of the north. Few were faced with the double transition from south to north, and country to city. However, in the face of an influx of Negroes and a corresponding out-movement of whites which was relatively large, the demographic character of the several neighborhoods of Midcity showed remarkably little change during this period. Black faces replaced white in several neighborhoods; the way of life followed by both was much the same.39

As the ethnic identity of Midcity’s inhabitants changes, fashions explaining the persisting features of its lower class life-style also changed. By the 1960’s a new explanatory rationale had supplanted the now out-modeled cultural dislocation school. This conceptualization centered on poverty, racial discrimination, and injustice, and attributed the classic characteristics of the slum primarily to the

38 “In nature foreign matter tends to collect and cake in every crack, crevice, and cranny-interstices... The gang occupies what is often called the “poverty belt”--a region characterized by deteriorating neighborhoods, shifting populations, and the mobility and disorganization of the slum. The gang may be regarded as an interstitial element in the framework of society, and the gangland as an interstitial region in the layout of the city”. Frederick M. Thrasher The Gang University of Chicago Press 1927 p. 22.

39 Chapter 3, will show that the relative position of the 21 census tracts of Midcity with respect to income, occupation, education, racial composition, etc. showed high correspondence in 1950 and 1960. For example, the rank-difference correlation between 1950 and 1960 in “percent” was +.90.
denial of legitimate opportunity to lower class status Negroes by higher status whites. The imagery disseminated by the racism-and-poverty school, while not identical to that of the cultural dislocation school, was remarkably similar. In this classic form, the imagery of the urban lower class community depicts its population as sunk in poverty, victimized by economic exploitation, chronically unemployed, miserably housed, desperately overcrowded, heavily ethnic, swarming with unplanned and unattended children, disproportionately containing the old, maimed houses, and the unproductive. If defective families can only produce disturbed and defective children; the 1920’s variant pictured generationally-split homes between the child, and its mother; the 1960’s variant pictured matriarchal houses whose absent or ineffectual fathers made it inevitable that the only meaningful bond subsist between a child and its mother.  

The present chapter has presented a picture of an urban lower class community derived from direct field observation and from demographic data. The community characteristics emerging from this examination correspond in important respects to the classic images of the slum held by the cultural dislocation and race-and-poverty schools, and in important respects, differ. Midcity was, without a doubt, predominantly lower class. Two-thirds of its residents, and three-quarters of its lowest status residents, had failed to finish high school. Seventy percent of its male workers, and 85% of its lowest status workers, worked in manual jobs. At the same time, Midcity was not poverty stricken. Although income levels were lower than those of the country as a whole, only 27% reported 1960 incomes of under $3,000, and even among its very “poorest” level, fewer than half reported incomes below the $3,000 poverty line. The residents of Midcity received enough and spent enough to feed and clothe themselves adequately, and line their streets with cars as well. The lower class way of life of Midcity was the product of something far more fundamental than simple poverty.

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40 Quotes from Josiah Strong The Challenge of the City, 1907.
Midcity in the 1950's was a community “in transition”, but its way of life after a decade of population movement, as well as after a century of important technological and population changes, was similar in fundamental respects to what it was before. The lower class subculture of Midcity was not a product of an unassimilated foreign population; 85% of its residents were native-born Americans, and its lowest status levels contained the fewest persons of more recent foreign origins. Nor was it directly linked with the prevalence of American Negroes; while the lowest status levels did contain the largest proportions of Negroes, there was a substantial and important group of middle class Negroes, and the statistical association between Negro prevalence and the classic attributes of the slum was astonishingly low. Midcity contained more Negroes than other districts of Port City, but was not a “ghetto”; Negroes comprised less than half of the total population, and were found at every status level. They patronized “mixed” commercial facilities, and lived for the most part either in mixed neighborhoods or within easy walking distance of white neighborhoods.

The circumstances of the Midcity family accorded with the conventional imagery in that the community contained relatively high proportions of female-headed families and divorced or separated women, and in that higher proportions of these were found at the lowest levels. The circumstances of the family departed markedly from the conventional image in that the number of children in even the lowest status families was close to national averages, and considerably below the numbers found in nearby middle class suburbs. Nor was there any preponderance of females, old people, and small children in the lowest levels. The residents of Midcity were not tightly packed together in the close confines of warren-like tenements, nor were they confined within constricted areas of life apace. Fewer than 15% of its dwelling units contained more than one person per room, and its empty lots, dead-end alleyways, and wooded bluffs provided some play space for its children. Low rent housing in a wide variety of structures was, in these pre-urban-renewal days, plentiful.
It was with respect to “disorganization” that the picture of Midcity emerging from these data departs most radically from the accepted imagery. Virtually none of the available data furnished support for an image of the community as disordered, unstable, or unintegrated; on the contrary, the bulk of evidence pointed to a way of life that was organized and cohesive. Conceptualizing the community as comprising four social status levels revealed direct and logically-consistent relationships between residence in particular areas and the maintenance of particular subcultural living patterns. The fact that these relationships were ordered, systematic, and patterned indicates that fundamental modes of life-style organization underlay the surface complexity of Midcity life. That these regularities were not merely a product of the methods of demographic analysis used to derive them will be shown in future chapters, in which the same kinds of regularities emerge out of examination of smaller groups which were known and directly observed. The social status subcultures of Midcity gave form, direction, and order to the lives of inhabitants.

One characteristic of the urban lower class community which occupies a central place in the classic imagery, but which has not been considered thus far, is crime. The elements of “vice, crime, and corruption” not only form an intrinsic part of cultural-dislocation and race-and-poverty conceptualizations, but are often taken as a, if not the, central index to the existence of “disorganization.” The central relevance of criminal behavior to the way of life of urban lower class populations, as well as its central relevance to the way of life of city gangs, requires that it be given separate and more concerted attention. Upcoming chapters will examine youth crime in Midcity--its prevalence, its distribution among the several social status levels, its association with the range of demographic characteristics already discussed, and changes during the decade of the 1950’s in the patterning of youth crime and community characteristics.
The Evolution of

an Urban Lower Class Community

Two miles from the town of Port City lies the village of Midcity. Its colonists are mostly from London, but there are also a few from the west of England. Among its inhabitants are many farmers, and there are also a goodly number of people of substance. In the town there are none of the poorest sort...

Thomas Dudley, Royal Governor, 1630

.....whereas it hath been the practice of the Negro servants of this town to be abroad in the night at unseasonable hours to ye great prejudice of many persons and families...and whereas too many of the townspeople are frequenting the common houses and taverns which have become so numerous and where one may find all manner of drinking, dancing, gambling, and other violations of the laws...and whereas the good citizens of this towne are no longer safe from the robbers and footpads who lurk in ambush along the main thoroughfare to Port City...the petitioners pray that it may be prevented and punished.

Petition to Midcity Town Council, 1739

The youth gangs of Midcity frequented the corners and roamed the streets of a community which may be characterized with little qualification, as “lower class.”

The bulk of its residents engaged in manual occupations, had relatively little
specialized training or advanced education, lived in low-rent apartments in multiple-unit buildings, and pursued a characteristic set of life practices involving drinking, gambling, and violation of legal statutes as customary behavior. Chapter One adduced a range of statistical measures indicating that this way of life was neither random nor disordered, but reflected instead, cohesive and organized subcultural patterns. Future chapters will describe in some detail the character of these patterns with respect to practices such as mating, drinking, schooling, family behavior, and the like. The demographic material of Chapter One suggested that the lower class subculture of Midcity was not directly associated with the particular racial or ethnic groups which composed the community in the 1950’s, but rather with a set of social status levels of diverse racial and ethnic character.

The existence in Midcity of an identifiable lower class with a well-developed subculture raises a pivotal question—how did this come to be? Later sections of this work will argue that characteristic attributes of city gangs—including their propensity to violate laws—are in fundamental respects a product of the urban lower class subculture. On this assumption an explanation of city gangs and gang delinquency requires, as one essential constituent, an explanation for an urban lower class. How can one account for the existence of a lower class in Midcity?

The issue of origins is as controversial as it is ancient. The statement “…the poor you have always with you...” was derived from close familiarity with a lower class which flourished almost 2,000 years ago. In contemporary America there are many who do not admit of the existence of a lower class, at least in the sense in which the term is used here. Those that do use this concept maintain a wide range of divergent positions both as to its nature and its origins.

In the United States, explanations for the existence of a lower class tend to assume a characteristic American form. There is a pronounced tendency, during any particular historical period, to derive the existence of the contemporary lower class from some set of social or economic circumstances peculiar to, or especially pronounced during, that particular period. The existence of contemporary lower
class populations was attributed in the early 1800’s to industrial conditions accompanying the shift from muscle power to mechanical power; in the 1870’s to social dislocations attending the aftermath of the Civil War; in the 1910’s to cultural dislocation attending the process of immigrant assimilation; in the 1930’s to characteristics of the economic system which produce depressions; in the 1950’s to characteristics of the system which produce prosperity and uneven affluence; in the 1960’s to cultural conditions attending shifts by the Negro population from rural to urban residence, and from lower to higher status.

Closely related to the tendency for contemporary observers to derive lower class from contemporary conditions is a tendency to assign causative primacy to social conditions the observers disapprove of and wish to see changed. Among these have been the relative powerlessness of workingmen vis-à-vis their employers; the non-“Americanized” state of recent immigrants; the weakness or absence of centralized economic planning and administration; discrimination against “minority” groups. This would suggest that in many cases the kinds of explanations forwarded to account for the lower class were geared more directly to the requirements of social reform than to those of adequate explanational validity.

In the United States, during the past 300 years, mechanical power has replaced muscle power; wartime has become peacetime; immigrant foreigners have become Native Americans; powerless workers have formed powerful unions; diffuse administrative power has become far more centralized; depression has become prosperity; country dwellers have become city dwellers; minority groups have moved from lower to higher status. In the face of all these changes—some recurrent or cyclical, others not—a lower class and a lower class subculture have persisted. This would indicate weaknesses in those explanations, which derive the lower class from contemporary conditions, and suggest the importance of an extended historical perspective. The basic question is clearly indicated: In the face of marked changes in technology, the character and residence of the population, the conditions of work and production, levels of wealth and prosperity—what characteristics of the social
order have remained constant—and related in a constant fashion to the existence of a lower class?

In the community of Midcity, as succeeding sections will show—a population identifiable as lower class has been in existence for over three hundred years. A selective historical review of this period—with particular attention to those features which changed and those which remained stable—will illuminate the reasons for the existence and persistence of this social class. The historical data are quite rich; this was initially the case because Midcity’s early settlers included a group of literate clerics with a well-developed propensity for expressing themselves via the written word, and later on because a sufficient number of its subsequent residents exhibited a similar propensity. Unfortunately, due to the circumstances of the present study, only a small portion of available historical materials have been utilized, and the defects of the forthcoming analysis must be attributed at least in part to this relatively shallow utilization.

This chapter will divide the history of Midcity into four periods, examine each one, and conclude with a generalized explanation for the persistence of the lower class based on the historical evidence presented therein. The four historical sections are titled as follows. 1630-1780: An English Country Village; Farm Laborers, Craftsmen, Servants and Slaves. 1780-1840: A Pre-industrial-revolution Mill and Market Town; Artisans, Mill Workers and Paupers. 1840-1880: A small Industrial City; Native and Immigrant Laborers. 1880-1910: A Classic Urban Slum; English, Irish, Jews, and Negroes.

1630-1780: An English Country Village:

Farm Laborers, Craftsmen, Servants, and Slaves

Four hundred years before the street gangs of the 1950’s roamed the streets of Midcity, the inhabitants of the community were American Indians of Western Algonquian stock who hunted, fished, and farmed in the rich woodlands.
surrounding their village. In 1630 the pattern of their existence was disrupted by
the arrival of colonizers from Europe. These new immigrants were Englishmen. The
bulk of English immigration occurred between 1630 and 1640; in the latter year the
settlement comprised approximately 600 persons. By 1780, when the 140-year old
European colony terminated its political affiliation with England and became part
of a new and independent nation, the United States of America, its population had
increased primarily by natural fecundity, to approximately 2,000.

The advent of the English marked the initial appearance in the community of a
population which may properly be designated “lower class.” The Indians whose
village had been appropriated were able to conduct the affairs of their society in the
virtual absence of intra-societal differentiation based on social rank. Among the
first and most enduring contributions of the old world to the new was the concept
and practice of a social order whose functioning depends upon a set of social status
levels differentiated by wealth, power, and prestige.\textsuperscript{41}

In the decade of the 1950’s approximately 75-80\% of Midcity’s population
could have been considered lower class; in the decade of the 1650’s, when the town
government recompiled records destroyed in a fire, approximately 75-80\% of the
community could have been considered lower class. In the intervening 300 years,
develop some fluctuations, the proportion of lower class residents of Midcity never
departed very far from this figure.

None of the English colonists of Midcity were wealthy or noble; a few were, or
became, eminent. A major incentive for colonization was dissatisfaction with
religious conditions in England, and a few of the leaders of the immigration were
highly creative religious scholars; several of the major Protestant denominations of
the United States can trace their origins to the seminal climate of intense religious
discussion by the elders of the First Church of Midcity. These men, the intellectual
aristocracy of the village, along with a small number of settlers who had brought
modest fortunes from England, comprised a small minority of the population. The

\textsuperscript{41} See Miller, Walter B. “Two Concepts of Authority” American Anthropologist, April 1955
village census of 1650\textsuperscript{42} listed about 300 names. Most were male family heads; some were unmarried males and females. Rough estimates based on the occupational data of this census make it possible to distinguish five status levels. About 10\% of the villagers had comparatively large (150-350 acres) landholdings; another 15\% were scholars and professionals; about 25\% were artisans and craftsmen, 35\% farmers and laborers with very small holdings (3-10 acres), and about 25\% were servants. The latter three categories correspond roughly in size and degree of labor skill to the three intra-lower-class status levels of the 1950’s.

The “landed gentry” were primarily managers and administrators; the “scholars and professionals” pursued occupations such as clergyman, physician, army officer and school teacher. Those at the level corresponding to lower class I practiced a wide range of manual occupations including those of carpenter, tailor, shoemaker, harness maker, baker, brewer, miller, and chandler. Those listed as “servants” were both male and female; several of the latter married men of the small-farmer or artisan class and became the mothers of Midcity’s new indigenous lower class. Those listed as manservants worked both as house servants and as low-skilled farm laborers.

There is no intention here of implying a direct correspondence between the social status levels of 1650 and those 1950; there were obvious differences both in the social class implications of the various occupational statuses and the style of life pursued by those in a social status system still modeled on the classic English Feudal pattern. Despite these differences, however, the lower status residents of Midcity as an English village did share significant life patterns and orientations with their social status descendants of 300 years later, and represented the earliest in an unbroken line of low-skilled laborers in the community. A casual reader of the historical accounts of this period might gain the erroneous impression that the bulk of Midcity’s first European inhabitants were men of eminence and high station; one reason for this impression is that virtually all of the writing about the community

\textsuperscript{42} Ref. to Ellis
was done by the relatively small group of higher status persons. Naturally they reported the doings of themselves and their fellows in great detail, and dealt with the presence and activities of the lower class only indirectly and sketchily. The fortunate existence of census-type data reveals that the names which occur so often in the historical accounts as to make it appear that they comprised the bulk of the population, in fact, were a small minority; the majority of Midcity’s colonial residents were humble folk pursuing low skilled occupations in many ways similar in form and context to those pursued by the lower class of the 1950’s.

Additional evidence as to the lower class status of a substantial proportion of Midcity residents may be derived from information as to political participation. Although the governing body of the church was directly influential in town affairs, Midcity also had a secular government which was organizationally independent of the church. The major governing organ was the selectmen (“fivemen”, since it comprised five men) whose members were elected by “the body of the people.” This “body,” in fact, did not include those whose social status was seen as inappropriate to political participation. Available data support a rough estimate that approximately 60% of Midcity’s adult males were not enfranchised. Decisions as to eligibility were made by the selectmen who formally designated as “freemen” those entitled to vote and run for office. In 1659 a delegation of non-freemen petitioned the selectmen for the right to vote; there is no record of action on this request.

Estimating the proportion of non-enfranchised males at about 60%, and the proportion of the occupationally lower class at about 75-80%, it is evident that being occupationally lower class and belonging to the non-voting class were not coterminous; something like 15-20% of occupationally lower class men, presumably those at the higher skill levels, were enfranchised. For the bulk of the lower class, however, pursuing lower skilled occupations and not voting were concurrent conditions. A situation of this type was not legally sanctioned in the 1950’s; in practice, however, the association between low skilled occupational status and failure to participate in the political process was still quite close.
The displacement of the resident Indians by the incoming English was a gradual process; in 1654 Indians were still listed as “members” of the First Church; in 1670 the medical care of Indians was still considered a public responsibility of the village. It was not until about 1700 that the last of Midcity’s former inhabitants reluctantly, and under unremitting pressure of military force, abandoned their community to the English. The departure of the Indians established a second major precedent for Midcity; it was the first known instance of a process that was to be repeated often during the next 300 years—the advent of a new ethnic group and its gradual displacement of a resident population. Most of the later instances of this process differed from their precedent in that some portion of the earlier population remained in the community as another portion of their fellows fled. In any event, it is hard to say which of the many displaced groups left the community more reluctantly—the Indians forced out by the English, the English overwhelmed by waves of Irishmen and Jews, or the Jews driven to flight by the immigration of Negroes. Midcity was “well watered with coole and pleasant Springs issuing forth the Rocky-hills, watering the Vallies of this fertill Towne…filled with a laborious people whose labours the Lord hath blést.” This 1654 description conveys the appeal of the community for the “laborious people”—an appeal which transcended many changes in size, in economic circumstance, and in governing auspices—so that each successive set of displaced residents clung to their Midcity homes until it became inescapably evident that the accession to political power or the newly-achieved dominance of a different group presented serious obstacles to their continued presence in the community.

Another feature of the community during this period established a third precedent—the presence of African Negroes as a low skilled laboring class. While the majority of the English immigrants were manual workers, many of them were small craftsmen and artisans, and did not, therefore, constitute a readily available source of labor for the low skilled manual tasks involved in farming, milling, building, transportation, and the like. At first the English believed that the
indigenous population could, with appropriate training, be recruited for this purpose. A not insignificant by-product of the attempts to “civilize and Christianize” the Indians conducted by local clerics would be, it was hoped, an indigenous population which could understand the language and customs of the English sufficiently well as to enter the fields, households, and mills as farmhands, servants, and laborers. It soon became evident that these hopes were based on a most fundamental misconception as to the nature of the native North American culture. Extensive attempts to teach the Indians to read, write, and take orders were undertaken; the second minister of the Midcity church spent the major part of his life and vitality in an intensive effort to induce the Indians to adopt the beliefs and customs of the Christian English.

With the exception of a few well-publicized converts, “praying Indians,” these efforts were met with dismal failure. The culture of the Eastern Algonquians was singularly maladapted to the conditions of subordinate domestic labor. With few exceptions the Indians were proud, convinced of the rightness of their own ways, and fiercely independent. Attempt to induce them to adopt the stance of obedient servitude assumed without difficulty by any self-respecting English indentured servant met with a spectacular lack of success. After a vain attempt to consider the Indians as fellow townsmen who could comprise a ready-made slave or servant class, and “executing” a few who responded to these expectations by murdering their would-be masters, the English of Midcity gave up the attempt to convert the natives into a serving class.

Residents of Midcity then adopted an expedient already widely employed by their fellow colonials in many parts of the British Empire. They purchased, as legally-owned property, natives of distant Africa who had been captured and enslaved in the numerous wars between African tribes. The culture of these Africans, unlike that of the Indians, was not antithetical to the requirements of subordinancy and servitude. The first African slaves were imported about 1670. In 1750 there were about fifty Negroes in Midcity, and in 1780 about 100, comprising
about 5% of the population. The use of Negro slaves as laborers was not confined to the relatively small number of larger landholders, although it was these men who took the initiative in their importation. In 1720 William Curtiss, a man of modest means, “bought a horse and a Negro and set up farming.”

Although the right to buy and own Negroes as property was abolished at about the same time that Midcity became subject to the laws of the newly-created United States of America, Negroes working as low-skilled laborers were still much in evidence in the 1950’s. Thus, of the three major ethnic groups inhabiting Midcity during this early historical period—Indians, English, and Negroes, two were still represented in the 1950 community, and of these the Negroes were more numerous. Midcity Negroes in the ‘50’s were thus one of its two “old stock” populations—having been present in the community for almost 300 years.

The economic circumstances of Midcity during this period served to establish a further precedent of the most direct significance to its future as a predominantly lower class community. The characterization of Midcity by one modern historian as a “purely agricultural village” conceals the fact that even during its most rural days the Midcity community had started to evolve a pattern of diversification in production, distribution and marketing which was to come into full bloom in succeeding historical periods, and was to remain a constant characteristic of the community. In the earliest years of this period, the primary economic activity of the villagers was, of necessity, the production of farm products for immediate local use. However, as soon as some surpluses began to accumulate, and the village became connected by roads with nearby towns, farming as a source of food and related products became the primary occupation of a diminishing minority of villagers.

From its earliest years the economic ethos of Midcity was oriented to manufacture and commerce rather than the fruits of the soil. While some proportion of the town’s agricultural product did, of necessity, go directly for consumption as food, it is significant that the inhabitants chose to convert that produce not so consumed into crafted or processed products before putting them on the market.
Cattle was a major agricultural product, but Midcity chose to focus on hides rather than beef, and rapidly became involved in the manufacture of leather, an essential material for clothing as well as a variety of other crafted products. By the end of this period there were 18 tanneries and their associated slaughter-houses in Midcity; one writer characterized the town as “tannery for the colonies.” Soap and candles, other animal products were also manufactured. In addition to the tanneries there were about a half-dozen mills; Midcity’s several rapid streams and small rivers provided a strategic location for the water mills that served as a prime source of power until the time that steam came into use. Included among the mills were several grist mills, a cloth (fulling) mill, a sawmill, and a chocolate mill. There were also several breweries—establishing another Midcity precedent.

Midcity was in fact the nearest inland town to Port City, which was at this time developing into a flourishing seaport and needed a vast array of products to outfit its vessels and maintain its port facilities. Among these, in addition to leather, were rope, sailcloth, netting, casks, nails, planking, spars, and similar products. The mills and small craft shops of Midcity became engaged in the manufacturing, storage, and delivery of these products. The necessity of transporting its products to Port City required wagonmen, porters, stevedores, and dockmen in addition to the blacksmiths, cartwrights, wheelwrights and other craftsmen needed to build and maintain the horse-drawn vehicles which formed a steady stream along the three mile road between Midcity and the Port City waterfront. Midcity also maintained, of course, a variety of shops and markets to supply its own residents, and local shops included grocery markets, bakeries, hardware and household goods stores, tailor shops, and the like.

Thus, while farming for local consumption was Midcity’s principal economic activity during the start of this historical period, by its close the community exhibited a highly diversified mix of small shops, small craftsmen, wagoners and haulers, mills, tanneries, and so on. These commercial facilities, moreover, were not isolated in particular sections of town but rather were scattered in and amongst the
dwelling units so that ones’ place of work and place of residence were close by, if not identical. What is of particular significance for the future of Midcity was the fact that the bulk of Midcity’s economic enterprises utilized and depended on a local supply of manual labor at various levels of skill—from the lower skilled porters, loaders, mill and farm laborers to the higher skilled carpenters, stonemasons and weavers. Major features of Midcity’s economic adaptation—mixed residential and commercial districts, a production system dependent on a supply of resident manual laborers, and a production-distribution-marketing system characterized by variety and diversity—present in embryonic form during this period, were to develop and expand, becoming stabilized and persisting characteristics of community life for 300 years.

To characterize the bulk of Midcity’s colonial villagers as lower class on the basis of their general level of labor skill will, to most readers, seem reasonable. The farm laborers, haulers, mill workers, house servants and field hands of Midcity shared with the contemporary urban lower class a low level of education, little wealth, and involvement in relatively low skilled manual occupations. But does this make them “lower class”—with the connotations this term has acquired in more recent times? Surely the millers, craftsmen, smiths, and bakers of this English village were sober, respectable, peaceful, and law-abiding—in sharp contrast to the image of the contemporary urban lower class—with its “broken” families, transiency and instability, economic dependency, and propensity for drinking, gambling, stealing, fighting, and in general running afoul of the law.

Available historical records provide little direct information as to the daily lives and customary behavior of Midcity’s colonial lower class, particularly those forms of behavior which failed to conform with the rigid statutes of the times. The degree to which these people did in fact engage in classic patterns of lower class crime must be inferred largely from the insistence with which the laws interdicted certain forms of behavior, which someone must have been engaging in. There does appear in the records, however, scattered references to specific offenses by the
towndsmen, and these must serve to indicate the form of violative behavior during this period.

Extensive data currently available, some of which is presented in the next chapter, show that the actual volume of criminal behavior among lower class populations is substantially higher than among higher; it is impossible to derive even roughly comparable information on the volume of crime from available historical records, particularly during earlier periods. It is possible, however, to get a fairly good idea of the form of such behavior. As future chapters will show, the principal forms of crime engaged in by the lower class residents of Midcity in the 1950’s were stealing, fighting, and illegal drinking; it would appear the criminal behavior of the colonial lower class approximated this pattern.

Illegal drinking was by far the most prevalent form of adult crime in Midcity of the ‘50’s, and there is ample evidence that it was also prevalent in the 17th century. The first brewer was licensed in 1653, and the first tavern (“ordinary” or “common house”) established soon afterwards. The first arrest for drunkenness was recorded shortly after the initial English settlement. On March 4, 1633, the Midcity court ordered that “Robert Coles, for drunkenness by him committed at (Midcity) shall be disfranchised, weare about his necke a “D” made of redd clothe...to continue thus for a yeare...”; in the 1650’s, one John Mathew, “being convict of notorious drunkenness and not holding remorse” was banished from Midcity. By 1768, according to one writer, “intemperance had become so prevalent” that severe restrictions were placed on the sale of wine and liquors.

This period was marked by a continuing and determined battle by town officials to hold down the number of breweries and taverns, and an equally determined battle by the sympathizers of alcohol to increase them. One reads of laws restricting the number of taverns to a specified number, and a few years later to a somewhat larger number; it would appear that the laws were not too effective in controlling the proliferation of drinking places. Nor did they appear to be much more effective in controlling the distilling and vending of spirits; in 1725, a widow
Pierpont was fined for selling alcohol without a license. One writer remarks, “The use of ardent spirits was almost universal, their abuse very common. They were offered on all occasions, ceremonial or social, --a call, a trade, a wedding, birth or funeral, a church dedication, --and to refuse was considered an affront.”

Direct references to theft were few, but there is little doubt that it was prevalent. Laws against thievery were stringent and severe. Early statutes indicate that the villagers had the habit of removing masonry from public roads for their own use and digging clay from the town clay pits at midnight. The commercial traffic along the road to Port City also posed a severe temptation to thieves. Drake points out that the road was the scene of frequent robberies; “so dangerous had it become, that in 1723 it was fenced in by order of the General Court.” In 1642, Mrs. William Webb, a baker’s wife, was tried and convicted for a common type of offense during this period—that of giving short weight, and nipping bits of dough from bread loaves after having weighed them. In the years 1669 and 1771, seven Midcity residents were hung on the gallows for crimes of various kinds, including thefts. Seven executions in two years in a town of 700 people would suggest that town authorities did not regard at least some of the citizenry as particularly law-abiding.

Crimes of violence do not appear to have been particularly common among the English residents of Midcity. Some were, however, recorded. Family fights, one of the more common forms of violent crime in contemporary Midcity, were not unknown in colonial days. In 1644, a Mrs. Anne Munke Stebbins “was so violent of passion that she offered violence to her husband, which being of such infamy she was cast out...” In 1681, a female Negro slave “in a discontent set her master’s house on fire in the dead of night.” For this crime she was herself burnt to death. A good deal of brawling occurred during the course of drinking bouts at the local taverns. It should be recalled, however, that the English were not the only inhabitants of the area during this period, and violence involving Englishmen and

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43 Drake, Francis, The Town of (Midcity), op. cit., page 63. For a virtually identical statement as to the prevalence and circumstances of drinking in the 1950’s, when most of Midcity’s drinkers were not Englishmen, see Chapter 10, Drinking Behavior.
Indians was extensive and severe. In 1671, an Indian discovered his wife “lodging” with an Englishman, and killed her. For this crime he was convicted of murder, executed, and his body hung up in chains.”

In the 1950’s a form of violent crime which seriously agitated the community was the gang fight—a combat encounter between groups of young men. The 17th century again set the precedent for this form of behavior; time and again between 1650 and 1690 small bands of Englishmen engaged small bands of Algonquians in bitter combat. In one of the more serious of these engagements ten of Midcity’s young men were killed; there is no record of the number of casualties among their antagonists. The criminal significance of fighting between bands of Indians and Englishmen obviously differs from that of fighting between bands of fellow Americans during later periods of Midcity’s history. Viewed, however, as a form of behavior entailing violent and hazardous confrontation between opposing bands of young males, it is apparent that the Indian fighting of the 1650’s and the street fighting of the 1950’s, however much the former may be viewed as heroic and the latter as reprehensible, exhibit a high degree of commonality in external form. At any event, violent confrontation, however justified by being categorized as “war” or “defense,” represented an ancient tradition in Midcity.

It further appears that colonial Midcity was no stranger to the variety of petty violations commonly accompanying lower class life. In 1733 laws were passed levying fines upon the prevalent practice of equine drag-racing along the main street of Midcity; gambling took many forms; cards and dice were ubiquitous, and subject to numerous unsuccessful attempts at legal control; youths and maids customarily frequented the streets and fields engaging in legally condemned manifestations of affection. In 1739 a group of Midcity’s wealthier landholders, greatly upset at the “unhappy practice of the Negro servants of this town to be abroad at unseasonable hours,” demanded that the selectmen institute measures to control this situation. Apprehension by the white middle class property-owners over the spectacle of lower class Negroes engaging in disorderly behavior in the streets of
Midcity was not, therefore, a phenomenon unique to the poverty-and-Negro-ghetto period of the 1960’s.

By the time it had reached the close of its earliest period of existence as a community in the European tradition, Midcity already manifested a set of social conditions of central significance to its future as an urban district whose subculture engendered and nurtured its youthful street gangs. Four such conditions may be cited. The first was that of ethnic replacement. At the start of this period the community was predominantly Indian; at its close it was predominantly English. This was the first of many instances of the in-movement of one ethnic or national group precipitating the out-movement of another. This instance, however, was unique in a fundamental respect; the social organization of the out-moving group did not incorporate a system of differentiated social status levels and did not, therefore, contain a lower class. The European culture of the English, by contrast, embodied a highly developed system of differentiated social status levels, in which a low skilled laboring class played a prominent part. The advent of the European-English form of social organization thus also marked the first appearance of a “true” lower class in Midcity. The historical evidence establishes that the central occupational involvement of this class revolved on low or relatively low-skilled manual labor; available evidence is too meager, however, to permit certain knowledge as to whether this class also manifested other forms of classic lower class behavioral practice. One indication that such forms did in fact accompany the low-skilled laboring way of life during this time is furnished by available evidence as to crime. The pattern of drinking behavior pursued by some substantial portion of Midcity’s colonial residents approximated the model of lower class drinking behavior in its most classic form. They also engaged in fighting, stealing, and a typical variety of behavioral practices such as racing in the streets, noisy nocturnal congregation, and public involvement in forms of adolescent mating behavior traditionally designated by middle class adults as “disorderly.”
The historical data clearly establish a second important circumstance; there was a lower class in Midcity from its very beginnings as an English community. This fact goes directly in the face of a “golden age” mythology maintained by later residents of Midcity and many similar communities; during earlier times, the myth goes, the community was composed almost entirely of persons of wealth, social standing, and quality, if not of outstanding stature. From this peak of eminence and worth, the myth continues, a progressive deterioration occurred, due primarily to the incursions of “lesser” stocks, until today the community has fallen into sadly regrettable disreputability. This image achieved major currency during the final stand of the English in the late nineteenth century, and in fact is still maintained in virtually pristine form by many upper and middle class residents of the Port City area, a few of whose ancestors lived in Midcity during earlier days. The total number of Midcity’s early residents whose descendants achieved social-register status comprised a small minority of the population; the great bulk of the populace consisted of lower class laborers and artisans whose family names merged inconspicuously into those of the vast body of “common people” in the United States.

A third condition concerns the role of the Negro in Midcity. Although it was not until the most recent historical period that Negroes achieved the status of a major ethnic group in Midcity, their presence in the community has venerable precedent. Africans comprised a low skilled laboring class in Midcity three hundred years ago; while their numbers in the community have risen and fallen during the intervening period, both their presence in the community and their involvement in low-skilled labor is as old a phenomenon as anything in the history of the United States.

Midcity’s economic and residential ecology represented a fourth major social condition. During this early period Midcity had developed an ecological pattern consisting of a mixture of residential and commercial units in close proximity. Both residential and commercial units displayed considerable variety, with the variety of commercial enterprises particularly marked. Production, distribution, marketing,
and service enterprises, generally on a small scale, were all present and proximate. A most significant feature of this economic adaptation was that its viability depended on the ready availability of a pool of local low-skilled labor. The variety of commercial enterprises of Midcity provided employment opportunities for these people, and its variety of dwelling arrangements provided appropriate housing. From its beginnings, the economic viability of Midcity and the presence of a low skilled laboring class were intimately interlinked.

1780-1840: A Pre-industrial-revolution Mill and Market Town - Artisans, Mill Workers, and Paupers

During its first 150 years as an English community, Midcity was a village in a British colony—a colony in which low-skilled laborers could be bought and sold as property. During the next historical period, the sixty years from 1780 to 1840, Midcity was a town in a state of an independent nation—a state which outlawed slavery in 1780. The events which marked the end of one phase and the beginning of another—the war of independence, the establishment of a new nation, and the abolition of slavery—were all of the most direct relevance to the existence of a lower class in Midcity Of particular relevance was the constitution of the new nation, which, in adopting the principle that “all men are created equal” as a fundamental tenet of national ideology, placed the society in official and explicit opposition to the existence of status inequalities. However, despite the potential for change of these and related events, the social status circumstances of Midcity remained much the same. Most of the characteristics of the pre-revolutionary community which were hospitable to the existence of a resident lower class population remained in existence, and new ones came into being.

Midcity continued to grow, but quite slowly. Between 1780 and 1840, its population increased from approximately 2,000 to approximately 9,000. While this represented a more than fourfold increase, the average annual increment of new residents was only 100 per year. The national background of the residents remained
predominantly English. With the abolition of slavery the number of Negro residents underwent a slow albeit a temporary decline. Some of the ex-slaves did remain, and continued to work as servants and in other low-skilled jobs. A few embarked on the classic American course of upward social movement through occupational betterment; in 1832, for example, John Parkinson, a local artisan, took on a Negro apprentice.

Although the numerical predominance of the English remained secure, this period witnessed two events which presaged profound changes. Its latter years saw the arrival of the initial representatives of the first large-scale immigration to the new nation of continental European peasants—the Germans. The first of these came to Midcity in the late 1820’s. They took jobs as low-skilled laborers, mostly in Midcity’s growing number of breweries. The Germans never became a major group in Midcity, but these immigrants established a precedent in that they were the first of a series of immigrations of Europeans which were to continue to replenish the ranks of Midcity’s lower class during the next century.

The second event presaged a far more substantial alteration of Midcity’s ethnic character. In 1818, the newly-formed Midcity-Port City Mill Dam Corporation, undertaking extensive construction of new water power facilities, imported a group of Irish peasants to work as construction laborers. While the Irish did not establish permanent residence during this period, their importation as low-skilled laborers presaged a movement which was to assume massive proportions in future years. It is worthy of note that less than thirty years elapsed between the time that English employers were prevented by law from importing African tribesmen to serve as low skilled laborers until the time they began to import Irish peasants to serve in a similar capacity.

The need for additional sources of water power reflected a continuing growth of commerce and industry in Midcity. Virtually every type of commercial enterprise which had employed low skilled labor during the previous period underwent expansion. The use of steam power on any extensive scale did not become common
until the next historical period, but the growing number of mills and factories were able to produce a variety of products using a combination of water and muscle power. Included among Midcity’s milling and manufacturing enterprises during this period were a cable factory, turpentine factory, lead factory, distillery, breweries, chemical and dye (“colour”) works, and others. While some of the early manufacturers went out of business or became obsolete, their places were taken by others, often producing similar products. For example, as leather breeches passed from fashion, one factory which had been engaged in their production converted to a woolen mill. The growing volume of trade also occasioned further growth of service enterprises such as taverns and hostelries, and the increasing flow of commercial traffic required manual labor for construction of roads, as well as other municipal facilities.

This historical period also saw the initial manifestation of a phenomenon which was also to become recurrent; the attempt to establish middle-class residential areas in Midcity. During the colonial period the residential circumstances of the relatively small group of middle and upper class residents of Midcity were distinguished from those of the lower in that, among other things, their landholdings were considerably larger. While some of these families retained their relatively modest “estates” during the post-colonial period, the size of the higher status population was augmented by a new group—residents of Port City who had begun to accumulate substantial fortunes in shipping, finance, and other commercial enterprises of the prospering port. These men bought up the farmland whose agricultural use was diminishing as Midcity became increasingly industrialized, and built country homes. Most of these were located in a section of town called “Midcity Highlands” or “Upper Midcity”—so designated, originally, because of the geographical elevation of its land rather than the social elevation of its residents. Midcity possessed obvious advantages as a residential area for middle and upper class families. It was scenic and attractive, close enough to the central
business district of Port City as to be convenient, and yet far enough away so that one’s “country” home was, in fact, in the country.

Most of the country houses were built between 1810 and 1830. This period of construction of middle class houses in Midcity was the first of five such enterprises—the most recent having started in the 1960’s. The first four attempts to establish a durable middle class beach-head in Midcity ended in failure—swept away by the inexorable press of social and economic circumstance. The fate of the most recent awaits the future. This first venture in establishing a middle class residential enclave in Midcity was, in fact, the most successful. During the following historical period, middle class business and professional people, attracted by the convenience and prestige of Midcity Highlands, added their more modest residences to the spacious country homes of the earlier and wealthier residents. It was not until the end of the 19th century that the bulk of Midcity’s first community of middle class suburbanites finally fled the district. Thus, during the second and third historical periods, wealthy owners of country homes and substantial professionals pursued a characteristically middle class pattern of existence on the highlands of Midcity as the workaday life of the mills and markets took its course on the flatlands below.

Concurrent with the establishment of a separate and self-conscious middle class community in one section of Midcity was the development of a phenomenon which was to outlast their presence in the community by many years; attention to the welfare of the lower class as an organized concern of the middle class. This attention took a characteristically American middle class form; the establishment of formally organized associations with a “program” of humanitarian enterprises aimed at the succor and uplift of the lowly. In 1789, a group of middle class citizens met to incorporate the Midcity Charitable Society—the first of many analogous social-welfare enterprises, private and public. While the welfare of the lower class was their primary concern, they did not go so far as to absorb themselves wholly in
lower class enterprises; in 1820 the major event of the society’s annual meeting was a concert by the Handel and Hayden Society of Port City.

The welfare of “the poor” as a concern of Midcity’s middle class had been evidenced during the colonial period by, among other things, the establishment in 1670 of a “Free Schoole” whose purpose was, in part, “the maintenance of a schoole master and free schoole for the teaching and instruction of poor men’s children at Midcity aforesaid forever;” and by the building in 1678 of a town workhouse for paupers. During the post-colonial period a major civic enterprise was the replacement of the old wooden workhouse by a new brick almshouse, constructed in 1830 at the cost of $11,000, to house the increasing numbers of penurious laborers. In return for accommodations the residents of the almshouse performed a variety of manual maintenance and construction services for the town. This circumstance was the occasion of some conflict between the residents of Upper and Lower Midcity.

Drake writes “Perhaps the most fruitful theme for town meeting eloquence, with the possible exception of allowing the swine to go at large, was the subject of the town paupers and the cost of their support.” He reports this complaint by a resident of Upper Midcity to a Lower Midcity fellow citizen: “You furnish most of the paupers from your part of town and we help support them; but you get their work, and we get nothing,” and the reply—“Well, if we furnish the poor, why shouldn’t we have the benefit of their labor?” As a political issue, the financial support of the poor by the middle class had scarcely lost currency by the 1960’s.

The Midcity Charitable Society and the new brick almshouse were among the first of what was to become an extensive network of societies, organizations, and facilities designed by middle class groups to attend the welfare of the lower class, and hopefully, in the process, of affecting changes in their behavior. By the 1950’s the descendants of those who initiated these enterprises had long removed from Midcity, but the legacy of social welfare organizations and programs they had pioneered was, as shown in Chapter One, extensive and flourishing.
The objects of these charitable ventures, meanwhile, continued to conduct themselves in ways characteristic of lower class populations. Extensive drinking, petty thievery, and general disorder were common. Drake writes of a major market district called “Midcity Neck”—“In the 1820’s a portion of this area called “The Point” was especially riotous and drunken, and (necessitated a continuing) warfare (by church-sponsored lay groups) against intemperance and disorder.” One theft in particular exercised the churchgoers of upper Midcity. In 1804, a silver dedication plaque placed upon the fifth building to be erected on the site of the original First Church was, shortly after the dedication, stolen by person or persons unknown. Officials of the newly-built church, moreover, attributed the fact that it was only half-filled on Sundays to the increasing numbers of “those who prefer to spend their Sabbaths lounging about taverns and pilfering in the fields.” Midcity’s first bank was established in 1826, and within a few years, not too surprisingly, the community experienced its first major bank robbery.

The propensity of lower class groups to congregate in and near neighborhood commercial facilities and there engage in drinking, game-playing, and the like, was already well developed during this period. A major congregation point was “The Punch Bowl,” for many years a kind of earlier-day truckers’ stop. Even closer to present-day practice was the phenomenon of the corner variety store as a major hangout. Drake writes,

At the corner (near Meetinghouse Square) is a store known as Riley’s, which was (in the 1830’s), a popular place of resort. A bar was a component part of (the) grocery store, three cents being the price of a full drink, while the “two cent club” contented themselves with a modicum of gin. In the afternoons and evenings Riley’s store would be thronged, some making purchases, some drinking, others gossiping and others playing checkers...

This description of the corner store as an all-purpose neighborhood facility and hangout, could with the elimination of the gin and the substitution of cards for checkers, apply virtually without modification to twentieth century gang hangouts such as Ben’s or Rosa’s stores, to be described in Chapter Four. In fact, a major Midcity corner gang in the 1950’s—one cited but not analyzed in succeeding
chapters, hung out on precisely the same corner where Riley’s store had stood, and there engaged in much the same activities as did their lower class precursors more than one hundred years before.

1840-1880: A Small Industrial City-

Native and Immigrant Laborers

The period from 1840 to 1880 witnessed three developments which served further to move Midcity towards its future as an urban lower class slum. These were a marked increase in size, a significant shift in ethnic composition, and a new form of industrial power. During this forty year period the population increased by more than four times, growing from about 9,000 in 1840 to over 40,000 in 1880. This represented an average annual growth rate of 900 persons per year, compared to a rate of 100 persons during the previous period. Midcity thus changed from a town to a city, and was, in fact, so incorporated in 1846. No small part of this growth was due to an event of lasting consequence—a massive influx of Irish peasants fleeing the fabled famine of the 1840’s.

For more than 200 years the bulk of Midcity’s citizenry—upper, middle, and lower class—was English. The decade of the 1840’s witnessed the sharpest population increase in the city’s history—from 9,000 in 1840 to over 18,000 in 1850. The great majority of new residents were Irish immigrants, and the stream of Irish immigration continued in force for close to fifty years. To the English who owned and managed Midcity’s industrial enterprises the advent of the Irish appeared at first as a bonanza. The Indians had proved completely unsuitable as a source of low skilled labor; the abolition of slavery had dried up the supply of Africans; the Irish appeared to be, at last, the ideal solution. They spoke the English language—albeit a dialect which amused the English; as farmers they were accustomed to hard and demanding manual labor; and best of all, their condition of poverty and paucity of
schooling constrained them to accept with enthusiasm wages well below those of the still substantial group of resident English laborers.

What the English did not foresee was that within the century the Irish, through the exercise of acute political craftsmanship and the astute employment of bloc voting, would have wrested from them the political control of the city itself, and would be well on their way to assuming economic control as well. During the 1840's, however, this eventuality was impossible to conceive; the primary apparent cost of the new immigrants, offsetting their utility as a low cost labor supply, was the possibility, soon realized, that their presence would entail a substantial expansion of health, welfare, and other services required of a city with a substantial impoverished lower class.

Virtually concurrent with the advent of a new and growing supply of manual labor was the advent of a new form of industrial power—the steam engine. Early in its history, as has been shown, Midcity had become a town of mills and small factories, due in part to the ready availability of water power. The basic patents which led to the development of the steam engine were taken out in the late 1700's, and by 1840 this revolutionary device had developed to a stage where it was able to provide a practical source of industrial power. In Midcity, however, the “industrial revolution” was scarcely a revolution; a milling town since colonial days, the coming of age of the steam engine involved a relatively smooth transition from water to steam as a source of industrial power; once the first pioneering mill owners had proved the practicality of the new device, the others quickly followed suit.

The introduction of steam power, then, did not disrupt the basic economic pattern of Midcity. Quite the contrary, it strengthened an existing adaptation. The virtually concurrent advent of a superior new source of industrial power and a large new source of low cost labor to man the new facilities provided the basis for a reinforcement and expansion of Midcity’s basic ecological pattern—mixed commercial and residential facilities, with a wide variety of industrial and business enterprises dependent in large part on an ample supply of locally-resident low-
skilled labor. Many of the new immigrants quickly found employment in construction work, which served the dual purpose of inducting them into the role of low skilled urban laborers and providing them the low-cost housing their increasing numbers required. Old factories, new factories, old dwelling units and new housing for and by new laborers lay cheek by jowl.

One writer\textsuperscript{44} says of this period, “In the twenty years from 1850 to 1870 Midcity enjoyed a great industrial and building boom... a segregation of residence and business... had not taken place; there was continued building of city row houses, and the invasion of Midcity Highlands by a large factory...foundries, textile mills, rope walks, piano works, clock companies, lumber and stone yards, indeed, all sorts of establishments, appeared...” The basic economic-ecological adaptation of Midcity in the 1950’s was essentially set by the 1850’s; the basic elements of the subcultural environment which engendered the street gangs of the 1950’s were clearly in evidence one hundred years earlier, and this environment, in turn, represented an orderly and sequential development from earlier patterns.

The social status class composition of Midcity during this period also showed a remarkable degree of continuity with that of earlier periods. Detailed records of all births between 1843 and 1849 provide specific information as to the occupation of each father and, in most instances, nationality information.\textsuperscript{45} These data permit a delineation of six occupational status levels; laborers and farmers, artisans and craftsmen, clerical and “traders,” merchants and proprietors, professionals, and “gentry.” During this period approximately 35% of Midcity’s fathers listed themselves as laborers; 40% as artisans or craftsmen; 5% as clerical workers or traders; 10% as merchants or proprietors; and 5% as professionals. Midcity also contained, during this period, 5% who designated themselves only as “gentlemen.” This occupational distribution of the 1840’s was remarkably similar to that of the 1640’s. In terms of the more general social class categories used in the present

\textsuperscript{44} Warner? See next page, “one quote by Warner...”

\textsuperscript{45} Ref. to Vital Statistics of (Midcity); used sample of 3 initials (?% of all names) n=288 names, letters A, L, P.
work, this occupational distribution would indicate that about 75% of the community was lower class, 20% middle class, and 5% upper class, a distribution remarkably close to that of the 1640's. At that time, as has been shown, the proportion of lower class persons was estimated at 75 to 80%, middle class at 15%, and upper class at 10%. Even the size of the several occupational categories, insofar as these are equivalent, show excellent correspondence over the 200 year period; for example, those listed as “farmers and laborers” comprised 35% in both periods. The major difference involved the presence of a “new” middle class in 1850; the 25% listed as clerks, merchants, and proprietors had no direct analogues in the 1650 listings.

One might suppose that the surprisingly stable figure of 75% for the lower class in Midcity might have resulted from an increase in the proportion of laborers consequent on the Irish immigration. This was not the case. Although the bulk of the Irish were laborers, their numbers relative to the English were as yet too small to show a significant influence of the statistics. The ethnic status of Midcity’s population in the middle 1840's was, in approximate figures, English 75%, Irish 15%, Germans 5%, and “others” 5%. The bulk of the lower class was English (75%), and the bulk of the English were lower class (75%). Ninety-three percent of the Irish were occupationally lower class, and 73% of the Germans. A higher proportion of the English were, however, in the higher lower class occupations (45%) than was the case for the other ethnic groups; 30% were listed as laborers, compared to 80% for the Irish.

In the predominantly lower class community of the Civil War period, what were the residential circumstances of Midcity’s middle class minority? It will be recalled that an upper and middle class residential enclave was established in Midcity Highlands in the early 19th century. This community continued to maintain itself during the 1840-80 period, with some of the higher status “country-estate” families being replaced by less wealthy but still “solid” middle class families from Port City. The quote from Warner shows that the residential purity of the
Highlands had already begun, during this period, to be diluted by the incursion of commercial building. It was, however, the increasing size of the “new” middle class of clerical workers and small businessmen, called “lower middle class” by Sam Warner, which provided the basis of a second major attempt to establish a middle class residential area in Midcity. During the period between 1860 and 1873, according to Warner, private builders took advantage of newly filled-in land in Lower Midcity and open land on the edges of the Highlands left by departing country estate owners to construct tracts of housing especially geared to the tastes and incomes of this lower middle class group. These units were rapidly filled, but the residential tenure in Midcity of these early middle class suburbanites was, as will be seen, surprisingly brief.\textsuperscript{46}

By the close of this historical period the low-skilled laborers of Midcity comprised a sizeable urban proletariat with a well-developed lower-class style of life. To the numbers of English, Irish, and German laborers were added a small but growing group of Negroes, the vanguard of a post-Civil War influx of Midcity’s second oldest ethnic group. Evidence of the lower class life style is furnished in the historical material by references to two of its classic characteristics—the utilization of public funds to support a variety of life activities and involvement in criminal behavior.

This period was marked by a substantial expansion in social welfare enterprises, an expansion characterized both by an increasing tendency for civil agencies to assume welfare functions formerly in private hands, and by the enlargement and consolidation of existing welfare facilities. In 1840 Midcity instituted a “poor farm” on a 200 acre plot recently abandoned by a group of artists and intellectuals who had attempted unsuccessfully to establish a communal agricultural colony thereon. In 1860 the Martin Luther Orphan’s Home was established, and in 1866 the Midcity YMCA. In 1868 the now venerable Midcity Charitable Society merged with the Midcity Dispensary to form a general-purpose

\textsuperscript{46} Ref. to Warner, Street Car Suburbs.
health and welfare facility for the poor. In 1871 a commercial hotel (formerly a country estate) was converted into a “sanitorium for the needy classes.” The basic shape of the modern social welfare structure was thus clearly discernable by the period of the Civil War. This period also witnessed the re-appearance in the repertoire of lower class behavior of a form which had been absent for over 150 years—combat between male bands of different ethnic status. Following the departure of the Indians in the late 17th century, the street brawls of Midcity’s male laborers pitted only Englishmen against Englishmen. The advent of the Irish reintroduced the ethnic factor ...

In their daily lives the Irish had little direct contact with the small middle class community of Midcity Highlands; in their areas of residence, their recreational activities, and particularly in the circumstances of their work they were exposed to the language, the values, and the customs of the indigenous English lower class subculture. It was this variant of American culture, rather than a dimly experienced middle class variant, that was, for the Irish, the American way of life. The Irish did, of course, as did all other ethnic groups, impart a particular ethnic flavor to this basic subcultural tradition, but it’s essential elements—low-skilled labor, low-cost housing, sporadic employment, sporadic husbandship, extensive drinking, gambling, and fighting, and all the rest—remained, as practiced by the Irish, true to the fundamental subcultural tradition.

Certain aspects of Irish peasant culture were parallel to and concordant with the American lower class tradition, and this, along with the fact that there was no language difference to impede acculturation, enabled the Irish to adopt the native lower class tradition rapidly and thoroughly. So well did they learn and practice this tradition that the middle class English of Midcity were quite convinced that it represented an inherent racial characteristic. As will be shown further in the next section, the residents of Midcity Highlands firmly believed that the propensity of the Irish to drink, to gamble, to fight, and to leave the mothers of their children

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47 A page of this chapter is missing. Text is continued from the next available page.
represented an ineradicable property of the “stock,” and this in the face of the highly conspicuous fact that a very substantial proportion of the Midcity Irish, in a remarkably short span of time, shed in turn the recently learned patterns of the American lower class subculture and adopted the mores, customs, and modes of thought of the native middle class.

The habit of attributing to “race” or “stock” a whole range of behaviors which in fact were a consequence of cultural learning continued to be prevalent among the middle class. Even as late as the 1960’s there was a marked tendency to believe that the most modern practitioners of the classic lower class tradition—the Negroes—behaved as they did because of something that was unique or peculiar to their particular race, or ethnic background, or ethnic experience. This belief was maintained just as firmly in the case of the Germans in 1830, the Irish in 1850, the Jews in 1890, and the Canadians in 1910—each of which, in due course, converted the majority of their numbers into solid middle class status.

1880-1910: A Classic Urban Slum-English, Irish, Jews and Negroes

In the two hundred years during which the English were its dominant national group, Midcity had developed, in generalized form, most of the typical characteristics of the urban lower class community. In the thirty years between 1880 and 1910, during which the English became a minority for the first time since colonial days, most of these characteristics assumed the specific form they were to maintain for the next half century. One characteristic which became firmly established during this period was that of class stability through ethnic replacement—a phenomenon whereby the basic character of a social class subculture remains essentially stable while the ethnic identity of those who manifest it undergoes significant change. This phenomenon almost always appears to the contemporary observer as an unambiguous manifestation of fundamental and
even disruptive social change (“twenty years ago, before this new group started to come in, things were completely different...”); in the perspective of history the phenomenon appears, quite the contrary, to represent a stable and consistent social process.

The population of Midcity in 1880 was approximately 40,000; by 1910 it had increased to something over 80,000. Some years before the start of this period (in 1867), in the flurry of enthusiasm over metropolitan consolidation that swept the area shortly after the Civil War, Midcity relinquished its 200 year-old status as a self-governing local unit and become a district of Port City. She regretted this move almost at once, and shortly after “annexation” had been supported by a substantial vote, there began a series of abortive efforts to return all or parts of the community to self-governing status—efforts which have continued up to the time of writing.

The nature and circumstances of Midcity’s lower class during this period, as well as those of its middle class minority—can best be approached through a brief examination of its four major ethnic groups—the Irish, the Jews, the Negroes, and the English. By 1900 those Irish who were descended from the earlier immigrants represented the third generation of American residence, and the second of American nativity. New immigration continued to increase the numbers of Irish during the late 19th century, but the bulk of new immigration was over by the twentieth. In 1910, seen as perhaps the zenith of the “melting pot” epoch, over two-thirds of Midcity’s inhabitants were native-born Americans (68%, compared to 85% in 1950-60), and another 10% were English Canadians.

The social status of the original Irish immigrants was quite homogeneous; all but a few were peasant-laborers. The sixty years between the original Irish reflux and the turn of the century saw the development of three major social divisions. One group, rapidly advancing itself primarily through commercial enterprise (primarily in the construction field) moved first from the flats and shanties of lower Midcity to the new lower middle class residential developments in and near the Highlands, and finally left Midcity entirely to settle in the newer middle class
residential suburbs some three to seven miles to the south and west. For the new Irish middle class, Midcity had served as a stepping-stone to higher status. A second group chose to cast its fate with the community, there to undertake the task of wresting from the English their long-established political power. This story has often been told. Beginning in the late 1800’s the Irish of Midcity produced a series of brilliant political leaders who moved from control of local precincts to become ward bosses and thence to city-and state-wide offices. One of these men serves as the virtual archetype of this pattern, and was the central figure of a best-selling novel. In 1880 he was a grammar school pupil in Lower Midcity, in 1912 boss of Midcity Ward 17, in 1914 mayor of Port City, and in 1935 governor of the state. The politically active and bloc-voting constituencies of these men did not follow the middle class trail westward; instead they comprised a solitary, neighborhood-oriented population of lower class I and II persons. They remained active as manual workers in construction, in factory work, and in the growing number of service and distribution industries.

A third and sizable group of Irish adopted the familiar patterns of the lower class III subculture. They remained in and near Lower Midcity, and competed for the lowest skilled jobs with the Negroes who were moving into this area. The “shanty” Irish of the lower class III neighborhoods provided steady patronage for the many barrooms of Midcity Center, the bulk of the clients for the welfare agencies, the major clientele for Midcity’s Irish lower class I and II policemen, and an ample supply of low-skilled labor for Midcity’s commercial enterprises.

The Irish of Midcity thus recapitulated the “separating out” process experienced by their English predecessors, in that they evolved out of a relatively homogeneous immigrant-generation subculture a set of well-differentiated life styles based on differential social status. The experience of the westward-moving suburbanites conforms, of course, to the conventional American Dream of upward social movement; of far greater significance to the later history of Midcity was the
The continuing existence of a sizable group of Irish who adhered to a stable and well-developed lower class III subculture.

The major new ethnic group to take up residence in Midcity during this period was that of Eastern European Jews. The influx of Jews, mainly from Russia and Poland, got underway just about forty years after that of the Irish, with pogroms rather than famine the major spur to emigration. Both groups shared in common a background of political and social discrimination by European governments. For most of the new Jewish residents, Midcity was the second stop in a series of moves to increasingly “better” neighborhoods, and represented a definite step up over the central Port City district, which served as their first American locale of residence. The Jews moved into Midcity slowly and in limited numbers—especially when compared with the flood of Irish during the previous period. An 1880 report cites “fifty-eight Russian Jews” as having taken up residence in three Midcity wards; by 1910 the total number of Jews in Midcity was about 2,000, or less than 5% of the population.

Of all the ethnic groups to come to Midcity, the Jews, as a group, stayed for the shortest time and left behind the smallest residuum of persons at the lower status levels. Moreover, even during the historical period when the external character of their lives most closely approximated the urban lower class pattern, the Jews did not manifest that pattern in as “pure” a form as did their English and Irish neighbors. For example, an ancient abhorrence of drunkenness and an equally ancient tradition of nuclear family solidarity militated against any ready adoption of two of the key features of lower class III life—customary heavy drinking and the female-based household. A particular set of subcultural characteristics which cannot be detailed here (high valuation of scholarship; familiarity with and skill in European commercial practice; concept of intensive and rational pursuit of specific life goals; stress on worldly rather than otherworldly achievement; perception of the individual as personally responsible for his own destiny) enabled the Jews, in the face of (or perhaps aided by) considerable exclusionary sentiment and practice, to
enter the professions and commercial world in force, and to convert the bulk of their numbers into substantial middle class status in the space of two generations.

However, despite the fact that the seeds of destruction of the Jewish lower class subculture were already planted, and that even during its golden age it did not attain the degree of purity achieved by the English, Irish, and Negroes, the occupational circumstances, language patterns, and many customary practices of the Jews fell well within the established lower class tradition. The Jews may not have excelled in the Saturday night spree or the establishment of fatherless families, but they did, during this period, closely resemble their lower class Midcity neighbors in pursuing predominantly low-skilled occupations, inhabiting “cheap” housing, and maintaining it in forming tough and active street corner gangs, speaking the lower class variant of American English (with Jewish coloration: “money I ain’t got,” instead of “I ain’t got no money”), engaging quite actively in theft and a variety of other illegitimate commercial practices, and producing their share of hustlers, boosters, con-men, card sharps, pool-sharks, pimps, and prostitutes. As will be seen, the language used by middle class observers to characterize the life style of these lower class Jews was very similar to that applied to the English, Irish, and other lower class groups.

Although no detailed occupational breakdown of Midcity’s Jews is available for this period, such data is available for the Jewish community of a nearby and similar lower class district. These distributions, for the year 1910, probably approximate those of Midcity ten or fifteen years before, since the social status of the Jews in the neighboring district was slightly lower than that of Midcity Jews. These data, based on a 1910 police census of 712 male Jews, show that 78% of the adult males were employed in manual occupations corresponding to the bottom five

48 A detailed picture of lower class Jews in New York’s Lower East Side during the 1890-1910 period is presented in Gold, Michael, “Jews Without Money” (Publisher), 1930. Gold presents in detail the picture of a classic urban lower class community, with a full repertoire of lower class roles—saloonkeepers, teamsters, hucksters, gamblers, gangsters, sailors, migrant workers, pimps, prostitutes—all filled by Jews.
categories of the federal census. While the bulk of these were lower class I and II, almost one-third (31%) pursued characteristically lower-class III occupations such as teamster, stevedore, factory operator, and laborer. Many Jewish women also worked as factory operatives during this period. Lower class I and II occupations included those of carpenter, plumber, butcher, machinist, painter, paperhanger, shoemaker, and tailor. The 22% non-manual occupations reflected life-styles just barely, if at all, different from that of the lower class workers. One-quarter were junk dealers, another quarter salesmen, and clerks, and one-half small storekeepers. Thus, despite the relative brevity of their adherence, as a group, to lower class ways, the American subculture initially learned and practiced by the Jews of Midcity was that of the lower class, as it had been for their Irish predecessors.

Following the abolition of slavery about one century prior to the start of this historical period, the number of Negro residents of Midcity waxed and waned, but remained quite small. In 1880 the Negroes were thinly scattered throughout Midcity, with numbers ranging from 2% to 4% of its three major political wards. Around 1895 the major Negro community of Port City, located near the city center since Civil War days, began to move to Lower Midcity. By 1910 this area contained 5,100 Negroes, about 22% of the population. Most of these people moved into dwellings vacated by upwardly-mobile Irish and Jews. About half of these Negroes were employed in the lowest occupational categories, with the average wage described as under twelve dollars a week. Some significant part of Midcity’s growing Negro community was, however, in the process of assuming middle class status along with their Irish and Jewish fellow citizens, and this group formed the basis of the long-established Negro middle class community which, in the 1950’s, was occupying the houses of the departed English, Irish, and Jewish middle class in Midcity Highlands.

49 Reference to Woods’ data.
For the English of Midcity, the period from 1880 to 1910 marked the end of an era. The English had won control of the community from the Indians, and there established a lower class subculture reflecting the classic English tradition immortalized by Dickens and Booth. Early in the previous period, it will be recalled, the English still comprised a clear majority (75%) of the community, with a clear majority of these (75%) lower class. The position of the English in Midcity—the middle class minority as well as the lower class majority—was directly affected by the increasing numbers and influence of the more recent arrivals from Europe.

The English middle class, as has been seen, at first perceived the advent of the Irish as a boon. Commercial enterprises established or expanded through the use of low cost Irish labor further enriched the already prosperous and provided new wealth for many more. By 1880, however, as the first generation of American-born Irish was reaching maturity, the English began to sense a serious threat to their position in the community. Their commercial dominance was still secure, since the relatively few Irish-run business enterprises were quite small, but Irish power in the realm of politics was real and growing. The first mayor of Midcity had been one of the middle class English, and the community’s major political offices had remained a perquisite of Midcity Highlands. As the second-generation Irish politicians moved rapidly to gain and consolidate power through ethnic bloc voting and efficient political organization, the English were confronted with the prospect of a community run by Irish lower class I politicians to promote the interests of an Irish lower class II and III constituency.

By 1885 the threat was perceived by the English to be of sufficient gravity as to warrant specific countermeasures. One of these was the establishment, within a relatively short space of time, of a set of exclusive “gentlemen’s clubs”—bearing names such as “The Elm Hill Shakespeare Society,” “The Dudley Club,” and “The Midcity Club.” These clubs were established partly in an attempt to counter the solidarity of the Irish by instituting an equivalent kind of organizational system, and partly to draw clear and conspicuous lines of demarcation between themselves
and the growing Irish middle class which was beginning to move in along the fringes of the Highlands.

The efforts of the English to retain dominance in Midcity were futile. They were overwhelmed, in the end, by the political skill of the Irish and by the sheer weight of numbers. The middle class community itself had always been small, and the English lower class, whose earlier numerical predominance might have provided the basis for a successful counter to Irish power, were also, at this time, beginning to retreat before the Irish. The increasingly futile attempt by the English to maintain their position in Midcity lasted for about 15 years—until 1900. By this time, the very heart and citadel of middle class Midcity—Midcity Highlands, with its gracious homes and ordered Victorian existence—was under attack from diverse quarters. The first factory to violate its walks and groves was the harbinger of others, and industrial smokestacks and massive masonry walls were now visible from the verandas of middle class homes. Slowly but with growing momentum the rising Irish middle class bought and built first near and then in the Highlands district. This was hard enough to endure—but the crowning blow came in 1900, when that most exalted of all status symbols, a house in Midcity Highlands—was attained by a small number of prospering Russian Jews.

This was the final straw. Their citadel breached and infiltrated, the English broke ranks and ran, and within a remarkably short time abandoned the community completely to the Irish and Jews. The speed with which the English fled from Midcity Highlands was almost as great—but not quite—as that with which the Jews fled from the Negroes 40 years later. Although by 1900 the English had almost completely abandoned their residential tenure and political interests in Midcity, they did maintain their local commercial interests for some time afterwards—as did the Jews when they in turn underwent a similar experience. In 1900 the now venerable First Church in one of the last collective enterprises of Midcity’s English middle class, printed the first and last issue of “the Midcity Magazine,” a valedictory gesture representing a sad farewell to Midcity and the glories of its
illustrious past. Almost all the merchants and tradesmen of the community took out ads in this magazine; of some 50 advertisers, about 85% had English names (Putnam, Griggs, Sawyer), 10% Irish (Coughlin, Collins), and 5% German. All of the Irish advertisers were in the construction field.

The departure of the lower class English from Midcity was less precipitous than that of the middle class, but almost as complete. The earliest group to leave in force was the lowest-skilled laborers of lower class III. These men and women were unable to compete with the flood of Irish laborers who were willing to work for much lower wages. Capitalizing on what resources they had—a superior command of American culture and a slightly higher level of labor skill—many took up residence in the growing ring of factory towns on the perimeter of Port City—towns still largely free of the Irish.

Not long afterwards the higher status English manual workers also began to leave Midcity. Several processes were at work. The large pool of low-skilled Irish laborers attracted to the community commercial enterprises geared to the use of low skill labor. As their numbers increased, the enterprises employing craftsmen and highly skilled laborers began to move away, and many of their workers followed them. Further, as the immigrant Irish learned the ways of the industrial city, as they did with considerable rapidity, they began to come into competition with the resident English for the higher skilled jobs. English residents of lower class I and II status began to feel increasingly disadvantaged in a community whose political was passing to Irish politicians whose love for the English was less than overwhelming. Some additional number of the lower class I English, in addition, in the process of following the route to higher status achieved by so many of their compatriots, left Midcity for communities better adapted to middle class life circumstances. The lower class English who remained in Midcity were, after 250 years, so well entrenched in a lower class life style as to approximate a “pure” lower class III subculture. In relatively small numbers, they continued to live in the low-rent
districts of the community, and to work with, live among, and intermarry with their more recently arrived neighbors.

Quite remarkably, by an ironic twist of history, the departure of the bulk of English laborers did not leave Midcity bereft of an English Protestant lower class. During the very period when the ranks of the older English lower class were becoming thin, Midcity experienced a new influx of lower class Englishmen—an influx second in scope only to that of the Irish. These people came from the eastern provinces of Canada, and were referred to as “Provincials.” In religion, locale of British origin, and general culture these new arrivals were virtually identical with the old English lower class. This was scarcely accidental. As will be recalled, during the pre-revolutionary period a substantial number of Midcity residents, in common with many others, choose to leave a country which had so small a sense of honor as to revolt from their mother country. Many of these “Tories” or “Loyalists” took up residence in the still-loyal Maritime Provinces; changing economic circumstances along with a gradual softening of anger produced an initially small but continually expanding re-immigration to the United States. The first colonies of Provincials settled in Port City around 1850; up until 1905, however, few had come to Midcity. Then between 1885 and 1905, the community experienced “a tide of Canadian movement.” By 1905 there were approximately 15,000 Provincials in Midcity—between 15% and 20% of the population.50

Virtually all of the new English were lower class. Not only did they duplicate the ethnic characteristics of the old English lower class, but they closely approximated their social status circumstances as well. A contemporary writer, noting the “varied classes” among the Canadian workingmen, indicates that Provincials were found at levels I, II, and III of the lower class. Their distribution among these levels, it would appear—was close to the all-community distribution of the 1950’s. The bulk were found in lower class II, with smaller and approximately equal numbers in lower class I and III. The majority of Midcity’s Provincials came

50 Reference to Canadian chapter in Woods.
from Nova Scotia; the next largest groups came from Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick; the fewest from Newfoundland. The same writer notes, “The great middle mass of them do fairly good work in the less skilled employments, averaging from $15.00 to $18.00 a week.” Lower class I Provincials worked as foremen in machine shops, skilled carpenters and cabinet makers, street-car motormen; many lower class I women went into nursing. Lower class III Provincials worked as operatives in casting foundries, as pile-drivers, as lumbermen, as fishermen. Many Provincial women worked as factory operatives.

The appearance of these English Provincials in Midcity—or rather, their reappearance, since many of the immigrants were descended from Loyalists who had left the same or nearby communities a little over a century before—guaranteed the continuity of an English Protestant lower class in Midcity despite virtually complete departure of the old. Many of the immigrating Provincials were highly-motivated to rise socially and by the second generation—following in the footsteps of their English ancestors and Irish predecessors, had converted some significant part of their numbers into middle class status, and, in their turn, left Midcity. However, more in line with the Irish than English precedent, some substantial portion of the Provincials did not so alter their status; as shown in Chapter One, about 15% of Midcity’s population in the 1950’s had Provincial backgrounds; these people, the mixture of earlier and more recent migrants, remained in Midcity as an indigenous English Protestant lower class.

Thus, by 1910, the basic shape of Midcity’s social class and ethnic composition was essentially “set” for the next half century. Most of the Germans, whose numbers had never been large, left the community just about the time of the major Provincial immigration; a relatively small group of Italians also entered Midcity during this period, but did not form a sizable Italian community. For the first half of the twentieth century Midcity was a predominantly lower class community of English, Irish, Jews, and Negroes.
The process by which the various immigrant groups took up residence in Midcity, adopted and practiced a lower class way of life, and in the course of time experienced a “separating-out” process whereby some portion of the group adopted middle-class ways while another continued in the lower class tradition—was repeatedly illustrated during the 19th century. It also appeared that the different national groups manifested different potentials with regard to their rate of “conversion” from lower to middle class status. Relative to the Germans and Jews, larger proportions of the English, Irish, and Italians retained lower class status. However, despite the abundance of the historical evidence that each national group possessed the capacity to adopt both lower and middle class subcultures, many observers during this period maintained the conviction that adherence to lower class life was in some fashion directly linked to the particular national, ethnic or racial background of a particular national group. This view had considerable currency even at the time of writing—primarily with reference to the Negroes, who in the 1950’s comprised a minor but increasingly conspicuous proportion of the urban lower class. Readily admitting that large numbers of English, Germans, Irish, Jewish, and others moved from lower to middle class status in the course of time, proponents of the position maintained that the Negro case was of a different order, and that a heritage of slavery, widespread racial discrimination, overly rapid urbanization, and other factors made the linkage between Negro and lower class status closer and more compelling than in the case of the other groups.

In light of this position it is enlightening to consider statements made by contemporary observers during the 1880-1910 period about three of Midcity’s groups—the Irish, the Jewish, and the English. The following statements were made in 1910 about the national group which in the 1960’s produced an eminent American president:

Of the Irish it should be reiterated...a latent germ of unprogressiveness and even degeneracy taints the air and cripples the social institutions of (Lower Midcity). They live in cheap surroundings in the squalor of the low-rent district. The relief agencies are at one in proclaiming drunkenness, shiftlessness, and poverty as powerful influences in their lives. The problem
of wife-desertion is particularly vexing; that there is an absence of virility in this stock demands frank recognition. The number of arrests among people other than the Irish is small; this race furnishes the major portion of the crime, most of which consists in drunkenness. In unarrested crime the Irish again furnish the bulk of drinking and fighting. Crime and malicious mischief is on the increase, and there is a spirit of lawlessness which argues badly for the future...The homes of the Irish are (far from) exemplary, and many of the children are at the same time insubordinate and weak morally as well as physically. Drunken fathers and mothers leave their children to get their education in the street...they lack the type of education which will turn out children capable of being really productive members of society. It is the lament of all that the years from fourteen to seventeen with both boys and girls are practically wasted. Three quarters of the pupils leave at the end of the grammar grades. The matter of petty larceny among these boys deserves special mention. The moral tone of the young people, as indicated by their corner gangs, is low and vulgar, or even worse. 51

The parallel between this catalogue of characteristics and those associated with lower class Negroes in the 1950’s is striking. Attributed to a “latent germ of unprogressiveness” and a racially-inherent “absence of virility in this stock” are dependency on public welfare, occupancy of badly-maintained slum housing, high rates of crime and delinquency, prevalence of drinking and violence, low concern for education, high drop-out rates, child neglect, fatherless families, disrespect for law and order, immorality, and vulgarity.

The Jews also, during their relatively brief sojourn in the slum districts of Midcity, were represented as manifesting key characteristics of the lower class subculture out of racially-inherent propensities. The Jewish communities in Lower Midcity and a nearby district were described, in 1911, in these terms:

The Jews have established a colony which shows the same stench in the houses, the same overcrowding of rooms, the same dirty yards, which one finds in (a central Port City slum district). The Jewish colony seems peculiarly dirty and dismal. The passage ways of the tenements are dark, filthy, and permeated with fetid odors, while the litter on the floor, the torn-out wallpaper and kicked-out banisters bear witness to the presence of tenants carelessly content with squalor. The apartments are decked out with well-worn old furniture and the colored advertisements of the local dealers. The people are mostly small shopkeepers and junk dealers, and some work in a small raincoat factory...Jews furnish some of the less responsible (factory) work.

51 Reference to origins of statements. Cite authors in Woods. Not all in sequence.
operatives and carry on the hard and dirty forms of work. Their children are filling the schools and kindergartens, where they are characterized as chiefly dirty, ignorant of the language, brilliant at figures, slow at other things. The Jews break the city ordinances by keeping their shops open on Sunday, letting their customers in the back doors, and violating the rules governing peddling. Even the laggards (among the Irish) are cleaner than the Jew; the Irish children become soiled with the dirt of the street, but they are really clean compared with those races which are inherently dirty...

This representation is not as faithful to the classic form of the lower class III subculture as was the case for the Irish; although dirty, content with squalor, ignorant, and slow, the Jews do fill the schools, and are brilliant at figures. The major emphasis here is on dirtiness as a characteristic (and racially inherent) life condition, but also associated with being Jewish are illegal behavior, slum residential conditions, room overcrowding, low-skilled manual labor, and occupancy of the less responsible jobs.

One might suspect that these middle class writers, most (but not all) of whom were of English background, would be less apt to link lower class characteristics with national background in the case of the Provincials, whom one of the writers characterized as “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.” This close affinity, however, did not save the life style of their fellow Englishmen from being characterized in terms similar to those applied to the other lower class groups, or from the implication that these were in some specific way related to national background. The following refers most explicitly to the lowest status English Canadians:

There is among (the Provincials) a large proportion of slack, careless, and little-to-be-trusted workmen. They are not liked by their fellow workmen. When there are several of them in a shop they tend to be very clannish, and are accused of being sneaky and behindhand. As well might be imagined...the newcomers act as strikebreakers, and the Unions dread this body of Canadian labor force ready to be tapped on the slightest provocation. When they marry they make their home in neighborhoods of others of their kind, who thus form a little colony. They generally rent an apartment and acquire the restless habit of moving from one flat to another...They disregard local duties and refuse to assume religious or civic bounds. Expenditures on clothing are unusually large; for appearance counts for much. On the whole
the manner of life is unequal, uneven, oscillating between penury and extravagance...Police lists show a considerable number of Canadian arrests for drunkenness, for assault, and for disturbing the peace, which are characteristic crimes. The crime against the family is desertion, of which there are many instances noted by police and charity workers.

The Provincial emerge from these statements as exhibiting lower-class characteristics in a somewhat purer form than the Jews, and somewhat less pure than the Irish. They are slipshod and undependable as workers, are clannish at work, and congregate in all-English “ghettos.” Like the image of present-day lower class Negroes, they splurge on non-essentials and are strapped for necessities. They are restless nomads, moving from flat to flat. Like the image of the Irish, they exhibit a propensity for lawless behavior, drunkenness, violence, and fatherless families. The authors of these statements were not bigots; on the contrary, they were highly educated, liberal, and socially-conscious men dedicated to the reform uplift, and ultimate elimination of the lower class populations of Port City. What is striking about their statements is their failure to perceive the high degree of uniformity in the life conditions of the several ethnically-differentiated lower class populations they were describing, and their consistent propensity to attribute these conditions not to basic similarities in occupational and other economic circumstances, but rather to something directly associated—either through biological or social heritage—with the peculiar circumstances of the particular racial, national, or ethnic background of each group.

The period from 1880 to 1910 offers an excellent illustration of the process of class stability through replacement. In the face of a set of rather complex and extensive class-ethnic developments, (Irish develop three divisions; lower class Jews come in; lower class Negroes come in; new English lower class replaces old), the overall social class composition of Midcity was, at the close of this period, virtually identical with that of the 1640’s, the 1840’s, and the 1950’s. As measured by

52 Backgrounds of authors given in S. Warner, Ed., Ward’s Zone of Emergence, Preface. Passages showing almost identical characteristics appear in 1960’s with reference to Kentucky Mountain “hillbillies” in Midwestern cities. See, for example (Haberman thesis).
occupational figures, the approximate size of the lower class was 75% and 25% of the middle. Forty-five percent of the male manual laborers held jobs at the lower skill levels and 30% at the higher; 20% of middle class occupations were categorized as clerical and proprietary and 5% as professional. Comparability with earlier and later figures is high—not only with reference to the lower class middle class ratio, but also with reference to intra-class status levels.\(^5^3\)

This period also affords an excellent illustration of the ecological-economic processes which operated to produce the remarkable degree of social class stability. The major industrial, commercial, and housing developments of this period served, in essence, to reinforce the basic features of Midcity’s established ecological-economic adaptation—mixed commercial and residential land-use, multiple and diversified commercial enterprises, and extensive commercial use of local resident low-skilled labor. Moreover, developments affecting each of these features illuminate a process by which a set of deliberate if not coordinated efforts to recreate a set of conditions congenial to the life circumstances of lower class I and middle class III populations were defeated by the operation of stronger forces operating to sustain the predominantly lower class II and III character of the community.

Midcity in the 1880’s and ‘90’s experienced, according to Warner, a substantial building boom. Extensive construction of both residential and commercial units was undertaken; such construction did not, however, materially affect the business-residential mix, nor the wide variety found among both commercial and residential structures. New commercial buildings were large, medium, small, and of many different kinds; new housing units were large, medium, and small, and of many different kinds. A 1910 observer writes, “Although the appearance of the principal streets belies it, (Lower Midcity is) largely

\(^5^3\) These figures are based on the municipal police census of adult (over 20) males conducted in 1912 and covering Midcity’s three major political wards, as presented in Woods, op. cit., pages 46-7 and 68. Percentages for the three wards were Professionals, 3, 4, and 7%; clerical and proprietary, 25, 19, and 22%; “skilled” labor 33, 30, and 34%; “unskilled”, 40, 47, and 47%.
residential. The factories, breweries, and stores are located (on main thoroughfares) while the side streets are closely set with a variety of old one-family houses, three deckers, and large tenements."

This period witnessed two further attempts to establish middle class housing enclaves in Midcity—one in Lower Midcity, another in a newly developed neighborhood in the western part of the community. Private real estate developers in the 1890’s, as today, were unenthusiastic about the construction of housing designed for the tastes and incomes of lower class II and III populations, and hoped to attract the growing urban middle class to newly developed sections of Midcity. Both of these developments, while at first peopled by the middle class occupants for whom they were designed, were soon abandoned by them and altered to fit the circumstances of the lower class occupants who took their place. Warner writes “...by 1900 all of Lower (Midcity)...underwent a shift from lower middle class to a working class district...New low income families, in order to keep rents down, were converting single houses to multiple use, and doubling up in existing multiple dwellings. After but a few years as an acceptable middle class neighborhood these parts of Lower Midcity were becoming a slum.”

Concomitant with the construction of residential units geared to higher social status levels were several attempts to introduce industries which required substantial numbers of skilled craftsmen of the lower class I variety. Among these were a number of piano factories which required trained and specialized workmen. Most of these enterprises ended in failure; the set of residential and occupational circumstances which were well adapted to the life circumstances of a low-skilled, generalized, sporadically-occupied labor force were poorly adapted to those of specialized, highly trained, stability-oriented craftsmen. The lower class II and III workers of Midcity, who were mostly “generalists,” adapted well to the here-again-gone-again commercial atmosphere of Midcity—to be discussed further—and could quite readily, after suitable periods of rest and recuperation, find similar work in

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other nearby enterprises if the fuel-and-lumber yards or small factories in which they worked closed down or went out of business. The specialized lower class I craftsmen, on the other hand, were “locked into” a particular type of enterprise; their fate was bound to that of the furniture or piano factory in which they performed specialized tasks such as cabinet making or piano stringing; if and when such enterprises closed down, these men were left with substantial long term financial obligations (e.g., house mortgage) and few prospects for employment in the only type of work for which they were equipped. The operation of processes inhospitable to lower class I and middle class populations was circular; close proximity of lower class III populations made local residence undesirable for those of higher status; difficulties in keeping trained workers contributed to the failure of enterprises geared to higher skill levels; loss of local jobs forced lower class I populations to locate elsewhere and relinquish their property holdings to lower status occupants; increased proportions of lower class III persons further handicapped the residential and work circumstances of higher status populations. One contemporary observer writes:

The most important cause of the disintegration of ward life was the decided change which came over the character of local industries about a decade ago (1900). High grade industries located near a desirable residential community automatically attract and build up a high grade of population; conversely, industries employing a low grade of operative tend to call low grade help into nearby dwellings; and these pull down the local life to their own level...In (the past 15 years) more than 10 high grade factories were discontinued...The failure of the (Midcity) Piano company in 1900 was a bitter blow...men were paying for their homes on the strength of the future of the factory...when the blow came they lost all their savings...A proportion of the forepeople and skilled workers went to pieces morally and never recovered...family life was pulled down...

The growing movement to unionize manual labor also played a part in the process which served to keep Midcity a lower status community. The viability of most Midcity’s industrial enterprises was geared to the continuing availability of low rent facilities and low cost labor. The few enterprises which were successfully unionized around 1900 were those described as “high grade,” and which employed
higher skilled workers. Saddled with increased labor costs, many of these businesses folded completely; others left Midcity for communities better adapted to the preferences and life conditions of higher skilled labor.

By the close of this period the ecological-economic character of Midcity was essentially set for the next half-century. A wide variety of commercial enterprises, mostly small, and dependent on the availability of locally-resident low-skilled labor; a wide variety of housing units mostly in the low rent category, situated near and among the places of work of their low-skilled occupants. Cary and Tead write, “...the supply of cheap, unskilled labor which is afforded in quantity offers no small inducement to a certain type of manufacturer.” They cite, among such industries, “belting, carpet and oil-cloth factories, over half of whose employees live in the district”; “a large manufacturer of drug products” which “draws heavily on the local population”; shoe factories, also drawing on local labor; and most of Port City’s breweries, employing many Irish in low-skilled jobs, “at least 60% of whom live in the immediate vicinity.” They also included foundries, factories, and machine shops where work on metal products is carried on, and woodworking establishments.

The same authors also point to the growth and continuing expansion of a type of commercial enterprise which draws heavily on low-skilled labor, and whose prevalence in Midcity played a major part in assuring its future status as a lower class community. These were the service industries, which played so large a part in the economy of the 1950’s. Cary and Tead write:

Largest in point of numbers is a series of firms which manufacture, cleanse, or distribute, articles of immediate service in the necessary business of housekeeping, such as food, laundry, coal, and wood...The district is strategically located to be a center of vast distribution. Unfortunately, however, these industries employ a relatively unskilled grade of worker...baking, the handling and delivery of coal, ice and laundering do not call for skill...These relatively low grade industries are reinforced by a considerable group of rag and second-hand shops.
The authors note, with regret, the close relation between service industries and lower class populations, and accurately prophesy: “It is this group (of industries) which seems likely to fix the status of the ward in the future.”

A final important feature of Midcity’s economic adaptation should be noted—a process whose dynamics became increasingly visible during this period, and which continued to operate actively up to the time of writing. Midcity provided an economic climate which enabled the community to serve as an experimental arena for low-cost, low-risk, small-scale entrepreneurial enterprise. It is most significant that the identical set of social and economic circumstances which served to maintain and reinforce the lower class status of one sector of the population served at the same time to enable another sector to relinquish that status and move toward a higher one.

These economic circumstances made it possible, during this period as during others, for a laborer well supplied with ambition but with limited resources to capitalize on a particular set of local conditions: a labor force which was low-skilled, locally resident, and sporadically employed and employable; an ample supply of commercial sites and structures of various types, many with low rentals; and personal familiarity with the community and its human and economic resources. The concurrent existence of these conditions made it possible for many of the more ambitious wage-earners to move from the status of employee to employer at relatively low cost and with relatively low risk. This climate of opportunity was particularly attractive to second-generation ethnics—many of whom set themselves up in small-scale businesses such as grocery or “variety” stores, small retail shops (clothing, shoes, hardware, etc.), small shops in the construction field (painting, carpentry, stone-and-cement work, plumbing, etc.), wholesale supplies (wagon or auto parts, plumbing supplies, electrical equipment, etc.), trucking and hauling, lunchrooms and taverns, and many more.55

55 Reference to Martin Study 1967.
Some of the many enterprises thus undertaken were successful; many were not, and the would-be proprietors resumed their places among the ranks of the wage-earners. The relatively low cost of going into business on one’s own provided relatively easy access to managerial status for the enterprising wage-earner; this also meant that the cost of failure was relatively low, and it was this “low-risk” quality which made it possible for a man with limited capital to try and to fail without suffering a destructive blow to his personal pride and financial resources. Among those who were successful, the most common pattern was the expansion of initial operations and/or a move to larger quarters in Midcity; a further step, for those whose success continued, was to leave Midcity entirely and establish themselves in higher status communities. Such departures, as already mentioned, served to sustain the predominantly lower-class character of Midcity’s economic adaptation.

One consequence of Midcity’s serving as an arena for low-cost, low-risk entrepreneurial enterprise was to impart to its commercial complexion a kind of here-again-gone-again look, as small shops and stores scattered throughout the community would come to life, operate for a limited period, close down, remain vacant for a while, reopen under different auspices, and so on. The quality of intermittency which characterized Midcity’s commercial life on the “management” level was paralleled by, and articulated with, the quality of sporadicity which characterized life on the level of labor. As in the case of class stability and ethnic replacement, such intermittency gives to the contemporary observer a strong impression of great flux and change (“ten years ago it was all completely different”), while in fact the intermittency itself is a stable, recurrent, and regular quality of community life.

It is important to emphasize at this point the capacity of the economic environment of the urban lower class community to provide a major mechanism for achieving higher social status, since such communities are so frequently seen only in terms of their capacity to maintain and reinforce lower status. The aspiring
proprietors who capitalized in the low cost labor and commercial facilities of Midcity were not well-financed capitalists coming in from the outside to exploit and victimize an indigenous lower class population; on the contrary, the majority of those who availed themselves of these opportunities came directly from the ranks of that population itself, and shared similar life circumstances. The phenomenon of upward social movement through low-rent, small-scale entrepreneurship was visible among lower class Negroes at mid-century.56

The developmental process which served, during this period, to sustain and reinforce conditions favorable to the presence of lower class populations also served to sustain and reinforce a wide range of behavioral practices characteristic of lower class life. Indicative of this range were several features of direct relevance to youth gangs and their behavior—the patterning of youth crime, the programs and rationales of social welfare agencies, and the nature of the gangs themselves. The existence and basic forms of each of these had been well established during previous periods; during this period, however, the actual language used to describe and explain them took the form it was to maintain for the next half-century.

Data previously presented have shown that the forms of crime engaged in by Midcity’s earlier lower class residents were quite similar to those of the 1950’s, and that a pattern of customary criminal behavior centering on drinking, stealing, and fighting was well established by the 1880-1910 period. Data available for the first time during this latter period also indicate that the volume of such crime did not differ markedly from that of the 1950’s. Cary and Tead, after stating that in 1910 the distinction for the largest number of juvenile arrests comes to this part of the city (viz., Lower Midcity)—a statement whose language is almost identical to statements frequently made in the 1950’s—furnish data which provides the basis for the following figures: male court cases formally adjudicated in 1910-1911, 232; number of male children of school age, 3755; rate per thousand, 61.8. Although both

56 Appeal to Negroes to become entrepreneurs which figured in “black power” movement of 1960’s also a major feature of programs by Negro leaders in 1870’s, 1910’s, and at other times.
offense and population statistics for 1960 were computed on a somewhat different basis, they are sufficiently similar to those of 1910 as to afford a rough comparison with those of 50 years before. 1960 figures for the same part of lower Midcity were: number of male court cases formally disposed of, 40.4; number of males 7 to 17, 672; rate per thousand 60.1.\(^{57}\)

Despite the fact that the 1910 rate of 61.8 was computed on a somewhat different basis from the 1960 rate of 60.1, these figures would indicate an extraordinary degree of stability in the volume of youth crime over a 50 year period. These findings do not support a conviction widely held during the 1950’s that the volume of such crime had reached unprecedented levels, but rather support the notion that similar kinds of lower class populations tend to generate similar volumes of crime. Furthermore, in light of the tendency fashionable in the 1950’s to attribute increasing urban crime rates to increasing numbers of Negroes, it is significant to note that the proportion of Negroes in the district under consideration was 22.5% in 1910 and 81.8% in 1960.

It is also of more than passing interest that these authors, in an effort to account for the prevalence of juvenile delinquency in Midcity, availed themselves of what continued to be, in the 1950’s, the classic explanation afforded by the conventional wisdom. This explanation states, quite simply, that juvenile delinquency is caused by bad parenthood; restated and ramified in many forms, it even appeared in the 1950’s as the considered conclusion of extensive scientifically-oriented research ventures. The classic explanation was phrased by Ordway and Tead as follows:

> Perhaps even more influential in promoting (juvenile) lawlessness is the breakdown of family life. Parents no longer exercise the same degree of care and control over children that used to obtain. The father sees little of his sons, the mother is often away, children are more and more on the street day and night. The present-day type of parent no longer teaches children to respect people as such. No child would do the things, nor adopt the attitude that many children do, had he been taught to respect human nature...

\(^{57}\) On statistics. 1960 statistic is ’59, ’60, ’61 average; 3 census tracts almost coterminous with 1910 ward boundaries; comparability good because detailed crime statistics in 1910.
This statement also incorporates the concept, still current in later years, that the present period somehow represents a serious deterioration of a formerly correct mode of parental behavior. It is particularly striking to see phrases such as “the present-day parent no longer teaches his children to respect...” applied to the 1910 period, for it was precisely this period which served for many 1950 observers as that now-vanished golden age when parents acted as they should, children were thereby immune from delinquent behavior, and which throws into stark relief the sorrowful degeneration of present times.

These authors also included in their explanation another notion which has remained fashionable—the idea that in some former time urban communities were close-knit, neighborly, and solidary, while today they have become impersonal and disorganized:

Schools and shops are entered, windows broken, destructive mischief devised, often without anyone observing...This situation ... is ... reinforced by the breakdown of neighborhood life. Children now commit depredations on those living in sight of their own windows, and are unrecognized. The multiplication of tenements and the fashion of frequent moving have killed the old community spirit. People no longer live among neighbors and friends, and children lose all sense of that common unity of feeling which under ordinary circumstances would be outraged over the violation of family ties...

This statement is equally classic. To the “breakdown of the family” is added “the breakdown of the old community spirit.” Such classic explanations would merely provide amusing examples of the perpetual rediscovery of the sad deterioration of present-day morality if it were not for the fact that thousands of persons in each generation perceive this rediscovery as a startling new revelation, and ascribe a quality of dangerous urgency to the ameliorative measures which are thenceforth proposed.

By 1910, therefore, the patterning of youth crime, its general rate of occurrence, and the set of conventional explanations adduced to account for it, had all approximated their modern form. Similarly, by 1910 both the philosophy and
structure of social welfare enterprises designed to alter the character of youth crime as well as many other forms of customary lower class behavior had also become essentially set. Illustrative is the approach to the youth gangs of Midcity, seen in 1910 as an alarming social problem. Cary and Tead write:

The recreational assets (of Lower Midcity) are meager and ill-adapted. There are...25 saloons, pool rooms, four moving picture shows, three public dance halls...Anything like a well-organized plan for meeting the real needs for recreation of 23,000 people has never been dreamed of, much less contemplated. Who should be surprised that boys and girls run amok the police so frequently? Social clubs (viz., street corner gangs) are in vogue here as elsewhere. In fact these organizations seem to represent the natural medium through which the group instinctively asserts itself. Under wise, understanding oversight their potential power might be directed along definitely constructive lines...But such oversight will depend on the conscious coordination of recreational assets through some (social) agency.

With a few minor changes, the language, conceptions, and program proposals of these statements could have been taken directly from any number of statements made by Midcity social workers in the 1950’s. The basic elements of this approach—the importance of recreation as an influence on gang behavior, the deleterious effects of “unwholesome” recreational forms and the beneficial effects of “wholesome” forms, recognition of the “natural” character of street gangs, proposals to “redirect their energies into constructive channels,” emphasis on the need for warm and understanding adult leadership, and the urgent stress on the need for “coordination” among many and diverse social agencies—all remained essentially unchanged in letter and spirit during the following fifty years.

The form of the organizational units through which middle class professional and volunteer workers endeavored to alter the mores of Midcity also represented a logical evolution from earlier forms. By the 1900’s, as shown in Chapter One, the almshouses, workhouses, sanitoria, orphan’s homes, and charitable associations of the 1880’s had developed into an extensive network of organizations whose daily business was customary lower class behavior and its consequences. Circumstances attending the inception of one such organization, the settlement houses, are of
particular relevance to the issue of middle class and lower-class relations in Midcity.

Midcity’s first two settlement houses were founded within a year of one another. The language used to describe the founding of one is illuminating:

In the fall of 1895 three people, possessed of an ardent desire to be of service to their fellow-men, took up residence in a part of (Midcity) where the poor were herding together in increasing numbers. A home was made to which the neighbors were invited...Classes were established for children as well as a kindergarten, and Ben Adhem house had begun its work...Mothers are taught to raise their children to become wholesome and healthy adults; there are classes in crafts where the boy is taught to work off his energies in legitimate ways...

The other settlement house was founded a year before as an outgrowth of a day nursery for working mothers established by a philanthropic daughter of one of Port City’s socially prominent families, and was still active in the 1950’s. It is most significant that this new mechanism for ensuring contact between middle and lower class people began to flower in Midcity at almost the same time that the last of the older English middle class residents were taking their leave. These enterprises were called “settlement” houses because their middle class personnel actually “settled” among the lower class residents of Midcity, as did their progenitors among the Indians. If one assumes that “the welfare of the lower class as an organized concern of the middle class” described as well in evidence by the early 1800’s continued to be a cogent concern for most middle class people and an intense concern of a few, the settlement house appears as a logical if not inevitable development. In the 1600’s the second minister of Midcity’s First Church earned enduring fame for his efforts to bring Christianity and civilization to the pagan and primitive Indians; he was distinguished in that he actually went out of Midcity to settle among the objects of his missionary efforts. In the 1900’s the second minister of Midcity’s First Church earned enduring fame for his efforts to bring Christianity and civilization to the pagan and primitive Indians; he was distinguished in that he actually went out of Midcity to settle among the objects of his missionary efforts. In the 1900’s middle class Protestants, animated by very similar motives and with very similar objectives, came in to Midcity to settle among its people and bring to them the classic middle class message of sobriety, order, and economic responsibility.
The lifelong efforts of the early Congregationalist minister ended in failure. Few were converted, and of those few most returned to their own ways once the missionary had departed. The fate of his spiritual descendants was, for the most part, similar. The quality of “intermittency” which characterized the lives of Midcity’s lower class residents as well as its commercial life was also characteristic of its many middle class “settlers” whose mission in Midcity was to alter the ways of the indigenous population. Wave on wave of workers and Projects in the fields of recreation, mental health, education, work training, and social reform came to Midcity charged with energy, enthusiasm, and optimism, carried on their activities for varying periods of time, and then, for the most part, left the community much the same as it was when they came.58

The relatively minor impact of all these efforts did not serve, however, to deter continuing efforts to alter the life conditions of Midcity’s lower class. Quite the contrary. As one Project moved out, another, or even two more, moved in. As the “special education” teachers despaired at the painful slowness of their progress, as the remedial mental health workers retreated to relocate in more “receptive” communities, as the “demonstration projects” in the control of crime, the inhibition of unwed motherhood, neighborhood betterment and the neighborhood organization of “the people” terminated their efforts, others took their places. Serving in part to sustain these efforts was an institutionalized disregard for the history of previous efforts, and a persisting reluctance to evaluate honestly the effects of their own. New Projects and workers came in force in the 1930’s, the 1940’s, the 1950’s, and the 1960’s under varying auspices (in later years with substantial Federal support) and with differently phrased objectives. They will continue to come for many decades, and in the meantime, the form and flavor of the lower class life pattern will retain, in most essential respects, its basic character, in Midcity or elsewhere.

58 Far greater effect was registered by those projects aiming to improve the physical health of Midcity residents.
The Persistence of a Lower Class Subculture in Midcity

Nearly two hundred years before the 1950’s, a decade of youth gangs and gang delinquency, a member of one of Midcity’s eminent Colonial families played an active part in the charged ideological discussions which eventuated in the revolt to the colonies from England, and which produced, as part of the justification of that revolt, the famous proposition that “all men are created equal.” His subscription to the philosophy which engendered this principle was no idle one; he gave his life in its defense. A major purpose of those who established the United States as an independent nation was to found a new form of society in which the traditional distinctions of rank and station so characteristic of European societies would be minimized or eliminated. And yet, in the Midcity of the 1950’s, an established set of social status levels was as relevant as any time in the past. What happened to the lofty vision of the founders of the republic, and what happened to the American dream of equality and a classless society?

For present purposes, the flowing rhetoric of the revolutionary ideologies must, unfortunately, be transmuted into the stilted terminology of contemporary social science. In these pedestrian terms, the basic question becomes--How can one account for the existence of a distinctive lower class subculture in Midcity and for its persistence for more than three centuries? For the subculture has retained strength and vigor in the face of an explicit national ideology massively and adamantly opposed to its very existence; in the face of a host of programs aimed deliberately and directly at its elimination; in the face of major modifications in the racial and national origins of its citizenry; and in the face of profound shifts in the character of the technological order.

The questions of “origins” and “persistence,” although intimately related, may be addressed separately. The question of origins is essentially historical, and the extensive historical analysis it requires may be sidestepped, at this point, by a simple answer. The lower class sub-culture of Midcity, in its generic if not specific
form, was brought to the community from England, where it had evolved over a very long period of historical development common to most of Europe.

The question of the persistence of this English-derived sub-culture, and of its effective adaptation to the changing circumstances of a new land and new historical periods finds direct analogies in the field of biological evolution. Given substantial changes in environmental conditions, what processes enable a complex and highly-organized organic form to maintain its viability? (A classic case of success in such a process is man; of failure, the dinosaur). The present section will abstract a set of more general principles and processes in an attempt to explain the persistence of Midcity’s lower class subculture.

This chapter has traced selected events in Midcity’s history through four historical periods, ending in 1910. It would be possible to continue the accounting of historic events for the period from 1910 to the 1950’s, when Midcity had achieved the social character described in Chapter One; however, very little of what happened during this period had any marked impact on the ecological, economic or social circumstances which made Midcity an urban slum, nor did the events of this period reveal any particularly new kinds of processes contributing to the persistence of the community subculture. Midcity’s population continued to grow, reaching a peak of 113,000 in 1950 and then, in common with most similar eastern urban districts during this period, began to decrease. Some of the older commercial enterprises declined or moved away, but others of similar character took their places. Notable among these were the breweries, which were forced out of business during the prohibition period, returned upon repeal, and gradually, during the ‘40’s and ‘50’s, merged with national companies or went out of business as mass media advertising, mechanized production techniques, unionized labor and other developments made the economic climate of Midcity increasingly uncongenial to this type of enterprise.

Between 1910 and 1940 Midcity’s Negro population gradually increased, and followed the precedent of the Irish and Jews in that the growing number of higher
status residents moved into the “better” sections of the community. In 1940 Negroes comprised 14% of Midcity; in 1950, 22%; and in 1960, 43%. The actual rate of increase, contrary to general impression, was slower between 1950 and 1960 than during the previous decade. This lower rate of increase, however, eventuated in a relatively higher proportion of Negro residents, since the spread of Negroes into new sections was accompanied by an out-movement of white residents, resulting in a net loss of population. As had often been the case in the past, the increase in the size of the Negro populations was seen by the older residents as enormously disruptive, and as producing a radical change in the character of the community. In fact, this particular ethnic movement changed the community subculture to a considerably lesser degree than had several earlier movements; the Negroes who moved in were English speaking, totally “American,” long-term native residents and manifested a lower class subculture similar in many respects to that of most of those who moved out.

The process of “class stability through ethnic replacement” thus continued to operate efficiently during this period as it had so often in the past, as did the other major processes which served to insure the continuity of Midcity’s lower class subculture. The following sections will examine these processes under two major headings: economic-ecological processes and adaptivity and stability-maintaining processes. Discussion of the first set of processes will center on the actual nature, at a given point in time, of the currently-existing articulation among the multiple elements of Midcity’s social, economic, and subcultural adaptation; the second set of processes involves a number of mechanisms which operated to preserve a high degree of subcultural stability in the face of changing conditions. The two sets of processes are, of course, organically inseparable, but will be artificially separated here for purposes of analytic treatment.
Economic and Ecological Articulation:

The Keystone of Subcultural Persistence

It is impossible, in addressing the question of the persistence of Midcity’s lower class subculture, to attribute causative primacy to a single factor or set of factors; over the centuries there had developed in the community a most intricate and complex system based on an intimate articulation of a variety of economic, ecological, residential, and subcultural conditions. It is clear, however, that among these intimately interrelated conditions, those which may be termed “economic” played a role of the utmost importance. As has been shown, Midcity from its very beginnings combined both residential and commercial facilities, and both these aspects of community life continued to flourish in the 20th century. The specific character of Midcity’s system of business and commercial enterprise was integrally related to its social and cultural adaptation. Four features of this system were of particular relevance. There was a great multiplicity of separate enterprises; these enterprises where highly diverse in nature; they varied widely in size; the life span of given types of commercial enterprise as well as that of particular units showed wide variation. Each of these characteristics—multiplicity rather than limitation, diversity rather than homogeneity, variety rather than uniformity in size and life span—were of long duration, and each contributed in some significant fashion to the existence and persistence of the lower class subculture of Midcity.

Midcity in the 1950’s contained some 2,500 different commercial enterprises—about 15% of the total number in Port City; these were extraordinarily diverse in character. Of the approximately 2,500 firms listed in the Port City Directory, about 1,500 (60%) dealt in services and 1,000 (40%) in goods. The range of services was wide; the Directory lists the 1,500 service enterprises under some 165 specific categories. On the basis of a more general categorization distinguishing 20 types of service, something over half of these enterprises fell under three categories: Cleaning, Maintenance, and Repair (500 enterprises); Health Services (200); and Personal Grooming (170). Included under the first category, in
approximate numbers, were 100 laundering and cleaning concerns, 60 automobile service stations, and 25 garages. The “cleaning” figures do not, of course, include the many Midcity women who did housecleaning on a “daywork” basis as private contractors. The “Health” category, in addition to individual medical and nursing practitioners, included the six large hospitals already mentioned as well as about 25 nursing or rest homes. “Grooming” enterprises included 80 barber shops and beauty parlors. Other “service” enterprises which employed manual and/or low-skilled workers were restaurants and taverns (150), trucking and moving companies (30), and construction (100).

Firms dealing primarily in economic “goods” covered an equally wide spectrum, and included firms engaged in manufacturing, distributing, jobbing, wholesaling, and retailing. Retail stores included approximately 170 meat and grocery stores, 60 local neighborhood “variety” stores, and 50 drug stores. There was little evidence of any specialization in manufactured goods; approximately 60 different kinds of manufactured products were produced by the 120 shops and factories of Midcity. These included shoes, boxes, auto parts, electronic equipment, plastic products, brooms, furniture, machinery, mattresses, tools, and many more. Even a cursory inspection of the character of Midcity’s many and diverse commercial enterprises reveals that they provided many employment opportunities for persons at all levels of the lower class—including the lowest skilled workers at the lower class III level.

The size of these varied kinds of commercial concerns also varied widely. On the one hand were several enterprises employing large numbers of workers—such as a plant manufacturing nationally distributed shoes and which employed about 2,000 workers, and the half-dozen large hospitals, each employing 500 to 1,000 non-medical personnel. On the other hand were small stores, shops, and service facilities run primarily by one person with one or two employees. The bulk of Midcity’s commercial enterprises, however, fell into the “medium” size category—with scores of firms maintaining staffs on the order of 10 to 100 persons. As already mentioned,
the life-span of these diverse enterprises also showed considerable variation. On the one hand were firms which had been doing business in Midcity for a century or more; on the other hand were the scores of small and medium size enterprises which recurrently took the plunge into the volatile, here-again-gone-again commercial climate of the community, and went out of business after two, three, or five years of operation.

How did these particular characteristics of Midcity’s commercial world contribute to the maintenance of its lower class subculture? A central reason has already been cited in connection with the several historical phases. Some substantial portion of the commercial enterprises which were located in Midcity required for their effective and economical operation a readily available locally-resident and mutually-reinforcing process: the presence in the community of this type of enterprise attracted the kinds of people whose occupational capacities and predilections were in accord therewith; the presence in the community of this type of worker attracted and kept commercial enterprises requiring this type of labor supply.

But the articulation of the commercial and subcultural worlds of Midcity was more complex and deviously contrived than is implied by this simple statement of symbiotic interdependence. It will be recalled that persons at all three levels of the lower class, as well as the lower levels of the middle class, were reported among Midcity’s population, and that the majority of its residents were of lower class II status. The nature of Midcity’s commercial system was such as to provide local employment opportunities for persons at all these status levels—with the social-status composition of the locally-employed work force resembling, in general, that of the residential community. This did not mean, of course, that the staff of each concern was 10% middle class, 20% lower class I, 50% lower class II, and 20% lower class III (See Table 7.1, Chapter One)—although some of the larger concerns did in fact approximate this distribution. One concern might employ 50% lower class I workers and 10% lower class III; another might employ 60% lower class III
employees and 10% lower class I. On an all-unit basis, however, the cumulative social-class composition of Midcity’s locally-employed labor force in the 1950’s approximated the 75% lower- 25% middle-class ratio maintained by the residential community for over two hundred years.

Commercial concerns which maintained a successful adaptation to the labor force circumstances of Midcity were those whose task requirements and operating procedures could be accommodated to the capabilities and customary forms of occupational behavior of low-status employees. First, some significant proportion of the tasks to be performed could be executed by low-skilled “generalists”—that is, persons who could perform the job within acceptable limits of adequacy with a minimum of specialized training (e.g., sweepers, washers, loaders, sorters, pick-and-shovel workers, stackers, stock boys). Second, it was necessary that such jobs be primarily manual, requiring relatively little “brainwork” and/or “paperwork.” Third, it was important that the incumbents of such positions be acclimated to subordinancy—with experience in being on the receiving rather than the giving end of orders. Fourth, the enterprise had to be geared to the “sporadic” character of customary low-status occupational behavior. For example, personnel departments had to be equipped to handle a relatively high turnover rate, as employees moved into and out of particular job slots. Company practice with regard to such matters as punctuality, reliability, proportion of “goofing” to “working” time, acceptable degrees of sobriety, and amount of tolerated pilfering had to be quite loose and flexible. Scores of enterprises in Midcity had in fact effectively incorporated a whole set of practices, policies and orientations toward their low-status employees which were probably beyond the capacity, if not the comprehension, of the many

59 See “Work” section of “Family, School and Work” Chapter.
60 See Leibow, Elliot Tally’s Corner: A Study of Negro Street Corner Men. 1967 for a good discussion of how an employer of lower class III males includes an estimate of the amount of routine theft expected of his employees in determining their wage levels. A survey reported in President Johnson’s Crime Commission Report (1967) indicated that 20 to 30% of 473 companies reported “serious” problems with employee theft; social status of employees was not indicated.
predominantly white-collar enterprises operating in Port City’s financial district and suburbs.

In addition, inter-personal relations within particular concerns were generally organized so as to take advantage of the kinds of interaction patterns already existing among the several social status levels of Midcity’s multi-status community life. Occupational activity was so arranged that workers at a particular status level were customarily in contact with others at another appropriate level. For example, the direct supervisor of lower class III manual laborers was most often a lower class I foreman, rather than, say, a middle class administrator. As in the case of the “tough” army sergeant and companies consisting primarily of lower class II and III enlisted men, one of the usual areas of competence of lower class I males is that of “handling” lower class III subordinates—a task requiring knowledge and skills seldom possessed by middle class persons.

The “residential” aspect of Midcity’s commercial-residential pattern in many ways resembled the commercial aspect, and was articulated with it not only spatially but functionally. The four features applied quite directly to its residential pattern as well. The dwelling units of Midcity were many in number, extremely heterogeneous in type, and varied greatly in size and age. There were, in the 1950’s, almost 29,000 housing units in the community—something over ten times the number of commercial enterprises. As already shown (Chapter One), the range of variation was wide. The majority were rental units, but about 15% were owned by their occupants. Most were older units, but a substantial amount of housing-project construction dated from World War II and after. There were multi-unit and single-unit structures. Rentals as well as house costs clustered around the “low” end of the scale, but within this range there was considerable variation.61 Many units were close to, and quite a few even part of, commercial units employing local labor. Residential facilities available in Midcity were thus adapted quite directly to the

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61 See Table 14.1, Chapter 1.
occupational circumstances, incomes, housing preferences, and customary forms of residential behavior of a predominantly lower-class, multi-status-level population.

Many features of the occupational behavior of the lowest status sectors of the population characterized their residential behavior as well. Prominent among these was the quality of “sporadicity”; residents tended to remain in a given unit for only limited periods of time, and a truck being filled with furniture was a common sight in many neighborhoods. However, in most instances the new apartment was only a few blocks away from the old. Persons in the lower class I minority, who favored “steady” work in long-term jobs, were able to buy, and generally to maintain carefully, modest single or two-family units near their places of work.62

The historical account has emphasized the point that a major aspect of the articulation between Midcity’s residential and commercial worlds was their spatial proximity. The dependence of commercial enterprises on a low-skilled labor force which was “locally resident,” and the tendency of the low-skilled laborers to live near their places of work have been cited as playing an important part in the maintenance and persistence of Midcity’s lower class subculture. It is evident that this circumstance was virtually necessary during Midcity’s first 250 years, when transportation was difficult and expensive. It is equally evident, moreover, that living and working nearby became less of a practical necessity when street railways became common after the Civil War, and considerably less necessary when automobiles became common after World War I. Nonetheless, as shown in the previous section, the large majority of Midcity’s laborers lived near their places of employment during the 1880-1910 period, despite the availability of public transportation. But what of the automobile? The widespread ownership of private automobiles has been seen by some as creating the conditions for an extremely mobile labor force—one whose place of work becomes less and less dependent on its locale as well as the availability of gasoline—and electrically-powered public

62 The percentage of renters in lower class I neighborhoods was however, considerably higher than in most, and generally more homogeneous, in lower class I areas.
transportation, on the traditional tendency of Midcity’s workers to live close to their places of work.

It would appear that while the workers of twentieth century Midcity were considerably less closely tied to local employment than in past years, their propensity to work locally was still pronounced. The theoretically high mobility afforded by the automobile was seriously limited, in practice, by the relatively low rate of auto ownership. Despite a popular notion that most slum residents own cars, however poor they might be, about 80% of the households in lower class III neighborhoods reported in 1960 that no automobile was available to them. Moreover, the proportion of residents of lower class III areas who reported that they got to work by means other than the automobile was about 75%, compared to about 50% for a middle class Port City district. There was also a rough relationship between social status and the proportion of those who reported that they walked to work; in one of Midcity’s lowest status areas, over one third reported that they walked to work, compared to less than one-twentieth in one of the highest status areas.

One obvious reason for the continuing pattern of local employment is budgetary. Maintenance of an automobile can take a large bite out of a limited income, and even the relatively low cost of public transportation must be taken into consideration when debating a local versus a more distant job. But also of considerable importance is the matter of preference. As discussed elsewhere, the low status residents of Midcity, during earlier as well as more recent times, maintained a strongly parochial orientation to life. Whenever possible, they preferred to live and work in the same general area—as well as to play, fight, drink, steal, and find entertainment. One exception to the pattern of close local employment was found among the many lower class III females who did housework by the day in private homes in other communities. It was precisely this group, however, which was least likely to own an automobile or to have one available. This meant, for the most part, the use of public transportation, and since most of these
women were reluctant to pursue a complicated or lengthy route to their places of work, also contributed to a preference for work as close to Midcity as was possible. Similarly, of the 70% of the residents of lower class III areas who utilized transportation to get to work, about 65% utilized public transportation... much of it to places within Midcity or in adjacent low-status communities. Eighty-six percent of Midcity’s workers were employed in the Port City Metropolitan area, and of these, 83% worked in municipal Port City itself. Thus, while technology to a considerable extent reduced the necessary degree of closeness between residential and occupational locations, the important link between place of work and place of residence continued to be vital in the age of the rapid transit system and throughway.
The Persistence of Lower Class Subculture

Stability and Adaptivity Processes:

The Mechanisms of Subcultural Persistence

Previous sections have examined the nature of a persisting articulation among several broad features of Midcity’s socio-economic adaptation—focusing primarily on economic patterns, residential patterns, and certain customary forms of behavior of its resident population. It now remains to address the question of persistence itself: how did these features and their mutual articulation maintain so high a degree of continuity in the face of substantial changes in size, technology, and the backgrounds of the resident population? This complex issue will be approached through an examination of three persistence-enhancing mechanisms—economic-ecological flexibility, class stability via ethnic replacement, and the exodus of higher status population elements.

Economic-ecological Flexibility: Generalism and Intermittency

In the classic evolutionary model of biological persistence, species become extinct when they have developed a specialized adaptation to environmental
conditions that change (e.g. dinosaurs); species survive either when they have
developed a specialized adaptation to environmental conditions which persist (deep
sea marine life), or when they maintain a highly “generalized” structure which can
survive under a wide variety of environmental conditions (e.g. rats, man). Midcity’s
adaptation falls into the latter category. Within the orbit of one sector of economic
enterprise—the production of goods and services involving low skilled labor—
Midcity maintained a flexible and responsive adaptation which proved capable of
accommodating substantial changes in its ecological “environment.” The nature of
this adaptation may be approached through a brief examination of two of its central
features—generalism and intermittency. These designations may be applied both to
the economic system as a whole and to the work behavior of those at the lower skill
levels. The following sections will discuss generalism and the economic system,
generalism and the labor force, intermittency and the economic system, and
intermittency and the labor force.

The economic system of Midcity, viewed as a whole rather than in terms of
particular component units, was highly generalized, or, conversely, minimally
specialized. Its economic output, as has been seen, was extraordinarily diverse—
both with regard to the scope of its economic product and the types of goods and
services it produced. While the demand for particular products and services had
diminished or disappeared during its long history, at no time did the demand for all
or most of its products slack off at once, nor was this at all likely, considering the
diversity of this product. The contrast here is to the “one-industry” town which
stands or falls with the fate of its primary employer, (New England Cotton Mill
Towns), or the “one-product” region, whose economic well-being is directly
dependent on the current state of the market for its product (Appalachian coal
mining areas). Early in its history Midcity had adapted the “diversification”
principle which became so popular among American corporations in the 1950’s; the
less the viability of your concern is predicated on a continuing market demand for a
particular product or type of product, the better are its chances for continuing prosperity.

The relatively low degree of economic specialization, moreover, made it possible for Midcity’s economic system to be quite responsive to new market demands, and to change accordingly. This was accomplished either by changes in the output of existing concerns or the establishing of new ones. An early example of the former process has been noted for the post-Revolutionary War period, when a concern manufacturing leather breeches switched over to the production of woolen products when their original product began to pass from fashion. This same type of adaptivity was also shown during the 1920’s when many of the breweries switched over to carbonated beverages on the advent of national Prohibition.

The operation of the latter process was evident in the rapid growth of “service” (at the expense of manufacturing) enterprises during the post-World War II period, and by the advent during the same period of many enterprises based on the “new” technology. At the same time, traditional Midcity products with continuing market demand (luggage, clothing, rope) continued in production. Thus, in the 1950’s one might find on the same street enterprises dealing in such space-age products as two-way radio communication and plastic products, and such Colonial-age products as shoes, brooms, and ink. This quality of adaptivity was facilitated by the relatively “low-risk” nature of entrepreneurial enterprise in Midcity, described previously. With low rents and low labor costs it was possible for an enterprising entrepreneur to test out the potential of a new product or service with a relatively low investment; thus, by a kind of “natural selection” process, concerns for those whose perception of a new demand was accurate continued in business, while those whose perception was inaccurate failed.

Generalism was also a characteristic of the work behavior of those at the lower skill levels. The bulk of workers of lower class III status, and many of lower class II, possessed low or moderate skill in a variety of pursuits rather than high skill in one or a limited number. Like the jack-of-all-trades traditionally derogated
by lower class I and middle class III workers whose ideal is the “steady job” these people were equipped, by capacity and predilection, to move quite readily from one occupational situation to another, and to accommodate varying periods of unemployment between jobs. The key to the difference between higher and lower status workers was specialized training: for higher status workers this was greater, and for lower, less. This did not mean that the more generalized workers were untrained or unskilled. Rather, it meant that the kinds of tasks they were equipped to perform were those which are routinely taught, in some form, to all members of a society in the course of their general enculturation. Many of these skills, for both males and females, involve cleaning of various kinds, and thus many lower class III persons held jobs whose duties involved sweeping, washing, scrubbing, laundering, dusting, straightening, polishing, and the like. The average member of society also learns in the course of normal enculturation to carry, to wrap, to dig, to drive cars. Thus many lower class II and III persons held jobs which involved carrying loads of various kinds, wrapping and crating, pick-and-shovel work, and driving of trucks, taxis, and other vehicles.63

Equipped thusly to perform a set of generalized readily transferable and widely required tasks, the lower status workers of Midcity manifested a degree of flexibility in the world of work analogous to that of the economic enterprises which employed them. If a job folded in one place, one could generally find a similar job in another, usually after varying periods of non-work during which one availed oneself on non-job-derived economic resources of various kinds.64 Their situation was in marked contrast with that of the lower class I workers, who were generally “specialists” whose employment fate was tied to that of particular concerns or lines of work. As shown in the discussion of the skilled cabinet makers and piano craftsmen of the 1910’s, these men were “locked into” particular trades, and if market demands decreased or plants failed for other reasons, were confronted with

63 Structural characteristics of lower status occupations are authority position, intermittency, degree of training, examined elsewhere.
64 See Theft and Family School and Work chapters for sources of “non-legitimate-job” income.
serious and often tragic consequences. It was these men for whom technological change produced the necessity of extensive “re-training”; the job skills controlled by lower class III workers tended to a much greater degree than those of higher, to transcend particular technologies, and to remain a consistently marketable commodity. Like the commercial concerns of Midcity, then, its low-skilled workers, unspecialized and moving readily from job to job, could roll with the economic punches, weather a variety of social and economic changes, and maintain a flexible and adaptive accommodation to changing technological and economic circumstances.

The second persistence-enhancing element which characterized both the economic system and low skilled laborers of Midcity was that of intermittency. The “here-again-gone-again” complexion of Midcity’s commercial face, described earlier, reflected a pattern whereby commercial enterprises could come into being at relatively low cost and concomitantly low risk, and “test out” the marketability of a new product or service as well as their own capacity to sustain a viable organization. Some of these succeeded and others failed. Thus, at any one time, on a rough estimate, something like 85% to 90% of Midcity’s commercial facilities would be housing ongoing concerns, and 10 to 15% would be vacant or “in transition.” There were, of course, as described earlier, a substantial number of commercial enterprises which remained in business for long periods of time. The duration-pattern of Midcity’s commercial enterprises might be likened to a current conceptual model of the atom which represents it as a sphere comprising a large inner zone of stable or long-term components, a volatile surface zone which admits and discharges components at a rapid rate, and a near-the-surface zone in which the life span of components is longer at the surface but shorter than at the core.

Viewed from the surface, or in a short-term perspective, the commercial complexion of Midcity might appear to represent a situation of chronic economic instability, with a relatively high rate of business failure. Viewed in wider perspective the system could be seen as a responsive and adaptive arrangement
whereby the inner zone of long-term enterprises provided elements of continuity and stability, the surface zone the capacity to adapt rapidly to short-term conditions, and the intermediate zone the capacity to accommodate medium-term developments. These enterprises which moved from outer to inner zones were those which had successfully gauged the nature of new technological, market, labor, or other economic developments; enterprises which, terminated in any zone, were generally those which had unsuccessfully gauged new trends or had failed to accommodate changing ones. The degree of “intermittency” characteristic of Midcity’s economic adaptation thus provided elements of flexibility which contributed directly to its persistence.

Intermittency was also a characteristic of the work behavior of Midcity’s low status residents. The gang boy who said, “Work a few days, goof a few days—that’s my motto…” (See Chapter Five) was articulating, in condensed and simplified form, an orientation to the world of work which was prevalent among workers of all ages and both sexes. For many lower class III persons, the “steady job,” viewed as a central life objective by their lower class I fellows, not only ranked relatively low in the priority of life goals, but was often viewed as a distinctly distasteful prospect. The lives of many lower class III persons were so organized that they would typically hold a job for awhile, quit or arrange to be fired, spend a period of time “between engagements” during which they would pursue a set of life activities outside of the “legitimate” work world, avail themselves of a variety of non-job sources of support, and then go out and find a job again. While this pattern was of course related in some degree to the availability of low-skilled jobs, it was also in large part a matter of preference on the part of the worker himself. As will be shown in a more extended discussion of the intermittent employment pattern (Chapter Five), intermittency and generalism were closely related aspects of a coherent pattern of work behavior.

As shown in Chapter One, during non-depression periods like the 1950’s, something like 5% or 10% of those who reported themselves part of the labor force of
Midcity were generally out of work at any one time; among the lower class III populations this figure ranged from about 8% to 15%. It is important to note in this connection that the “unemployment rate” derived out of this situation by census tabulations did not indicate the existence of a hard-core cadre of permanently unemployed persons; rather, as a consequence of the intermittent employment pattern, the composition of the 5-10% “unemployed” was constantly changing as different persons moved in and out of “employed” status at varying rates.

As will be discussed later, the pattern of intermittent unemployment entailed a particular organization of one’s living schedule, a particular set of capacities, predilections and orientations which represented far more than simple resignation or a despairing acceptance of an unhappy fate engendered by inexorable economic forces. The intermittent employment pattern, it is evident, articulated well with the pattern of intermittent housing—as recurrent changes in job locale, income level, and other job-related factors induced corresponding changes in housing arrangements. This pattern was also articulated, of course, with the intermittency characteristic of Midcity’s commercial life—fitting in with the seasonal nature of certain commercial enterprises, the here-again-gone-again duration pattern described above, and other characteristics of Midcity’s economic system.65

Class Stability via Ethnic Replacement

A pointed illustration of the principle of “stability through adaptive change”—a principle which runs as a common thread through the persistence process under discussion—is furnished by the historical material as to population movements in and out of Midcity. This material documents two trends which appear at first to be mutually inconsistent; a continuing process of in-movement and out-movement by groups of different ethnic and national backgrounds, and a

65 The set of reciprocal relationships among regional economies, ethnic groups, and social-status subcultures is discussed on a more general level by economist Martin Katzman in “The Ethnic Geography of the United States” in 1967.
figure for the proportion of manual laborers which, despite some periods of fluctuation, remained close to 75% for over three hundred years.

How did the social class composition of Midcity remain so stable in the face of so much population movement? There are essentially two ways in which the population of a community may remain predominantly lower class; an indigenous lower class population remains resident, and new lower class people move in to replace those who move out. The latter process was dominant in the case of Midcity, and raises two questions: what was the character of those who left, and what was the character of those who took their places? The historical experience of Midcity provides abundant documentation for a fundamental tenet of the American dream—the notion that it is possible for a family, in the course of time, to elevate its social status. Each of its major groups of immigrants—English, Negroes, Germans, Irish, Jews, Provincials—came to the community with the bulk of their numbers in low status circumstances. In each case, over the course of one or more generations, some portion of each group was so able to alter its financial status and/or customary mode of behavior as to elevate, in varying degrees, its general social position. However, another tenet of the same dream—the notion that through this elevation process a lower class would disappear from society—was not realized.

The related processes responsible for this circumstance—removal at the top and replacement at the bottom—both reflect traditional characteristics of American society. It is customary for those who are able to elevate their social status in a given particular community to detach themselves from it and move away to a “better” one, rather than remaining to elevate the status of the community as a whole. This process will be discussed further in the next section. What of the “replacement at the bottom”? Low status populations in American communities may have their origins in the same or different nations, in the same or different classes. The great bulk of “new” lower class immigrants to Midcity came, as has been seen, from outside the country. English, Irish, and Jewish peasants and laborers left their
native lands and came to Midcity both because of dissatisfaction with the old country and attraction to the new.

A second and very substantial proportion of lower class immigrants came from other parts of the United States. While the bulk of these represented the relatively gradual but ultimately very substantial movement from country to city, some additional number of migrants came from other American cities. The two major representatives of this group were the Provincials and the Negroes. While technically nationals of another country, the Provincials were in fact mostly rural and small-town residents of a region with essentially the same national culture as that of the United States, and for whom the “big city” which beckoned the laborer was Port City. The “internal migration” of the Negroes during the post-slavery period was complex; the earlier migrants came mostly from the rural south, but later ones, during both the World War I and World War II migrations, came, in various combinations, from other parts of Port City, other Northern cities, Southern cities, and the rural south.

Two other sources of Midcity’s resident lower class should be noted. Little is known as to the nature and volume of “downward mobility” in the United States, and no systematic information in this area was obtained in the course of the present study. It is evident, however, that a fair number of persons who had achieved higher status and could not maintain it moved into (or back into) Midcity, seeking circumstances more congenial to their altered positions. Two such groups were lower class I and II females without husbands who found that the low rents and general cultural climate of Midcity facilitated the task of raising children without a father. Another major group was of course those members of in-moving lower status groups, which maintained a stable lower class position rather than altering their status. In Midcity the ethnic groups which contributed most heavily to this category were the Irish and the Negroes. Virtually all of the “old” English lower class, and most of the new (the Provincials) had moved out by the 1950’s; the bulk of the

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66 Ref. to Duncan.
Germans and Jews had also gone. Still well represented were Negroes of the earlier regional migrations, and Irish. The latter were in the process of altering their ethnic homogeneity by extensive intermarriage with other Catholic groups such as Italians, Poles, and French Canadians, but retained, in this mixed-ethnic form, their low social status.

What attracted the immigrants to Midcity and why did many of them stay? The economic, ecological, and subcultural climate of the community was, as has been shown, hospitable to the general way of life of low status persons. As a consequence of the historical processes discussed here, its housing, employment, commercial, and other circumstances were directly geared to the life circumstances of low skilled manual laborers, who were comfortable in the company of others in similar circumstances and with similar outlooks. By the same token, as will be shown, the subcultural climate of Midcity was inhospitable to the way of life of higher status groups. A fundamental question here, which cannot be examined in the present context, is that of the future. Will the economic, ecological, and subcultural climate of Midcity continue to be hospitable to low status populations, and what will be the size and character of such populations in coming years?

It seems unlikely that the assumption by mechanical devices of many traditional white and blue collar jobs will substantially affect the occupational circumstances of Midcity’s lower class III, and perhaps II, residents in the near future. It would appear that the number of work slots available for low-skilled manual workers will continue for some time to be equal to, or perhaps even in excess of, the number of persons equipped and available to fill them. Will the present lower status populations of Midcity exhibit the same propensity to move upward and outward as did their predecessors, and if so, what will be the source for the “replacement at the bottom”?

The virtual cessation of foreign immigration in the 1920’s dried up a major source of new low status citizens. The few true foreign populations still migrating to Midcity—principally Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Spanish Americans—exhibit
social-status characteristics very similar to those of the earlier immigrants, and are in the process of the social-class separating-out process experienced by their predecessors. As yet, however, they have not come to Midcity in substantial numbers. In some respects the rural-urban movement of the Negroes resembles the immigration of the earlier national groups, and the Negro community of the 1950’s included a substantial number of ambitious persons in the process of moving to higher status positions. What of the capacity of the “still-theres” of the earlier migrations, and of the non-mobile Negroes, to elevate their status in the future? This would appear to be diminishing, and might portend the continuing existence of a “stable” low status population with little mobility potential.

Despite this, the prospect remains that by 1985 the number of low status persons residing in Midcity would in fact be lower than at any time in the past—due not to any substantial changes in their mode of life, but rather as a consequence of simple physical removal. The massive “urban renewal” or “urban redevelopment” movements of the 1950’s and ‘60’s gave evidence of continuing success in eliminating large numbers of low status persons from the community by the simple expedient of tearing down dwelling places, factories, shops, bars, and other structures, which provided the physical basis for Midcity’s traditional economic-ecological adaptation, and replacing them with structures designed neither for the residential, occupational, or recreational circumstances of low status persons. This process of massive structural removal and replacement showed promise, for the first time in Midcity’s long history, of achieving a substantial reduction in the size and proportion of its low status population. The people themselves, of course, would not disappear, but would instead move away to other sections of the city which were, or would become, hospitable to the circumstances of lower class life, and there attempt to reconstitute the basic patterns of lower class existence developed over the centuries in Midcity.
The Exodus of Higher Status Populations

Like its companion process, “replacement at the bottom,” the process of “removal at the top” which contributed to the stability of Midcity’s social class composition involved populations of several different kinds. Four categories may be distinguished—the “emergent” white middle class, the older English middle class, the “introduced” middle class, and the Negro middle class. The influence of a fifth category—the “visiting” middle class, will also be considered.

Why did higher status populations so consistently and recurrently leave Midcity? Despite differences in the nature of these groups and the circumstances of their departures, each departure appeared too responsive to a common and relatively simple principle; residents of higher status communities are uncomfortable living in close proximity to lower status communities. This “discomfiture” principle, which is of course mutually experienced, will be discussed further. The very set of factors which made the social climate of Midcity “hospitable” to the life ways of lower status groups made it “inhospitable” to that of the higher. The historical experience of Midcity would indicate that it is extremely difficult for lower status and higher status populations of substantial size to live in spatial proximity with one another in the absence of well-developed “insulating” devices—psychological, physical, or both. This principle of “mutual discomfiture” will be returned to later.

The most dramatic and recurrent type of out-movement was, as has been shown, that of those ambitious and aspiring families who were struggling toward middle class status. The Jews were the outstanding example of this process, with the Germans a close second; substantial numbers of English, Irish, and Provincials also followed the path upward and outward. As their economic circumstances improved, the upwardly mobile families sought to relocate in what were known as “better” neighborhoods—that is, those whose general subculture was closer to that of the middle class. Such a move, if successfully made, could serve further to enhance the process of upward mobility, in that the character of the schools,
customary practices of the neighborhoods and related conditions supplied a learning environment conducive to the adoption of new forms of class-related behavior.

But the exodus of these people was impelled not only by an attraction to the conditions of the “better” neighborhoods, but also, and perhaps with greater force, by repulsion against those of Midcity. To those families in the process of elevating their social status, the residential proximity of persons still practicing the lower class style of life was an active threat. The sense of threat was experienced most acutely by parents of young children—children who were attracted, not surprisingly, to characteristic aspects of the lower class living patterns—the excitement of street life, the relatively low esteem granted to formal education, the risk of law violation, the tough manliness of lower class heroes. Frightened lest the pull of this attractive subculture nullify all the gains of a lifetime of striving, these parents reacted logically and understandably; they got out.

It was, therefore, to those in the process of emerging from lower class status that the proximate and visible existence of a vital and active lower class subculture posed the greatest threat. Understandably, it is persons in this category who are, with some exceptions, the most actively intolerant of this way of life, the most prone to condemn its characteristic practices, the most insistent that it is not a “way of life” at all, but rather a series of regrettable lapses by discrete individuals or families who bear personal responsibility for their failure to behave in a different and morally supportable fashion. The model here is of the newly westernized indigene whose rejection of the traditional customs of his people is active, angry, and intense.

The departure of the older English middle class, those who frequented the shaded streets and flowered knolls of Midcity Highlands until the turn of the century, reflected a rather different process, and a rather different kind of “discomfiture.” The life style of these people—particularly those who had moved to Midcity after having achieved success in Port City—was secure and well-established, and they experienced little of the sense of vital danger that threatened
the emergent middle class. These people cherished an ideal of a life style which revolved around a comfortable and gracious mode of existence, an atmosphere which accorded a place of prominence to learning, cosmopolitan perspectives and the fine arts, and the well-ordered and rational conduct of community affairs. Despite the fact that lower class persons comprised a clear majority in Midcity for many decades, it was possible for the residents of Midcity Highlands to pursue this ideal so long as their lower class fellow townsmen continued to live at some remove on the flats below, and so long as their power in community affairs was modest.

The physical insulation of the Highlands community was destroyed when the newly emerging middle class began to move in around the base of the Highlands, and its hegemony was shattered when the lower class Irish began to gain political control of Midcity. These and related events made it clear to the older English middle class that the conditions necessary to their way of life would soon vanish from Midcity, and despite the fact that the agents of this dissipation were of higher rather than lower status within the lower class, saw little alternative to relocation. The older English middle class was less threatened by the possibility that lower class behavior would provide a bad example for their children than by the impossibility of maintaining their accustomed life style in a predominantly lower class milieu. The type of life they desired, and which they found or made in the communities to which they moved, involved well-financed and competently run schools, well-kept dwelling units of ample size and with ample grounds, retail outlets catering to the middle class tastes in clothing, household, furnishings, and the like, and, of particular importance, a local government sympathetic to the maintenance of conditions congenial to middle class life, and relatively free of the patronage practices, budgetary preferences, and general administrative conduct of the lower-class political style.67

67 Discussion of lower class political style in Miller et al “Delinquency and Organizational Relations” in S. Wheeler, ed. Controlling Delinquency, John Wiley, 1962. See also Banfield and Wilson, City Politics.
At various times during the history of Midcity attempts were made to induce middle class populations to take up residence in the community. Several such attempts occurred during the post-Civil-War period, when developers utilized newly-filled land in Lower Midcity to build houses designed to attract what Sam Warner calls the “lower-middle class.” As has been said, Midcity offered many advantages as a residential community, and the convenient location and newness of these units attracted to Lower Midcity a substantial group of non-lower-class persons. It did not take them long to discover that they had moved to middle class islands in a lower class sea, and to realize the consequences of this circumstance. For these people residence in Midcity involved liabilities similar to those which affected both the “emergent” and the older English middle class. Less “secure” in their status, as was the “emergent” group, parents felt vulnerable to the perceived influence of the local lower class subculture; desiring a community geared to the middle class life style, as did the older English middle class, they were dissatisfied with the schools, shops, and political climate of Midcity, and displeased with the ubiquity of bars, factories, and other physical manifestations of lower class life. As these people moved away to communities better suited to their life pattern, the developers rapidly began to alter the vacated units so as to accommodate the tastes and income levels of low status populations (subdividing single units, and the like). This process accelerated the out-movement, and in a surprisingly short time, according to Warner, the middle class islands became submerged in the lower class sea.

During the “urban crises” period of the middle 1900’s, the introduction of middle class populations into Midcity was proposed as one solution to its problems. For reasons beyond the scope of this study, a major form of voluntary immigration of middle class persons which occurs in some lower class communities—the settlement of adolescent and young-adult middle-class artistic-intellectuals—never developed in Midcity. As of mid-century, such proposals had not come to fruition. With the exception of new housing for the Negro middle class, to be discussed
shortly, the major middle-class in-movements involved a “visiting” rather than a resident middle class, also to be discussed. In the perspective of Midcity’s historical experience, prospects for the process of “reverse-tipping” would not appear good.

The circumstances of Midcity’s Negro middle class residential community in the middle 1900’s would appear, at first, to run counter to the “discomfiture engenders distance” principle. For many decades Midcity contained both lower and middle class Negroes. Many of the middle class Negroes of the 1950’s were descended from the “emergent” group of a generation or two before, and had moved from Lower Midcity to substantial single family dwellings in Upper Midcity and Midcity Highlands, vacated by the out-moving English and Jews. Prior to World War II, these middle class Negro communities had been quite effectively isolated from the lower class areas by the physical features that had served the same purpose for their predecessor populations. Following World War II substantial groups of lower class Negroes began to move toward and into this area; why didn’t the Negro middle class follow venerable precedent of their white status-mates and flee the district?

The simple explanation “racial barriers to free residential movement” is not enough. It is certainly true that the middle class Negroes encountered greater difficulty in obtaining suitable housing in higher status communities than did their Irish and Jewish predecessors, but this was not the whole story. The study of middle class Negroes cited in Chapter One showed that Midcity had a positive attraction for many and that some important element of preference combined with elements of restriction in determining their choice. It would appear that relative to whites, the Negroes had a greater toleration of residential proximity to persons of different social status.68 The discomfiture principle suggests competition between two forms of social distinction—race and class. Did middle class Negroes feel less uncomfortable as racially-different residents of class-similar communities, or as

68 See the discussion in Chapter Four of the wide range of social status in the Negro corner gangs relative to the white.
racially-similar residents of class-differentiated communities? With the factor of housing discrimination as one important fact in weighting their decision, the bulk of Midcity’s middle class Negroes apparently chose the latter alternative.

Given the fact that the Negro sections of Midcity in the 1950’s contained an unusually wide range of social status levels and an unusual degree of physical proximity among the several levels, it remains to inquire as to the influence of the “discomfiture engenders distance” principle. Was it minor or non-existent? By no means; two rather striking kinds of evidence may be cited. The first is the existence of an unusual degree of explicit class antagonism among Midcity’s Negroes. Physical separations, a major device for insulating classes, result in a relatively low level of direct interaction among persons of different social positions. Low interaction engenders less direct hostility. In the absence of the degree of physical separation which ordinarily mutes direct class antagonism, Midcity’s Negroes were constrained to confront these feelings directly. Higher status Negroes not infrequently referred to their lower class fellows in terms of derogation and disdain, and pursued a variety of practices designed to maintain the maximum degree of social separation. Lower class Negroes wrote furious letters to the local newspapers excoriating what they called “The Black Bourgeoisie” as smug, supercilious, exclusionist, and class-prejudiced. One distillate, therefore, of the unusual degree of inter-class residential proximity was an unusually intense manifestation of inter-class hostility.

The second kind of evidence of the operation of the “discomfiture” principle involves the use made by the Negro middle class of the urban redevelopment movement of the 1950’s. As has been shown, prior to World War II the Negro neighborhoods in Upper Midcity and the Highlands were relatively isolated geographically; after World War II, the growing lower class Negro community began to infiltrate these neighborhoods, destroying the earlier pattern of physical isolation. Just at this time federal funds and enabling legislation made it possible for the Port City Urban Redevelopment Authority to propose the razing of large
sections of lower class housing areas, and building, in their place, new garden-type
developments of the kind so prevalent in the middle class suburbs. Midcity’s middle
class Negro community enthusiastically supported these proposals and by the
1960’s several new housing developments, inhabited almost exclusively by middle
class residents, once more appeared as middle class islands in the lower class sea.
The residential developments made possible by Federal Urban Redevelopment thus
enabled Midcity’s middle class Negroes to recover some degree of the residential
insulation they had been in the process of losing. In the 1960’s, the Midcity
neighborhoods best approximating the designation of “ghetto” were not lower class,
but middle class.

The ethic of “salvation by good works” is deeply ingrained in the subculture of
the American middle class. Increasing secularization of this ethic appears to have
strengthened rather than weakened its force. From its earliest days the existence in
Midcity of a substantial lower class population provided for middle class persons a
clearly distinguished and conveniently located target for social reform. As has been
shown, at that point in time when the last descendants of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century founders
of the Midcity Charitable Society were moving away, other socially-similar persons
began to move in from the outside to minister to the poor in various forms and for
various periods. Most conspicuous among these were those who actually “settled,”
on a full-time basis, among the poor (the first “settlements” were established in
1895); more significant, in the long run, were the myriads of workers, professional
and amateur, who “visited” Midcity during the day in connection with a wide
variety of services categorized, in the 1900’s, under the designation “health,
education, and welfare.”

In earlier years the bulk of these middle class visitors were either affiliated
with formally-organized health, education, or welfare organizations, or represented
private charitable ventures; in later years they were joined by many more affiliated
with a host of “projects,” often supported by federal funds, whose objective was to
induce changes in customary modes of lower class behavior. These enterprises
themselves, however, seldom formulated their objectives in these terms; rather they spoke of producing “improvements” or “amelioration” in patterns of language, child-rearing, formal education, health behavior, housing, use of leisure time, occupational behavior, religious practices, and the like. On a gross and general level, the impact of all these efforts over all these years may be evaluated most directly by the well-documented fact that in the 1950’s a well-developed lower class subculture still flourished in Midcity. On a more specific level, it is evident that many of these enterprises had significant impact on the population, and contributed, along with other factors, to the movement out of lower class status which characterized so many of Midcity’s residents.

Of the constituent enterprises of the “social service” trio of health, education, and welfare, the impact of the first two was most evident. Health services in Midcity contributed to substantial reductions in infant mortality, deaths from diseases such as tuberculosis, and a generally improved level of physical health. The contribution of the schools in altering patterns of behavior was also substantial. Particularly during the high immigration periods, the educational system bore the major responsibility for “Americanizing” Midcity’s new citizens, and discharged this responsibility with considerable effect. It was also during this period that the settlement houses played their most direct role in exposing Midcity’s lower class residents to the perspectives, values, and behavior patterns of the American middle class, and many a parent or grandparent of the middle class suburbanites of the mid-twentieth century had absorbed, in the settlement houses, experience of the most direct utility to the achieved status of their descendants.

Had the residents of Midcity—thus made more healthy and set firmly upon the road to social elevation by their visiting middle class mentors—chosen to remain therein, the character of population in the 1950’s would undoubtedly have been far different. Since, however, the bulk of those thus enabled to elevate themselves adopted the common practice of converting status into separation by moving away, a major effect of the more successful behavior change enterprises was to facilitate
the “exodus of the higher status,” and thus to enhance the general process by which the community remained predominantly lower class. The continuing propensity of the socially-reformed to depart the community was reflected in the bitter complaints of many of the “project” workers of the mid-1900’s: “Whenever I finally succeed in developing a good ‘leader’ in a neighborhood, they leave!”

If one assumes, then, that a major objective of the visiting middle class was to make Midcity less lower class by enabling its residents to alter their customary modes of behavior, it would have to be said that the greater their success in effecting the latter part of this objective, the greater their failure in achieving the former. Given the persisting tendency for Americans to convert social-status change into residential change, along with the other “stability” process discussed here, the long-term cumulative impact of the social-reform activities of the visiting middle class was to make Midcity more rather than less lower class.

**Lower Class Subculture as an Intrinsic Component of a Viable Societal Adaptation**

The historical materials of this chapter as well as its more general analysis bear directly on a set of questions posed at the beginning of this chapter—questions of central relevance to the understanding of gangs and gang delinquency in Midcity. Why do lower class people behave as they do? Why is there a lower class? How can one explain its long-term persistence? Although these questions have engaged thoughtful men for many centuries, they are being asked today with a sense of urgency which indicates that available answers have failed to provide sufficient understanding. Today, as always, there is a press for answers which are simple and unitary—qualities which do not characterize the present explanation. Abstracted from an extensive body of historical, demographic and field-collected materials and reflecting their complexity, the present explanation is not readily susceptible to simplification. This final section will, however, at the cost of some distortion,
attempt such a simplification, along with a comparison of the explanation with several others. In simplified form, the explanation derived from the historical experience of Midcity might be phrased as follows: A lower class subculture came into being and persists because it comprises an intrinsic component of an intricately organized and viable socio-economic adaptation. Over the course of many centuries, in Europe and elsewhere, men developed a solution to the problem of containing masses of persons within a supervening social order which incorporated, as a major structural feature, a device whereby the enormous range of differentiated occupational pursuits required by such societies were distributed among specific subsectors of the society. Within this system, those subsectors whose occupational pursuits involved lower levels of skill developed a subculture centering around the conditions of low-skilled labor, and which involved, among other things, mechanisms for accommodating to subordinancy, residential and kinship practices geared to the requirements of low-skilled labor, and systematic adaptations to the circumstance of being assigned low social prestige.

When persons enculturated under this type of social system migrated to North America they constituted a social order which incorporated its essential features. During the intervening three centuries there have been many changes of actual or potential relevance to the functioning of this system. Principal among these have been a major shift in the dominant national political ideology, massive alterations in the national and ethnic composition of the population, and dramatic changes in the technological bases of the economic adaptation. It is of central importance to note, however, that none of these changes, profound as they might appear, have thus far sufficiently altered the basic shape of the established social and economic adaptation as to significantly modify its reliance on a set of occupationally-differentiated social status levels, and the concomitant existence of a low-skilled, low-status population of substantial size.

The major shift in the national political ideology (often called a “revolution”) which occurred about half-way through this historical period placed the nation in
explicit opposition to inequalities based on social class position, and aroused in many the vision of a classless society. Hard reality—in the form of the operational requirements of a viable multi-status-level social and economic system—proved far more powerful than the egalitarian vision, and the continuing existence of social classes differentiated by prestige, reward and behavior continue to discomfort those who are more than ordinarily discomforted by discrepancies between the actual and the ideal. The incorporation into the population of the United States of vast numbers of persons with national backgrounds and traditions quite different from those of the earlier English settlers also had limited influence on the basic shape of the system. Despite their divergent backgrounds, these people proved highly educable in American ways, and among these ways were the skills, perspectives, and customary practices of lower class life. In the process whereby millions of immigrants became “Americanized,” some significant number learned to become lower class Americans.

Changes in technology which occurred during the three centuries of Midcity history are seen by some, with reason, as the most revolutionary in human history. Since the area of technology has a most immediate relation to the economic adaptation of any society, one would expect changes of this magnitude to carry a powerful potential for altering the basic shape of the system. Surely the cumulative impact of thousands of technological and technologically-influenced developments such as electrical power, massive population shifts accompanying the spread of the mass-produced gasoline automobile, and the vast coverage made possible by electronic communication could be expected, if anything could, to more closely align the social class ideology of the United States with its social class reality. And yet, as of the present time, these technological developments appear to have strengthened rather than weakened those elements of status-differentiation which lie close to the core of the socio-economic system. Instead of eliminating low-status populations by providing mechanical substitutes for muscle power, the increasing mechanization of the economy appears to have brought into being a system of specialized training far
more extensive and far more differentiated than heretofore, a system whose consequences appear to be intensifying rather than mitigating the traditional distinctions between persons at different skill and status levels.

It would thus appear that major changes in ideology, technology, and population composition which produced marked alterations in external manifestations of Midcity’s social and economic adaptation, failed to alter materially those “core” features of the system which involve status differentiation, and a lower status population. The adaptability-flexibility model discussed in connection with Midcity’s economic adaptation would appear to serve as a more general model as well; the key to persisting viability—biological, social, or economic—would appear to adhere in the capacity to maintain a core of relatively stable elements while at the same time maintaining sufficient flexibility to change many of its extrinsic characteristics in response to environmental and/or internally-generated changes. One intrinsic component of this larger system, Midcity’s lower class, while changing in many external respects over the centuries, retained the essence of its “core” characteristics, and the essence of its relation to the larger system.

This explanation for the existence and persistence of a lower class, the practitioners of the lower class subculture, differs in important respects from others which are currently fashionable, were fashionable in the past, or both. Three of its characteristics are of particular relevance for purposes of comparison with other explanations. First, it derives from a “general” explanational model which applies to the total social system and its full range of social classes rather than seeing the lower class as a special case requiring a special explanation (this will be discussed further). Second, the urban lower class and its associated subculture are seen as a “normal” component of an organized and viable social and economic adaptation, rather than as “abnormal,” “deviant,” or “disorganized.” Third, changes in the external aspects of lower class life during the recent and less recent past are seen primarily as changes of degree rather than kind, with evident changes in
technological, residential, and ethnic circumstances failing to transmute the “essential” nature of the established social and economic adaptation. These characteristics contrast with those of other explanations; four major explanatory traditions will be cited here—those of Supernatural Determination, Inherent Human Characteristics, Organized Exploitation, and Disorganization-Pathology.

The continuing propensity of Midcity’s Colonial lower class residents to drink, brawl, steal, and remain poor may have disturbed its authorities, but it did not perplex them. The basic explanation for the phenomenon of the lower class, as for many other phenomena, lay in the concept of Supernatural Determination, or divinely-ordained fate. As applied during Colonial times, this explanation conceived “good” and “bad” forms of human behavior as a consequence of a struggle for the souls of men waged outside human society by supernatural partisans of good and evil. Engaging in acts such as theft or assault represented a victory of the forces of evil; one was “seized,” or possessed of the devil. While the postulation of powerful extra-human forces removed from human volition much of the responsibility for behavior, this explanation managed to combine both external causality and individual responsibility by granting to the individual a measure of choice as to which side he allied himself with. Those living under circumstances of penury or hardship were seen as suffering divine retribution for having succumbed to the forces of evil. This type of explanation, in one of its several forms retained currency among many Americans in the mid-1900’s, but most scholars sought to place the locus of causality in the human rather than the extra-human sphere.

The Inherent Characteristics explanation has been and remains one of the most popular. It is simple, and frequently appears to be substantiated by direct experience. In some forms it resembles a secularized version of the Supernatural Determination position. According to this explanation, people practice customary forms of lower class behavior because of an inherent predilection to do so. In one version these propensities are assigned to particular individuals or family lines; in a more prevalent version, to certain broad categories—particularly racial, national,
religious, and regional. It has been convincingly argued, for example, that the propensity to practice lower class forms of behavior is intimately related to being Negro, Irish, Catholic, or Southern. This explanation experienced its greatest popularity among serious scholars in the United States and elsewhere during the post-Civil-War period; the passages from Woods and his collaborators attest vividly to its strength.

This explanation was still widely held in the mid-1900’s, applied most generally, perhaps, to the Negroes, but also seen by many as applicable to groups such as the Spanish Americans, Southern Appalachian “hillbillies,” Sicilians, and Catholics. Among most serious scholars, however, this position had lost currency, due in part to the fact that it comprised a major tenet of the ideology of those considered “racists,” as well as to the evident fact that many persons (including many scholars) who belonged to groups at one time categorized as inherently predisposed to lower class behavior had come, in time, to behave quite differently. There were signs, however, that the Inherent Characteristic explanation was experiencing a revival among some scholars, with the idea of “subculture” taking the place of “race” or “ethnic status.” As the attribution of lower class behavior moved from the devil to race to subculture, some scholars took the position that a “permanent underclass” was developing, differentiated by race, religion, region, and so on, but maintaining in common a “culture of poverty” or “culture of delinquency” as a quasi-inherent characteristic.

Although the classic Inherent Characteristics type of explanation had fallen into disrepute among most scholars of the mid-1900’s, another equally classic explanation, the Disorganization-Pathology approach, still enjoyed high favor. At the root of this explanation is the premise, generally implicit and unexamined, that the idealized (rather than the actual) forms of middle class life represent a state of “order” and “health,” and that other forms, to the degree that they deviate from idealized middle class standards, represent “disorganization” and “pathology.” Two main variants of this explanation are the psychological and sociological. Taking
idealized middle class personality attributes as its primary measure of “normality,”
this school characterizes as “abnormal” masses of persons whose behavior with
regard to sex, drinking, family life, economic activity and other areas deviates
significantly from the postulated norm, quite independent of their social status. The
sociological version of this explanation, maintained most firmly by those with a
commitment to certain types of social reform, perceives as “organized” those ways of
life which accord with official idealized middle class standards, and “disorganized”
those which do not. The approach, which characterizes characteristic forms of lower
class behavior as “deviant,” combines both the psychological and sociological
versions of this explanation in seeing such behavior as simultaneously lacking the
attributes of health and order. A fourth category of explanation, perhaps the most
ancient of all, enjoyed a tremendous revival in mid-twentieth century United
States. This explanation centered on the concept of “organized exploitation.” This
classic thesis, propounded in its most eloquent, persuasive, and massively-
documented form by Karl Marx in the mid-1800’s, holds that the existence and life
circumstances of the lower class are a direct consequence of a deliberate, organized,
and highly effective policy pursued by higher status persons.69 These persons, the
theory goes, impelled by motives not considered admirable, in a concerted drive to
maximize their own power, stature, and wealth—particularly wealth—have
developed an economic system wherein low status persons provide a cheap and
tractable labor supply. Since this reservoir of low-skilled labor provides the major
underpinning for the system from which those of higher status achieve their
position, they mobilize their extensive resources--financial, political, administrative,
in a continuing and deliberate effort to maintain the conditions seen to sustain the
lower class—low income, poor housing, little education, and all the rest.

The appeal of this explanation rests upon essentially the same basis as the
“supernatural determination” explanation; it divides the society into two clearly
distinguished classes of persons—the “evil” (malicious, conspiratorial,

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69 See, for example, Marx and Engels, “The Communist Manifesto.”
monumentally-selfish capitalistic exploiters) and the “good” (good-hearted, sacrificing, long-suffering, cruelly exploited workers)—although the two explanations do reverse the assignments of good and evil. As in the case of most popular explanations of human behavior, it is apparently hard to conceptualize a “social problem” independent of heroes and villains. The mid-twentieth-century American vogue for the organized exploitation explanation centered on the concept of “opportunity.” This version for the most part avoided classic Marxian terminology, using instead the eminently American and currently acceptable concept of “denial of opportunity.” Instead of “capitalistic exploiters” this school spoke of “slumlords,” “the white power structure,” and the “Washington-Pentagon Wall-Street Establishment.” The formulation in terms of “opportunity” was so palatable to most Americans—even to legislative officials hardly sympathetic to classic Marxism—that the term was used to designate a major governmental agency established to deal with the problems of the American lower class.

The several types of explanations wax and wane in popularity during different historical periods, often in response to particular historical circumstances. Generally several are applied at the same time, with varying emphases, to account for lower class populations of different kinds. Differing applications during the post-Civil War and post-World War II periods are instructive. During the earlier period, when the “unassimilated” state of several national groups was seen as a primary cause of lower class conditions, the latter three explanations were brought to bear, with Disorganization in a dominant position, Inherent Characteristics a strong second, and Exploitation third but running well. Midcity’s lower class subculture of the 1880’s was seen primarily as a result of the intergenerational dislocations attendant on cultural transition, but also as reflecting particular inherent Irish or Jewish “racial” characteristics, as well as the exploitative policies of employers, particularly with regard to child labor and opposition to labor unions. In the 1960’s despite the enormous growth of unions and the legal abolition of child labor, the “exploitation” explanation became the front runner, with “disorganization” running
a close second, and “inherent characteristics” a poor third among scholars, but running well for most others.

The situation of the highly publicized “urban poor” of the 1960’s was attributed most widely to deliberate discriminatory policies aimed primarily at lower class Negroes, designed to deny them the opportunity to better themselves with respect to income, education, occupation, and housing. This circumstance, along with others, was said to result in an unhealthy and disorganized mode of life, with a catalogue of social ills—dilapidated houses, broken homes, illegitimacy, desertion, dependency, delinquency, and ill-health—adduced to support the characterization. While most scholars, as previously stated, (except for some who postulated a “culture of poverty” which was transmitted from parent to child), placed major stress on organized exploitation by higher status whites and belittled the influence of inherent characteristics, most other people reversed this emphasis, assigning causative primacy to something inherent in being Negro (or Southern Appalachian, or Puerto Rican).

The present explanation, which represents the lower class subculture as one intrinsic component of a viable, “total-society” social and economic adaptation, has had little or no currency. Some of the reasons for this may be adduced by comparing the several explanational traditions with respect to three characteristics similar to but not identical with those cited earlier in this section: the attribution of blame, the use of particular evaluative frameworks, and the use of “special-case” explanations.

The tendency to blame someone for disapproved human conditions remains strong among scholars and non-scholars alike, despite one tenet of modern social scholarship which supports the notion of “objective” social analysis. The four explanations cited here differ in the degree to which they ascribe blame for the existence of the lower class, and who is blamed. The explanations in which blame is most unequivocally ascribed are those of Supernatural Determination and Organized Exploitation. Despite some conceptual ambiguity as to the degree of
individual responsibility involved, the supernatural determination explanation severely blames the “undeserving” poor for their drinking, stealing, wenching, and the like, since this is a manifestation of their regrettable surrender to the forces of evil. In Colonial Midcity the ascription of blame was sufficiently impelling as to subject the objects thereof to burning, hanging, and torture. The Organized Exploitation school also assumes a quasi-religious quality in its ascription of blame. Here the partisans of evil are the higher status exploiters and their (sometimes lower status) accomplices, who, out of the most reprehensible motives of greed, selfishness and social irresponsibility, deliberately induce and foster the conditions which produce and sustain the lower class. Blame is not a dominant feature of the Inherent Characteristics explanation; the behavior of those inherently predisposed to lower class behavior is disvalued, but seen in general as essentially beyond individual volition. The Disorganization-Pathology approach assumes a rather curious position with respect to blame. On the one hand, children and/or the current generation are seldom held to account for their behavior, but rather are objects of compassion and sympathy; on the other, parents and/or the preceding generation are blamed, often with passion, on the grounds that policies and choices on their part are responsible for the plight of the succeeding generation. In the present explanation the question of blame is essentially irrelevant; the circumstances of the lower class are seen as one feature of an intricate social invention contrived by humans struggling to develop viable adaptations to a difficult environment—an eminently collective invention involving millions of persons, each contributing, according to his own light, to the achieved adaptation.

In most cases, again despite the “objectivity” ethic of some scholarship, it is not difficult to discern particular value perspectives underlying the several conceptual frameworks used to explain the lower class. The first four explanations are similar in incorporating well-developed value premises; they differ, however, in the degree to which these premises are made explicit.
The Supernatural Determination explanation is, of course, the essence and prototype of value-incorporation. Those lower class people whose behavior stems from the surrender to moral temptation embody the evil which engineered that surrender. The value premises of the Inherent Characteristics explanation are fairly close to the surface. These generally center on the assumption that the national, racial, religious, and/or regional characteristics of particular categories of persons render them especially suitable for low status positions. In the United States, Protestants of Northern European background have traditionally been seen as inherently less predisposed to lower class behavior, and groups such as Southern Europeans, Catholics, and Africans as inherently more. Lower class people not infrequently subscribe to this explanation in much the same terms as do the higher; the latter will say “He can’t help drinking; he’s Irish;” the former “I can’t help drinking; I’m Irish.”

The value premises underlying the Organized Exploitation position are quite explicit, and derive more from a set of abstract philosophical principles than from class- or ethnic-centered values. These premises center on the concept of “justice”—a traditional preoccupation of social philosophers. Proponents of this position perceive a social order in which wealth, power, and prestige are unequally distributed as a violation of justice, which appears in this context as an absolute and universal standard. It is the intensity of their disapproval of those elements of injustice associated with lower class life which animates the powerful evaluative stance of this school. It is of interest to note in this connection that despite their conception of justice as an absolute and universal standard, the proponents of this position devote considerable attention to circumstances in which lower status people appear as victims of injustice, and rather little to those in which they may be the authors thereof.

The Disorganization-Pathology position is distinguished in both the thoroughness with which it incorporates a particular value stance and the thoroughness of its denial that it is doing so. This value position, as already
mentioned, centers on a largely implicit assumption that forms of behavior which accord with official middle class ideals embody the qualities of abnormality, pathology, disorganization and deviance. The psychological variant of this position is rather less ambivalent with regard to values than its sociological counterpart; characterizations of lower class persons by terms such as “premature independence,” “defective impulse control,” and “emotional immaturity” reflect a model of healthy personality development which approaches the status of formalized doctrine.

The works of sociological proponents of this position, on the other hand, reflect a far more deep-seated ambivalence with respect to values. These works characteristically combine two categories of concepts of markedly different character. The first set is defined with a relatively high degree of precision, has explicit operational referents, and enjoys a high degree of scholarly consensus as to meaning. Examples are “population,” “statistical significance,” “sampling procedures,” and “error variance.” The second set of terms incorporates a complex congeries of unexamined assumptions, value premises, and implicit connotations whose existence is seldom admitted, let alone being subjected to critical examination.

Some of the terms in this category frequently applied to lower class forms are: unstable family structures; broken homes, poor educational attainment, inadequate parental practices; inferior job performance; inefficient expenditure patterns; defective inter-personal communication; apathetic life outlook; and excessive intra-community involvement. Were the proponents of this position to apply to this latter set of terms the same criteria of definitional rigor they demand of the former, they would hold without hesitation that adjectives such as “unstable,” “broken,” “poor,” “inadequate,” “inferior,” “inefficient,” “defective,” “excessive,” and “impaired” can have meaning in the scholarly sense, only in connection with the

70 The Disorganization-Pathology explanation as applied during the immigration-assimilation period of the late 19th and early 20th century is discussed in Chapter One.
question—with reference to what? In point of fact, the “what” which serves almost invariably as an unexamined standard of comparison is an idealized normative concept of middle class behavioral forms.

Since the sociological scholars who subscribe to the Disorganization-Pathology explanatory framework for the most part exhibit a high degree of sensitivity to scientific rigor with respect to the first set of terms, it is of some interest to note the degree of casualness exhibited with respect to the latter. These unexamined concepts are widely used in scholarly reports, frequently in direct conjunction with terms of the first category, apparently with little or no awareness that such admixture is occurring, nor of the markedly contrasting nature of the two categories of terms.

Many of those who use the Disorganization-Pathology explanation have little awareness that a distinctive set of value assumptions are implicit therein, since they are so seldom subject to systematic examination. Those who are aware that this position rests on something more than universally valid premises generally forward a well-developed argument to explain away the class-linked nature of its underlying values. This argument postulates that the bulk of society shares a common or universal set of values, often termed “conventional”; that these values are “internalized” in such a way so they have a direct and compelling impact on behavior; that the values of those sectors of the society which customarily pursue behavioral practices at variance with these standards have drifted or shifted or stretched away from the “conventional” values; and that this set of commonly internalized standards coincides with the official idealized values of middle class life.

The value premises underlying the present explanation fall less readily into a conventional pattern. Those who subscribe to the Disorganization-Pathology explanation and who share the sense of urgency for extensive social reform which generally accompanies this position regard this explanation as embodying a “conservative” ideological position. This is due in part to the fact that the major
thrust of the explanation goes to an intensive examination of currently-functioning social forms and places relatively little emphasis on issues on directed social change. It might be more accurate to say that the present explanation takes as a base value the continuing viability of human societies, conceived as a set of highly complex, multi-component social systems. The position in no way argues against the necessity of adaptive social change but rather by implication, casts doubt on the potential effectiveness of programs of social reform which derive largely from particular ideological convictions and which fail to take into account the extraordinary complexity of the modern national state, and the intricate fashion in which its vast multiplicity of constituent components are related to one another.

According to one of the values of modern scientific method, an explanation which accounts for its relevant universe according to a general and uniformly-applicable set of principles is superior to one which must adduce separate and special principles to account for “deviant” cases. While none of the explanations discussed here remotely achieves this estimable ideal, the several explanations differ in the degree to which it is actualized. The “Supernatural Determination” and “Organized Exploitation” explanations resemble one another in that both look to a “total system” explanation; the “Inherent Characteristics” and “Disorganization-Pathology” explanations are closer to “special-case” explanations. The former two explanations delineate a universe wherein the circumstances of lower status populations arise directly from the actual character of persisting relationships between higher and lower sectors of the system; the latter two delineate “dominant” sectors which function in a “normal” and “organized” fashion, and must then adduce a wide range of discrete and special explanations (bad parents, emotional immaturity, etc.) to account for the “non-conforming” behavior patterns of the numerous “deviant” sectors.

The “Disorganization-Pathology” approach, as in the case of the utilization of values, forwards a special-case explanation while claiming a total-system explanation by reliance on arguments already cited; the relevant universe, “society,”
is defined so as to include those whose behavior is regarded as normal and organized according to middle class ideals, while the large numbers of persons whose behavior apparently accords with differing standards are regarded as outside the system (non-social, asocial, or even anti-social). Special explanations must then be adduced to account for the myriad forms of deviancy (sexual, economic, educational, vocational, etc.) pursued by persons operating outside the normal and dominant universe.

The present explanation, like the former two, includes the behavior patterns of both lower and higher sectors of the society within the same explanational system, and also like them derives these patterns from the character of persisting relationships among the several sectors. The concept of a total social system containing subpopulations differentiated by occupation and social standing, with each making some useful contribution to the viability of the whole, allows for the explanation of status and subcultural differences in terms of different but complementary contributions to the viability of the total system. This explanation requires a more complex delineation of social status levels than is encountered in the traditional upper-middle-lower or Marxian capitalist-bourgeoisie-workers scheme, and a concomitantly complex delineation of the nature of their mutual relationships (see, for example, the analysis of relationships among lower class III, II, I, and middle class workers in Midcity’s economy). Despite this complexity, the present approach does afford an opportunity—still far from realized—for including explanations of the lower class and its subculture within a more general explanation of the functioning of a total society, conceived as an organized and viable social system. Within this system, each of a range of social status levels manifests a subculture which, while sharing important elements in common with other levels, at the same time maintains a set of subcultural elements of sufficient distinctiveness as to permit clear differentiation among levels, with the differentiated elements of each subculture directly and intimately related to the customary occupational circumstances of persons at that level.
Youth Crime

in an Urban Lower Class Community

Whatever the merits or demerits of these several models, the data of the Midcity study would indicate that any conceptual position, which leads to a characterization of urban adolescent street gangs as “deviant” or “outsiders,” indeed reflects a curious picture of American society. The term “deviant” may refer, among other things, to values which deviate significantly from particular statistical parameters, or to social manifestations which depart significantly from idealized standards. With respect to the first meaning, data presented in the last chapter showed that something on the order of two thirds of male adolescents in Midcity were affiliated with street gangs. From a statistical point of view, it was the boy who was not part of a gang who belonged to a “deviant” minority. There were many more gang members in Midcity than Boy Scouts—a membership organization not ordinarily considered “deviant.” Although comparative figures are not readily available, it is quite probable that the number of American adolescents who do or did belong to gangs is equal to or greater than those who do or did belong to the Boy Scouts. The gang cannot be considered “deviant” on the basis of statistical prevalence.
The characterization of gang members as “deviants” with respect to the normative standards of a cultural system, or as “outsiders” with respect to affiliation with an “inside” sector of society, depends on what “culture” or what sector of society one chooses to use as the basis of one evaluation. The present work represents the gang in its most developed form as a patterned and predictable product of the “conjunction” of four “prime” subcultures—those of males, of adolescents, of city-dwellers, of low-skilled laborers. Most analysts do not consider the subculture of the first three categories as “deviant.” Whether one designates the urban slum gang as “deviant,” then, depends largely on the extent to which one regards as “deviant” the subculture of some 15 to 30% of the American population—that portion (lower class III and II) which follows the customary style of life of the low-skilled laboring class.

If one chooses to view the gang within the context of the subculture of the urban laboring class community, it appears as a highly conventional form—both in that its myriad behavior patterns conform closely to well-established conventions, and in that it is, and has been, a highly prevalent form. A middle class woman of fifty who habitually congregated on street corners with eight or ten peers might quite legitimately be regarded as “deviant” with respect to accepted standards of her subculture; a laboring class boy of sixteen who engaged in this kind of practice is engaged in absolutely conventional behavior within the context of his subculture. Nor is he an “outsider” as a consequence of gang membership; quite the contrary, it is more often the non-gang member in the urban slum who feels himself to be on the outside. The lower class male who belongs or belonged to a street gang is just as much a part of the “mainstream” of American society as a middle class female who belongs or belonged to a bridge club. The urban adolescent street gang is a traditional and entirely conventional feature of American urban lower class life, and thus, a conventional feature of American life as a whole.
The Gang and "Normality"

During the 1950's, the heyday of the "pathology" approach to social problems, it was fashionable to explain gangs and gang behavior in terms of abnormality—primarily emotional abnormality. One fashionable phrasing went: "These kids are sick!" This kind of explanation suffered a certain loss of popularity during the 1960's, being replaced for some by explanations based on social rather than individual pathology, and for others by explanations locating causes in various forms of social injustice rather than in social sickness. However, the "pathology" approach to gangs still retains considerable currency in some quarters, and it will be useful to bring to bear on this issue relevant data from the Midcity study. What do the extended-term field data of the Midcity study indicate with respect to the notion that the existence of gangs and the behavior of gang members are manifestations of abnormality or pathology? Evidence will be adduced with respect to three forms of "normality"—physical fitness, mental capacity, and emotional stability.

Although evidence available from the study is largely indirect, it would appear, on a gross level, that the range of variation represented by the 205

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71 Issue of definitions of "normality-abnormality," particularly when applied to mental or emotional states in different social-class contexts, like issue of what is "conventional" or "deviant," is highly complex, can't be developed here. Discussions of "pathology" frame of reference as applied to lower-class and/or gang populations in Miller, W.B., "Preliminary Theoretical Orientations to the Study of Gang Delinquency," International Research Newsletter in Mental Health, Vol. I, No. 2, October, 1959; "Some Assumptions Underlying a Theory of Delinquent Behavior," Paper delivered at Nat. Ed. Ass. Conference, May, 1959; "A Treatment Approach to ‘Conforming’ Delinquency," Paper delivered at American Psychological Association meetings. One of best examples of "emotional pathology" approach to gangs in Yablonsky, op. cit. (Violent Gang). Saw gangs primarily as forming around highly disturbed leaders, and as representing a collection of outcasts or defectives unable to function in any group but a disturbed one. At least two of numerous meanings of term “normal” of relevance here: statistical normality (as in "normal" curve or distribution), and normality with respect to physical, mental, or emotional functioning by individuals or groups. Consideration of gang with respect to statistical normality included in previous discussion of gang as "conventional," present discussion centers on latter meaning.

72 The Midcity study did not conduct systematic research involving measurement and/or testing of physical, mental, or emotional characteristics of individuals, nor attempt to obtain such information from organizations which may have compiled some of it. Insofar as this evidence is not derived from professionally-standardized modes of ascertaining physical health or intelligence (comparable methods do not exist for "mental health"), it must be regarded as inferential rather than direct.
members of the intensive-study gangs fell well within the range of “normality” for persons of this age category and social status level. Gang members appeared fit and healthy; there were few visible indications of chronic disease or malnutrition. One of the best forms of indirect evidence as to their physical fitness was the fact that almost all of the male gang members engaged in demanding forms of athletic activity; some very successfully so. All male gangs were active in football, baseball, and basketball; several produced championship teams; during one year the playoff for the city football championship was between the Kings and Outlaws. In addition, the Senior Bandits engaged in boxing, and the Kings were active in track and field. To perform effectively in sports of this kind, one’s physical condition must not only be up to the average, but above-average.\footnote{One of the Outlaws was a polio victim, and partially crippled. One of the Kings had a metal plate in his skull as a consequence of an accident. These physical infirmities apparently had little effect on the boys’ acceptability as gang members. For most of the gang members, “keeping in shape” was an important concern; see the discussion of physical fitness versus drinking in the chapter on drinking behavior.}

An appraisal of the mental capability of Midcity gang members must take into account the important distinction between intellectual capacity in the scholastic sense and intelligence in the sense of being able to cope effectively with the circumstances of one’s cultural environment.\footnote{The distinction between “book smartness” and “street smartness” is developed in W. B. Miller, 1958 (“Milieu”), op. cit. Evidence for the “smartness” of gang members includes, among other things, the intellectually demanding pattern of mutual insult interchange so characteristic of gangs.} Plotted on a curve, the intelligence of the population of Midcity gang members would probably approximate a “normal” distribution, with some duller and some smarter than the average. There were no indications that the intelligence of the average gang member could be categorized as “sub-normal”; on the contrary, there were indications that the gang selected for membership from among the more able adolescents in the community.

The Senior Bandits provide an excellent example of the level of mental capacity of a gang regarded by some as of subnormal intelligence. The Senior Bandits ranked lowest of all gangs in educational attainment, and judged in terms
of their scholastic achievement might well be regarded as “below average,” if not
downright dull. Judged, however, with respect to their achievements in theft and
other forms of illegal enterprise, the term “brilliant” might well be applied with
little hesitation in several instances. Their escape from the maximum security
installation—the first in its history—was a mode of foresight, planning, ingenuity,
and efficient execution. However dull the gang members might have appeared in
the eyes of the classroom teacher, they had little apparent difficulty in outsmarting
policemen, store detectives, probation officers, correctional officials, jail guards, and
other adults of at least average capability. While many of the recorded actions of the
Bandits, as well as of other gang members, might be regarded as ill-advised or even
stupid by middle class adults, there was little evidence that the intelligence level of
Midcity gang members was below that of equivalent populations of American
adolescents whose actions might be similarly regarded.

An accurate appraisal of the degree of “emotional normality” of non-
institutionalized populations is extremely difficult. In cases of extreme abnormality
or psychosis characterization as “disturbed” on the basis of widely recognized
symptoms is fairly straightforward. In the case of “natural” community groups such
as gangs, however, appraisals of greater or lesser degrees of normality are highly
prone to influence by a complex set of subjective judgments which often reflect
social-status-based criteria of evaluation. On the basis of “harder” indications of
emotional normality such as commitments to psychiatric institutions, recourse to
psychiatric treatment, or suicide, there was little evidence of serious emotional
disturbance, or even of less serious disturbance, in the intensive-study gangs. None
of the 205 gang members was committed to a mental institution during the
intensive-study period, nor, so far as is known, prior to it. One of the Senior
Outlaws did, however, commit suicide during this period—a relatively “hard”
indication of serious emotional disturbance. There were no other suicides, nor any
information of institutional commitment during the ten-year follow-up period, with
one partial exception; a member of the Senior Bandits, after ring leading a prison
riot, was placed in the psychiatric section of the prison system. During the study period, four gang members were referred for psychological counseling or psychiatric treatment. Of these, three were girls referred (primarily because of truancy) by a female worker who was a particularly strong supporter of psychiatric methods. The fourth was a Junior Outlaw whose illegal activities included an incident of exhibitionism. Even if one assumes that several other gang members may have had psychiatric contacts which were not known, the total proportion of gang members for which there was “hard” evidence of more or less serious emotional disturbance was less than 5%.75

Despite the paucity of “hard” evidence of emotional disturbance in Midcity gangs, there was a tendency among many who contacted them to characterize them as “disturbed,” and explain their behavior as a product of disturbance. One reason for this relates to the tendency noted earlier to apply standards of “normality” based on the behavior of middle class adults to lower class adolescents; another involves a kind of circular reasoning which is common among psychologically-oriented persons who contact gangs. This generally involves some variation of the formula: “Emotional disturbance may cause repeated or serious involvement in illegal behavior; repeated or serious involvement in illegal behavior is a sure indication of emotional disturbance.” Among the intensive-study gangs it was the most-criminal Senior Bandits who were most likely to be characterized as “disturbed” on the basis of such reasoning. Evidence of disturbance, which is independent of criminal behavior, is obviously necessary to establish a causal relation between the two.76 In a similar vein, the Senior Bandits were characterized by psychologically-oriented

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75 A 1969 study, based on national-level statistics, reported that 10% of college freshmen avail themselves of psychiatric help during their freshman year (New York Times, August 24, 1969). The valid notion that psychiatric help is generally less available to low-status populations has little affect on study-population statistics, since field workers were highly oriented toward psychiatric services, and two psychiatrists served as consultants to the study.

76 Ref. to Spiller data on Senior Bandit emotional disturbance study. Careful analysis of all data cards relevant to. Five boys characterized as more than usual degree of emotional disturbance; bases of characterizations. Little relation between estimated degree of “disturbance” of families and four orders of illegal involvement (high-low). Some grounds for more-disturbance more-crime position, but evidence weak.
personnel as “disorganized.” As already suggested, the validity of such characterizations often depends on the kind of endeavor under consideration. With respect to job-seeking, for example, the behavior of gang members, as will be shown, appeared lackadaisical, unfocused, and ineffective; with respect to theft, however, as will be shown also, the Bandits exhibited a high degree of foresight, efficiency, and directed energy.

A final point of relevance to the “normality” of gangs concerns the level of “happiness” or contentment of gang members. The fashionable cliché of the 1950’s—“These kids are sick”—was supplanted for many in the 1960’s by one which became equally popular, as a product of the then-fashionable deprivation-alienation-exploitation approach to low status populations: “They are desperately unhappy.” Conclusions with respect to a concept as nebulous as “happiness” must, of necessity, rest on even less objective grounds than in the case of concepts such as “solidarity” or “normality,” but the currency of the “unhappiness” notion enhances the importance of adducing relevant evidence, however impressionistic. The intensity of involvement in athletic contests by players and spectators and the elation of victory; the air of expectancy, of promise, of adventure, in the milling crowds of black adolescents on the King’s corner on a warm summer evening; the whimsy, the horseplay, the high good humor of an “average” session of corner congregation; the fluidity and expressiveness of young bodies executing the latest dance steps before the corner juke box or at the local ballroom; the rapt attention and sense of special meaning attending the performance of the latest popular songs by the latest “star” performers; the dark electricity of the winter house party and the bright languor of

77 Deriving “operational” definitions of “happiness,” minimally influenced by subjective factors, probably impossible, certainly no success to date, even harder than concepts such as “normality” and “solidarity.” Issue of “happiness” discussed in WBM “Ideology” paper (1969), proposition that attribution of “desperate unhappiness” to low status populations probably due more to social reform objectives (if desperately unhappy then extensive reform programs are justified) rather than systematic appraisal of actual levels of happiness and unhappiness, and careful comparisons with content-discontent level of other population categories.
the summer beach party—all these and more were intrinsic aspects of the life pattern of members of Midcity gangs.

The existence of these kinds of activities and feelings—so common among members of Midcity gangs, white and black, as well as among slum adolescents throughout the country—simply does not accord with images of low-status urban communities as dismal ghettos whose suffering residents pursue pathetic lives of unrelieved misery, alienation, and deprivation. Midcity gang members were intensely interested in life; they were not apathetic, anemic, nor alienated. At the same time, it is important to note that members of Midcity gangs, in common with all other adolescents and all other human beings, experienced discouragement, depression, and discontent. There was fear of parental censure and disapproval after the loss of a job, drunkenness, or trouble with the law. There was gloom and disappointment at athletic defeat. There was frustration in failure to win the object of one’s love and sorrow in the end of a love affair. There was apprehension in passing through a strange neighborhood, worry over maintaining one’s place in the prestige hierarchy of the gang, fear of reprisals after a clash between rival gangs. But these elements of unhappiness in the lives of gang members do not set them apart as members of a deprived underclass, but show, rather, that they possess a prime qualification of membership in full standing in the human race—the recurrent experience of sorrow and discontent.

The lives of members of Midcity gangs, like those of most other gang members, were compounded of some complex mixture of joy and sorrow, of elation and depression, of gratification and frustration. Can it be said with any assurance that this mixture—when compared with that of other categories of persons such as middle class adolescents or working class adults or the upper class elderly—was disproportionately weighted on the side of unhappiness? The overwhelming impression, based on extensive study of thousands of separate events in the lives of hundreds of gang members over many months—is that it was not. The life experience of Midcity gang members, viewed as a total pattern rather than in terms
of specially selected events—does not support a conception of lower class adolescent life as abnormally unhappy. In the balance of happiness and unhappiness, these products of an American slum partook in full and abundant measure of the human condition—in all probability not more than other humans, and in all probability not less.

**Gangs and Race**

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960's brought with it a set of images and conceptions of the urban lower class community, particularly the Negro portion thereof, some of which (alienation, deprivation, desperation) are discussed here and elsewhere. It was inevitable that the street gang, a major feature of such communities, be swept up in this set of conceptions. However applicable to the general circumstances of blacks in the United States, characterizations of gangs developed out of this perspective are not, for the most part, supported by the empirical findings of the Midcity study. Many of these conceptions center on the factor of “race”—a characteristic treated here as referring to the original or early geographic origins of populations (see discussion of geographical-national status classes in Chapter One). The two major “racial” categories represented in Midcity were “whites” or Caucasians (originating mostly in Europe), and “blacks” or Negroes (originating mostly in Africa). Three issues involving the “racial” status of gang members concern the question of gang origins, the relation of race to social mobility, and the power of race to differentiate among types of gangs.

It could probably have been predicted that as the composition of the central city in the United States became increasingly black (percent “non-white”; 1960, 18%; 1968, 22%), with highest proportions in lower-status areas, that the existence of urban street gangs would be attributed in some way to Negro status as such. In the late 1800’s, the prevalence of gangs in predominantly Irish slums was

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attributed to special gang-forming propensities of the Irish; in the early 1900's, a similar thesis was applied to gangs in predominantly Italian slums. The historical account of Midcity shows that the racial and/or ethnic composition of the community shifted many times between 1630 and 1960, and that the ethnic or racial status of gangs reflected that of the resident low-status population. In 1950 Midcity was about one-third Negro, and about one-third of its street gangs were Negro; in 1970 the majority of residents were black, and the majority of gangs were also black. Compared with the generative capacity of male status, adolescence, urban residence, and low social status, the influence of racial or national status on the forms and prevalence of gangs is weak, and this applies to Negores as well as to Irish or Italians. The ethnic composition of gangs at any point in time and in any particular city reflects the ethnic composition of the low-status adolescent male population rather than special gang-forming propensities of particular ethnic groups.

A second issue concerns the concept of “restricted opportunity” which played so important a part in the Civil Rights ideology of the 1960's. The gist of this thesis, as applied to gangs, is that the pervasive power of racial discrimination (“racism”) blocks off, for black youth, channels to social betterment (“upward social mobility”) which are available to whites, impelling them to form substitute social systems wherein they themselves can establish criteria of acceptance and prestige which are available to them, the gang being one such system.

The prevalence and potency of racial discrimination in the United States is undeniable, nor can there be any doubt that black skin may seriously restrict opportunities under many circumstances. The empirical findings of the Midcity study, however, and particularly those which involve comparisons of the educational and occupational experiences of black and white gang members, throw

70 For a classic statement of this position, see Report of National Advisory Commission, 1969, op. cit., p. 278.
80 One example of the probable influence of race prejudice is cited on page N. (occupational “gap” between lower class III and middle class for Negro males)
into serious question the simple notion that racial prejudice is the principal element impeding the upward social movement of blacks. The Negro Kings showed a greater degree of “upward” educational and occupational movement than did any of the four white male gangs—both in the distance they moved from the status of their parents and in the level they achieved as young adults (see Table 2.4). It was the Negro Queens who showed the highest educational achievement of all gangs, and the contrast between their status as young adults and that of the white Molls is striking. The intensive-study gang which showed the highest rate of criminality, the lowest educational level, and the lowest occupational status was white, not black.

However one may account for these outcomes (one important element is parental social status), the experience of Midcity gang members indicates clearly that race prejudice does not operate in any simple or uniform manner to allow opportunities to whites which are denied to blacks. Members of the Kings and Queens had to face and overcome serious obstacles to achieve what they did, but however serious they were, if outcomes are any criteria, the forces which affected the social-mobility potential of the Senior Bandits—who certainly were not subject to discrimination on the basis of race—were far more potent.

A third issue concerns the relation of racial status to differences and similarities among gangs. A central feature of the Civil Rights approach of the 1960’s to low-status populations was its stress on the differentiating capacity of racial status. A highly influential governmental report reflecting this tradition projected a vivid picture of the United States as comprising “two societies, one black one white—separate and unequal.” 81 Some Negro leaders during this period pushed this notion even further—representing “blackness” as a powerful and pervasive basis of differentiation—with the black ethos, personality, perspective, and life-style radically different from the white. The findings of the Midcity study, based on systematic comparisons of white and black low-status populations, and in particular

of white and black gangs, indicate that these representations are greatly
overdrawn.

As noted earlier, the ethnic and/or racial status of gangs impart a particular
“coloring” to certain aspects of their conduct (Jewish-type humor in Jewish gangs;
Italian profanity in Italian), and there was ample evidence in black Midcity gangs of
certain forms and practices (whatever their ultimate origins) traditionally
associated with the subculture of low-status Negroes. Among these were dialectical
patterns and items of vocabulary reflecting the southern regional subculture, and
more extensive use, relative to whites, of the “playin’ the dozens” type of patented
repartee. Certain differences in criminal patterns are cited in later chapters. The
most direct and obvious influence of racial differences among Midcity gangs lay in
the racial composition of the gangs themselves. There was no “mixed” gang among
the seven studied most intensively. Several of the other study gangs did include one
or two members of a different race than the majority: a core member of the
predominantly white Hoods was Negro; a highly influential member of the
predominantly black Knights was white. Moreover, despite the low degree of
racial mixture within gangs, there was a good degree both of direct contact and
mutual knowledge among Midcity gangs of different races. Black and white gangs
engaged mutually in one of the most “intimate” forms of male interaction—athletic
competition—and, as already noted, the two playoff teams for the Port City
municipal championship one year were the black Kings and white Outlaws.

If, however, one turns to consider the impact of racial differences on
 customary behavioral practice rather than on group composition, the degree of
difference between white and black gangs diminishes radically. On this level,
differences become a matter of shadings, of nuances, of subtleties, whose magnitude
is sufficiently small so that their delineation must rest primarily on the reporting of
impressions. A point-by-point comparison of white and black gangs, with respect to

82 Several gangs in a district adjacent to Midcity were “racially mixed” in that they contained
representatives of three major races—Caucasian, Negro, and Mongoloid (Chinese and Micmacs).
the approximately sixty forms of behavior examined by the Midcity study, indicates that similarities between the two races were far more in evidence than differences. Some of the latter have already been remarked, and it should be repeated that the following impressionistic comparisons include citations of differences which were often extremely subtle. Compared to the white gangs, black gangs appeared somewhat less “solidary” (more individualists, fewer “team” men) and slightly more faction-prone; somewhat more religious; more creative with respect to language and terminology; somewhat more involved with drugs vis-à-vis alcohol; more likely to become involved in procuring (boys); more concerned about formal education; rather more ambitious; somewhat more active in sexual and mating activity; somewhat more prone to involvement in person to-person fighting (girls); less active in vandalism (girls); generally better dancers; more helpful with domestic chores (boys).

But differences of this kind—fascinating as they might be both individually and in combination—appear as relatively minor stylistic variations on a basic subcultural theme, and provide scant basis for the position that whites and blacks in Midcity represented, or were moving towards, two distinct and contrasting racially-based societies. As fellow gang members, blacks and whites in Midcity shared a thousand similar life experiences, a thousand close perspectives, a thousand mutual concerns. As age-mates, they sang the same popular songs, danced the same popular dances, and followed the same popular performers; as residents of a common district, they knew the same downtown stores, the same street-corners, the same parks, the same theaters, the same transportation system; black females shared with white a focused concern with mating and motherhood; white males shared with black an intense concern with male competence and male honor. These areas of similarity, shared by virtue of common age status, common social status, and common residential locality, far outweighed those areas of differences consequent on differing racial status.
The “Solidarity” of the Gang

The complex and intricate developments concerning cliques, factions, and leadership, detailed in the last chapter, indicate with little ambiguity that members of Midcity gangs were related to one another in highly significant ways, were sensitive and responsive to the actions and opinions of their fellows, and were contained within an orbit of mutual understanding and concern. Of all the characteristics of gangs thus far discussed, one would expect least disagreement with respect to the “solidary” character of the urban adolescent street gang. This is not so. Influential scholars not only deny “solidarity” to the gang, but some even go so far as to deny them the relatively neutral status of “group.” Relationships among gang members are characterized as “fragile” or “diffuse;” the gang itself is characterized as a “pseudo-“ or “near-“ group. How can one account for such conceptions?83

One possible reason is that such characterizations have been derived from observations of adolescent assemblages which in fact were not “solidary” in either the common or sociological senses of the term.84 Such assemblages undoubtedly occur, and may legitimately be characterized as “non-solidary.” However, the condition of “solidarity,” considered as an attribute of gangs, is not an either-or condition, but a “variable” like the several other gang characteristics discussed here. Degrees of solidarity may vary from gang to gang, just as in the case of other collectivities (families, army-squads, card-players’ cliques) commonly considered to “solidarity,” and would apply these to those adolescent assemblages which fit the five defining criteria presented here. Some gangs would undoubtedly rank higher

83 It might at first appear ironic that the intellectual fashions of the later 20th century denied solidarity to a kind of group regarded earlier in the century as the virtual apotheosis of male gemeinschaft—“that old gang of mine.” However, it is not unlikely that this oversimplified image itself played a significant role in provoking an oversimplified counter-image—the gang as an anomic, disorganized, aimless collection of rejects and lost souls.

84 It is obvious that the core of this issue is semantic—that is, how one defines “solidarity” and “group.” Although subsequent discussion will give some indication of the sense in which these terms are used here, there will be no extensive or systematic treatment of these complex definitional problems.
and some lower in solidarity, just as some rank higher and some lower in social status. If characterizations of the gang as “non-“ or “pseudo-“ solidary have been derived from observation of assemblages which do in fact fail to conform to customary sociological conceptions of “solidarity,” then the major error here is that of generalizing from such groups to “the gang” as a generic unit, as most of these authors do.\textsuperscript{85}

But it is not the actual or possible existence of adolescent assemblages whose solidarity is low or minimal that provides the primary basis for concluding that gangs are non-solidary—however common or uncommon such assemblages might be. The primary reasons are methodological and conceptual, with conceptual reasons paramount. With some exceptions, to be noted, conclusions as to the solidarity of gangs are derived from methods of gathering information which suffer from the same kinds of defects cited earlier as characteristic of many gang studies. Among those relevant to the likelihood of obtaining adequate information as to “solidarity” are: basing conclusions on overly brief study periods; on information collected during unusual circumstances (e.g. periods of gang warfare); on overly small study populations; on study populations representing single or limited status-characteristic categories; (e.g., one race, one social status level); failure to specify or distinguish relevant status characteristics (e.g., social status level); failure to

\textsuperscript{85} The major formulation of the “pseudo-solidarity” position is that of Yablonsky (Lewis Yablonsky “The delinquent gang as a near-group” Social Problems, Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall 1959). It is adopted with minor qualifications by Klein (Malcolm W. Klein and Lois Y. Crawford, “Groups, Gangs and Cohesiveness,” Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency Jan. 1967) and his associates, the Meyerhoffs (Howard L. and Barbara G. Meyerhoff, “Field observations of middle-class ‘gangs’ Social Forces, Vol. 42, March 1964), among others. Yablonsky classified certain New York gangs he observed, primarily in the context of an intense gang-war situation, as “near-groups” rather than “true groups,” on the grounds that they were characterized by “diffuse role definition, limited cohesion, impermanence, minimal consensus of norms, shifting membership, disturbed leadership, and limited definition of membership expectation.” An additional and partially overlapping listing cites 12 features of “near-groups.” The Meyerhoffs, on the basis of two weeks of participant-observation in a Los Angeles suburb, conclude that adolescent groups they observed “precisely conform to Yablonsky’s conception of a near-group.” Klein also maintains that Yablonsky’s “near-group” criteria apply to some of the Los Angeles gangs he studied, although with some qualifications (he rejects, as do the Meyerhoffs, the “emotional disturbance” characteristic stressed by Yablonsky, but accepts others such as “diffuse role definitions” and “little or no norm consensus”).
distinguish between “core” and “peripheral” affiliation; basing conclusions primarily on expressed sentiments rather than systematically processed data derived from direct recording of specific behavioral events over time. Conclusions derived from data-gathering methods characterized by any of these defects are suspect, and the more such defects in any given study; the more suspect the conclusions.\footnote{The study which provides the major basis for Yablonsky’s “near-group” formulation incorporates almost all of these defects. His conclusions are based primarily on the experience of two male New York gangs, both black. Much of his information was obtained through interviews conducted in the heat of a highly volatile and atypical “gang war” situation. Particularly serious is his failure to ascertain the “customary” composition of the aggregates involved, and the related failure to distinguish between “core” and “peripheral” affiliation. Many of those he interviewed and reckons as part of the “diffuse and amorphous gang structure” were undoubtedly persons temporarily swept into the area by the attraction of the gang-fighting situation and whose relationship to the “core” hanging group under ordinary circumstances was tenuous or non-existent. Yablonsky decries the gullibility of those who accept at face value gang-member statements as to gang size, but has little apparent hesitation in granting full credence to other interview responses concerning group composition, rationales for fighting motivation for joining gangs, and so on. The major defect of the Meyerhoff’s study is its extremely brief time span. Conclusions are derived from an observation period of only two weeks. Accurate listings of gang affiliation in Midcity required from six months to a year in order to accommodate membership variation by season, day of week, and so on. They Meyerhoff’s themselves recognize that the empirical basis of their conclusions is very weak, and characterize them as “speculations” based on observation, not “findings.” Relevant to the issue of solidarity is the fact that observed assemblages were largely middle class; the present study concludes that the gang as an associational form is best developed at lower status levels; observations of middle class gangs in the Port City area show them to be smaller, less frequent in congregation, and of shorter life. Accurate determination of the relative degree of “solidarity” of lower and higher status gangs would require careful comparative studies based on uniform measurement techniques. Klein’s work is characterized by only a few of the methodological defects cited here (no white gangs; failure to specify or distinguish social status levels, age levels), and it is significant therefore that his research supports the “pseudo-solidary” position less strongly than the others. For example, he rejects the “emotionally disturbed” characteristic stressed by Yablonsky, and acknowledges that Los Angeles gangs in some communities are cohesive. He mentions three such neighborhoods, call them an “exception,” but fails to present figures on the relative prevalence of cohesive and non-cohesive gangs. Despite its methodological sophistication, however, Klein’s analysis provides surprisingly little clarification of the “solidity” issue. His treatment of gang “cohesiveness” is ambiguous and inconsistent—both in that his general statement contains internal inconsistencies, and that his empirical findings are poorly articulated with his general statements. He states, for example, that gang member turnover is so high that “it is hard to conceive of, much less observe, a continuing cohesive group.” A few paragraphs later, apparently discussing the “exceptions,” he states that “strong external sources of cohesion are everywhere apparent,” but later characterizes this cohesiveness as “tenuous.” Oddly, Klein grants “cohesiveness” to highly artificial and extremely short-lived groups such as T-groups and laboratory groups, while denying it to the gang (partly because of “transitory” membership). Klein’s work is far superior to Yablonsky’s in that he makes a conscientious effort to develop an “operational” measure of cohesiveness, based on careful counts of interaction frequency over six-month periods. However, his empirical findings articulate poorly with his theoretical statements, and provide little support for the “near-group” thesis. The data he presents are ambiguous and inconclusive with respect to group cohesion, and in fact appear to}
It is not fortuitous that research methods used by competent investigators tend to accentuate “non-cohesive” elements of gang life and de-emphasize elements of cohesion. Both choice of methods and interpretations of findings reflect pervasive conceptual traditions which are inhospitable to the depiction of the urban adolescent gang as “solidary.” One aspect of these, more common among scholars, relates to notions of the gang as “anomic” or “disorganized,” to be discussed shortly. Another aspect derives from a set of sub-culturally influenced modes of perception similar to those affecting conceptions of gang prevalence.

As will be shown later, adolescent street gangs are best developed at the point of conjunction of four “prime” subcultures—male, adolescent, urban, and low-skilled laboring class. Customary features of the way of life of at least two of these categories—adolescent and lower class—strongly engage the disapproval of most middle class adults. With varying degrees of justification, the adolescent street gang is seen as “bad,” and the conception of “badness,” based primarily on the criminal propensities of gang members, is extended to all aspects of gang life. One of the most important “good” things in the adult middle class subculture is the concept of the close, warm, “primary group”—persons related to one another by intimate ties—mutually considerate, dependable, and most of all, loving. This concept in fact derives from and reflects sub-culturally developed images of the ideal middle class family. It is here that one finds true solidarity, true cohesiveness, and true intimacy.

provide more support for the opposite view. Klein’s data show that interaction within particular cliques is high, and that interaction within cliques is higher than between cliques, which is just what one would expect on the basis of a conception of gangs as a congeries of cliques or subdivisions, and where the basic unit of interaction is the clique or subdivision and not the aggregate as a whole. The critical element missing from Klein’s analysis is a systematic delineation of subgroups on the basis of age, social status, and so on. He points out that solidarity is in part a function of age (gangs become less solidary as members grow older) and that age serves as a basis of subgroup delineation, but he fails to use these characteristics systematically as analytical distinctions in his examination of gang cohesiveness.

87 The central importance of “true” group closeness to the adult middle class subculture means that the concept of group solidarity is seldom dealt with as a neutral descriptive concept, but rather is invested with strong evaluative overtones. Of the authors cited here, Yablonsky is perhaps the most explicit in this respect. He regards the state of “near-groupism” not only as morally bad, but as a
This image of the ideally-solidary group affects representations of gang solidarity in several ways. Since true group closeness is so highly valued, there is great reluctance to grant it to groups which are highly disvalued (skid row drinking cliques, motorcycle gangs). Whatever the empirical evidence might show, many persons simply cannot conceive of street gangs as “cohesive.” What might appear to be closeness, or mutual loyalty, or “in-group” feelings, is seen as the pseudo-solidarity of the near-group. Moreover, insofar as gangs are seen as manifesting cohesion of some kind, it is regarded as having been forced upon them by external forces rather than arising naturally and spontaneously from within, as in the case of the good family.  

In addition, the idealized image of the perfectly loving and solidary group serves as a standard against which the gang may be weighed and found wanting. The fact is that no actual group meets the criteria of solidarity implied by the idealized image—certainly not the middle class family itself. This does not vitiate the utility of the image as an ideal; it may still serve most effectively as a model on the basis of which one may point out the deficiencies of existing groups (including families) of which one disapproves. The relational systems of gangs, like those of families, are highly complex. They are compounded of many elements of affection and hostility, trust and mistrust, intimacy and remoteness, loyalty and disloyalty, altruism and selfishness, and others. Moreover, gangs, like families, vary greatly in kind of disease, as evinced by statements such as “The family, as a social institution, may be suffering from near-groupism;” he depicts the formation of “near-groups” as a blameworthy tactic of retreat by pathological persons who cannot tolerate the intimacy and demands of “true” groups. (Yablonsky, “Near Group” Op. Cit.)

88 The discussion of gang solidarity as a product of “external” rather than “internal” forces is contained in Klein, Op. Cit.

89 Lamar Empey, who subscribes somewhat cautiously to the “pseudo-solidarity” position, is uncomfortably aware of the fallacy of measuring actual gang relationships against a theoretical image of ideal solidarity.” While this (the practice of mutual insults by gang members)...may...be found...in a host of other status-conscious groups, the point is that such interaction is not characteristic, at least hypothetically, of primary groups. Primary groups, ideally, are supposed to provide warmth and support” (Lamar T. Empey. “Delinquent Subcultures: Theory and recent research” Jnl. Of Res. On Crime and Del'y, Vol 4, No. 1. Jan. 1967). The presence of the phrases “at least hypothetically,” “ideally,” and “supposed to” reveal his uneasiness in the attribution of idealized characteristics to actual “primary” groups.
the degree to which they manifest one or more of these diverse components of “solidary” relationships.

The association of “cohesiveness” with “affectionate interaction” implied by the idealized image also contributes to serious misunderstanding of the role of overtly aggressive behavior within the gang. Middle class observers of lower class gangs are uniformly struck by what appears to be a constant stream of mutual invective, insult, and deprecation. How can groups whose members behave so angrily towards one another be considered “solidary?” Applying to lower class populations conceptions of solidarity based on middle class perceptions can result in serious misinterpretation. Interaction among lower class people is often characterized by formally hostile expressions of considerable force, but these seldom carry the emotional impact attributed to them by middle class persons on the basis of what they would signify in a middle class context. An alternative to categorizing ideal middle class relationships as “solidary” and lower class relationships as non-or pseudo-solidary is the possibility that the behavioral concomitants of “solidary” relationships might be quite different for different classes of persons—males and females, middle and lower class, adults and adolescents. In fact, in the gang as in many male work groups, overtly hostile expression may represent a sub-culturally acceptable way of expressing affection. One conclusion of the analysis of 1,500 aggressive acts by Midcity gang members was that “aggressive action within the gang itself, rather than appearing as disruptive or disintegrative, served as an effective device for producing and maintaining group cohesion.”

The experiences of the Senior Bandits and Junior Outlaws earlier further throw into question simple notions of “solidarity” as affectionate face-to-face interaction. Despite assertions that “one halfa them guys don’t know the other half,”

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90 The character and functions of aggressive behavior in one Midcity gang is analyzed in detail in W.B. Miller, H. Geertz and Henry S.G. Cutter “Aggression in a Boys’ Street Corner Group” Psychiatry Vol 24, No. 4, November 1961, pp 283-298. Approximately 1,500 separate “aggressive acts,” verbal and physical, engaged in by gang members over a one year period were recorded, coded and analyzed with respect to form, targets, content, and other characteristics.

91 Miller et al, ibid, p. 296.
analysis showed that Senior Bandits, separated by institutional incarceration, maintained effective channels of communication between “inside” and “outside” gang members, remained well informed as to events affecting their fellows both on the corner and in the institution, and continued to be involved in developments respecting leadership, prestige, and clique formation in the gang. The case of the Junior Outlaws suggests that some significant degree of “solidarity” may be obtained, even in the face of overtly intense hostility and fairly extended physical separation. Following a serious intra-gang dispute, one faction separated from the other and maintained a separate hanging locale for almost a year. But during this period both factions remained intensely interested in happenings on the “other” corner, well informed as to the activities and sentiments of their opposite numbers, and finally rejoined. In the case of Midcity gangs it would appear quite meaningful to talk of “solidary” groups so long as gang members were contained within a relational orbit of mutual understanding, concern, and information-exchange, even in the presence of overtly hostile behavior and some degree of physical separation.92

This discussion has suggested that attempts to assign observed collectivities to one of two categories—“true” groups and “false” (or “near”) groups, like attempts to categorize persons or gangs as “delinquent” or “pseudo-“ delinquent, involve complex matters of definition and conception which frequently reflect particular subcultural perspectives. In the case of adolescent street gangs it would seem to be more in accord both with the nature of other gang characteristics and with accepted analytic practice to consider “solidarity” as a condition which may vary in degree, rather than as a present-or-absent criterion which characterizes “true” groups, but not “near” groups. Whatever degree of solidarity one might feel is required in order to grant the status of “group” to various kinds of adolescent assemblages, there can be little doubt that Midcity gangs which were studied intensively and for extended periods ranked high in “solidarity” on the basis of almost any reasonable criteria.

92 Coser on “integrative” and “disintegrative” group conflict; Ham on CB radio cliques as firmly “solidary” without face-to-face interaction.
one might apply. Five such criteria will be noted briefly. These are: affiliational continuity, kinships, interconnections, long-term mutual knowledge, and the character of intra-gang relational dynamics.

The gang, as already noted, is an “informal” rather than a “formal” group, such as women’s clubs and “service” organizations, which maintain official attendance records. Even when compared with such groups, however, Midcity gangs maintained a high degree of affiliation continuity over time. Contact was maintained for periods of one to three years with those groups which were contacted with sufficient intensity and frequency so that the identity of individuals participating in gang activities could be recorded on a continuing basis. For the intensive-study gangs the degree of affiliational continuity (percentage of individuals “active” during the final contact phase who were also active during the initial phase) ranged from low to high. For example, of 25 boys categorized as “active” Senior Outlaws during the initial contact phase, 21 (84%) were still active 20 months later. Of the four boys who had moved away or terminated participation in gang activities, only one was a “core” member.\textsuperscript{93} This degree of affiliational continuity for an “informal” group with no official membership roster would appear to fall well within the range of “high” continuity, in contrast to those reports which represent gangs as “transient” or temporary assemblages. It should also be recalled that the older brothers, fathers, and grandfathers of some of the intensive-study gang members, in common with other Midcity gangs, had maintained an affiliation with the same corner for two generations or more.

However one might choose to characterize the quality of relationships among gang members, there was amply in evidence in Midcity gangs a kind of interpersonal tie whose existence requires no imputation or evaluation—that of kinship. Previous accounts cite some of these ties in individual gangs and aggregates; summary data as to kinship linkages among all seven intensive-study

\textsuperscript{93} Further detail on method, results of “affiliational continuity” findings. Cite Billy Robinson not counted, death.
gangs give some indication of their extent. Available information indicates that a minimum of 65 (32%) of 205 gang members had close relatives (siblings, first cousins) within their own subdivisions. Percentages ranged from 18% for the Kings to 58% for the Senior Outlaws. Furthermore, a minimum of 72 (35%) had close relatives in subdivisions other than their own, with percentages ranging from 28% for the Senior Bandits to 58% for the Junior Bandits. A minimum of one-third of all gang members, then, were related by close kinship to members of their own and other subdivisions, with over half of the gang members in some subdivisions so related. Kinship linkages were complex and extensive. There would appear to be little basis for characterizing as “diffuse” or “transient” groups thus linked by the most traditional of interpersonal ties—blood kinship itself.\(^{94}\)

An important indication of how solidary a group is concerns the amount of knowledge group members possess as to the life circumstances of their mates. It is not surprising that members of Midcity gangs were well-informed as to the circumstances of their fellows during the period of their most intensive gang affiliation; quite surprising, however was the amount of mutual knowledge they displayed during later periods. As noted earlier, “follow-up” information respecting the residence, marital status, parenthood, occupation, education, and other characteristics of each gang member was collected after a lapse of seven to ten years following initial field contact. Three to five informants per gang, selected primarily

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\(^{94}\) No systematic investigation of kinship ties among gang members was made. This would have entailed specific inquiries of gang members as to their kinship relations, analysis of social welfare and other records, and systematic analysis of the network of existing kinship connections. Data presented here are derived from the method used in the case of most of the behavioral information in this study—the accumulation of facts and events as recorded in the course of daily contacts for periods of one to three years. Close and obvious relationships such as siblingship, and to a lesser extent first cousinhood, emerged readily on this basis, but there is no doubt that some substantial number of more distant relationships such as second cousinhood, step-cousinhood, and relationships based on past affinal ties at the parental and/or grandparental generation were not ascertained. Partial data showed kin ties among these low-status persons to be very complex, and considerably more extensive than was evident on the surface. It is thus clear that the data presented here represent an undercount of the actual number of kin ties, and probably a substantial one. The data are presented to document the kinship component of “solidarity” in Midcity gangs, and make no pretense of being a systematic study of kinship among gang members—a study which might be undertaken with some profit.
on the basis of ready accessibility rather than any expectation of unusual knowledge, were queried as to the current status of each of their former gang mates. Remarkably complete information was obtained; gang members had lost track of only three or four of the 205 original members; information was current and detailed, and there was high concordance among the several informants. Particularly striking was the case of a member of the Kings who was a first-year medical student at the time of the follow-up inquiry. Not only was he able to provide accurate information, but did so on the basis of his own recall of the roster of gang members—a roster almost identical with that compiled by research personnel. Nor was his knowledge confined to the more “successful” Kings, as one might have expected from someone who was upwardly mobile, but extended as well to those involved in procuring, narcotics, and other illegal ventures. This degree of detailed information as to the circumstances of their fellows five or more years after the period of most active gang affiliation indicates that relationships among members were sufficiently meaningful as to transcend the gang phase itself—certainly an indication of considerable solidarity.

A fourth and final indication of the degree of solidarity of Midcity gangs concerns group interaction and group processes. The accounts of individual gangs described leadership, followership, cliques and interaction patterns within the gangs, and the integral relationship between these and elements such as prestige and criminal behavior. Also treated were continuing developments with respect to these features—developments which were often dramatic and of extended duration. It is hardly conceivable that phenomena such as the intricate and ingenious multi-leader power-balance system of the Senior Outlaws, the delicate control of competing factions by the dominant clique of the Junior Bandits, the capacity for effective activity coordination of the Senior Outlaws, and the intensity of conflict between the finally reunited Junior Outlaw factions could be found in groups whose relationships were casual, diffuse, or fleeting. These developments embody classic

95 Ref. to Short, Strodtbeck “Group Processes” book
group processes—reciprocity, balance, equilibrium-maintenance, and mutually responsive interaction—which have characterized solidary collectivities for centuries.

There can be equally little doubt that involvement in these developments was of compelling emotional investment, in one extreme instance, as to provide a major incentive for suicide. All of the features cited here and in previous paragraphs—affiliational continuity, kinship ties, detailed knowledge of the life circumstances of ones’ gang mates, classic forms of group process, continuing developments concerning subgroup alliances and opposition, heavy emotional investment in the status of the collectivity—characterize groups whose solidarity is high, and of deep significance to members.

What was the “source” of the solidarity of Midcity gangs? There is almost universal agreement among those writers who grant a measure of “solidarity” to the gang (as well as some who do not) that the solidarity of the gang results from opposition or conflict of some sort. In this they follow the lead of Thrasher, who in turn followed the classic thesis forwarded by Machiavelli and others that the solidarity of any collectivity is enhanced through common opposition to a clearly-defined enemy. Thrasher used the term “integrated through conflict” in delineating the defining criteria of the “true gang.” Scholars differ somewhat as to the nature of the “external” entity which induces gang solidarity. Thrasher himself cited clashes with other gangs and run-ins with adult officials; Albert Cohen and his followers postulate opposition to a “conventional” or middle class subculture; Malcolm Klein follows Thrasher in citing police and local adult behavior, and cites in addition “sets of environmental frustrations” such as disrupted families, poverty, and the like, as “strong external sources of cohesion.”

There can be little doubt that opposition to, and a sense of difference from, other groups and categories of persons contributes in some degree to gang

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96 Ref. to Billy Robinson. Returned from correctional institution to find bases of prestige and leadership shifted, hanged himself.
97 References to Yinger “counterculture” idea as in Cohen tradition, Cavan also.
solidarity, but in this respect gangs are no different from other groups whose solidarity derives in part from a sense of difference from and opposition to those unlike themselves. Some component of solidarity among female groups derives from a sense of difference from and opposition to males; some component of the solidarity of football teams derives from opposition to other teams; some component of solidarity among company employees derives from competition with other companies. The issue here is not that gangs are unique by virtue of achieving some measure of solidarity through opposition to outside entities, but rather whether the degree of gang solidarity thus induced is significantly greater than in the case of other kinds of groups. In the case of Midcity gangs it would be misleading to formulate this issue in terms of the notion that amounts of solidarity can be parcelled out and attributed to either “external” or “internal” sources. Midcity data indicates that the major sources of gang solidarity derive from those general social conditions which underlie the existence of the gang as a stable associational form. Gang members are close age mates sharing a multitude of common concerns and pursuits. They generally share common age status, social status, locality status, sexual status, and a relatively uniform set of life perspectives. They engage repeatedly and jointly in a wide range of collective and cooperative enterprises such as hanging out, athletic involvement, recreational activities, parties, and many others. Moreover, as shown elsewhere, the frequency of involvement in inter-gang combat as such is quite low relative to participation in the kinds of activities just noted. It would appear that the extent to which gang solidarity is enhanced by opposition to outside groups and categories of persons does not differ to any marked degree from that of many other kinds of groups, and that the more fundamental bases of gang cohesion arise from the extensive complex of general social processes which underlie the existence of gangs, and from the myriad commonalities in

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98 Ref. to discussion of “status classes” in Chapter Three
outlook, participation, and understanding which gang members share with one another.99

**The Gang as “Conventional”**

Street gangs are generally regarded by middle class adults as a kind of aberration, and frequently represented by scholars as a manifestation of “deviance.” During the 1960’s representations of gangs were caught up in a highly fashionable conceptual framework—that of “alienation”—which pictured them as “outside the mainstream” of American life. All these conceptions of gangs—as aberrant, as deviant, as alienated, as outsiders—derive from two closely related models of American society. One model represents certain orientations and behavioral practices as comprising a “core” or “dominant” culture (whose content for the most part is based on certain idealized behavioral forms of middle class adults), and those which depart there from as “deviant.” The other designates certain categories of Americans as “insiders” and others as “outsiders” with respect to certain elements of power, prestige, and the like which are selected, by and large, in accordance with standards derived from elements of the postulated “core” culture.100

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99 Caution not to create wrong impression of “perfect” solidarity to counteract misleading “near-group” formulation. Three points: 1) How to account for the differences re other authors? Are less solidary groups and/or assemblages, probably some approaching “non-solidary.” But need careful and operational definitions of “solidarity” for accurate characterization. 2) Within intensive study gangs, also a range of solidarity. Senior Outlaws prob. most “cohesive,” Queens least. Queens were looser agglomerate of cliques, clique structure more shifting. Not analyzed in detail. But Queens “solidary” re other criteria, e.g., degree of kinship linkage, of mutual knowledge 8 years later, impact of group standards on individual behavior. 3) Role of field worker in enhancing solidarity. Undoubtedly of some influence, particularly with respect to “formal” organizations developed out of gangs. But “comparison groups,” without direct worker action, appeared similarly solidary, although impossible to get same degree of detail [e.g., Mauraders (WM4), Midget Outlaws (WMI), Hoods].

100 Issue of conceptual models very complex, can’t develop here. Involves basic controversies re “common” vs. “diversified” value system in U.S., relationship of power and prestige to “insideness” and “outsideness,” definitions of “conformity,” etc. Issue developed in part in other writings (e.g., W. Miller, ’69, “Elimination of American Lower Class,” other refs.), and in the present work in Chapters 11 and 12 (Patterning of Thefts).
Summary: The Urban Adolescent Street Gang

as a Stable Associational Form

The present chapter consists primarily of a large amount of detailed information relating to youth gangs and gang members in Midcity in the 1950’s and ‘60’s. The bulk of this material is empirical and descriptive rather than general or theoretical. This emphasis has been quite deliberate, and is responsive to a circumstance discussed earlier—that much of what is “known” about gangs and gang members is based on methods of obtaining information which are critically deficient. Media writers, with an eye to the market, tend to select for attention those gangs which are most unusual, and those aspects of gang behavior which are most spectacular. The media are therefore of limited value as a source of information as to the day-to-day behavior of the average American street gang. Much descriptive treatment by scholars also embodies serious methodological weaknesses which cast doubt upon the validity of the more general conclusions derived there from.101 Since the present study has been able to accommodate many of the more common methodological deficiencies (although by no means all), the interests of factual accuracy justify the presentation of a considerable amount of descriptive detail. From this perspective the descriptive material can be seen as a contribution to the ethnography of the urban adolescent street corner gang.

This is not to question the importance of generalized propositions, but rather to emphasize the necessity of having such propositions based on empirical foundations which are as solid as possible. The final chapter of this work develops a general explanation of gangs and delinquency which builds on a level of proposition which is somewhere between empirical finding and abstract theory, and which might be called “descriptive generalization.” Accounts of the individual gangs center around a set of descriptive topics—character of the neighborhood, gang haunts and hangouts, subdivisions and relations between subdivisions, kinship

101 Citation of deficiencies in scholarly works; cite BU School of Soc. Wk article for comparison with Thrasher, Cohen, Cloward-Ohlin: cite need of cross-cultural data.
links, illegal involvement, cliques, leadership, and so on. The previous section developed a set of propositions on the “descriptive generalization” level out of the analysis of the more readily quantifiable “status characteristics” (sex, social status, etc.) of gang members; it would be possible to follow a similar procedure with respect to the less-readily-quantifiable characteristics such as leadership and clique patterns. This analysis will not be presented at this point; instead, the empirical data of this chapter, along with a limited amount of information from other sources, will be brought to bear on a set of issues relating to gangs and gang behavior at a somewhat higher level of generality. These are: real and perceived changes in the prevalence of gangs; definitions of “the gang”; the “solidarity” of the gang as a unit; gang members as “disturbed” or “unhappy”; the gang as “deviant” or “alienated”; and racial differences among gangs.

General Characteristics of the Urban Adolescent Street Gang

Characterizations of the urban adolescent street gang, as noted earlier, are particularly susceptible to misrepresentation. Specific examples will be discussed in later sections; an important underlying reason is that the gang is anything but a “neutral” phenomenon, and the existence and activities of gang members engage deep and often unexamined values and emotions of both lay and professional observers. As in the case of any highly-charged social phenomenon, what one sees as well as the way he interprets what he sees is significantly influenced by what one approves and disapproves, wishes to be and wishes not to be. Largely because of this the task of presenting a balanced and accurate picture of the gang is far from easy, and the methods one uses to obtain information bear a direct relationship to the kind of picture one derives. Methods of media-writers are particularly conducive to distortion, since the daily routine activities of the average gang have little market value, and are seldom reported. Instead, what the media do consider

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102 Analysis in preliminary form, unpublished mss.
newsworthy are those kinds of gang activities which are most extreme, those gangs which are most spectacular, and those periods in gang history which are most flamboyant. The media are therefore of limited value as a source of information on the day-to-day behavior of the average gang, since their reporting criteria operate so as to emphasize the extraordinary at the expense of the ordinary, and provide little basis for accurate conceptions of the average gang.

Many studies by scholars also embody methodological weaknesses which throw into question the validity of their general conclusions. Insofar as the present study has been able to accommodate the more common of these, it provides a more adequate basis for valid generalizations. Particular features of the present method—the extended duration of the study period, the intensive and intimate nature of field observation, the large volume of detailed recording by a corps of field workers, the comprehensive and systematic processing of field records, the use of demographic, historical and ethnographic bodies of data, and the mutual articulation of these and other bodies of data—make the accumulated information of the Midcity study an unusually strategic basis for addressing a set of fundamental questions concerning gangs. What is a gang? Are gangs temporary or lasting? Is there a “crucial element” of the “true” gang? What features of gangs vary and which remain stable? To what degree are gangs deviant? Disorganized? Abnormal? Alienated? Unhappy? Racially distinctive?

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103 Some of the more common deficiencies are cited on page --particularly as these affect the issue of gang “solidarity.” Some of the deficiencies of several major works on gangs—Thrasher, Whyte, Cohen, Cloward-Ohlin—are discussed in Miller, W.B., “City Gangs: A Report on the Midcity Delinquency Study” in Boston University School of Social Work Journal, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1963. One of the points of this discussion is that most of these works are strong on either an empirical or theoretical level, but none represents an effective integration of the two. One major defect of the present study is the paucity of “comparative” data—both within the United States and with other countries—on an equivalent level of intensity and detail.

104 Poss. Descriptive material in accounts of individual gangs centered on several topics—leadership, cliques, subdivision, illegal involvement, and so on. Would be possible to do “all-gang” treatment of these topics in fashion parallel to “study-population” analysis to “higher” level represented by cited questions. All-gang generalizations will be incorporated into these analyses rather than more specific topic-centered analyses.
Discussions of these issues will draw on studies conducted in a number of other cities—principally New York, London, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. Utilization of findings from these studies will add comparative breadth to conclusions derived primarily from the intensive study of a single community. But it should be pointed out that the consideration of such findings—even those which are most adequate methodologically—will not serve to modify public misconceptions nor resolve scholarly differences. For at issue here is not merely the availability of factual data or the validity of available factual data, but the interpretation of available data—or rather, a complex mixture of fact and interpretation with particular theoretical perspectives serving both to guide the initial collection of data and provide the basis for its subsequent interpretation. It is difficult to know, in any given case, the degree to which disagreements derive from different factual findings, differences in the interpretation of similar findings, or some combination of these. The weight granted to conclusions of the present study must rest on an appraisal of the adequacy both of its data collection methods and the general framework used to interpret its finding. The most conservative statement one can make here is that conclusions of other studies which do not accord with those presented here cannot be taken as validly applicable to the gang as a generic form.

The Gang as a Persisting Form

The gang, in one or another of its various forms, is as old as human history, and the urban adolescent street gang is as old as the American city. The band of young males, maintaining an identity separate from that of the breeding or child-rearing unit, and carrying out a set of activities independent of but complementary to those of the latter, is a ubiquitous form in primitive and near-primitive human societies, and close analogues are found in other primate societies as well. Despite radical differences in environmental contexts, there are direct continuities between such bands and the twentieth century urban adolescent street gang, both with
respect to form (size, age composition) and patterns of activity (predation, protection, recreation).\textsuperscript{105}

Modern historical evidence indicates that there have been adolescent street gangs, similar to those of today, wherever there have been urban lower class communities. The crowd that congregated at Riley’s store in Midcity Highlands in the 1830’s (see Chapter 11) manifested classic characteristics of the “hanging” corner group. Henry Adams described in vivid detail the gang fights between the “Northsiders” and “Southsiders” on the Boston Common in the 1840’s. An 1856 account from Brooklyn states that:

...at any and all hours there are multitudes of boys...congregated on the corners of the streets, idle in their habits, dissolute in their conduct, profane and obscene in their conversation, gross and vulgar in their manners. If a female passes one of the groups she is shocked by what she sees and hears...

The account of the Outlaws cites evidence that gangs with the Outlaw name had hung out on the same corner at least since the 1930’s; similarly, gang fighting between the “Tops” and “Bottoms” in West Philadelphia which started in the 1930’s was still continuing in the 1970’s.\textsuperscript{106}

Despite the historical continuity of the street gang, many observers in each new generation tend to perceive it as a new or emergent phenomenon generated by contemporary conditions and destined to vanish as these conditions vanish. As in the case of explanations for the lower class discussed in Chapter Two, the existence of gangs during any historical period is generally explained as a product of conditions peculiar to that era—frequently conditions of which the observer does not approve. Gangs in the 1910’s and ‘20’s were attributed to cultural dislocations and community disorganization attending the massive immigrations of foreigners; in the

\textsuperscript{105} Analogues of “Midcity” type gangs and Otoro system of East Africa cited in “Total Community Delinquency Project” paper (Miller, 1962). The present work, as discussed in greater detail elsewhere, conceives the urban lower class child-rearing unit and adolescent street gang as related and complementary forms, each performing various parts of the total task of child-rearing and enculturation (along with other units), rather than conceiving the latter form as a consequence of malfunctioning of the former (“the gang is a product of the broken home”).

\textsuperscript{106} References to sources. Outlaw reunion in 1969.
1930’s to enforced idleness and economic pressures produced by the great depression; in the 1950’s to mental or emotional disturbance of parents and children resulting from the increasing stresses and tensions of modern life; in the 1960’s and ‘70’s to a range of social injustices including racial discrimination, unequal access to educational and occupational opportunities, resentment over inequalities in the distribution of wealth and privilege in an affluent society, and ineffective or oppressive policies of service agencies such as the police and schools.\textsuperscript{107}

In consequences of these and related factors, public perception of the prevalence of gangs at any point in time varies widely. Statements such as “the gangs are all gone,” “the gangs are breaking up,” or “the gangs are coming back” are typical. How can one account for this general conception of gangs as disappearing and reappearing? Two questions are at issue; first the empirical question of the actual prevalence of gangs in different localities at different points in time, and second the question of what affects public conceptions. The empirical question is obviously the prior one, but the kinds of comprehensive and carefully collected information necessary to an accurate answer are not available.\textsuperscript{108} Changing perceptions of the prevalence of gangs must therefore be based on something other than verified factual information. Although it will not be possible in the present work to treat in detail either the empirical or conceptual question, some light may

\textsuperscript{107} The explanatory fashions of this period also accommodated explanations for the non-existence of gangs by those whose perspectives led to a belief in such a situation. Most of these centered on the notion that urban slum adolescents had converted their gang-forming propensities into various “substitute” activities or ventures such as the use of narcotics, “politization” which consumed their energies in ideologically-oriented radical or reform activities, involvement in collective enterprises modeled on commercial ventures, and involvement in publicly financed education and/or training programs.

\textsuperscript{108} Adequate information as to the prevalence of gangs in the United States would require a kind of data-gathering effort on a national scale analogous to that by which the federal bureau of the census ascertains the number of family units in different localities at different times. Such an enterprise does not exist and in all probability is not contemplated. Information utilized in the present work relating to the prevalence of gangs is derived from a variety of sources, including published accounts, newspaper reports, contacts with researchers in various cities, and direct observation of gangs in a number of large American cities, including Boston, Providence, Springfield, Philadelphia, Washington, Miami, New Orleans, Houston, Chicago, national data, conclusions relating to prevalence on a nation-wide basis must be considered as tentative.
be shed on the latter by an examination of two kinds of reasons for changing perceptions. These will be called “definitional” and “perceptual.”

What is a Gang?

How one defines a “gang” is of critical importance to one’s perception of how prevalent gangs are. Many observers, both scholars and non-scholars, maintain special, restricted, and often private notions of what a “real” gang is. Frequently a single, sine qua non element is regarded as the essential feature; without it, observed groups are regarded as near-gangs, pseudo-gangs, or non-gangs. This “crucial element” is frequently different for different observers. Among the more common are names, autocratic one-man leadership, some “absolute” degree of

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109 In the late 1960’s and early ‘70’s, during a period when considerable unanimity existed among most New York-based observers that the gangs were gone or no longer a problem, nearby Philadelphia was experiencing a wave of gang violence which probably resulted in more murders in a shorter period of time than during any equivalent phase of the highly-publicized “fighting gang” era in New York. Police estimated that about 80 gangs comprising about 5,000 members were “active” in the city, and that about 20 were engaged in active combat. Social agencies put the total estimated number of gangs at 200, with about 80 categorized as “most hostile.” Most gangs were designated by the name of their major “hanging” corner (12th and Poplar Streets; 21W’s, for 21st and Westmoreland); others bore traditional gang names such as the Centours, Morrocans, and Paggans. Between October 1962 and December 1968, gang members were reported to be involved in 257 shootings, 250 stabbings, and 205 “rumbles” or gang fights. In a 17 month period between January 1968 and June 1969, 53 homicides and over 519 injuries were attributed to armed encounters involving gangs. Of the homicide victims, all but 8 were known to be affiliated with street gangs. Assaultants ranged in age from 13 to 20, with peak years at 16, 17, and 18 (70% of the cases) and with the frequency curve sloping down toward 13 and 20, closely resembling the “assault frequency” curve shown for Midcity gangs. Although detailed research-based information as to the forms and activity patterns of these gangs was not available, existing evidence appeared to indicate that most of the Philadelphia gangs approximated the classic Midcity type, with a territorial base, age-graded subdivisions, related female groups, and a range of “customary” forms of criminal activity centering on the “central complex” crimes of theft, assault, drinking, and vandalism. The wave of violent gang activity in Philadelphia was virtually ignored by the national press. It seems most likely that if these events had occurred in New York where most of the media have their headquarters, a spate of newspaper features, magazine articles and television “specials” would have created the impression that the country was engulfed in a “new” wave of gang violence. (Sources of information: Division of Youth Conservation Services, Philadelphia Department of Public Welfare; Gang Control Unit, Philadelphia Police Department. See also “Teen Gang Carnage Reaches Peak; 47 dead, 519 injured in 17 months” The Philadelphia Bulletin, May 25, 1969. A similar situation existed in Chicago, with 33 deaths attributed to gang fighting during the first six months of 1969. During this same period, gangs were also active in Boston. In a 90-minute period on May 10, 1969, one of the two channels of the Boston Police radio reported 38 incidents involving gangs (one every two-and-a-half minutes), including two gang fights. Simultaneous field observation in several white lower class neighborhoods showed congregations of street gangs at numerous corners throughout the area. None of the 38 incidents was reported in the newspapers.)
cohesiveness or mutual loyalty or stable membership; a dominant involvement in violent conflict with the gangs, and participation in activities seen to pose a threat to other sectors of the community. Reaction to groups which lack the crucial element often takes the form of – “Oh them. That’s not a gang. It’s just a bunch of kids out on the corner.”

Extensive involvement in gang fighting serves for many as the essential element of the “real” gang. This was explicitly true during the New York-focused “fighting gang” phase of the 1950’s. The only “real” gang was the fighting gang—that is, a gang perceived to be specifically organized around the conduct of gang warfare. If there is no gang fighting there are no gangs. A closely related conception defines the gang in terms of the degree of “threat” or “problem” it poses; a group whose “problematic” behavior is hard to ignore is a gang; one less problematic is not. This mode of definition is particularly common among agencies charged with responsibility for maintaining order or working directly with low-status populations. Given a situation wherein resources are very limited relative to the potential “need” for services, such agencies must of necessity develop relatively simple defining criteria which will serve to delineate a limited and manageable domain of responsibility. For these purposes, general definitions based on formal criteria are of little relevance. Unless a group acts in such a way as to call responsive action by the agency it is not considered a real gang.  

110 This kind of definitional criterion is applied not only on the basis of whether or not “action” is called for, but also on the basis of the kind of action seen as appropriate. The previous footnote cited police estimates that there were 80 gangs in Philadelphia, of which 20 were “at war,” whereas social workers estimated that there were 200, of which 80 were “most hostile.” It is obvious that the 80 “most hostile” gangs of the social workers were the 80 “gangs” of the police. The additional 120 groups defined as “gangs” by social workers because they were seen as appropriate objects of social work action were “non-gangs” to the police since they were not sufficiently troublesome to require consistent police attention. Similarly, it is quite possible that there were other groups in the city definable as gangs by some criteria but which were not considered gangs by the social workers since they were not seen as appropriate objects of social work attention.
It becomes obvious from these considerations that an explicit and detailed definition of the phenomenon under consideration is an essential prerequisite to any informed statement as to the prevalence of gangs. Such a definition must be based on formal characteristics which may be ascertained through direct observation. Intangible characteristics such as “esprit de corps,” “a sense of we-ness,” “morale,” “group awareness,” “tough self-image,” and the like, while not irrelevant, are of limited utility since their attribution depends so heavily on subjective judgments by observers whose evaluative standards are difficult to formalize. Nor must the definition incorporate hypotheses or speculations as to origins or developmental history (“originally formed spontaneously,” “integrated through conflict”) but must depend rather on contemporaneously observable characteristics.

The development of a satisfactory definition along these lines would require extensive information, on the order of detail and specificity here presented for Midcity gangs, as to gangs and related groupings in a wide range of contexts. These would include not only the major urban centers of the United States, but also the many locales in other countries where gangs are and have been prevalent. Ideally, both national and cross-cultural data should include as much historical depth as can be achieved. Information of this type would make possible not only an adequate and generally acceptable definition, but also the development of taxonomy—the range of types and subtypes of gangs and related groupings.

As already stated, information of this order is not now available. In its absence, it is essential to delineate as precisely as possible the sense in which the term “the gang” is used in the present work. This definition is based primarily on the substantive findings of the present study, but also incorporates findings of other empirical studies.111 Two orders of characteristics will be distinguished—“defining criteria,” which serve to define the unit and which remain stable over time, and “variable characteristics,” aspects or attributes of gangs which may vary over time or in different localities without destroying the identity of the unit as here defined.

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111 References to Thrasher, White, Scott, Short and Strodtbeck, B. Cohen, others.
The Urban Adolescent Street Gang: Defining Criteria

Five major criteria serve to define the urban adolescent street gang, as the term is used in the present work. These are presented in Chart 1.4, along with sub-criteria intended for amplification or clarification. The five major criteria are: recurrent, extra-residential congregation; a territorial or area basis of assemblage, recruitment, activity, and self-defined use-and-occupancy rights; an age basis for affiliation and subgroup delineation; a versatile activity repertoire, with “hanging,” mating, recreational, and illegal activities of central importance; and intra-unit differentiation by authority, prestige, role, and cliques. These criteria apply both to the more inclusive or independent units (“aggregates”) and to recognized subunits (“subdivisions,” “segments”). “Recurrent congregation” appears in Chart 1.4 as the paramount defining criterion of the urban adolescent street gang. This is described earlier as “the practice of leaving one’s home at recurrent intervals and assembling with others of one’s age at designated locales.” Forms, frequency, and locales of hanging have been discussed in some detail. The exact nature of hanging locales may vary from gang to gang and for the same gang at different times (“the” corner, a local store, a poolroom, a parking lot etc.) and may be indoors or outdoors depending on the season or other circumstances, but they are almost invariably “extra-residential.” The propensity to assemble away from the residential unit reflects conditions of at least two subcultures—adolescent and lower class. A central requirement of adolescent peer congregation is that it be sufficiently removed from the household unit so as to facilitate a variety of objectives—including freedom from adult supervision and attention and the conduct of mating activities. The propensity for out-of-home assemblage also relates to the fact that at lower status levels, particularly lower class III, the “hearth” does not serve as a life center in the way

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112 Ref’s. to other definitions. Thrasher one of earliest, still one of best. Also, Scott, B. Cohen, others. Not defined at all in many works, examples. (Check A. Cohen, Block, Cloward, Short, etc.)
113 Term “segment” first used in WBM 1957 paper, still used in some cities, e.g., Philadelphia. Present work generally uses term “subdivision.”
that it does at higher levels, with much life activity taking place out of the home, in barrooms, on door stoops, at street corners.

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The gang is not an “open” group, but maintains well-developed criteria for inclusion and exclusion. These are not formalized, and can seldom be readily articulated, but exert a compelling influence nonetheless. Nor is the gang a transient assemblage, but maintains continuity of affiliation over time. As in most groups, the degree of continuity may vary both over the short and long run. Membership varies with the season, and there is always some turnover in the course of a year. A group formed in early adolescence will seldom include all the same individuals at the point when it starts to dissolve in late adolescence. Nevertheless, under conditions of average residential stability, there will almost always be a sizable core of persons who may be depended on to be “out on the corner” during most of their adolescent years.

Territorial aspects of the street gang are manifested in several ways. The bulk of membership is drawn from nearby residential areas; most “regulars” live within walking distance of the major assemblage locale or locales. The advent of the automobile has to some degree weakened the powerful influence of territoriality and localism on traditional modes of gang life but has by no means eliminated it. Gang members tend to operate within specific “ranging areas” whose major activity locales (the movie, the hamburger stand, the lovers’ lane, the bowling alley) are highly routinized. Such ranging areas may be extended by the availability of automobiles but they never become randomized.

Perhaps the best known manifestation of territoriality in gang life is what Chart 1.4 designates as “self-defined use-and-occupancy rights.” Many species of

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114 A discussion of criteria used by gang members to determine who is “one of us” is included in Miller, 1968 (Milieu), op. cit., pages 00. These center on adherence to certain standards of acceptable and estimable behavior as defined within urban adolescent lower class subcultures.

115 In order to draw up membership lists for Midcity gangs it was necessary to make careful counts of the “hanging frequency” of persons on major corners for periods ranging from one to three years. Despite temporary fluctuations, these lists showed a high degree of affiliational continuity for the major study gangs. The degree of membership continuity for shorter periods was on the order of 80-85%, and for longer periods on the order of 75-80%. (Check exact figures).

116 Ref. to “residential areas” study of Midcity gangs. Maps were made up for each corner, members’ residences spotted. Series of concentric zones around the corner. A few instances of persons coming from longer distances, always some specific reason (kinship, moved away, etc.).
animals, including man, carve out geographically-delimited areas or zones within which they exercise certain special rights of occupancy and use.\textsuperscript{117} The “turf” concept has caught the fancy of popular writers, who often misleadingly represent the “gang turf” as a rigidly defined no-trespass zone into which outsiders may intrude only at the risk of serious danger. As in the case of other sub criteria discussed here, the “turf” concept is not a present-absent situation, but rather a principle which may vary in degree or intensity. More intensely developed instances of the “turf” principle do exist, but they are not typical, and for most gangs the special relationship of the gang to “their” neighborhood area is more diffusely developed. For example, the “trespass at your own risk” ethic applies primarily to male peers, with adults seldom affected. However, all gangs do make some sort of claim of special rights of occupancy and use for what they define as “their” territory, and this phenomenon serves as a major defining criteria of the street gang.

The urban adolescent street gang is, preeminently, an assemblage of age-mates. Age serves in diverse and complex ways to define the limits of gang aggregates and to order internal relationships, but the operation of the age principle as such is powerful and pervasive. One of the principal ways in which age affects gang composition is that it establishes, within rough limits, the upper and lower limits of the adolescent “hanging” phase. These limits may vary considerably from community to community, but in most instances the lower limit runs, very roughly, from about 10 to 13, and the upper from about 18 to 22 for males, and 16-18 for females.\textsuperscript{118}

Age also exerts a decisive influence in the delineation of gang subgroups. Sub aggregation by age is a complex process involving interaction between several sets of variables, including the number of individuals in the hanging aggregate, local statutes respecting age of school attendance, work-force participation and armed-

\textsuperscript{117} Ref. to Ardrey Territoriality book.
\textsuperscript{118} Further discussion of age limits of “hanging” phase in Male Sex and Mating, Chapter 9. Age also plays important role in composition of other “genera” of “territorially-localized self-selected peer association” such as the adult male corner gang and the elderly male “crony” gang. Age span for older groups generally considerably wider than for adolescent.
services membership, the age-period within adolescence, and characteristic gang activity patterns. Total size of the aggregate is very important. By and large, the greater the number of congregating individuals, the more sensitively age serves to delineate subgroups. When the local community can support only one or a few gang units in a given locality, the age-span within the unit is wider than when larger numbers are present. Similarly, the age-spread within units tends to be wider at the oldest (and sometimes the youngest) age levels, and narrower for middle-adolescent units.\(^{119}\)

The urban adolescent street gang is represented in the present work as a stable and conventionalized associational form—one of a number of forms which compose the totality of social arrangements in the urban community. The gang, like the “family” or child-rearing unit, is “multi-functional”—that is, it engages the lives of its members in multiple and diverse spheres of endeavor, rather than centering around single or restricted concerns. As a multi-functional unit its members engage in a wide range of diverse activities.\(^{120}\) Chart 1.4 selects from this range four kinds of activity sufficiently intrinsic to gang life to warrant their being designated as “defining” criteria. These are hanging (“casual” interaction), mating, recreational-

\(^{119}\) The age spread was computed for the seven intensive-study gangs with some results reported in the accounts of the individual gangs. For middle-adolescent gangs age-spreads were very restricted; typically, 70-80% of gang members were born within two years of one another, and 90-100% within four years.

\(^{120}\) As discussed elsewhere, (e.g., Violent Crimes paper, Op. Cit.) the Midcity study collected and analyzed information on over 60 separate forms of behavior (e.g., economic, religious, recreational, etc.) with these 60 themselves representing a selection from a potentially larger number. Detailed treatment of 9 of these (kin-oriented, educational, occupational, sex, mating, drinking, assaultive, theft, and general criminal behavior) is presented in subsequent chapters. In this connection it is important to clarify the meaning of the term “gang behavior.” As used here, the term refers simply to behavior engaged in by gang members, whatever its context. A contrasting notion conceives “gang behavior” only as these collective or “organized” enterprises in which all gang members or most gang members participate, (e.g., B. Cohen). Thus, a mugging executed by three gang members is not “gang crime,” but rather a crime by individuals who happen to belong to gangs. As shown elsewhere, participation by the full complement of persons associated with a particular gang is extremely rare; while most forms of gang activity are “collective,” the great bulk of activities involve variously composed subgroups of the larger aggregate. Even hanging, the central gang activity, generally occurs in shifts; all persons affiliated with a gang are seldom out on the corner at the same time. One situation where concerted and close-to-complete participation occurs is a large scale gang fight, but for the average gang, as shown in the chapter on assault (Chapter 13), such events are very rare.
athletic activity, and illegal activities. Each of these forms, in turn, represents a diversified set of sub forms.

Hanging, the central form of gang activity, is often perceived as aimless and amorphous—as “loafing,” “doing nothing,” or “killing time.” This perception is reinforced by the tendency of gang members themselves to characterize this activity in similar terms. Hanging is in fact a highly complex and diversified form of activity, whose many components (arguing, discussing, teasing, ranking, repartee, horseplay, flirting, gambling, etc.) are discussed elsewhere.\(^{121}\) “Recreational” activity, with its important component of athletic spectatorship and participation, is a dominant activity for gang members as it is for most American adolescents. Among the more common forms of collective recreation which frequently involve both sexes are expeditions to beaches or amusement parks, dancing, and listening to popular music. Involvement in music and dancing as such is a permanent part of gang life, but the actual forms current at any point in time vary greatly, being highly susceptible to fashion. The predominance of mating activity—all those forms of behavior related to the process of establishing mating partnerships—also resonates a dominant concern of the larger adolescent subculture, and is discussed in detail in future chapters.

Of all the customary activities of the street gang, the nature and role of illegal activity is perhaps the most misunderstood. The term “delinquent gang” is highly misleading; as generally used it implies the existence of two distinct kinds of gangs—one whose members engage primarily or exclusively in criminal behavior and another whose members are law abiding. In point of fact, there is no street gang whose members do not engage in some form of illegal activity, nor is there any gang for which specifically illegal activity comprises more than a minor portion of its total range of customary activities.\(^{122}\) The repertoire of illegal activities engaged

\(^{121}\) References. Include “Aggression in a Boys’ corner gang” article.
\(^{122}\) Statistics on proportion of criminal to other forms of behavior. City Gangs chapters. Thefts, Assault, Patterning of Crime. Also “Violent Crimes” paper. Much of customary gang crime is quite mild; petty theft, noisy congregation, disturbances while drinking.
in by the average gang is “versatile,” as in the case of other defining activities. It includes various forms of theft, assault, drinking, narcotics use, and property destruction. There is, however, wide variation in the forms and frequencies of illegal activity—among different gangs, at different age levels, in different communities, at different periods in history. Preferred forms of crime are strongly influenced by fashion just as in the case of popular music. For some gangs during certain periods narcotics may be more fashionable than drinking, with different kinds of narcotics, as well as different kinds of alcohol, moving in and out of favor. The frequency of organized inter-gang conflict is particularly subject to time-and-place variation; as already shown, the “rumble” was “in” in some cities during the ‘50’s, and enjoyed a revival in the 1970’s. But it is most important here to be quite clear as to just what it is that changes and what it is that persists. Criminal activity of some kind comprises a persistent component of customary gang behavior; the particular form it takes at different times and in different places may vary, but the practice of illegal activity in some form remains universal.

In common with other kinds of human groups, the street gang is characterized by internal differentiation of various kinds. Prominent among these are differentiation with respect to authority, prestige roles, and cliques. As in the case of other criteria, there is considerable misconception as to the nature of intra-gang differentiation, particularly with respect to authority or “leadership.” One prevalent conception of the “true” gang sees it as an autocratic despotism, with a single dictatorial leader imposing his will on compliant followers; another pictures the “true” gang as comprising a highly organized system of hierarchical authority, with presidents and war councilors, and the efficient execution by subordinates of decisions originating at the command level. Like other stereotypes, gangs, which approximate the “dictator” and “chain-of-command” conceptions, do appear from place to place and time to time, but such manifestations represent extremes in a range of variation, and are far from typical. Authority and leadership in the average gang is complex, fluid, and responsive. One has only to consider the variety of
leadership arrangements in Midcity gangs—the delicate power-balance among the five Senior Bandit clique leaders, the two opposing and one mediating clique in the Junior Bandits, the good-boy and bad-boy leaders of Junior Outlaws and Kings—to appreciate the intricacy and variety of gang leadership. For the average gang leadership is more diffuse than concentrated, and depends in large part on the particular activity being conducted.\textsuperscript{123}

Related to but not identical with differentiation by authority is differentiation by prestige. Members of gangs are mutually evaluated with respect to ability, capacity, and esteemed personal qualities.\textsuperscript{124} Some writers have pictured the gang as characterized by a rigid and stable pecking order. While the allocation of ranked prestige is quite sensitive, it is considerably less rigid than implied by the “pecking order” image, and, like leadership, may vary over time and according to situational contexts. The gang is also differentiated by “role”—that is, a set of well-defined “types” which occur with remarkable consistency from gang to gang. Among these are: the lover, the clown, the scapegoat, the battler, and the operator. Finally, all gangs include cliques or subgroups of various sizes and mutual relationships—ranging from pairs and triads to relatively stable six to eight person groups. Both leadership and prestige are related to ones’ position in a particular clique.

The criteria listed in Chart 1.4 and explicated in the accompanying discussion serve to define the “urban adolescent street gang,” as the term is used in the present work. It will be useful, in addition, to summarize the substance of the discussion in terms of a formal definition, as follows:

An urban adolescent street gang is a group of adolescents who congregate recurrently at one or more extra-residential locales, with continued affiliation based on self-defined inclusion criteria. Recruitment, customary assemblage locales and ranging areas are based upon location within a delimited territory, over some portion of which limited use and occupancy rights are claimed. Group boundaries and the composition of subgroups are delineated on the basis of age. The group maintains a versatile repertoire of activities

\textsuperscript{123} The “situational” nature of leadership in Midcity gangs is discussed in “The Impact of...etc.,” 1957, Page 402.

\textsuperscript{124} Basis of esteem, prestige, discussed in Milieu, Aggression papers, Op. Cit. Also ref. to Spiller thesis, paper.
with hanging, mating, recreational and illegal activity of central importance, and is internally differentiated on the basis of authority, prestige, personality-roles and clique-formation.125

Variation in Gang Characteristics

Having established an explicit basis of reference with respect to the term “gang” as used in the present work, it is now possible to return to the issue of persistence. This issue will be addressed in terms of the following question: Which characteristics of the urban adolescent street gang remain constant, and which vary? Since “variation” in gang characteristics may occur either in the same locale at different points in time (“change”) or in different locales (neighborhoods, cities, countries) at the same point in time (typological variation), treatment of issues relating to persistence is at the same time a treatment of issues relating to typology. Two kinds of variation will be discussed: first, variation in the defining criteria or sub criteria, and second variation in other characteristics of gangs.

It should be evident from previous discussion that the criteria which serve to define the gang are not conceived of as narrowly restricted states or conditions but rather as general characteristics which can and do encompass a good deal of variation. For example, “subgroup delineation by age” may take a variety of forms, but it serves as a defining criterion of the gang so long as it is present in one or another manifestation. Similarly, each of the criteria of Chart 1.4 represents a descriptive dimension along which gangs may vary in space of time. A brief discussion of such variation follows.

Among the aspects of “recurrent congregation” which show variation are the frequency of hanging and the composition of the hanging group. These may vary

125Since available data do not provide a satisfactory basis for the development of a systematic typology, it will be useful, on a preliminary basis, to “place” the urban adolescent street corner gang with respect to related groups according to the classificational scheme used in biological typology. The unit as defined here is conceived to be at the species level of biological taxonomy. The genus is “territorially-located self-selected peer associations,” which includes forms such as the middle-class adolescent drug-store crowd, the urban adult male street gang (treated by W.F. Whyte, 1943, and E. Leibow, 1967, Op. Cits.) and the elderly male “crony” assemblage (urban, small town, rural). Forms at the family or order level include the organized adult criminal “mob,” and the young adult motorcycle gang. Subtypes of the unit under consideration here (e.g., multi-unit age-graded aggregate, two-unit male-female aggregate, and so on) are at the subspecies level.

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according to the season, the day of the week, and the age period within adolescence. Territorial characteristics which slow variation include the size and boundaries of ranging areas and the “recruitment zone” from which the gang draws its members. The number and location of hanging locales may vary seasonally and according to the local availability of appropriate points of assemblage. The kinds of “use and occupancy rights” to which a gang lays claim will vary, as will the area over which it claims such rights. Both the upper and lower age limits of hanging groups may vary from place to place and time to time, as will the number, span, and identity of the age divisions which delineate cliques and subgroups.

The specific activities which compose a gangs’ total activity repertoire show a good deal of variation, particularly with respect to the proportion of time and attention devoted to activities of various kinds. Such proportions vary from gang to gang and for the same gang during different seasons and age periods. Hanging is always an important component of the gang’s activity repertoire, but the frequency and duration of hanging periods show considerable variation, particularly by season. The amount of time and attention devoted to mating activity varies both by age and sex, with females devoting proportionately more attention to such activity than males and with intensified concern generally starting at an earlier age. Variation in the forms and frequency of illegal activities is especially relevant to the issue of gang persistence. As shown in later chapters, involvement in the several forms of customary gang crime (theft, assault, drinking, vandalism) shows systematic variation by age within particular gangs. “Favored” forms of crime vary from gang to gang, and “fashionable” forms vary over time. While theft in its various forms shows a high degree of persistence as a major component of the gangs’ repertoire of illegal activity, certain forms of assault—particularly inter-gang assault—show a great deal of variation both in frequency and scope. Such variation, as already seen, frequently provides a major basis for concluding that gangs do or

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126 Ref. to activity distribution statistics.
127 See Sex and Mating Chapters (Chapters 8,9).
128 Ref. to chapters on crime
do not exist. It is important to bear in mind that involvement in collective assault—in common with other forms of gang activity—may increase or decrease without affecting the prevalence of gangs. The same principle applies to the equipment of assault; weapons may or may not be used, and the kinds of weapons utilized at different points in time and among different gangs (zip guns, knives, chains, clubs) may vary greatly. Whether or not a gang uses guns is, of course, of critical importance to the police, but has little relevance to the empirical issue of the prevalence of gangs.

The illegal use of narcotics and alcohol shows similar kinds of variation. As in the case of the term “the delinquent gang,” it is misleading in most instances to talk of “drug using” gangs. Almost all gang members have some experience with narcotics in one or more of their various forms and with alcohol of various kinds. Frequency of usage, favored forms, and degree of public attention to usage are subject to the same kinds of time and place variation as obtains for other forms of customary gang behavior.

It is hardly necessary to mention that forms of recreational activity vary greatly, particularly over time. The zoot-suited gangs of the 1940’s jitterbugged to swing music; the “cool” gangs of the 1960’s did the twist and boogaloo to electronic rock music. Music and dancing in some form, however, consistently play an important part in gang activities, with favored forms generally reflecting contemporary fashions of the larger adolescent subculture. Participation and spectatorship of athletic activities tends to be more conservative; baseball has remained a central preoccupation of gang males for well over half a century.

Involvement by gang members in political and politically-oriented activities appears to show cyclical variation in response to the changing political climate of the cities. During most periods political activity does not play an important part in the customary activities of gangs. However, during the heyday of the big city political machines gang members frequently became involved in local political activity, acting as runners, and performing a variety of tasks (posting bills,
transporting voters) during election time. Not infrequently gangs were partially subsidized by local ward bosses.\textsuperscript{129} Similarly, during the heyday of the Negro advancement movements of the 1960’s and 70’s, some Negro gang members, particularly older males, became involved in a variety of activities relating to one or another of the constituent enterprises of this movement.\textsuperscript{130}

Intra-unit differentiation in gangs shows wide variation. “Leadership,” already discussed, takes many forms and varies along the dimensions of concentration-diffuseness, strong and weak authority, and others. Evidence does not support the simple notion that groups with a single strong and visible leader are “gangs” and those without such a leader are not. There is also variation with respect to the number and sizes of intra-gang cliques, the number and types of special roles, the ranking of members with respect to prestige and the degree of development of the “ranking” principle. The relation of the gang to “organization” is also widely misconceived, as evidenced in part by the prevalent confusion between the terms “gang” and “club.” Some see a group as a “gang” if it is “organized,” and a “non-gang” if it is not; others assume the opposite view.

The gang is essentially an “informal” association unit—that is, its many forms of role differentiation, leadership arrangements, subunit formation, and modes of operation are not governed by or delineated in a codified charter. Under some circumstances, however, smaller or larger parts of a gang may adopt one or more of the features of a formal organization—with codified rules and bylaws, elected officials, committees, and so on.\textsuperscript{131} Despite the presence of such elements, however, the basic congregating unit may still be readily identified as a “gang” on the basis of the defining criteria presented here. As in other instances, the degree of

\textsuperscript{129} Ref. to Thrasher, Chapter XXI, The Gang in Politics. 1920’s.
\textsuperscript{130} Ref. to gang involvement in rioting. By and large not “political.” See June ’68 report to N.Y. State Legislature.
\textsuperscript{131} Relation of “club” and “gang” discussed in some detail in W. Miller, “The Place of the Organized Club on Corner Group-work Method,” 1956. Also discusses issue of “formal” vs. “informal” organization. Also Miller 1957 “Impact…etc.” In most usages the term “street club” is essentially equivalent to the term “gang” as here defined.
formal organization manifested by gangs represents a range of variation rather than a present-absent dichotomy.

Variation also affects characteristics of gangs other than the defining characteristic just discussed. Included among these are names, language, attire, size, number, and ethnic composition. Gang names, when they are present, are often colorful and striking, and thus appear to provide a simple and obvious indication of the presence of gangs.\textsuperscript{132} The actual relationship of formal names to gangs is, however, quite complex. Many gangs which meet all of the definitional criteria cited here have no formal name. There are numerous ways other than names by which gangs may be designated. These include locality designations (the kids that hang out at Ace Variety; the gang at 12\textsuperscript{th} and Poplar), and names of key members (Digger and them kids). Some gangs assume a name for some purposes and not for others, or assume different names under different circumstances. Athletic teams whose membership overlaps that of a gang may have names which are the same as or different from the gang name, if there is one. Some gangs, as indicated by the quote at the head of this chapter, eschew formal names for a variety of reasons (kid stuff, passé, enhancement of vulnerability to arrest). Both the use of names and the types of names used are highly subject to changing fashions. Instances where a named gang decides to drop its name may be perceived by outsiders as indicating the dissolution of the gang, when in reality nothing has gone but the name. Thus, gang names neither represent an unambiguous present-absent characteristic nor are in any way intrinsic to the existence of gangs.

There is little in the way of a special or distinctive gang “language” independent of the larger subcultural systems of which gang members are a part. Most usages current among gang members which differ from those current in the schools are derived from one of several “prime” subcultures, primarily those of

\textsuperscript{132} Gang names are discussed in several works, including Thrasher, 1927 (page 275) and Cavan, 1969 (page 269), others.
adolescence and the social class of gang members. Grammatical usage in particular is affected by social status (lower class III, “I seen them guys;” lower class I, “I saw those guys”). An additional set of terms in common usage by gang members derives from certain non-prime subcultures with which there is some contact, such as the drug-users subculture (a bust; the fuzz) and the subculture of the prison and/or adult crime (stoolie; packing; a hustle). A further set of terms does derive primarily from gang life itself (turf, rumble, rep), but is relatively small. As in the case of other gang characteristics, language patterns show a fascinating mixture of stability and change; some of the terms cited by Thrasher in 1926 are still current (punk; jackrolling); others are quite passé. Variations in terminology from area to area and time to time (jam, rumble, bopping, punch-up) of course have little relation to the persistence of gangs.

The clothing, hairstyles, and forms of bodily adornment of gang members are, like language, highly susceptible to fashion. Persons seeking to locate or identify gangs or gang members through any distinctive “uniform” or mode of dress are generally disappointed. From time to time some article of clothing or mode of adornment becomes particularly fashionable among members of urban street gangs (pachuco marks, west coast, 1950’s; leather jackets) but such fashions are never universal, and are generally short-lived. The “gang jacket” popular in the 1950’s closely resembled similar jackets worn by members of athletic teams and adult laborers. Members of the same gang generally dress pretty much in the same fashion, but in this they differ little from groups of 14-year-old schoolgirls. Attire and adornment of gang members generally reflect fashions current in adolescent

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133 A general explanation of gangs as a product of “subcultural conjunction” which includes the distinction between prime” and non-prime” subcultures is presented in the concluding chapter of this volume.
134 Thrasher failed to recognize the subcultural origins of many of the terms he perceived as distinctive gang usages. For example, his discussion of the “argot of the gang” includes the phrasing “We was by my sister for two days” an obvious Yiddishism more current among the adult Jews of the time than among their then numerous gang-member offspring. Thrasher, op. cit.
and lower class subcultures, and, like other “extrinsic” gang characteristics discussed here, may vary widely without affecting the identity of the gang as such.

The size of gangs is, of course, subject to wide variation. What are the lower and upper size limits of the gang as defined here? As already seen, the basic “building blocks” of gangs are cliques, some as small as two or three persons. Different numbers of cliques form larger units. The size of the group which customarily congregates at particular assemblage locales generally ranges from five or six to 25 or 30 persons. This does not mean that 25 or 30 adolescents are always or usually at the same assemblage point at the same time, but that the hanging aggregate draws from a group of this size. Frequently several such units, differentiated by age, sex, and specific hanging locales are associated with a particular corner or assemblage area. In such cases the total collectivity may be designated an “aggregate,” and its component units “segments” or “subdivisions.” When the 6 to 30 person unit is the only or major group at that locality, it may be called an “aggregate.”  

With respect to the lower limits of gang size, present usage would apply the term “gang” to any regularly congregating group where the potential recruitment pool numbers six or more persons. Five would represent a borderline case. General statements as to the upper limits of gang size are difficult to make. Gang members, for a variety of reasons, frequently make highly exaggerated claims as to the size of their own and other gangs, and some observers take these at face value. The size of congregating units is elastic, depending largely on participation in particular activities. It is most unusual for the number of gang members associated with a particular “corner” or other hanging locale to exceed 100 or 120 persons, and a group of this size seldom if ever assembles at the same place at the same time. Gangs in some cities sometimes claim extensive “lateral” or cross-territorial

135 Ref. to terms, other discussions of size, 1957 paper. Also present chapter. Present discussion of “size” very incomplete, due to lack of necessary empirical data. Unit-subunit situations can be very complex, adequate treatment would require extended discussion.
136 The reliability of the gang member as a source of information concerning gang characteristics will be discussed shortly.
alliances or aggregations, but these claims are usually questionable, and even if valid apply only to very limited kinds of association or collective endeavor.\textsuperscript{137}

The size of gangs in different neighborhoods, different cities, and different countries at different times is affected by many factors, including seasonal variations, age levels, local population density, and rates of population movement. Since the propensity to form gangs is higher at lower social status levels, one would expect to find the largest gangs in areas with relatively large lower class II and III populations. As in the case of other gang characteristics, variations in the size of gangs within the limits discussed here have little effect on their identity as gangs.

The number of gangs in any particular neighborhood, city, or country, during the past or in the present, is not known. Accurate information based on an explicit operational definition of the phenomenon at issue, as already mentioned, has never been collected. It is thus impossible to make reliable statements as to change trends. What data are available, however, would appear to indicate that the number of gangs does vary considerably, both through time in given areas and among areas at any given time. Neither the extent of variation nor its causes are known. Factors affecting the numbers of gangs are similar to those affecting gang size—size of local populations, residential density, rate of population movements. Here too the size of the lower status population is of critical importance—roughly, the larger the lower class population, the more gangs. Operations of public “service” agencies such as police and social welfare agencies also have some affect on the number of gangs, but its nature is poorly understood. More intensive police action in an area with larger gangs may result in a larger number of smaller congregating aggregates, thus reducing size but increasing numbers. Action by social welfare agencies appears to have little effect on the numbers of gangs. However variable the number of gangs in different places and different times, they have always been present, in major American cities, and will be for the foreseeable future.

\textsuperscript{137} Ref. to Thrasher data on gang size. In his table (p. 119) 60\% of gangs between 6 and 20. However, hard to know what order of unit his figures refer to since there are no specific definitions of units and/or subunits.
The ethnic composition of gangs also varies according to the kinds of demographic variables which affect size and numbers. Observers during any particular historical period tend to relate the existence of gangs to characteristics of the particular ethnic groups which figure prominently in the urban lower class during that period. Gangs were thus seen as distinctively “Irish” or distinctively “Italian” in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; similarly, they were seen during the middle and late twentieth century as somehow related to the particular circumstances and subculture of urban lower class Negroes. As shown elsewhere, the ethnic composition of particular gangs may affect some of their non-defining characteristics (e.g. Jewish gangs in the 1910’s used many Yiddish phrases; Puerto Rican gangs in the 1950’s spoke Spanish), but has little effect on the form or basic pursuits of the gang. The number and sizes of gangs reflect the size of the lower class population; the degree to which the several ethnic populations maintain lower class status (Italians and Negroes more; Jews and Japanese less) affects the numbers of gangs in various ethnic communities, but the general influence of ethnic status is minor compared with that of class status.

It is now possible to return to a question posed at the beginning of this section: “How are perceptions of the prevalence of gangs affected by matters of definition?” Many of the reasons for misperceiving the prevalence of gangs center on a widespread tendency to force observed groups into one of two discrete and mutually-exclusive categories—“gangs” and “non-gangs”—on the basis of the perceived presence or absence of one or more elements seen as essential to the “true” gang, and which also are conceived as discrete entities. If one takes as the

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138 The tendency to conceive differentiation in terms of conceptual dichotomies rather than continuous variation is a common characteristic of many approaches to social phenomena which evoke moral disapproval or are perceived as threatening. This phenomenon is identified by John and Elaine Cumming as “conceptual isolation,” and discussed by them as it operates with respect to the mentally ill (J. and E. Cumming “Mental Health Education in a Canadian Community,” in B.D. Paul and W. Miller, Editors, Health Culture and Community, Russell Sage, 1955). This approach affects many treatments of both gangs and delinquency. Mentioned earlier is the common practice of dichotomizing gangs into two discrete types, “delinquent” and “non-delinquent.” In both instances, variant types are designated by terms such as “near-” or “quasi-” or “pseudo-delinquent.” The “gang”-
essential criterion of the “true” gang particular elements such as strong leadership or gang fighting, and if these elements appear to come and go, then gangs themselves are seen as coming and going. The evidence of the present study does not support such a conceptualization, but indicates instead that core characteristics of the urban adolescent street gang manifest an extensive range of continuous variation from place to place and from time to time without negating the existence of the gang. Gangs may be larger or smaller, named or nameless, modestly or extensively differentiated, more or less active in gang fighting, stronger or weaker in leadership, black, white, yellow or brown, without affecting their identity as gangs. So long as groups of adolescents gather periodically outside the home, frequent a particular territory, restrict membership by age and other criteria, pursue a variety of activities and maintain differences in authority and prestige—the gang, as a basic associational form, will continue to exist.

Perception and Gang Prevalence

Information as to the actual number of gangs in the United States, as already noted, is not collected on a systematic basis. In such a situation, conceptions as to the prevalence of gangs are heavily influenced by the perspectives derived from one’s social “location” with respect to characteristics such as age, sex, social status, occupational status, and residential locale. Perceptions of gang prevalence, as well as many other kinds of perception, are closely related to the “class” interests and subcultural concerns of these various categories as well as to the kinds of information ordinarily accessible to them. The following paragraphs will discuss

“non-gang” dichotomy is a product of the same process, with the reality of continuous variation being accommodated by terms such as “near- or “pseudo-gangs.” This mode of conceptualization is apparently responsive to a human tendency to isolate or wall-off threatening behavior manifestations by conceptually insulating those persons and forms of behavior which have moved sufficiently for beyond certain limits of “acceptable” variability so that it appears dangerous to admit the essential continuity between the “deviant” forms of behavior and those of “normal” persons.

139 As mentioned, categories are designated in a later chapter as “status classes” and are defined and discussed in detail. Influence on perception of differing social ‘positions” can be designated
briefly influences affecting the perceptions of four categories of persons—middle class adults, “service” personnel such as police and social workers, ex-gang members, and gang members themselves.

To the average middle class adult the street gang represents something dangerous and distasteful whose existence he would ordinarily prefer to ignore. On the other hand, insofar as gang activities are represented as shocking and spectacular, they constitute a salable product for which middle class adults provide an important part of the market. Since few middle class adults have any direct experience of gangs in the ordinary course of their lives, their primary sources of information in this area are the mass media, local and national. However, as already indicated, the kinds of information furnished by the media depend on many considerations other than the actual prevalence of gangs and the nature of their activities. Gang activities, like crime, are sufficiently prevalent as to constitute a virtually inexhaustible reservoir of potentially-reportable events; whether or not the media choose to report these, and the kinds of events they do report are determined by a complex set of definitions of what is “news” at different times and for different purposes.140

As shown earlier, newspapers do not report the day-to-day activities of gangs, nor pay much attention to their routine criminal involvements. On the contrary, those aspects of gang life which are seen as “newsworthy” are the most spectacular and unusual, and thus least representative of customary gang behavior. Moreover, as already noted, the very existence of gangs is ignored except when they manifest extreme and atypical forms of behavior such as violent conflict, at which times they

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“Rashomon” phenomenon, after a Japanese movie vividly depicting highly divergent conceptions of the same event by its several participants.

140 Determinants of media reporting choices extremely complex, can’t analyze here. One aspect, “wave” phenomenon; one spectacular instance of type of event ordinarily ignored triggers attention to others of similar type, creates artificial impression of “wave.” Data on relation between press coverage and police-recorded events; 10’s of thousands of gang offenses reported over police radio, recorded for several cities; virtually none are reported in newspapers. See also analysis of newspaper coverage of Midcity gang “violent” crimes in “assault” chapter, earlier discussion of “mutual feedback” phenomenon in re press attention and the “fighting gang.”
receive a good deal of press attention. This artifact of media reporting—silence during periods of ordinary gang activity and focus during times of atypical activity—creates an impression of abrupt appearance and disappearance, when in fact what is reflected are those peaks of behavioral variation sufficiently extreme as to pierce the threshold of press attention. Through these and other aspects of media coverage, then, the picture of gang prevalence and activity available to the average middle class adult is distorted and inaccurate.

Adults whose occupational responsibilities bring them in direct contact with gangs are generally in a good position to provide data with respect to gang prevalence. This is especially true of “service” workers such as juvenile police officers or “area” social workers, whose special area of responsibility is youth and/or gangs. However, unless these organizations maintain a specialized research branch, their estimates as to the prevalence of gangs must be accepted with considerable caution. One major limitation has already been discussed; agencies of this kind tend to define as a “gang” only those aggregates which are perceived as appropriate objects of the kinds of services they render; others are accorded little attention and generally do not figure in counts of “gangs.” Discrepancies arising from such definitional differences are attested by the Philadelphia example cited earlier where police estimated that 80 gangs were active in the city while social workers gave the figure as 200. An additional limitation relates to the area of geographic responsibility of involved personnel; a particular policeman or area social worker might be quite well-informed as to the gang situation in his own district, but poorly informed as to other districts. Unless careful counts are furnished by special administrative or research personnel, workers in local urban areas are generally poor sources of information as to the number of gangs in the total metropolitan area, and quite unreliable as to numbers in other cities.

Young lower class adults or older adolescents who formerly belonged to gangs are often sought out as sources of information concerning gangs and gang prevalence. It would seem reasonable that their status as ex-gang members would
qualify them for the role of expert—a role readily offered by adults such as reporters, social workers and sociologists, and generally accepted with little reluctance. The kinds of information generally furnished by ex-gang members are, however, significantly influenced by the perceptual consequences of a process discussed in later chapters—the “natural” dissolution of gangs as their members leave adolescence.141 With some exceptions, ex-gang members respond to the question of gang prevalence in terms of their personal experience. A 19 or 20 year old will say—“The gangs are all breaking up...” A 23 or 24 year-old—“The gangs have all broken up.” What this means is that his gang and those of his peers have passed through the traditional developmental sequence of the adolescent street gang. He will often give reasons: all the fellows are getting jobs instead, or becoming involved in narcotics or prostitution, or getting married, or going into the service, or have just generally “wised up.” These activities are perceived as newly-discovered alternatives to gang life rather than as a natural consequence of moving toward adulthood.

Questioned about the “younger kids” who are still hanging out, the same person might say—“Oh them. They ain’t wised up yet. Still acting like idiots like we used to...” The perspectives of the ex-gang member are colored by a powerful perceptual process whereby changes in behavior, which arise naturally from age-passage, are seen as general trends which affect everybody. It is not simply forgetting that clouds the vision of the ex-gang member; it is virtually essential to the effective conduct of his adult life that he erase from his mind much of the essential substance and circumstances of his “gang” phase. Not that he cannot and does not recover, often in vivid detail, the character and flavor of many of his gang experiences, but these are recast into a largely ritualized framework which better serves the purposes of adulthood than those of factual accuracy. An ex-gang member generally loses familiarity with details of the gang situation among the

141 Ref. to discussion in Male Sex and Mating. Gangs like grades in a school; today’s fifth graders are tomorrow’s sixth graders and day-after-tomorrow’s graduates, but the “fifth grade” goes on. (Check if point made elsewhere)
“younger kids” a surprisingly short time after his own gang experience has ended, even in the neighborhood he once knew most intimately.

But what of the “younger kids” themselves as a source of information? Surely it must be a gang member, himself, who is in the best position to provide reliable and accurate information as to the prevalence and activities of gangs. Unfortunately this is not the case. While any informed picture of gangs must, of course, ascertain and take into account the verbal expressions of gang members, it is folly to accept them at face value. The capacity of the gang member to furnish accurate estimates, descriptions, or explanations is significantly affected by strong perceptual influences related to his age, his social status, and his locality.

Two kinds of reasons can be distinguished. The first concerns the gang member’s actual conceptions of local gang situations, and the second, what might be considered “motivated” misrepresentation. The average gang member lives in a world of images, or rumors, of phantasms, molded and shaped by strong emotions—particularly that of fear. He sees himself as inhabiting a perilously circumscribed zone of relative safety surrounded by a mysterious and menacing terrain alive with malign and threatening forces. Perception tinged by fear predisposes him to exaggerate the numbers, size, and prowess of gangs in other areas. The gang member is an imminently parochial being; his knowledge of gangs fades off with great rapidity as one moves away from his immediate neighborhood, and he ordinarily possesses surprisingly limited knowledge as to the gang situation even in neighborhoods close to his own, let alone throughout the city as a whole.142

Closely related to the perceptually influenced tendency to exaggerate the size, numbers, and ferocity of other gangs is a propensity, more pronounced at lower status levels, to foresee unbounded calamity in the near future. Gang members often represent themselves as privy to absolutely reliable inside information as to

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142 After mapping Midcity gangs though methods described earlier (locations, sizes, subdivisions, etc.) conducted a limited survey of knowledge by gang members of other areas. Knowledge was extremely limited; often quite ignorant of major aggregates within a mile of own hanging corner; what was known was usually fragmentary or badly distorted. “Peripheral” member of several gangs as partial exception.
unprecedented carnage or other terrors just about to explode, and disseminate, year after year, dire predictions of horrendous events in the offing. Very often there is trouble, and some of it serious, but under most circumstances only a small proportion of the catastrophes predicted with unshakable confidence ever materialize. Sub-culturally influenced perceptions also affect the kinds of explanations for their own behavior gang members customarily offer. Through the years gang members have been confronted with a set of standardized questions for which they have developed equally standardized answers. Why do you join gangs? “We have to! With that other gang threatening us it’s a simple matter of self-defense.” Why do you get in trouble? “Boredom! There’s nothin’ to do around here. It’s so dead we get into trouble just for a little excitement.” Why do you fight? “We gotta show them they can’t step all over us.” These ritualized explanations, which change very little over the years, are often taken at face value by persons who would be more than a little skeptical of a colleague’s explanation that he pursued extra-marital affairs because his wife did not understand him. Considering that explanations for phenomena such as the existence of gangs and criminal behavior are sufficiently complex and elusive as to tax the powers of the best analysts, it is surprising how often these traditional and ritualized “horse’s mouth” explanations are sought, granted credence, and reported in all seriousness.\footnote{Issue of ritualized explanations complex; could be developed at some length. For example of comparison of gang-member reasons for behavior with analytic reasons, see Chapter 10 on Drinking Behavior.}

A second factor affecting the accuracy of information obtained from the gang member derives from his estimate of what kinds of information are appropriate for different categories of questioner. Gang members for the most part are sensitive to the differing interests and concerns of outside adults, and are quite skillful in shaping the kinds of information they offer to accommodate such considerations as what they think the questioner would like to hear, the image of their gang they wish to project, and matters of prudence and self-interest. A gang member soon senses the interests of a reporter looking for a sensational feature, and will
frequently accommodate him with lurid details of enormous gangs, shocking violence, and outrageous happenings. The tendency to exaggerate is often enhanced by a desire to represent one’s gang as important and powerful. “We got 250 kids right here we can get together in 20 minutes, and we got branches all over the city. I’d say we got a thousand kids altogether, maybe two thousand.” There is often some order of reality to which such statements correspond, but they are framed more with an eye to impressing others (including members of other gangs who will read the story) than the interests of factual accuracy. Different kinds of information are seen as appropriate for different categories of adult (e.g., sociologists, educators, social workers). For example, the boy who belongs to a two-thousand member gang for the news reporter might tell a policeman or attendance officer—“There’s no gangs around here. We got about 9 or 10 kids that hang around together, but there ain’t no gangs.” Information subject to both orders of influence—situation-biased perception and audience-adapted formulation—must be interpreted with particular caution.

It should be evident at this point that representations of the urban adolescent street gang, its activities, and its prevalence, are particularly susceptible to misperception and distortion. Information obtainable from each of the sources cited above—media reporters, service workers, ex-gang members, and gang members—can and do contribute valuable facets of the total picture, and it is obvious that information derived from several or all of these and similar sources will be more adequate than that derived from a single source. But it is also obvious that all of these sources are systematically affected by particular kinds of perceptual bias, making it most unwise to accept the information they provide at face value without “correcting for” expected kinds of limitations in the perception of each. There is no cheap or easy way to obtain detailed, balanced, and accurate information on gangs. It requires research which is systematic, intensive, and comprehensive, staffed by the most perceptive, conscientious, and objective personnel available.
Characteristics of City Gangs

...at any and all hours of the day there are multitudes of boys wandering about and congregated on the corners of the streets, idle in their habits, dissolute in their conduct, profane and obscene in conversation and gross and vulgar in their manners. If a female passes one of the groups she is shocked by what she sees and hears...

Report in Brooklyn Newspaper; 1865

The group of adolescent peers is a prevalent and persisting form of human association, and the adolescent street gang a prevalent and persisting feature of cities, in the United States and elsewhere. But the urban adolescent street gang, viewed as an associational form, exhibits an unusually wide range of variation over time and from place to place—in size, in prevalence, in composition, in customary pursuits, in favored forms of illegal behavior. In part as a consequence of this variation, few forms of human association are as extensively misperceived and misrepresented. Misperception affects not only the way gangs are characterized, but extends even to the fundamental fact of whether they exist at all. As a further consequence, the picture of gangs presented by different authors is highly sensitive to the characteristics of those gangs which form the primary basis of their experience. Particular gangs in particular cities at particular times reflect differences in city size, in racial and ethnic composition, in rates of immigration and emigration, in region, in current fashions of the adolescent subculture, and other factors. As in the case of the blind men and the elephant, one observer will maintain that gangs are small, loosely organized, and peaceful, and another that they are large, tightly organized, and violent.

Of central importance, therefore, is the question of how “representative” a particular gang situation is or appears to be. In this respect the situation in Midcity in the 1950’s and early ‘60’s is particularly fortunate. The city was large, but not one of the largest. The population included Catholics, Protestants, Jews, whites and blacks. It contains both lower and middle class populations, and a range of levels within the lower class. The neighborhood was in flux, but not radically so. There
was no unusual level of racial conflict. Gang warfare was not practiced at near
mania levels, as in New York in the 1950’s and Philadelphia in the ‘60’s and ‘70’s. There were no unusually large gang complexes, as in Chicago in the 1960’s and ‘70’s. While no local urban community or gang situation can be truly “representative” of all, the circumstances of gang and community in Midcity during the period of this study were probably about as typical as one could find in any major American city during the mid-twentieth century.

The previous chapter contains a good deal of detailed information as to particular characteristics of Midcity gangs and their neighborhood settings, along with specific analyses of features such as leadership, cliques, crime, and their mutual relationships. These data support a picture of the average Midcity gang as an ordered and adaptive form of human association, and its members as able and rational human beings. Because of these qualities, and also because of the “representative” character of Midcity gangs, the present chapter will use the specific data and analyses of the last as the basis of an examination of the characteristics of city gangs on a higher level of generality. This will be done in two ways. First, the seven “intensive-study” gangs, heretofore treated separately, will be combined into a single study population, and examined with respect to selected characteristics such as age, social status, illegal involvement, and the relationships among them. Second, the empirical data and related analyses will be brought to bear on a set of more general issues relating to gang characteristics—issues, for the most part, where differing empirical findings and/or conceptual approaches have resulted in divergent conclusions by different authors. These issues are: the definition of a gang, variation in gang characteristics, the prevalence of gangs, the solidarity of gangs, the “conventionality” of gangs, the normality of gangs, and racial aspects of gang life.
Status Characteristics and Illegal Involvement

The present work, in addition to its descriptive objectives, aims to present a general explanation of basic forms of gang behavior—particularly illegal forms. This explanation, as already mentioned, centers on the notion of “subculture conjunction,” which proposes that subcultures connected with certain “status characteristics”—particularly those related to age, sex, social status and locality—exert a direct and compelling influence, both singly and in combination, on gang behavior. Chapters One and Three have already explored the relation of such characteristics to crime and other attributes of the population, using the “census tract” as the basic analytic unit. It is now possible to pursue this mode of analysis on a smaller scale and with greater “control” of the data by combining the seven gangs into a single “study population” of 205 persons, and presenting first the status characteristics of this population, and second the relation of these characteristics to illegal behavior.144

Of direct relevance to the important methodological issue of validity is the fact that in the present analysis measures of both the dependent variable (law-violating behavior) and the independent variables (characteristics of the population) are different from those previously used. The “census tract,” which served as the population unit in the previous analysis, is highly useful in that detailed and uniform information is available for many thousands of tracts in widely varying localities, thus making possible very large-scale analyses and good comparability of units. One difficulty with the census tract, however, involves what has been called the “ecological fallacy;” that is, data are presented in such a way so that it is impossible to know which of the many individuals who compose the population unit manifest the specific characteristics being measured.145 This presents certain problems as to the meaning of relational propositions based on such units. For example, if 70% of the population of a census tract falls into a “low income” category

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144 Preliminary analyses and formulations by Rainer Baum.
145 Ref. to W. S. Robinson 1950 “Ecological Correlates and the behavior of Individuals” Am. Soc. Rev. June 1950 pp. 351-357. Ref. also to other City Gangs reference to this, e.g. Ch. 1.
and 70% into a “low education” category there would appear to be a good relation between income and education. It is logically possible, however, that some unknown proportion of the 30% who do not have low incomes are of low educational status, and that some proportion of the 30% with higher education have low incomes, so that the correspondence between education and income might, in individual cases, be poorer than indicated by the mass data.

The use of the “gang” as a population unit makes it possible to accommodate this difficulty. Since each unit is composed of specific individuals with designated characteristics, the correspondence or lack thereof between two or more characteristics in individual cases can be known directly. On the other hand, the gang is a very small unit relative to the census tract, thus lacking many of the analytic advantages of large units, particularly with respect to the stability of percentages and the use of refined subcategories in analysis. Also, the rarity of systematic data-gathering efforts which use the gang as a unit poses problems for comparability. What is important here, however, is that the one type of unit is strong where the other is weak, so that when both are brought to bear on the same analytic problem it is possible for strengths and weaknesses to balance each other and correct for the respective inadequacies. Moreover, if the general thrust of findings based on both types of unit is in the same direction, one’s confidence in the validity of both is increased.

Similarly, the “court case,” used in the previous analysis as the measure of law-violating behavior, is widely available for thousands of jurisdictions, facilitating the purposes of large-scale analysis, comparability, and generalizability. An important weakness of this measure, as already mentioned, is that those criminal acts which eventuate in court action represent some unknown proportion of an unknown population of potentially arrestable acts, admitting the possibility that data derived from a process whereby some cases and not others are selected for action through various forms of police and judicial discretion may fail to reflect accurately the “true” distribution of crime.
The “illegal involvement,” the measure used in the present analysis, is derived from information as to all law-violating acts observed by or reliably reported to field workers in daily contact with gang members. Since such acts were recorded whether or not official action was taken, this measure is largely free of the possibly biasing influences of official procedures. \footnote{Reference to “illegal involvement;” definitions, etc. (e.g., Violent Crimes paper, Theft, Assault chapters)} On the other hand, while clearly closer to the “true” volume of criminal behavior than “official” measures, it can scarcely be considered as exhaustive, and must, along with all other known measures of criminality, be seen as a selection from a theoretically exhaustive universe of violative acts, with principles of selection not systematically known. However, as stated above, a significant degree of correspondence between findings derived from measures whose bases of selectivity are different would appear to indicate that the differing bases of selectivity tend to balance each other, or that the several measures somehow reflect a similar “reality” despite such selectivity.

The “subcultural conjunction” theory presented in later chapters relates variations in the form and frequency of criminal behavior primarily to four “status characteristics”—sex, age, social status, and locality; a fifth characteristic, race, also figures in the analysis. The demographics analyses already presented have attended, in some form, variation in age (juvenile, youth), social status (lower class I, II, III, middle class), and race (white, black). Variations in locality (urban, suburban, rural) were not systematically attended, with all analyzed localities (Midcity, Port City, Port City higher status) being urban. The present analysis also examines variation by age, social status, and race. \footnote{Seven gangs thus characterized, Table 1.4. Present data gives basis of age and social-status assignments.} It includes, in addition, both sexes, since there were sufficient illegal involvements by females to make such analysis feasible. As before, locality variation is not involved, with all gangs being located within a single urban district. The primary question of the present section is: what were the age and social status characteristics of the seven intensive-study
gangs, and how were these, along with their sex and racial status, related to involvement in illegal behavior?

**Age-status of Gang Members**

Of the four major status characteristics of the present analysis, two are “discrete” and “given” by inspection (sex, race), and two are “continuous” and must be derived through computation (age, social status). In the latter instance, as in the case of any continuous variable, any assignment to discrete categories must involve analytic conventions which are to some degree arbitrary. Several considerations make it advisable in the present analysis to treat both age and social status as simple dichotomies. One is that the number of individuals under consideration is sufficiently small that more refined categories become analytically unfeasible. A second is that the analysis is based primarily (although not exclusively) on information obtained during the “intensive observation” period—that period when field workers were in direct contact with the gangs. As in the earlier analysis of community characteristics, this period is here treated as a “static” phase; intra-phase trends and variations are not systematically considered. For these and other reasons, age and social status in the present analysis are represented only by two categories apiece.

The two age categories are “older and “younger;” the basis for assignment to these categories is presented in Table 1.4. The four “older” gangs, Senior Outlaws, Senior Outlaws, and how were these, along with their sex and racial status, related to involvement in illegal behavior?
Senior Bandits, Kings, and Queens, were contacted when the average gang member was between 16 and 16.5 years old, with contact terminating when the average member was between 18 and 19. The three “younger” gangs—Junior Bandits, Junior Outlaws, and Molls were contacted when the average gang member was between 13.5 and 15.5 years old, with contact terminating when he or she was between 16 and 17.5. Thus, on a very rough basis, average age of the younger gangs during the observation period was from about 14.5 to 16.5 years, and of the older from about 16.5 to 18.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Gang</th>
<th>Average Age Start of Period</th>
<th>Average Age End of Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description of “average age” method. Cite fact that range of variation around mean also determined, presented in individual accounts, not systematically in table.
Social Status of Gang Members

Table 2.4 designates three of the seven intensive study gangs as of “lower” status within the lower class, and four as “higher.” What is the basis of these designations, and how do they relate to the delineation of social status levels for census tracts presented in Chapter 1? Since the present unit of analysis, the gang, is composed of individuals to whom various characteristics may be attributed directly, it would appear possible to ascertain social-status directly—that is, to assign to each gang member a score or scores derived from one or more status-relevant characteristics, and then to characterize the gang as a whole on the basis of the collective scores of its members. An effort to follow such a procedure was made, but results were unsatisfactory. The procedure used here for designating the social status of gangs is, therefore, very similar to that used previously.

This procedure shares three major characteristics with the method used in connection with census tracts. It utilizes multiple rather than single assignment criteria; it is based on educational and occupational measures; distinctions are based on the percentage of persons falling into one of two major categories. While the “direct assignment” method can have considerable value for certain purposes, the use of a method which is analytically parallel to that used for mass data has important advantages in the present instance—primarily those of comparability and the articulation of different bodies of data. Once the appropriate translations between the two types of unit are made, characteristics of the gang and the census tract can be compared directly, thus facilitating the task of relating gang characteristics to those of the population at large as well as to many relevant subpopulations.

Three criteria are used to designate the social status of the gangs: occupational status of fathers, occupational status of male gang members, and educational criteria, making a total of five measures. These criteria differ from those used for census tracts primarily in that the use of fathers’ occupation provides an important element of time-depth, and that two rather than one measure of
occupational position are employed. Both these advantages are made possible by the fact that the population under consideration consists of specific known individuals. Status assignment is thus better “controlled” and based on more refined criteria. Assignment categories and numerical data are shown in Table 2.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gang</th>
<th>Father's Occupational Status</th>
<th>Gang Member's Occupational Status</th>
<th>Gang Member's Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>% lower manual</td>
<td>% low soc-ec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Status Junior Bandits (LC II)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Lower Status</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Status Senior Outlaws (LC II-I)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Higher Status</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total All Gangs</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. N = number of persons with lower occupational status (see text)
b. US Census occupational categories 6 thru 10
c. Score below 20, Duncan Socio-Economic Index
e. Females omitted, see text

The use of multiple criteria for ascertaining social status, as discussed earlier, has both strengths and weaknesses. As the number of assignment criteria increases, the likelihood of adequate status placement improves, but at the expense of increased methodological difficulties—particularly with respect to discordance among criteria. In the present instance the use of measures involving two generations is virtually necessary, due to the relatively young age of gang members.

151 Recall, as discussed in Chapter 1, that even most “refined” analysis based on quantifiable characteristics still only represents “index to” or “locator of” social status categories conceptually based on “style of life” rather than “numerical interval” criteria.
Gang members’ occupations shown in Table 2.4 are those of young adults (average age 25) whose full occupational potential has not yet been achieved. Fathers’ occupations, on the other hand, involving for the most part men between the ages of 40 and 50, do in all probability approximate the maximum occupational achievement. The social status position of gang members during the intensive-study period is thus seen to represent some combination of the “achieved” status of their parents and their own status potential. The fact that placements which combine the circumstances of two generations are largely concordant strengthens confidence in the adequacy of the assignments; discrepancies provide valuable information with respect to social mobility.

Each of the three assignment criteria requires a few methodological comments. There are two measures of “fathers’ occupation:” the percentage of persons in “low manual” occupations, and the percentage with “low” scores in the Duncan Socioeconomic Index of Occupations. The “low-manual” occupations are the four lower non-agricultural occupational categories of the U.S. Census, namely operatives, private household workers, service workers, and laborers.152 These are the same categories used in the delineation of social status levels for census tracts, except that the “manual” classification used in that analysis includes one additional category, “craftsmen and foremen.”153

Occupations with “low” scores in the Duncan Socioeconomic Index of Occupations are those with scores of less than 20. The Duncan Index is a method for assigning scores from 1 to 100 to a wide range of occupational categories, based on

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152 The U.S. census system of occupational categorization is described and discussed earlier in this text. The “low manual” occupations are the first four in Table 5.1. The term “low manual” is used to refer to these categories in Blau, P.M. and Duncan, O.D. The American Occupational Structure, John Wiley, N.Y. 1967.

153 No theoretical reason for this; as in case of census tract analysis, selection made empirically on basis of which “cutting point” discriminated most sensitively among data at hand. Developed that bottom 5 discriminated best for census tract data and bottom 4 for gang data. Probably is reason for, related to sensitive position of foreman-craftsman category with respect to lower class I-middle class III boundary, but not worked out here.
those of the U.S. Census. The availability of 100 occupational distinctions provides the basis of a considerably more refined system of status-placement than is possible on the basis of four distinctions. Such additional refinement is of particular importance when one is dealing with intra- rather than inter-class distinctions. One reason for using this system is that it accommodates in some degree a major defect of the census classifications—namely, that the broad categories such as “sales workers” include positions whose status implications vary widely. Given the capacity of the Duncan system to discriminate so much more finely, it is all the more significant that results obtained from the two measures are so similar.

The term “father” as it appears in the phrase “fathers’ occupations” is not strictly accurate. The 205 gang members originated in 186 household units; information as to the occupational circumstances of adult household members was obtained for 165, or about 90% of all units. Of these, occupational information for a male acting in the “father” role (father, stepfather) was obtained for 152 units, or 92%. In the remaining 13 instances occupational assignments were made on the

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154 This scale is described in Chapters 6 and 7 of Reiss, A, et. Al, Occupations and social Status, Free Press, 1961. The index itself, which assigns scores to (450) occupational titles, is presented as Appendix B, pp. 263-275. “Status” in this system is based largely on the computed “prestige” scores of the various occupational categories. The assignment of status scores to occupations along a unidimensional scale involves some extremely complex conceptual and methodological problems, as does the whole field of the relationship between social position and occupational status—problems which cannot be treated here, but which are discussed in some detail elsewhere. Two such discussions are contained in Reiss 1961, op. cit., and Blau and Duncan 1967 op. cit. The application of the Duncan Index in a research context similar to the present one is discussed in Bernard, Sydney E., “The Economic and Social Adjustment of Low-Income Female Headed Families” Heller School Advanced Studies in Social Welfare, Brandeis University 1964, pp. 197-200. Since the Duncan occupational ratings are based primarily, although not entirely, on occupations of adult males, the present use thereof involves problems with respect to occupations of younger persons and females.

155 Several examples of this. The census category “sales workers” includes both “huckster” and “stock and bond salesman.” The Duncan Index assigns a score of 8 to the former and 73 to the latter. The category “service workers” includes both “bootblack” and “government detective,” scored by Duncan as 8 and 40, respectively.

156 The one exception is found in the case of occupations of higher-status gang members. The failure to discriminate well in this instance is a function of the cutting point used. As in the case of the “low-manual” cutting point just discussed, the “under 20” level was chosen because it proved empirically to discriminate most sensitively among occupations in the lower class II-III zone—where the present analysis requires such sensitivity. As one moves up in the occupational scale this cutting point loses its power to discriminate. If it were desirable to discriminate, say, between lower class I and middle class III, a different and higher cutting point would be used.
basis of a person other than a male acting in the role of mate to the mother. In most cases these were uncles or grandfathers. In a few instances the occupation of the mother herself was used, despite differences between males and females in the status connotations of occupations.

Another methodological problem involves multiple occupations. As will be discussed in later Chapters (Work, Theft), many lower status adults work at several different jobs and kinds of jobs, simultaneously or sequentially. In some instances information as to five or six different jobs was available for a single individual. This posed no problem for jobs which fell into the same “low-manual” category, as most did. In the few instances where jobs fell into two categories, assignments were made on the basis of which kind of job was most common. In deriving Duncan scores in the case of multiple jobs, scores of all known positions were averaged.

Measures of gang members’ occupations were derived in the same fashion as those of their fathers. It should be repeated that occupations in this instance are those of men twenty years younger whose full occupational potential had not yet been realized. Occupational data for females is not included for several reasons. Since many of the girls were married and not working, numbers were too small to provide reliable percentages. In addition, the status implications of certain female occupations can be quite different from those of male occupations in formally similar categories. For example, many lower class females work at jobs such as “ten-cent-store clerk,” which are classified as “clerical”—a white-collar category. For this and other reasons the Duncan scale is based on male occupations only, so that the females could not have been categorized on the basis of this measure. In the case of the Queens, the absence of occupational categorizations is compensated to some degree by the fact that, as the “sister” group of the Kings, they could be expected to fall into a similar status category. There was, in addition, enough occupational data available for the Queens to provide the basis of certain conclusions, to be presented

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157 Following common practice, persons serving in the armed forces were excluded from the occupational analysis. In some cases this accounts for discrepancies between the number of persons for whom occupational and educational date were available.
shortly. As for the Molls, assignment of status must rest on the three measures of Table 2.4; their educational standing makes it highly probable that their own occupational involvement, had they been males, would fall within the “lower status” range.

The measure of educational status, failure to complete high school, is self-explanatory. Similar information for gang members’ parents would have been extremely useful, but could not be obtained readily or reliably by the methods used here. The “failure to complete high school” measure in Table 2.5 differs from that used in the census tract analysis in that the latter applies only to persons 25 and older. Since the percentage of persons completing high school has been rising steadily during the past decade, generational differences must be kept in mind when comparing percentages based on the present age group with those for older persons.

What is the social status of each of the seven intensive-study gangs on the basis of these assignment criteria? Table 2.4 places the gangs into two categories; “lower status” (Senior and Junior Bandits, Molls), and “higher status” (Senior and Junior Outlaws, Kings, Queens). The term “lower status” as used here is analogous to “lower class III” as previously used, but the “higher status” category does not incorporate the distinction previously made between a middle and higher level within the lower class, for reasons to be discussed. For the gangs in the “lower status” category, 80% of the fathers and 75% of the sons pursued low-manual occupations, and 83% of the gang members failed to complete high school. For the “higher status” gangs, 60% of the fathers and 50% of the sons were employed in low-manual occupations, and one-quarter of the gang members failed to complete high school. The proportion of males in low manual occupation ranged from 68% to 87% in the lower status gangs and from 50% to 68% in the higher. The proportion of high school failures ranged from 59% to 90% in the lower-status gangs and 21% to 43% in the higher. Each of the seven gangs is thus assigned, with little ambiguity, to one
of two status categories which show little overlap, despite a fair degree of variation both within gangs and within categories.

For the lower status gangs the degree of agreement between the two occupational measures, low-manual and Duncan, is quite good. For fathers, the difference between percentages is less than two points, and for sons about five points. For individual gangs percentages fall within ten percentage points of one another in four out of five cases. Comparing the two indexes for individual gangs shows that the Senior Bandits, fathers and sons, held jobs of somewhat lower status within the broader categories than did the Junior Bandits, fathers and sons. For the higher status fathers, differences between the two indexes on an all-gang basis are rather low (4.4%), but an examination of individual cases shows that the Negro fathers held substantially higher positions within the broader categories than did their white counterparts. This is particularly true for the King fathers, who rank lowest of the higher status fathers on the basis of the low-manual index (68% compared to 54% for Junior Outlaw fathers) but highest on the basis of the Duncan prestige scores, (48% below Duncan 20 compared to 62% for Senior Outlaw fathers).

The largest discrepancy between the low-manual and Duncan indexes appears in the case of the higher status gang members, and raises the important issue of intergenerational mobility. Differences between fathers and sons in social and/or occupational status are of the most direct relevance to the issue of lower class social status. Conceptual fashions with respect to this issue are changeable. One popular concept sees “upward social mobility” almost as an inherent property of the American social system, and assumes that the “normal” or expectable progression is from lower to higher status. Another concept, related to the “cycle of poverty” tradition, talks of a “permanent underclass,” and stresses the extent to which upbringing in a lower class cultural milieu consigns one to the same social status level as one’s parents. Present data accord with neither of these concepts.

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158 Classic problem in sociology, many studies of. Prob. best of more recent works Otis Dudley Duncan, references.

159 Ref. Leibow, Tally’s Corner.
Significant differences in intergenerational mobility appear between higher and lower status gangs, and between whites and blacks. For the three lower status gangs, all white, the degree of upward occupational movement, even taking age differences into account, is rather small. About 75% of the gang members worked in low-manual jobs compared to about 80% of the fathers (if one assumes that the Molls’ occupational status, if males, would be commensurate with their educational status, the difference would be even less). The Junior Bandits achieved a somewhat higher occupational status than their fathers (fathers, 82% low-manual; sons 68%), but the occupations of the Senior Bandits were somewhat lower than theirs (fathers, 74% low-manual, sons 83%). The chances that the Junior Bandits might move into a higher status level seemed good, but the Senior Bandits and Molls would appear to be well entrenched in a lower-class III way of life.

The higher status gangs show, a considerably greater degree of upward occupational mobility. Intergenerational differences appear most clearly on the basis of the Duncan scores; only 25% of sons’ occupations fall below Duncan 20, compared to 55% for the fathers. Percentages for the higher status gang members, black and white, fall into a substantially lower range than any other set of occupational figures—indicating that their occupational status as young adults had risen beyond the level where the “under 20” cutting point was able to discriminate intra-lower class status levels with any degree of sensitivity. This suggests in turn that the social status position of some significant proportion had risen above the lower class II level. While most of the fathers’ and many of the sons’ occupations were consistent with lower class II status, the “higher status” category must be regarded as including persons at the lower class I level as well.

On the basis of the “low-manual” criterion, the greatest degree of upward occupational mobility is shown by the male Negro Kings; 50% were employed in low-manual jobs, compared to 68% for their fathers. The Junior Outlaws, by contrast, showed little movement, with the sons differing from their fathers by less than two percentage points. The educational experience of the black gangs, both
male and female, also shows them to have been the most upwardly mobile; only 22% failed to complete high school, compared to a figure of 46% for the higher status whites and 62% for all whites.

The educational and occupational experience of the Queens is relevant in this connection. The Queens’ high-school completion rate of 80% was the highest of all gangs. Occupational information available for 24 of the girls shows that their occupational status directly reflected their educational background; only 12% held jobs in the “low manual” category—a category which contains numerous positions traditionally held by low-status Negro women, such as domestic day-work and hospital kitchen work. The fact that this figure is lower than that of any of the male gangs (Kings, Senior Outlaws, 50% low-manual) is due in part, as mentioned, to differences between male and female occupational categories; it should also be noted that the occupational status of the Queens’ fathers, on the basis of the Duncan scores, was relatively high. Even so, it is clear that the Queens’ upward mobility was substantial. It is significant also to note that while a number of Queens held very “good” white collar jobs such as real-estate broker, keypunch operator, and floor manager for a major electronics manufacturer, at least five of the girls, including white collar workers, supplemented their incomes by part-time work as prostitutes. The case of the wealthiest Queen, a full-time prostitute, will be discussed in a later chapter.

The social mobility experience of Negro gang members in Midcity furnishes some evidence with respect to the influence of race prejudice on such mobility. A comparison of the young adult occupational status of the Queens with that of the Kings provides one of the few instances in the present study where evidence for differential opportunity connected with race prejudice seems clear. With similar high-school completion rates (Kings 24%, Queens 21%), the proportion of males (Kings 50%, Queens 88%) appears to indicate differential access by sex to positions in the lower-class I-middle-class III range, and accords with other evidence in the study which indicates a “bimodal” distribution of male Negro jobs—one group in the
low-manual category, another in the white collar category, but relatively few in between. It is likely that a reluctance to admit qualified Negro males to jobs at the level of craftsman, foreman, and the like, contributed to this situation in the 1950’s and ‘60’s.

If, however, one side of the coin shows that jobs at the lower class I level were less accessible to black males than white, the other side of the same coin shows that they were more accessible to black females than males. This would call for some qualification, at the least, of the notion that the restriction of opportunity on the basis of race operated in a uniform manner for both sexes. Even more important in this connection is the data presented here which shows that the greatest degree of occupational mobility was shown by the blacks rather than the whites. The Kings produced more college graduates and the Queens more high school graduates than any of the white gangs, and their adult occupations reflected their educational background. The contrast between Queens and Molls is particularly striking, with the same proportion of Queens completing high school (80%) as the proportion of Molls who failed.

Whatever the influence of race prejudice in Midcity in the 1950’s and ‘60’s—an influence of unquestionable importance—the evidence of Table 2.4 indicates with little ambiguity that the factor most closely associated with educational and occupational advancement was the occupation of one’s father rather than the color of one’s skin. Explanations based on race prejudice provide very little help in explaining why the white Senior Bandits showed a 10% drop in occupational status compared to their fathers while the black Kings, whose fathers were themselves higher in status than those of the Senior Bandits, showed an 18% rise over theirs. In this instance, as in many others in this study, influences associated with social status appeared far weightier than those associated with race.\textsuperscript{160} To what degree is it possible to generalize the method used here for categorizing gangs according to social status, and for providing a statistical basis for extending present conclusions

\textsuperscript{160} Ref. to similar findings, national sample, Schiller Study, 1969.
to other populations? One way of answering this question is to examine the degree of comparability between the method used here for small groups to that used earlier for mass data. Chart 2.4 presents the defining limits of the several social status levels as developed for the gangs in a manner analogous to that presented for census tract data. Allowing for minor differences in definitions, results are closely comparable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 2.4</th>
<th>Defining Criteria of Social Status Levels</th>
<th>Gang as Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent fathers in low-manual occupations.</td>
<td>Percent gang members in low-manual occupations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Status</td>
<td>70% or more</td>
<td>70% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lower Class III)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Status</td>
<td>50-70%</td>
<td>50-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lower Class I-II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The occupational criterion for lower class III used in Table 2.4 (census tract as unit) shows that 80% or more census tract males are employed in manual occupations; in Chart 2.4 (gang as unit), 70% or more are in low-manual occupations. The defining limits for lower class I-II in Table 2.4 are 60-80%; in Chart 2.4, 50-70%. The 10% difference in both cases is consistent with the fact that the “manual” category includes one more subcategory (craftsmen) than the “low-manual.” It should be noted that the limits delineated for the gangs include the occupational positions of both fathers and sons.
The limits for the educational criteria reflect generational differences already mentioned; definitions in Table 2.4 apply only to persons 25 years of age or older; in Chart 2.4, for the most part, to persons 25 or under. In Table 2.4, the educational criterion for lower class III is that 70% or more persons have failed to complete high school; in Chart 2.4, 55% or more. For lower class I-II, the Chart 2.4 definition is 50-70% high-school failure; in Chart 2.4, 35-50%. The gang figures are sufficiently lower than the census tract figures as to suggest that the high-school completion rate might be losing its capacity to discriminate differences within the lower class as fewer persons in the general population fail to complete high school. Considering the degree of concordance of the two methods, then, it would appear, despite minor differences in cutting points and definitions, that the method for defining social status levels for census tracts and that used for gangs delineate populations which are sufficiently similar as to provide a relatively firm basis for assuming that major subcultural characteristics of the smaller units also obtain for the larger.

A final point with respect to the assignment of social status concerns the degree of concordance among the several indexes. As mentioned earlier, the larger the number of measures one uses to discriminate social status, the greater the likelihood of low correspondence among measures. In addition, the use of data based on two generations increases the likelihood of discordance, in that possible shifts over time in occupational prestige and the educational experience of the general population are conducive to changes in the social status connotations of the several indexes. The existence of inter-generational mobility also enhances the likelihood of discordance.

A comparison of Table 2.4 and Chart 2.4 shows that the degree of concordance among the several indexes is quite good. The five separate indexes produce a total of 19 cell values for the seven gangs. Of these, only three fall outside the limits delineated in Chart II. The Junior Bandits fit the criteria with respect to their fathers’ occupational status and their own educational status, but their own “low-manual” figure of 68% falls just below the 70% cutting-point of Chart 2.4. The
educational level of both the Kings and Queens is considerably higher than the indicated limit for lower class status. In the face of the considerations just noted, however, the degree of concordance among indexes is unexpectedly high. Even more impressive is the fact that the two series which are conceptually the most independent (different people, different measures), show the closest correspondence. The ranking of paternal occupational status on the basis of the Duncan scores almost exactly “predicts” the ranking of high-school completion; the rank correlation of the two series is +.93. Desirable refinements in the present assignment system would require a series of experimental applications to other populations, but the method as developed is quite effective for present purposes of differentiating the social status of gangs.

Illegal Involvements by Gang Members

The measure of criminal behavior used in the present analysis is “illegal involvement.” This unit, as mentioned earlier, was derived primarily from direct field observation, and represents each instance in which a gang member was observed, or reliably reported, to have been involved in an incident wherein specific legal statutes were violated.\(^\text{161}\) In important respects this measure is the most “exhaustive” measure of legally-violative behavior used in this study. Actors are both male and female, and events are recorded whether or not official action was taken. As noted elsewhere,\(^\text{162}\) the ratio of illegal involvements to officially recorded offenses was something on the order of eight to one. Since the measure is based on field records, it is available only for the intensive-observation period, and cannot be

\(^{161}\) Relevant definitions as published in Miller, W. “Violent Crimes in City Gangs,” Annals, Vol. 364, March 1966 are as follows: “Incidents: An illegal incident is a behavioral event or sequence of events adjudged by a coder to provide a sound basis for arrest if known to authorities. Information as to most incidents was obtained from field records. In the case of (certain kinds of incidents, such as intra-gang fights), this definition ruled out a fair number of moderately to fairly serious instances…which involved members of the same gang or occurred under circumstances deemed unlikely to produce arrest even if known. Involvements: Incidents multiplied by number of participants. For example, three boys “mug” a victim; one incident, three involvements).

\(^{162}\) Ref. to figures.
used directly in analyses involving different or more extended time spans. Statistics presented at this point, it should be noted, do not differentiate among different types of offenses; later chapters will present separate analysis of illegal involvement in theft, assault, drinking, and so on.

Table 3.4 shows that during a total observation period of 175 months, an average of two years per gang, the 205 gang members were known to have been involved in 1,122 instances of illegal activity—producing a rate of 31.4 involvements for each ten gang members during each ten month period. Rates range from a figure of 60 for the highest ranking Junior Bandits to a low of 6.8 for the lowest ranking Queens. Differentiation of rates according to the status characteristics of age, sex, and so on is presented in the next section, but even a cursory inspection of Table 3.4 reveals a very good relationship between illegal involvement and social status. The three gangs which rank highest are of lower social status, and no higher status gang ranks above those of lower status.

163 Judgment as to the “absolute” level of criminality indicated by these figures depends on what they are compared to. On the basis of the totals, the fact that 200 adolescents accounted for 1,000 instances of legality over a 2 year period appears to indicate a fairly high level of criminality. On the basis of the rates, however, the fact that all gang members accounted for 3 violations per month, with each individual showing a rate of .3 per month, appears to indicate that criminal involvement was relatively infrequent compared, say, to the frequency of involvement in eating or group conversations. This issue is dealt with further in later sections. From the point of view of research design, of course, it is clear that a population of over 1,000 units provides a good basis for analysis.
Table 3.4

Seven Intensive Study Gangs: Illegal Involvements
Ranked by Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gang</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
<th>Number of Months Observation</th>
<th>Number of Involvements All Offenses</th>
<th>Rate of Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1122</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. involvements per 10 persons per 10 months

Illegal Involvement and Gang Characteristics

The delineation of two subcategories apiece for each of the four status characteristics presently under consideration and the availability of a measure of illegality makes it possible to return to the question posed at the members and their involvement in illegal activity. Table 4.4 shows rates of illegal involvement by social status and age, sex, and race, respectively, and also the degree of rate differentiation among the major status characteristics.
Table 4.4
Seven Intensive Study Gangs: Status Characteristics and Illegal Involvement

(Not Legible) = 205
Social Status, Sex, Age, Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>Older</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>Older</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lower = Higher x 4.2
Male = Female x 2.9
Younger = Older x 2.1
Lower Status Male = Higher Status Female x 8.7

Of the four status characteristics, social status shows the best capacity to discriminate. The rate for lower status gangs is over four times that of the higher status. The next best discriminator is sex, with male rates about three times female. Social status and sex in combination produce the highest degree of discrimination in the table, with the rate for lower status males (59.0) almost nine times the rate for higher status females (6.8). Age discriminates by a factor of two, with younger gangs showing about twice the rate of the older. Since these same characteristics have figured in earlier conclusions and will also figure in later ones, it will be useful to compare briefly present conclusions with those presented elsewhere for each characteristic.

According to present data, rates of illegal involvement for gang members between the ages of 14.5 and 16.5 were twice as high as rates for those between 16.5 and 18.5. Chapter Three showed court rates for Midcity males between 17 and 20 to
be substantially higher than those for males between 7 and 16. These differences are due in part to differences in sex composition and the age-spans under consideration, but it should be reiterated that age is a “continuous” variable, and is analyzed far more adequately on the basis of year-by-year treatment than on the basis of dichotomous categories. This type of analysis is undertaken several times in future sections—particularly in connection with assaultive behavior, theft, and the general patterning of court-handled crime.

Each of these analyses shows a regular tendency for involvement in crime to “peak” at certain ages—rising incrementally prior to the peaks and falling incrementally subsequent thereto. While the particular ages at which peaking appears varies according to the type of offense under consideration and the type of measure employed, the peaking tendency itself occurs consistently, showing a strong association between age passage and the frequency of illegal involvement. In the present instance, the 16.5 year cutting-point which serves to distinguish older from younger gangs probably falls somewhat later than a major all-offense peak for this particular measure, so that the averaged rate of several near-peak years for the younger gangs runs about twice that of older gangs moving away from that peak.

Present data with respect to race are inconclusive, due to the absence in these computations of Negro gangs in the “low status” category, and no direct comparisons of black and white rates are presented here. Chapter One showed poor statistical associations between juvenile court rates and the proportions of Negroes in Midcity neighborhoods, but present data which show white rates of illegal involvement to be substantially higher than those of blacks can be attributed primarily to the influence of social status. Since higher status gangs showed markedly lower rates than those of lower status, and since all black gang members were of higher status, the influence of class status was obviously the important factor. Future analyses, which utilize a population of fourteen male gangs and which do include a “low-status Negro” category, provide a basis for ascertaining
more accurately the relative influence of social status and race on gang-member crime.

Rates of illegal involvement for male groups are approximately three times those of female groups. This is a substantial but not striking degree of differentiation. Moreover, the rate of illegal involvement for the Molls as shown in Table 3.4 is higher than that of any of the higher-status male gangs, suggesting that the influence of social status differentiation might be superior to that of sex differentiation. Later data show that this is not the case, and differences are found between males and females on the order of ten or more times. The major reason for the relatively high rates shown here by the female Molls is the absence of offense-differentiation in the present measure. A very substantial proportion of the Molls' illegal involvements consisted of acts of truancy—a practice engaged in quite frequently by several Molls as a prelude to leaving school altogether. Truancy is a special sort of offense in that it is illegal only at particular ages; at age 16 the heavily truant Molls dropped out of school, thus automatically terminating the illegality of their absences therefrom. This does not mean, of course, that truancy is only casually related to lower social status or is not a significant offense; if, however, it is excluded from consideration, the Molls' rate drops below that of the Junior and Senior Outlaws, but not that of the Kings. Later analyses, which distinguish various forms of offense, make it possible to base rate calculations on the more "serious" forms of crime such as theft and assault; in these calculations the predominance of males over females is consistent and marked.

The strong relationship shown here between social status and illegal involvement parallels the findings of the demographic analysis presented earlier. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, conclusions based on the demographic data are subject to question with respect to characteristics of both the independent and dependent variables. Good statistical association between demographic measures of social status and court rates does not establish conclusively that census-tract residents of low social status are the same persons as those who appear
in court; the consistently higher court rates shown by lower status population could conceivably be explained on the grounds that lower status persons are more likely to be brought to court than higher status persons even when similar levels of crime are involved.\footnote{Ref. to ASR article on demog. Correlates cited in Chapter Three}

Present findings then enormously strengthen the methodological basis for posting a direct link between lower social status and higher criminal involvement. Present measures in themselves are not without defects, but they are strong where the previous measures are weak. All measures, both of social status and criminal involvement, apply to the same population of known persons. The population of “illegal involvements” which serves as the present measure of criminality is largely free from the influence of official procedures since 85% of all recorded offenses involved no official action. The general concordance between conclusions drawn from two substantially different bodies of data greatly strengthens the plausibility of both.

Social status differentiated well within each of the sex, age, and race categories. Lower status gangs showed higher rates in every instance. For males, lower status rates were 3.2 times as high; for females, 4.1; for younger gangs, 2.1; for older, 5.6; for white, 3.3. Moreover, at the lower class III level, the degree of upward social mobility showed little apparent relationship to the frequency of illegal involvement; the Junior Bandits, who were the most upwardly mobile of the lower status gangs, were also the most heavily involved in illegal activity.

Conclusions of the present analysis are derived from a small number of cases relative to those of the mass data. They are, however, based on more direct and intensive methods of data collection, utilize more refined categories, and are developed from a better controlled analytic design. They support with little ambiguity the proposition that criminal involvement by members of city gangs varies systematically according to status characteristics such as age, sex, and social status. Evidence with respect to social status is particularly impressive. The
proposition that urban adolescents of lower social status customarily engage in more illegal behavior than do those of higher status, both where official action is taken and where it is not—a proposition which emerged as the likely conclusion of the demographic analysis—must be seen as sufficiently well affirmed and strengthened by the present analysis as to be considered an established conclusion.
The Corner Gangs of Midcity

We ain’t got no name for our gang down there on the corner because there’s all different cliques of kids there…like there’s Dennis and his boys, and Hobo and his boys, and Digger and his boys. And anyway, we never really wanted a name because, well, gang names…and all that…that just wasn’t around anymore, ya know? Do ya think that’s the reason, Dennis?

Well, the reason I think why we ain’t got no name is since I been hanging out there we ain’t had no leader. Other kids got a leader of the gang, like up in Cornerville they always got one kid who’s the big boss; if he wantsa go someplace, the whole ganga them goes. So far we ain’t did that, and I don’t think we ever will....

Senior Bandits

Ya know—if you’d been with them kids as long as we have, if ya been hanging with em every night, ya wanna do the same things as they do. Ya don’t wanna be an outcast or anything…because ya hang with em! Wouldn’t you do that too, if you were in our shoes?

Moll to Field Worker

For most Americans, the term “gang” evokes strong associations. The gang, viewed as one type of associational unit, is generally seen as something bad—incorporating, in varying degrees, elements of violence, of illegality, of danger, of social threat. The term “gangster”—taking many of its connotations from Hollywood
movies about bloody Chicago mobs of the thirties, is familiar the world over, and appears in many foreign languages. The term “juvenile gang” similarly evokes images of senseless violence, heartless cruelty, and a kind of person beyond the world of, and beyond the understanding of, ordinary human beings.

During the decade of the 1950’s a good deal of public attention was focused on gangs of adolescents in the major cities of the United States. The degree to which the youth gang became recognized as a major national phenomenon was attested by the fact that the youth gangs of New York City became the subject of a successful musical comedy and motion picture—“The West Side Story.” This was, however, only the best known manifestation of a developed fictional tradition. In the period following World War II, a standardized image of the urban youth gang—violent, sadistic, sexually uninhibited—became a staple commodity in many hundreds of fictional products—paperbacks, movies, television dramas. The substance of this image, which rapidly became conventionalized within the subculture of professional writers, derived far more from considerations of consumer satisfaction than from accurate knowledge of the actual conditions of gang life in American cities.165

This development—the packaging and merchandising by the mass media of an image of the gang—helps to explain a phenomenon which was puzzling to many—the apparent disappearance of the street gang from the American scene.166 An observer who had become accustomed, during the 1950’s, to newspaper accounts of New York’s struggles to contain its fighting gangs or magazine features on the

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165 One example among thousands of the general tenor of this tradition appears in the introduction to a collection of short stories about gangs published between 1953 and 1957. “These are the stories behind today’s terrifying headlines—about a strange new frightening cult that has grown up in our midst. Every writer whose work is included in this book tells the truth. These kids are tough. Here are knife-carrying killers, and thirteen-year-old street walkers who could give the most hardened call-girl lessons. These kids pride themselves on their “ethics:” never go chicken, even if it means knifing your own friend in the back. Never rat on a guy who wears your gang colors, unless he rats on you first. Old men on crutches are fair game. If a chick plays you for a sucker, blacken her eyes and walk away fast.” (Margolis, Leo. Forward to The Young Punks. Pyramid Books, 1958, New York). Although from the perspective of later years this piece of vintage writing may seem extreme, it is in fact a rather mild example of the genre.

growing gang menace might well have wondered, in the 1960's—“Where have all the street gangs gone?” The answer is quite simple—nowhere. They are still there, out on the corner. But obviously something disappeared. What was it?

The puzzle is clarified if one assumes that the highly publicized “fighting gang” of the 1950’s, represented in many writings as a new and mysterious phenomenon, was not new at all, but rather a partly-real, partly-manufactured stylistic variation of a well-established and traditional form. The male adolescent street gang in the United States is as old as the American city. In the 1940’s creative members of a small number of gangs, mostly in the New York City area, began to develop a set of stylistic modifications of certain traditional elements of street gang life. Many, but not all of these, involved those elements of gang life which reflect features of organized military units—for example, the “uniform” of the gang jacket, chain-of-command-type organizational titles (“warlord,” “president”), flamboyant gang names (“Cobras,” “Blackhawks”) standardized weaponry (switch-blade knife), relatively well-organized combat encounters with other gangs, and the like.

The earlier and more rudimentary manifestations of these developments were picked up by the mass media (particularly in New York City, whose news-gathering and publication facilities are probably the most enterprising and novelty-sensitive in the world), magnified, formalized, and represented as far more prevalent than they were. This exaggerated image was, in turn, picked up by the originating gangs, as well as other gangs, who then strove to actualize what they perceived to be an accurate representation of “modern” gang behavior. These responses were in turn picked up by the media and further amplified and disseminated in a kind of mutual-feed-back or reciprocal escalation process found in many areas of human endeavor.167 The final product of this process, the image of

167 Process called “schizogenesis” (complementary, types) by Gregory Bateson (Naven), reciprocal escalation, de-escalation, by military analysts (e.g., Herman Kahn).
the fighting gang of the 1950’s, was, at its peak development, vivid, spectacular, and terribly convincing to most outside observers.\textsuperscript{168}

Then, as inevitably happens in a world where what is most stylish today is least stylish tomorrow, the fighting gang of the 1950’s began to move out of fashion. As good Americans, gang members are just as susceptible to fashion as newspaper writers, and in due time the Marlon-Brando- West Side Story conception of the gang became passé. The mutual-feed-back process, in its de-escalation as in its escalation phase, hastened the movement. This fall from fashion was presaged as early as 1956 in Midcity gangs, one of whose members remarked— “Anyway, gang names, and all that, that just wasn’t around anymore, ya know?” Two years later another gang member said—“That kinda gang fightin’ and all...is outta style—it’s outta style...” As the Beatles succeeded Elvis Presley, the media image of the gang became less salable, and media attention to characteristics of low status populations was evinced more frequently through newly fashionable or newly revived terms such as poverty, the black poor, the ghetto, violence in the streets, the urban crisis, and the like. Removed from the spotlight of publicity and their part in the feed-back process, gangs resumed their traditional forms and practices; many gangs, particularly outside of the largest cities, had never been much affected anyway, and for those that had, most of the appurtenances of the fighting gang of the 1950’s passed with little residue. Thus, what appeared to many observers as the sudden and mysterious emergence of a new form, and its equally sudden and mysterious disappearance, was instead a manifestation of the classic process whereby a stylistic efflorescence affects a traditional form, is catapulted into public attention, and then appears to vanish as the fashion passes. But the adolescent street gangs in Midcity, and in many other low-status urban communities, long preceded the fashion, and will, so long as such communities continue to exist, long outlast it.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{168} Ref. Yablonsky, The Violent Gang. Sociologists often perceive a contemporary fad as a new form, develop complex explanations of it, only to find object of explanation gone in a few years.

\textsuperscript{169} While the amount of newspaper space allocated to gang activities was generally lower in all American cities during the 1960’s than the ’50’s, gangs continued to command periodic attention
The role of the mass media in these developments at once directs attention to the issue of data-gathering and reporting. The part played by the media in creating a highly convincing but largely inaccurate image of city gangs provides a vivid illustration of the critical influence of data-gathering methods on the picture one gets of city gangs and similar social phenomena. The issue of methodology is particularly important in dealing with phenomena such as gangs, youth crime, and low-status communities, which strongly engage human values. The more highly charged an area of inquiry, the greater the likelihood of influence by the values of the investigator and contemporary fashions in explanation. The relation of methods to findings, and of values to methods, are issues of enormous complexity, and cannot be treated in any detail in this work. It is important, however, before proceeding with a description of the gangs of Midcity, to note briefly at least three characteristics of data-gathering methods which affect the likelihood of obtaining an accurate picture of gangs and their context. These are, first, the “distance” of the analyst from the phenomenon under study; second, the duration of the overall study period, and third, the frequency of recorded observations or data-gathering efforts during the period of study.

The substance of Chapters One, Two and Three deal primarily with the broader social and historical contexts of gang life in Midcity, and is based for the most part on sources of information which stand at several removes from the events, persons, or forms of behavior under consideration. Chapters One and Three present information on community characteristics and youth crime derived primarily from numerical data collected at varying intervals by official agencies,

throughout that decade in most of the nation’s largest cities. Prominent among these were Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. The fall-off of media coverage was most marked in New York, probably because it was here that the amount of press attention during the ’50’s had been most inflated.

170 Originally planned full chapter on method; eliminated, reasons of economy, other reasons. Many methods used in this book—e.g., historical, demographic, correlational analysis, action-sentiment analysis, field-observation, participant observation, others. Practice followed of including brief discussion of relevant methodological considerations in connection with presentation of findings, where necessary for interpretation and/or clarification.
and consisting largely of counts of the number of persons in different categories. Chapter Two is based on historical accounts and documents of varying degrees of closeness to the events they describe. With the present chapter the scope of concern narrows, the point of vantage moves in, and the focus of investigation closes in for a direct and intimate examination of gangs themselves, based on intensive, frequent, extensively-reported, long-term field contact. A corps of field workers maintained almost daily contact with gang members for periods of up to three years, reporting their contacts in detail. Research analysts remained in the community for a period of approximately ten years. Most of the research period involved analysis of voluminous data collected during the “intensive contact” period, but additional data-collection on a less intensive basis continued following this period.

Data-collection methods of this kind provide a degree of depth, detail, and accuracy which cannot be achieved by other methods. Observation over an extended time period makes it possible to distinguish the temporary from the lasting—both with respect to transient age-related forms of behavior and passing fads in forms and practices of gangs. Recording events as they occur minimizes the danger of “pre-structuring” which is inherent in questionnaire methods, and permits the recording of a far greater range and variety of events than is possible to anticipate in pre-planned data-collection devices. Detailed narrative recording furnishes an order of information which is far richer than is possible where a major criterion for what data to collect is the ease with which these data can be converted into numbers. Intimate daily contact with gang members makes it possible to record

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171 Field recording began in 1954; “follow-up” interviews with most gang members were conducted in 1964. These interviews were conducted by Myra Frederickson Bennett; analysis of follow-up data by Drs. Mickey Clampit and Irene Taviss. Additional detail on field-methods, contact periods, and intensive study gangs is presented. A second follow-up focusing primarily on the post-gang criminal experience of about 100 members of six male gangs was undertaken in 1967 by Dr. Sawyer Sylvester. Results are reported in his doctor’s thesis “On the empirical verification of Sutherland’s Theory of Differential Association,” 1968.
actual practice as well as expressed sentiment, and reduces the likelihood of a whole range of distortions which inevitably attend information communicated to an unfamiliar or less familiar interviewer. The use of a corps of field workers of both sexes makes possible a combination of depth and coverage which cannot be achieved by a single worker, and compensates in some degree for idiosyncratic reporting selectivity and sex-restricted access to information.

This is not to say that field methods are intrinsically superior to demographic or historical methods. Information derived from these methods provides a degree of time depth, of general coverage, of standardization, of comparability, which field methods alone cannot possibly achieve. But it is essential to stress that contemporary examinations of youth groups and their social milieu which place primary reliance on demographic or related survey-research methods simply cannot achieve the degree of depth, accuracy, and detail necessary to sound description and explanation. It is not that demographic and survey data do not reflect the “reality” of gang or community life, but that they represent a different reality. Study of any social phenomenon can benefit by the application of differing methods and multiple perspectives, but in the case of objects of study such as gangs and low-status communities—areas which are so prone to influence by the values of the observer and selective reporting by informants, so subject to distortion by short-term or one-time data-collection periods, so susceptible to passing explanational fashions—exclusive reliance on single perspective methods can be disastrous. The perspectives and data of both demography and field research are, at the least, essential. Field research uninformed by demography risks being parochial, particularistic, and difficult to generalize; demographic data without field research risks being superficial, narrow, and subject to inaccurate or inadequate interpretation.

Midcity has been depicted, in previous chapters, as a predominantly lower class community with a relatively high rate of crime, in which both criminal behavior and a characteristic set of life conditions—low-skill occupations, low education, low-rent living, and many others—appeared as relatively stable and
persisting features of a developed way of life. How did youth gangs fit into this picture? In common with most major cities during this era, there were many such gangs in Midcity, but they were not homogeneous. They varied widely in size, in sex composition, in stability, in durability, and in the range of activities customarily pursued. With all this variation, however, one type of gang was conspicuously absent—the so-called fighting gang—organized around combat, operating as a deliberate fighting machine, and dedicated to violence.¹⁷²

In Midcity, the youth gang appeared as a prevalent and persisting form of associational unit, with particular gangs representing a broad spectrum of variation on a basic structural theme. A major common characteristic of these groups, and thus in effect a defining characteristic, was recurrent congregation. At about the age of 12, the boys and girls of Midcity began to adopt the practice of leaving their homes at certain intervals and assembling at a designated locale with others of their age. This locale was generally called “The Corner” and it often but not always was an intersection of two city streets. The name used by Midcity residents to refer to this practice was “hanging” or “hanging out,” and since literary English contains no equivalent of this term, “hanging” will be utilized in this volume without quotation marks as the technical designation for this major practice of urban lower-class adolescents.

One’s corner mates were referred to as those who “hang out with us.” Whether or not one hung out was a major basis of distinguishing between kinds of adolescents in the community. In general, the proactive of hanging out was most prevalent and lasting among lower class III males. Males and females began this practice at about the same age, but regularly recurrent collective congregation was generally abandoned by girls at about the age of 16, while for the boys it usually continued up to, and often past, age 20.

¹⁷² The absence of this type of gang in Midcity during the ’50’s raises the questions of whether, in fact, the type actually does or did exist anywhere, and if so, how common it is or was. Prior discussion supports estimate that was much less common and much less “developed,” even in New York City, than represented by the media and some scholars. See discussion of “types” in summary section.
The major form of activity engaged in during these periods of recurrent congregation was generally referred to as “just hanging.” Talk was the major staple of this occupation—calm talk, agitated talk, casual talk, serious talk, frivolous talk, intense talk, desultory talk, wise talk, foolish talk, profound talk, silly talk, banter, raillery, argument, oration, praise, derogation, mockery, admiration, scorn, anger, affection. Midcity adolescents, in common with all American adolescents, were deeply involved in the serious task of discovering and creating personal identity. An incessant exploration of this issue, couched in the language of the street corner, and taking as a resonant sounding board the sympathetic ears of those few who really understood—one’s own same-age peers, was a central preoccupation of corner life.

The frequency of hanging varied widely for different categories of youngster. Some hung out every day, some only on week-ends, some regularly, some sporadically. Some hung out only for an hour or so after the evening meal; some all evening and much of the night; some once a day, some three, four or more times a day. Some hung out only in warmer weather, others were on the corner 365 days a year—in winter, huddling against the side of darkened buildings at midnight, trying to keep warm at near-zero temperature.

The fact that the term “hanging” was used by Midcity residents to convey three somewhat different meanings provides the basis for a more general definition of this practice. As used in the phrase “he hangs out,” the term served to delineate a particular kind of person who pursued a particular kind of practice. Someone who hung out—who habitually assembled with others at a particular locale—was seen to be clearly differentiated from those (generally conceived to be higher in social status) who did not engage in this practice. The phrase “he hangs with us” conveyed an in-group out-group distinction. It meant “he is one of us”—an accepted member of a solidary association of peers. The phrase “they’re just hangin’ out” was used to refer to a particular set of activities characteristic of hanging—discussing, arguing, roughhousing, courting, playing pranks, playing cards, and so on. From these three connotations there emerges a general definition of the practice of hanging as
conceived by Midcity residents: it was a form of recurrent and localized assembly, often outdoors, of a group of peers who saw themselves as contained within a solidary associational orbit, and who were thereby differentiated from those who did not congregate—during which one pursued a range of customary activities centering on generalized interaction.\footnote{On “near-group” idea—Yablonsky issue. Were groups “true groups?” With reference to most definitions of “true” groups...solidarity, in-group sense, durability, esprit-de-corps, etc., gangs were groups in fullest sense of word.}

Hanging locales varied considerably in nature, but the “ideal” corner was characterized by certain features. It was public but not too public; active but not too active; under the close but not too close surveillance of local adults who were friendly but not too friendly. The topographical focus of the most desirable corners was a small variety store or “drug” store presided over by a local storekeeper who purveyed a variety of goods and services of value to local residents. Among these were foodstuffs—both staples and snacks, and drinks—mostly carbonated beverages. There was also a variety of useful items—cigarettes, newspapers, comic books, magazines. Services included communication (the telephone booth), music (the juke box) and recreation (the pinball machine). The variety store contained within a surprisingly small space and in unpretentious surroundings a surprisingly large portion of those fruits of modern civilization needed and desired by lower-class people—particularly lower class adolescents.

Storekeepers varied considerably in sex and temperament. Three rough categories may be distinguished; the storekeeper who was big daddy or big mama to the corner gang; the storekeeper who tolerated but was not actively involved with the hanging group; and the storekeeper who resented the presence of the youngsters but who was too frightened of retaliation to ban their presence.\footnote{The corner store as a central feature of the hanging corner and the relations between gangs and various kinds of storekeepers afford the basis of extensive treatment. Some material on individual stores and storekeepers will be included in the descriptions of intensive-contact gangs, but a more comprehensive treatment will not be included in the present volume.}
Since it comprised the major locus of “free-time” activity during much of adolescence, the ideal corner had to incorporate a rather delicately balanced set of characteristics. If it were too public the annoyance of local adults and consequent police action would result in overly-frequent disbursement. If it were too private, it would lack the excitement produced by the ebb and flow of city life—store patrons, passing automobiles, passing girls, local drunks, local policemen. If adults were too watchful, the freedom of the gang to pursue many of its customary practices was inhibited, but it was equally important that one be aware of, and stimulated by, the shocked and indignant reactions of certain local adults, especially old ladies and the parents of “nice children”—to the language, dress, and general demeanor of the corner boys and girls.

The ideal hanging corner was also fairly proximate to a public park which served a variety of purposes. During the day, in warm weather and often in cold, it provided for the boys an arena for various athletic pursuits—most commonly, baseball, football, and basketball. Male and female spectators or semi-spectators generally played cards, courted, burlesqued the athletes, and otherwise amused themselves. At night the park could serve as a base for activities which required greater privacy than was afforded by the corner—drinking, lovemaking, planning illegal ventures.

The corner occupied by a particular gang and its general environs were recognized by other neighborhood adolescents as the “territory” of that gang; these territories, however, did not comprise rigidly-defined no-trespass zones, as reported for Manhattan and other New York City communities. Gangs on a particular corner were implicitly granted certain rights of occupancy and use within their area, and, for “outside” males, the act of venturing into territory recognized as that of a particular gang entailed a not inconsiderable degree of courage, and could be construed as a challenge. But locality definitions were relatively loose, so that conflict based on the “one step over the A street line means war” situation was rare.
Although corner-gang aggregates differed in size and composition, most of them comprised a number of divisions or subunits which could be thought of as groups in their own right. The full complement of youngsters who hung out at a particular corner very seldom assembled at the same time and in the same place. The corner aggregate consisted of a set of units differentiated by age and sex. A major corner gang, for example, might comprise six units: the Senior Gents—boys 18 and over; Intermediate Gents—boys 16 to 18; Junior Gents—boys 14 to 16; Midget Gents—12 to 14; Ladies—girls 14 to 16; and Little Ladies—girls 12 to 14. Members of the several units associated primarily with one another, although some corner gang members might divide their time among more than one unit. In the present volume the term “gang” will be used to refer both to the multi-unit aggregate and the included units; which type of unit is meant will generally be understood from the context. The term “group” and “gang” will also be used interchangeably, and the term “unit” will refer both to the larger aggregate and its subdivisions. The text will differentiate between these usages where clarity requires such differentiation.

Under ordinary circumstances, relations between the several subunits of the corner group resembled those of siblings. Members of boys’ units teased and scuffled with girls in the slightly younger group. Girls taunted boys and goaded them into fights. The male units at different age levels, like brothers, both competed and cooperated with one another. One of the more important kinds of inter-unit relationship was that of younger and older groups. The younger groups looked to the older to learn “correct” standards of behavior, what was acceptable and what was not, what activities to pursue and how. Younger gang members were strongly motivated to “be like the big kids.”

The older groups, for their part, kept a watchful eye on the “little kids” to make sure they were acting in accord with the traditions of the corner. Members of older groups frequently served as athletic coaches, team managers, and general counselors and advisers for members of younger groups. They were thus in a
position to exert considerable influence with respect to a wide range of behavior—how to act toward girls, cheating and fair play, staying on the right or wrong side of the law, and many other things.

The age-graded subunits which comprised the multi-unit aggregates could themselves be seen as comprising smaller associational units. Two orders of subunit could be distinguished—the triad and the eight-person clique. Although close two-boy friendships were found in the male groups, the three-boy clique was more common. The triad was the basic building block of the larger units, but could also function quite independently in connection with certain activities—particularly illegal ventures. Some substantial portion of store and auto thefts in Midcity were executed by three-boy cliques. The next larger associational unit comprised about eight persons. This clique could consist of two triads and a pair, or some other combination. The eight-person clique was, in general, the unit which was associated with a “leader”—a member of the clique who was granted superior prestige on the basis of demonstrated skill or ability in an area of activity valued by the group—for example, basketball, stealing, fighting, verbal adroitness. The “active” hanging group of the age-graded units in most of Midcity’s major gangs generally comprised three, four, or five eight-person cliques. This meant that the size of these units was about 25, 32, or 40. It also meant that the average unit had three, four, or five “leaders” who operated according to a rather delicate balance-of-power arrangement, rather than one strong and dictatorial “gang boss.”

Midcity gangs, in general, were racially homogeneous. While there existed, in this racially mixed community, many close friendships between whites and Negroes in pre-teen play groups, as the youngsters moved into the age where hanging and mating became dominant activities, these racially-mixed groups separated out into racially homogeneous ones. Very occasionally a white boy would hang out with a Negro group, or a Negro with a white. There were no known instances of girls

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175 On analysis of “leadership” in gangs. As in case of hanging corners, storekeepers, etc., potential in Project data for extensive treatment, but not developed here. Ref. to Dumphy paper.
hanging out with groups of other races. Groups also tended toward homogeneity along ethnic and/or religious lines. Jews and Catholics hung out with others of the same religion. In the case of the Catholics, Midcity had developed a “multi-national Catholic” type of associational pattern. Although a particular Catholic gang tended to be predominantly Irish or Italian, either kind could contain a minority of the other, along with sprinklings of Poles, French, Canadians, and others of European Catholic background. The Irish-Italian mix was the most common, reflecting a similar pattern in marriages. This was not surprising, since a major purpose of the gang was to provide for each sex a reservoir of potential marriage partners.

During the decade of the 1950’s, about 50 Midcity street corners and their immediate environs served as locales of adolescent congregation. Some of these were “major” corners, in that they served as persisting and established loci for a full set of age and sex differentiated units—with each of the subdivisions assuming its own place at a particular part of the corner during times of heavy congregation. In general, occupancy of the more favored part of the corner was reserved for the older male groups. For example, in the case of a fully-developed six subdivision hanging corner, the 18 to 20 male group might occupy the spot immediately adjacent to the variety store—and thus to some degree control access to its valued resources—cigarettes, snacks, the telephone, warmth, a pretty counter girl. The 16 to 18 age group might occupy the corner directly across the street from the older boys, and the 14 to 16 year olds the catty-corner. The “little kids”—12 to 14 year old boys, might have to settle for a spot considerably removed from the corner itself—perhaps as much as a block away, where they would be constrained to hang out in the semi-darkness, quite remote from the passers-by, store trade, flow of traffic, and other divertissements of the corner.

The girls, who generally did not hang out either as long or as frequently as the boys, generally positioned themselves close to the boys’ group of the same age or slightly older. Thus, the 12 to 14 year old girls might hang out either near the 12 to 14 or the 14 to 16 year old boys. In general, the girls’ groups were permitted
somewhat greater mobility than boys', and could migrate about, either as individuals or in groups, among the various male groups. With the inexorable passage of time, the “little kids” became “little kids” and the “little kids” became “big kids.” As the oldest age-division moved out and away from the corner, their favored position was taken over by the former juniors, who now became seniors. The forces leading to the break-up of the male units at the higher end of the age scale are detailed in a later chapter on male sex and mating behavior.

Midcity contained about 15 “major” hanging corners during the 1950’s. Nine of these were occupied by white gangs, and six by Negro. For many of the white groups, both the corner and the gang name were traditional features of the neighborhood—with fathers and grandfathers having hung out on the same corner. One of the Outlaws, filled with emotion and whiskey at a farewell banquet held in honor of gang members leaving for the service, made passionate reference to this tradition in these words. “When a little Outlaw comes into the world, only this high, he knows he’s gonna be an Outlaw just like his daddy and his granddaddy; that’s the way it’s always been and that’s the way it’ll always be…”

The major Negro corners, in general, did not maintain as well-structured a division between the several age and sex-based units, although age and sex were still the major bases of association. There was somewhat freer mixing between male and female groups, and somewhat greater freedom for youngsters at different age levels to congregate at the same place. The reasons for these differences between whites and Negroes were complex, but resulted in part from local geography, wherein groups of Negroes migrated from relatively greater distances to hang out at the most fashionable corners, and in part from certain characteristics of the subculture of Midcity Negroes. Relative to the whites, the Negro adolescents tended to be considerably more “relaxed” in cross-sex interaction, less reluctant to venture beyond the confines of the local neighborhood in seeking companionship, more comfortable in groups representing a wider range of social statuses, and less likely

176 Quote by member of Black Panthers, 1968, very similar. (1968 Newspaper files, U.S. Gangs--)

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to subordinate their individualistic predilections to the demands of group conformity.

In addition to the 15 “major” hanging corners, there were about 35 “minor” corners. The size and composition of the groups hanging out on these corners showed considerable variation; in general, they comprised fewer units of smaller size. One fairly common pattern was a three unit aggregate consisting of one group of older males, one of younger males, and one of females. Other minor corners comprised three male units; the simplest pattern consisted of one male and one female group of similar ages. In those cases where there were not enough adolescents to form a full set of age-graded units, the age-spread within existing units tended to be somewhat wider. The minor corners could be viewed as truncated versions of the more developed corners. The number, age, and sex composition of hanging units on a particular corner were determined by a complex combination of factors, including the size of the adolescent “feeding” population at a given point in time, their age distribution, geographical boundaries, location and size of populations of different social status levels, rates of population in- and out-movement, and so on.\footnote{Extended analysis of the number, form, size, and composition of street corner groups in a community provides a potential for systematic analysis. Can’t expand here, but good potential for systematic study on comparative basis. Range of variables needed to “account for” variation in size, number, etc. suggested in Asmarom Legesse, “[Some East African Age-] Class Systems,” Special Paper, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, May 1961.}

Population data presented in Chapter One showed that there were, during the 1950’s, about 12,000 persons in Midcity aged 12 to 19—5,750 males and 6,250 females. How many of these engaged in the practice of hanging, and could thus be considered as affiliated with a particular corner gang? This question—what proportion of residents of lower class communities belong to corner gangs during their adolescence—is one of some importance, but one to which unfortunately little careful research has been directed. The Midcity Project did not engage in an
extensive effort to amass this type of information but sufficient work was done to permit some relatively rough estimates.\textsuperscript{178}

Three of the fifteen major hanging corners in Midcity were subject to intensive study and a fourth to fairly close observation, so that rather accurate information was obtained as to the size of these corner gangs and their various subdivisions. It was assumed, for purposes of estimation, that the remaining eleven corners contained similar numbers and proportions of males and females. Major corners studied intensively showed that an average of 145 identifiable males and 32 females were associated with the corner;\textsuperscript{179} for purposes of estimation, the “average” major corner gang in Midcity was assumed to comprise 150 males and 40 females. The average “minor” corner was estimated to comprise 55 persons—two male groups of 20 boys each and one female group of 15 girls.

These figures provide the basis for an estimate that about 3,650 out of 5,740, or 64%, of Midcity boys between the ages of 12 and 19 habitually hung out at a particular corner, and thus could be considered members of a particular corner gang. For girls, the figure is 1,125 out of 6,250, or 18%. Thus, according to these estimates—about 40% of Midcity adolescents belonged to corner gangs—approximately 65% of the boys and 20% of the girls. About 40% of the boys and 10% of the girls hung out on major corners; about 25% of the boys and 8% of the girls on minor.

The above figures would indicate that something like 35% of Midcity’s male adolescents were not associated with a particular hanging corner, and that 80% of the girls were not so associated. What can be said about those who were not known to hang out? Information necessary to an accurate answer to this question was not collected by the study, but one clue is given by comparing the number of corner gang members in Midcity as a whole with that of the Midcity neighborhoods subjected to

\textsuperscript{178} Brief outline of “street-corner census” data-gathering methods. Stress that final results, while based on much data, still contain considerable extrapolation from the known to unknown (viz., assumption that gangs at other 11 major corners were similar in size to those at known corners).

\textsuperscript{179} See Table 1.5
the most intensive study—an area containing 40% of the population of Midcity.\textsuperscript{180} This area, with approximately 38% of Midcity’s adolescent population, contained seven of its fifteen major hanging corners. In this section of Midcity, approximately 85% of the adolescent boys and 27% of the girls hung out—over half of the area’s adolescents. Fifty percent of the boys and 15% of the girls hung out on major corners; 35% of the boys and 12% of the girls on minor. Thus—only 15% of male adolescents were not known to hang out, compared to 40% for Midcity as a whole. Were there any differences between this area and the rest of Midcity which would indicate the reason for this?

In 1950, about 70% of the 13 to 19-year-olds in the intensive-study area lived in neighborhoods categorized as lower class II or III; by 1960, all sections of this district fell into these categories. In the rest of Midcity, by contrast, 30% of those in this age group lived in neighborhoods categorized as middle class or lower class I in 1960. This indirect evidence would appear to indicate that the practice of hanging out was more prevalent among those of lower status, and that many of those not known to be associated with a hanging corner lived in middle class or lower class I areas. Even so, it is evident that a fair proportion of these higher status youngsters also hung out, since the total number of corner group members substantially exceeded the number of adolescents living in lower class II and III neighborhoods.

It was not possible with the limited resources of the present study to undertake a careful study of all 50 hanging corners in Midcity.\textsuperscript{181} Although a good deal of information was collected as to general patterns of adult and adolescent life throughout Midcity as a whole, research efforts were concentrated on three of the major hanging corners in the intensive study area. These corners will be referred to here as the “Bandit” corner, the “Outlaw” corner, and the “Royal” corner—after the names of the major corner aggregates which occupied them. Those who hung out on

\textsuperscript{180} On “intensive study” area: Census tracts which contained bulk of residences of members of seven intensive study gangs.

\textsuperscript{181} The Project budget was $55,000 a year for both service and research operations (with a full-time staff of 10 to 12 persons) during the period of major data collection.
the Bandit and Outlaw corners were predominantly white, and those on the Royal corner predominantly Negro. Fairly intensive contact was also maintained with a fourth corner—the “Warrior” corner, which was predominantly Negro—but the experience of this aggregate was not directly utilized in the extensive qualitative descriptions of corner gang life which follow.182

Starting in 1954, field workers of the Midcity corner gang project undertook the task of locating and establishing contact with corner gangs in the study area. Workers joined the gangs on their corners and other locales of gang activity on a daily basis for periods ranging from ten months to three years. Directly involved with the gangs in a wide variety of activities, they kept careful qualitative records of their daily observations of the gang members and their behavior. This observational material, supplemented by additional materials derived from focused interviewing, tape recordings, and periodic participation-observation by members of the research staff, was subjected to an extensive and systematic content-analysis coding which made available for analysis about 100,000 sequences of behavior involving gang members and other Midcity residents. These data provide the basis of the descriptive presentation of customary forms of gang behavior—both violative and non-violative—which comprises the bulk of subsequent chapters, as well as the descriptions of individual gangs included in the present chapter.183

In the course of their work in the three neighborhoods, field workers came in contact with a large number of street corner boys and girls. Although each gang unit comprised a stable core of consistent hangers, there were also a fair number of

182 Reasons for this: Combination of 1) Work which started later; 2) Considerably less intensive than others; 3) Time and cost of records-coding led to decision not to code fairly extensive field data on Warriors.
youngsters associated with the corner whose pattern of hanging was less consistent. Such youngsters might hang out for relatively brief periods, on a sporadic basis, or at odd hours. While recognized by members of the core group as persons who “hang out with us,” it was not possible for workers to become as familiar with these “fringe” members of the gangs as with the “active” members. In practical terms, this meant that workers often did not learn the names of some of those who hung out in their area, or knew them only as “Red” or “Sister.” Youngsters in this category may be designated as “fringe” members of the gangs, as distinguished from “active” members. For research purposes, only “active” members were counted as members of the “study gangs” which made up the Project’s study population. Fringe members, whose names, addresses and social characteristics were mostly or partly unknown, do not figure in statistical tabulations or other analyses.

Table 1.5 lists the names of twenty-one corner gang units in the three main study neighborhoods, and designates the age and sex category of each unit. Underlined are seven gang units which were studied intensively; more detail on these will be presented shortly. The numbers refer to the total number of active members of the several units. These numbers in most instances are smaller than the actual number affiliated with that unit, since they exclude fringe members, and, in the case of intensive study groups, larger than the number of persons considered “core” members of that unit.

Table 1.5 shows that the twenty-one units in the three neighborhoods comprised something under 700 known youngsters—approximately 250 in the Bandit neighborhood, 150 in the Outlaw neighborhood, and 270 in the Royal. Fifteen of the study gangs were male, and six female. Members of the twenty-one gangs comprised about one-quarter of the 12 to 19-year-old males in the study area, and about seven percent of the females. Seven of the twenty-one study gangs were selected for intensive study.\(^{184}\) These seven are underlined in Table 1.5, and appear

\(^{184}\) Reasons for selection of these: combination of contact intensity, duration, records completeness, status-category representation, limited research resources.
in Table 2.5 categorized by age, sex, race, and social status. In Table 2.5, “older” refers to the 16-18 age level (Roman numeral “III” in Table 1.5), and “younger” to the 14-16 age level (“II” in Table 1.5). “Higher” social status is lower class II, and “lower” lower class III.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male &amp; Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Male &amp; Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV Brigands</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>III Senior Bandits</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>III Bandettes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Junior Bandits</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>II Little Bandettes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Midget Bandits</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>256</td>
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<th>Male &amp; Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>IV Marauders</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>II Outlawettes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Midget Outlaws</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>126</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>48</td>
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<th>Male &amp; Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<tr>
<td>III Kings</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>III Queens</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>141</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Princes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>III Ladies</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Squires</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>136</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>269</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Totals: Males 436 Females 95 Males 70 Females 67 N= Total number known persons affiliated with unit
Underline = Intensive study group
It will be observed that the number of members of each of the intensive contact groups given in Table 2.5 is smaller than that given in Table 1.5. For example, the Senior Bandits appear in Table 1.5 with 41 members and in Table 2.5 with 32. These differences reflect a further distinction which was made as to “classes” of gang membership. “Active” members of gangs—that is, those whose names and social characteristics were known—were divided into two classes: core and peripheral. Since, for the most part, the gangs were treated as collective entities for research purposes, it was important that each intensive-contact group represent a relatively solidary group. In order to include only those who “belonged” to the unit in some significant sense, each person known to be affiliated with each intensive study gang was ranked on a four point scale with respect to four criteria—hanging frequency, acceptance by others, status within the group, and pattern of activity participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Lower Status</th>
<th>Higher Status</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Older Male</td>
<td>Senior Bandits 32</td>
<td>Senior Outlaws 25</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Male</td>
<td>Junior Bandits 34</td>
<td>Junior Outlaws 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>115</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>126</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Male</td>
<td>Kings 39</td>
<td></td>
<td>Queens 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>204</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Those who fell below a particular value based on a weighted combination of assignment criteria were not considered to be members of the gang for study purposes. On these grounds, 84 individuals who maintained some order of
affiliation with the seven groups were excluded from consideration. This accounts for differences in the size of the groups shown in Tables 1.5 and 2.5. For present purposes, an “ideal” intensive-study population would have comprised sixteen rather than seven gangs—including both age categories and both social status categories for white males, white females, Negro males and Negro females. As it is, gangs of both higher and lower social status as well as older and younger ages are found only in the “white male” category.

One important category, that of lower status (lower class III) Negroes—is not represented among the intensive study groups. In one sense this is unfortunate, since persons in this category comprise a very important part of contemporary lower class society, and manifest the lower class III subculture in one of its classic forms. In another sense the absence of this category is an advantage. A good proportion of contemporary attention to Negroes focuses on those in the lowest status positions, and a good proportion of attention to low status populations focuses on Negroes. The behavioral practices of this particular population category—which, according to one estimate, comprised in the 1960’s roughly two-tenths of those considered to be lower class by virtue of being “poor,” have thus come to represent, for many, the typical or dominant manifestation of lower class subculture. The general “flavor” of lower class adolescent life conveyed by the present volume is not seasoned by the conventional ingredient of Negro lower-class III subculture. What it may lose thereby in spice, it gains in representativeness, since low status Negroes comprise a clear minority of the contemporary lower class.

The method for assigning members to core or peripheral categories, here described in simplified form, was developed and executed by Dr. Hildred Geertz.

Defining as “poor” a non-farm family of four with an annual income of $3,000 before taxes (1962 dollars), United States President Lyndon B. Johnson presented the statistic that “22 percent (of the poor) are non-white”—which would mean, of course, that of those thus categorized as “poor,” 78% were white. (Johnson, Lyndon B., Address to Congress, January 20, 1964). 1970 census figures-rural, urban. See U.S. Negro folder.

While the experiences of Lower Class III Negroes do not figure directly in the present examination of customary behavioral practices of Midcity gang members, they do play an important part in the analysis of court-handled crime. In addition to the 21 gangs in three Midcity neighborhoods comprising 668 persons and the 7 gangs comprising the “intensive study” population
Although lower status Negroes, along with other “logical” categories indicated in Table 2.5, were not represented among the intensive study gangs, there was at least one gang in each of the four sex and race categories; this fact makes it possible for future chapters to explore quite systematically sex and race differences in gang behavior, and to explore somewhat less systematically age and social status differences. Five of the intensive study gangs were male (154 persons) and two female (50); five were white (126) and two black (78); four were older (135) and three younger (69); four were of higher (lower class II) social status (127), and three of lower (lower class III) status (77).

The following sections present descriptions of each of the three major study neighborhoods and of the seven intensive study gangs. Descriptions of the gangs devote special attention to their hanging patterns, educational and occupational status, leadership and clique structure, and involvement in violent behavior. Within the context of this volume, these descriptions of the seven gangs represent the one instance in which there is a direct focus on the members of Midcity gangs as persons—and even here they are treated not as unique individuals, but rather as members of groups. The rest of the volume will take the “behavior” of gang members—abstracted out as one analyzable aspect of their being and doing—as the focus of analysis. The unique identity of each gang member will be submerged in the analytic process of treating him as a “participant” in a range of activities and practices.

The Bandit Neighborhood

During the period between the Civil War and World War II the Bandit neighborhood was well-known throughout the city as a colorful and close-knit neighborhood of 204 persons, a third study population was used for analyses of officially-recorded criminal behavior. This population comprised 293 members of 14 male gangs, including 12 of the gangs along with two others in adjacent neighborhoods whose activities were observed and recorded by field workers but were not subject to the systematic analyses of non-criminal behavior. Six of these were Negro, and four of the latter lower class III (Senior Lancers, Junior Lancers, Knights, Viceroy).
community of Irish laborers. Moving to a flat in one of its ubiquitous three-decker frame tenements represented an important step up for the impoverished potato famine immigrants whose initial settlement areas were the crowded slums of central Port City. By the 1880's the second generation of Irish settlers had produced a spirited and energetic group of athletes and politicos, some of whom achieved national prominence. Among these was a hard-living, heavy-drinking national boxing champion and a state governor whose remarkable conduct in and out of office inspired numerous legends and several books.

Those residents of the Bandit neighborhood who shared in some degree the drive, vitality and capability of these famous men assumed stable and fairly remunerative positions in the political, legal, and civil service world of Port City, and left the neighborhood for residential areas whose green lawns and single houses represented for them what Midcity had represented for their fathers and grandfathers. Those community residents who lacked these qualities remained in the Bandit neighborhood, and on the advent of World War II comprised a stable and relatively homogeneous community of low-skilled Irish laborers.

With the departure of its more ambitious residents, the Bandit neighborhood resumed in large measure the close-knit and parochial character of an earlier period. The neighborhood was directly adjacent to Midcity’s major shopping district, spotted with bars, poolrooms and dance halls which provided the operating locales for an active neighborhood social life. Within two blocks of the Bandit’s hanging corner were the Old Erin and New Hibernia dance halls, and numerous drinking establishments bearing names such as the Shamrock, Murphy and Donoghue’s, and the Emerald Bar and Grill. The Bandit neighborhood also contained numerous wholesale houses, junk yards, and small manufacturing plants which provided convenient employment opportunities for local residents.

A number of developments following World War II disrupted the physical and social shape of the Bandit neighborhood. The post-war housing shortage led to the construction of a mammoth federally-financed housing project which sliced through
and blocked off the existing network of streets and razed the regular rows of wooden tenements. The number of small manufacturing plants was progressively diminished by the concomitant growth of a few large establishments, and by the 1950’s the physical face of the neighborhood was dominated by three large and growing plants. As these plants expanded they bought off many of the properties which had not been taken by the housing project, demolished their buildings, and converted them into broad acres of black-topped parking lots for their employees.

During the period of these changes, the parents of the Bandit corner gang members stubbornly retained occupancy of the decreasing number of low-rent, deteriorating private dwelling units still remaining in the neighborhood. Although the Bandit’s major hanging corner was almost surrounded by the housing project, virtually none of the gang members lived there. For these families, residence in the housing project would have entailed a degree of financial stability and of behavioral restraint which they were unable or unwilling to assume. For the corner gang members of the Bandit neighborhood were the scions of men and women who occupied the lowest social level in Midcity; for these people, low rent was a passion, freedom to drink and to behave drunkenly a sacred privilege, sporadic employment a fact of life, and the social welfare and law-enforcement agencies of the state intrinsic aspects of existence.

The Bandit corner was subject to field observation for about three years—from June 1954 to May 1957. Hanging out on the corner during this period were six distinct but related gang subdivisions. There were four male groups: the Brigands, aged approximately 18 to 21 at the start of the study period; the Senior Bandits, aged 16 to 18; the Junior Bandits, 14 to 16, and the Midget Bandits, 12 to 14. There were also two distinct female subdivisions: the Bandettes, 14 to 16, and the Little Bandettes, 12 to 14 (see Table 1.5).

The physical and psychic center of the Bandit corner was Sam’s Variety Store. The owner and sole employee of Sam’s was not Sam but Ben, his son. Ben’s father had founded Sam’s Variety in the 1920’s, the heyday of the Irish laboring
class in the Bandit neighborhood. When his father died, Ben took over the store, but did not change its name. Ben was a stocky, round-faced Jew in his middle 50’s, who looked upon the whole of the Bandit neighborhood as his personal fief and bounden responsibility—a sacred legacy from his father. He knew everybody and was concerned with everybody; through his store passed a constant stream of customers and non-customers of all ages and both sexes. Within a space not much larger than that of a fair-sized bedroom Ben managed to crowd in a phone booth, a juke box, a pin-ball machine, a space-heater, counters, shelves and stock, and an assorted variety of patrons. During one fifteen-minute period on an average day Ben would attend with little impatience the torturous deliberations of a five-year-old in the throes of deciding how to allocate five cents to which penny candies; complain to a uniformed routeman about the rising price of bread; supply $1.37 worth of groceries to 11-year-old Carol Donovan and enter the sum on her mother’s page in the “tab” book; agree to extend Mrs. Thebodeau’s already extended credit until her A.D.C. check arrived; bandage and solace the three year old Negro girl who came crying with a cut forefinger extended; shoo into the street a covey of Junior Bandits whose altercation over a pinball score was impeding customer traffic and augmenting an already substantial level of din.

Ben was a bachelor, and while he had adopted as a general and extended family the whole of the Bandit neighborhood, he had taken on as his most immediate sons and daughters the 200 adolescents who hung out on the Bandit corner. Ben knew the background and present circumstances of every bandit, and followed their lives with intense interest and concern. Ben’s corner gang progeny were a motile and mercurial lot, and he watched over their adventures and misadventures with a curious mixture of indignation, solicitude, disgust, and sympathy. Ben’s outlook on the affairs of the world was never bland; he maintained and freely voiced strong opinions on a wide variety of issues, prominent among which was the behavior and misbehavior of the younger generation.
This particular concern was given ample scope for attention by the young Bandits who congregated in and around his store. Of all the study gangs the Bandits were the most consistently and determinedly criminal, and prominent among Ben’s concerns was how each one stood with regard to “trouble.” In this respect, developments were seldom meager. By the time they reached the age of 18, every one of the 32 active members of the Senior Bandits had appeared in court at least once, and some many times; 28 of the 32 boys had been committed to a correctional institution and 16 had spent at least one term in confinement. Ben regarded the continuing propensity of his brood to run afoul of the law with alternating attitudes of hope and despair.

Ben’s stout arm swept the expanse of pavement which fronted his store. “I tellya, I give up on these kids. In all the years I been here, I never seen a worse bunch. You know what they should do? They should put up a big platform with one of them stocks right out there, and as soon as a kid gets in trouble, into the stocks with ‘im. Then they’d straighten out. The way it is now, the kid tells a sob story to some soft-hearted cop or social worker, and pretty soon he’s back at the same old thing. See that guy just comin’ over here? That’s what I mean. He’s hopeless. Mark my word, he’s gonna end up in the electric chair.”

The Senior Bandit who entered the store came directly to Ben. “Hey, Ben, I just quit my job at the shoe factory. They don’t pay ya nothin,’ and they got some wise guy nephew of the owner who thinks he can kick everyone around. I just got fed up. I ain’t gonna tell ma for awhile, she’ll be mad.” Ben’s concern was evident. “Digger, ya just gotta learn ya can’t keep actin’ smart to every boss ya have. And $1.30 an hour ain’t bad pay at all for a 17 year old boy. Look, I’ll lend ya ten bucks so ya can give five to ya ma, and she won’t know.”

In their dealings with Ben, the Bandits, for their part, were in turn hostile and affectionate, cordial and sullen, open and reserved. They clearly regarded Ben’s as “their” store. This meant, among other things, exclusive possession of the right to make trouble within its confines. At least three times during the observation period
corner boys from outside neighborhoods entered the store obviously bent on stealing or creating a disturbance. On each occasion these outsiders were efficiently and forcefully removed by nearby Bandits, who thence waxed indignant at the temerity of “outside” kids daring to consider Ben’s as a target of illegal activity. One consequence, then, of Ben’s seigniorial relationship to the Bandits was that his store was unusually well protected against the thefts, armed and otherwise, which presented a constant hazard to the small store owner in Midcity.

On the other hand, the Bandits guarded jealously their own right to “raise hell” in Ben’s. On one occasion, several Senior Bandits came into the store with a cache of pistol bullets and proceeded to empty the powder from one of the bullets onto the pinball machine and to ignite the powder. When Ben ordered them out they continued operations on the front sidewalk by wrapping gunpowder in newspaper and igniting it. Finally they set fire to a wad of paper containing two live bullets which exploded and narrowly missed local residents sitting on nearby doorsteps.

Such behavior, while calculated to bedevil Ben and perhaps to retaliate for a recent scolding or ejection, posed no real threat to him or his store; the same boys, during this period, were actively engaged in serious thefts from similar stores in other neighborhoods. For the most part, the behavior of the Bandits in and around the store involved the characteristic activities of hanging out. In warm weather the Bandits sat outside the store on the sidewalk or doorstops playing cards, gambling, drinking, talking to one another and to the Bandettes. In cooler weather they moved into the store as the hour and space permitted, and there played the pinball machine for such cash payoffs as Ben saw fit to render, danced with the Bandettes to juke box records, and engaged in general horseplay.

While Ben’s was the Bandits’ favorite hangout, they did frequent other hanging locales, mostly within a few blocks of the corner. Among these was a park directly adjacent to the housing project where the boys played football and baseball in season. At night the park provided a favored locale for activities such as beer
drinking and lovemaking, neither of which earned the unbounded approval of adult
Project residents, who not infrequently summoned the police to clear the park of
late-night revelers. Other areas of congregation in the local neighborhood were a
nearby delicatessen (“the Delly”), a pool hall, and apartments of those Bandettes
whose parents happened to be away. The Bandits also ran their own dances at the
Old Erin and New Hibernia; when renting these dance halls they attempted to
conceal their identity as Bandits, since the dance hall proprietors had learned that
the rental fees paid by the Bandits were scarcely sufficient to compensate the
general chaos and disturbance inevitably attending the conduct of a Bandit dance.

Rather infrequently, but somewhat more frequently than the Outlaws or
Molls, the Bandits frequented areas of congregation outside the local neighborhood.
One favorite summer hangout was an area several miles from Midcity called “The
Quarries.” A series of deserted stone quarries filled with water and assorted refuse
provided a major recreational and courage-testing arena for the Bandits. Great
prestige accrued to those gang members who mounted the crags over-jutting the
quarries to dive into their dark and junk-littered depths. The higher the crag, the
greater the prestige.

Another warm weather assemblage locale was Port City Beach—a Coney
Island-type amusement park about three miles from Midcity. Here, sometimes
transported by automobiles stolen for the purpose of the excursion, and provisioned
by food sometimes stolen, the Bandits held picnics and beach parties with the
Bandettes, or strolled the boardwalk seeking to “pick up” girls from other
neighborhoods. Also at Port City Beach was a boxing arena which the Bandits
frequented both as spectators and participants. With few exceptions the Bandits
were poor boxers, and were used by the private fight promoter at Port City Beach as
inexpensive fodder for older and more able boxers.

The Bandits were also able to find sources of entertainment in the central
business district of Port City. While most of the Bandits and Bandettes were too
young to gain admission to the numerous downtown cafes with their Rock and Roll
bands, they were able to find amusement in going to the movies (sneaking in whenever possible), playing the coin machines in the penny arcades, and shoplifting from the downtown department stores. Sometimes small groups of Bandits spent the day in town in job-hunting as a kind of diversion, with little serious intention of finding work.

One especially favored form of downtown entertainment was the court trial. Members of the Junior and Senior Bandits performed as on-stage participants (in some 250 court trials between the ages of 14 and 18 during the study period). Most trials involving juveniles were conducted in nearby Midcity Court as private proceedings. The older Bandits, however, had adopted as routine procedure the practice of appealing their local court sentences to the Superior Court located in downtown Port City. The appearance in Superior Court of a Bandit or group of Bandits was the occasion of as large a turnout of gang members as could be mustered. Spectator Bandits comprised a rapt and vitally interested audience at court proceedings in which one of their fellows appeared as a star performer. Following the court appearance, gang members engaged in extended and animated discussions concerning the severity or leniency of the sentence and the general events of the trial. The hearings provided not only an absorbing form of free entertainment, but also invaluable knowledge as to court functioning, appropriate defendant behavior, and the predilections of particular judges—knowledge which would serve the spectators in good stead as their own turn to star inevitably arrived.

Given such self-arranged divertissements as court trials, hanging out at Ben’s, the Quarries, and downtown shoplifting, it is not too surprising that the Bandits seldom availed themselves of the adult-arranged recreational activities provided by the city’s official recreational and social welfare agencies. One of Port City’s oldest and best-known settlement houses, known familiarly throughout the neighborhood as “the Set,” was located within three blocks of the Bandit corner. Its staff members, some of whom had been raised in communities quite similar to that
of the Bandits, were, by and large, dedicated and conscientious people. Its director, a long-time resident of the neighborhood, was almost as familiar as was Ben with the Bandits and their accustomed activities, and for many years had taken as a major objective the attempt to persuade the Bandits to exchange the recreational activities of the corner for those of the settlement house.

This objective met with limited success. Many of the Bandits had participated in the programs of “the Set” between the ages of 6 and 12. All but a few, however, as they entered their teens, abandoned the organized and supervised activities of the settlement house for the freer and far more exciting activities of the corner. The “tough kids” from the Bandit corner occasionally congregated in the vicinity of “the Set” and harassed the “good kids” who still went to the settlement house, and sometimes badgered staff members as well. This harassment, however, was not violent and lacked real malice; rather, it resembled the largely benign ridicule of younger children by older ones, chiding their juniors for not having yet learned to put aside childish pursuits.

Relations among Bandit Subdivisions
Each of the six subdivisions of the Bandits maintained a sense of identity as a distinct group and a clear conception of group boundaries. Under most circumstances each age-level subdivision functioned as an essentially autonomous unit; under some circumstances, however, two or more subdivisions would engage jointly in particular activities. One such circumstance, albeit a rare one, was the occasion of attack on or defense against other corner gangs.188

Relations among the four male subdivisions of the Bandits—Brigands, Senior, Junior and Midget Bandits—were generally amiable, although somewhat less close than relations among the higher-status (lower-class II) Outlaw groups.

188 The rather complex nature of relationships among subdivisions is described in greater detail in the forthcoming discussion of the Outlaws. With some differences, this description is also applicable to the Bandits.
Relations between male and female subdivisions, on the other hand, were considerably more intimate than in the case of the Outlaws. Mating alliances between Bandettes and Bandits were not uncommon, and joint activities by the Senior Bandits and Bandettes, or Junior Bandits and Little Bandettes, were fairly frequent. The Little Bandettes, in particular, were most anxious to be considered, unequivocally and exclusively, as “THE girls” of the Junior Bandits, and went to some lengths to insure that this special relationship be recognized—particularly by the Junior Bandits.\textsuperscript{189}

In addition to mating relationships and joint participation in particular activities, the several subdivisions of the Bandits, as was the case for all the other study gangs—were linked by kinship. The Junior Bandits, for example, in addition to two pairs of brothers within their own subdivision, had relatives in each of the other five subdivisions. Leaving aside cousins, uncles, nephews, and so on, almost half of the Juniors had brothers or sisters in other subdivisions.\textsuperscript{190} One family which had sons in all four Bandit subdivisions was also related to the parole officer who was responsible for the supervision of a number of the Bandits. The existence of these kin ties, as well as the patterned nature of relationships within and between subdivisions, make it clear that the gangs on the Bandit corner were not relatively transient aggregations, but rather were persisting and well-structured collectivities.

The following sections will describe briefly two of the six Bandit subdivisions—the Senior and Junior Bandits. Treatment of these two groups—those subjected to intensive field observation—will focus on leadership, clique-structure, and the relation of these to violative behavior.

\textsuperscript{189} The nature of relationships between male and female corner gang subdivisions is described in some detail in the chapter on male sex and mating behavior, especially pages \textsuperscript{190} More detailed information on intra-gang kinship ties is included in the discussion of relations between Outlaw subdivisions. Similar numbers and kinds of kin relationships obtained for the Bandit groups. See also the discussion of intra-gang kinship in Chapter One (Family School and Work).
The Senior Bandits

The Senior Bandits, the second oldest of the four male gang subdivisions hanging out on the Bandit corner, were under intensive observation for a period of twenty months. At the start of this period the boys ranged in age from 15 to 17 (average age 16.3) and at the end, 17 to 19 (average age 18.1). The core group of the Senior Bandits numbered 32 boys. The educational and occupational circumstances of the Senior Bandits and their parents were consistent with lower class III social status, and showed a high degree of homogeneity. Some seven years after the termination of the intensive study period, when the average age of the Bandits was 25, 23 out of 27 gang members whose occupations were known (85%) held jobs ordinarily classified in the bottom two occupational categories of the United States census. Twenty-one held jobs classified as “laborer,” holding jobs such as roofer, stock boy, and trucker’s helper.

The occupational status of the boys’ fathers, who were roughly 25 years older than they, was strikingly similar to that of their sons. Of 24 fathers whose occupations were known, 18, or 83%, held jobs in the same bottom two occupational categories as their sons; 17 were described as “laborer,” holding jobs such as furniture mover and roofer. Fathers held jobs of similar kinds and in similar proportions to those of their sons (e.g., construction laborers; sons 30%, fathers 25%; factory laborers; sons 15%, fathers 21%). There was little evidence that the occupational status of the Senior Bandits was in the process of rising above that of their fathers; there were indications, instead, of a slight decline, even taking account of the younger age of the sons. Two of the boys’ fathers held jobs in “public safety” services—one policeman and one fireman; another had worked for a time in the “white collar” position of a salesclerk at Sears; a fourth had risen to the rank of Chief Petty Officer in the Merchant Marine. Thus four of the fathers had attained relatively elevated positions, against the one policeman produced by the sons.

The educational experience of the Senior Bandits was also consistent with lower class III status. Of 29 boys whose educational experience was known, 27
(90%) dropped out of school in the eighth, ninth, or tenth grades, having reached the age of sixteen. Two did complete high school, and one of these was reputed to have taken some post-high-school training in a local technical school. None entered college. It should be remarked that the 90% high school non-completion rate of the Senior Bandits occurred not in a backward rural community of the 1800’s, nor in a black community, but in the 1950’s in a predominantly white neighborhood of a metropolis which took pride in being one of the major educational centers of the world.

Most of the Senior Bandits were Catholic. The majority were of Irish background; several were Italian or French Canadian. A few were English or Scotch Protestants. Gang members were linked by kinship to one another and to other Bandit subdivisions. The gang contained two sets of brothers and several cousins, and about one third of the boys had relatives in other subdivisions. These included a brother in the Midgets, six brothers in the Juniors, and three in the Marauders.

Since only two of the Senior Bandits were still in school during the study period, the employment circumstances of the gang members are of some interest. While almost all of the boys held full-time jobs at some time during the contact period, their characteristic work pattern was one which alternated shorter or longer periods of employment with periods of “loafing” or institutional confinement. The proportion of gang members who were working at any one time was subject to periodic variation, ranging from about 5% to 40% or more. Despite financial needs, pressure from parents and parole officers and other incentives to get work, the senior Bandits found jobs slowly, accepted them reluctantly, and quit them with little provocation. These fluctuations had little to do with the current availability of jobs, but were related primarily to certain orientations toward work maintained by gang members.191

191 The work pattern of the Senior Bandits, which might be called “cyclical voluntary unemployment,” will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on Family, School, and Work.
Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership

The Senior Bandits were clearly the most criminal of the seven intensive-contact groups. The present study uses a variety of indexes to measure the “criminality” of the study gangs (e.g., frequency of known criminal acts, proportion of gang members appearing in court, etc.); in all but a few of these, the Senior Bandits rank first. For example, by the time he had reached the age of 18 the average Senior Bandit had been charged with offenses in court an average of 7.6 times; this compared with an average rate of 2.7 for all five male gangs, and added up to a total of almost 250 separate charges for the gang as a whole. By the time the intensive contact period had been over for a year, 100% of the Senior Bandits had been arrested at least once; this compared with an average arrest figure of 45% for all groups. During the twenty month contact period, just about half of the Senior Bandits were on probation or parole for some period of time\textsuperscript{192}.

The only real rival to the Seniors with respect to criminal involvement was their younger brother group, the Junior Bandits, who ranked higher in some instances. For example, the Juniors showed considerably higher rates in the monthly frequency of thefts. As will be shown in later sections, the high-ranking position of the Senior Bandits with respect to criminal behavior was related to the fact that they were male, older, and of lower social status.

To a greater degree than in any of the other six groups, crime as an occupation and preoccupation played a central role in the lives of the Senior Bandits. Prominent among recurrent topics of discussion were thefts successfully executed, fights recently engaged in, and the current status of gang members who were in the process of passing through the successive stages of arrest, appearing in court, being sentenced, appealing, re-appearing, and so on. Although none of the contact-period crimes of the Senior Bandits merited front-page headlines, a number of their more colorful exploits did receive newspaper attention. In these instances the stories were carefully clipped and left in Ben’s store for circulation among the

\textsuperscript{192} Gather contact-period data: see JB p. 17
gang members. Newspaper citation functioned for the Senior Bandits somewhat as do press notices for actors; gang members who made the papers were elated and were granted prestige; those who did not were often disappointed; participants and non-participants who failed to see the stories felt cheated.

The majority of gang member crimes were thefts; the Senior Bandits were thieves par excellence. Their thievery was imaginative, colorful, and varied. Most thefts were from stores. Included among these was a department store theft of watches, jewelry and clothing for use as family Christmas presents; a daylight raid on a supermarket for food and refreshments needed for a beach outing; a day-time burglary of an antique store, in which eight gang members, in the presence of the owner, stole a Samurai sword and French dueling pistols. The gang also engaged in car theft. One summer several Bandits stole a car to visit girl friends who were working at a summer resort. Sixty miles north of Port City, hailed by police for exceeding speed limits, they raced away at speeds of up to 100 miles an hour, overturned the car, and were hospitalized for injuries. In another instance Bandits stole a car in an effort to return a drunken companion to his home and avoid the police; when this car stalled they stole a second car parked in front of its owner’s house; the owner ran out and fired several shots at the thieves, which failed to forestall the theft.

The frequency of Senior Bandit crimes, along with the relative seriousness of their offenses, resulted in a high rate of arrest and confinement. During the contact period somewhat over 40% of the gang members were confined in correctional institutions, with terms averaging 11 months per boy. The average Senior Bandit spent approximately one month in four in a correctional facility. This circumstance prompted one of the Bandettes to remark—“Ya know, them guys got a new place to hang—the reformatory. That bunch is never together—one halfa them don’t know the other half...”

This appraisal, while based on fact, failed to recognize an important feature of gang relationships. With institutional confinement a frequent and predictable
event, the Senior Bandits employed a set of devices to maintain a high degree of
group solidarity. One arrangement served to maintain intra-gang communication in
the face of geographical separation. Lines of communication between corner and
institutions were kept open by frequent visits by those on the outside, during which
inmates were brought food, money, and cigarettes as well as news of the
neighborhood and other correctional facilities. One Midcity social worker claimed
that the institutionalized boys knew what was going on in the neighborhood before
most neighborhood residents.

By common understanding, unconfined members had the privilege of using
the clothing and other belongings of the confined, and delegations of gang members
would visit the homes of the newly institutionalized to claim this privilege. This
form of exchange, since it was reciprocal, served to maintain material as well as
informational and associational bonds between separated gang members. The
Bandits also maintained well-established methods for arraing and effectuating
institutional escape by those gang members who were so inclined. Details of escapes
were arranged in the course of visits and inter-inmate contacts; escapees were
provided by fellow gang members with escape-facilitating equipment such as ropes
to scale prison walls, and getaway cars. The homes of one’s gang fellows were also
made available as hideouts. Given this set of arrangements, the Bandits carried out
several highly successful escapes; one succeeded in executing the first escape in its
history from a maximum security installation.\footnote{Additional detail as to the
Bandit’s correctional experience, as well as general analysis of the
confinement and parole experience of all seven gangs is contained in a chapter on the correctional
experience of Midcity gangs which is omitted from the present volume for reasons of economy.}

The means by which the Senior Bandits achieved group cohesion in spite of
recurrent incarcerations of key members merit further consideration—both because
they are of interest in their own right, and because they throw light on important
relationships between leadership, group structure, and the motivation of criminal
behavior. Despite the assertion that “one halfa them guys don’t know the other
half,” the Senior Bandits were a solidary associational unit, with clear group
boundaries and definite criteria for differentiating those who were “one of us” from those who were not. It was still said of an accepted group member that “he hangs with us”—even when the boy had been away from the corner in an institution for a year or more. Incarcerated leaders, in particular, were referred to frequently and in terms of admiration and respect.

The system used by the Senior Bandits to maintain associational solidarity and reliable leadership arrangements incorporated three major devices: authority diffusion, contingency anticipation, and role interchangeability. The recurring absence from the corner of varying numbers of gang members inhibited the formation of a set of relatively stable cliques of the kind found in the other intensive-study gangs. What was fairly stable, instead, was a set of “classes” of members, each of which could include different individuals at different times. The relative size of these classes was fairly constant, and a member of one class could move to another to take the place of a member who had been removed by institutionalization.

The four major classes of gang members could be called “key leaders,” “standby leaders,” “primary followers,” and “secondary followers.” During the intensive contact period the gang contained five key leaders—boys whose accomplishments had earned them the right to command; six standby leaders—boys prepared to step into leadership positions when key leaders were institutionalized; eight primary followers—boys who hung out regularly and who were the most dependable followers of current leaders; and thirteen secondary followers—boys who hung out less regularly and who tended to adapt their allegiances to particular leadership situations.

Given the dominant role of criminal activity among the Senior Bandits, one might expect that leadership and followership would be related in some significant way to criminal involvement. This was indeed the case. Each of the five key leaders had demonstrated unusual ability in criminal activity; in this respect the Senior

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194 Based on terminology first proposed by Dr. Mickey Clampit.
Bandits differed from the other intensive-contact gangs, each of which included at least one leader whose position was based in whole or part on a commitment to a law-abiding course of action. One of the Senior Bandit’s key leaders was especially respected for his daring and adeptness in theft; another, who stole infrequently relative to other leaders, for his courage, stamina and resourcefulness as a fighter. The other three leaders had proven themselves in both theft and fighting, with theft the more important basis of eminence.

An examination of selected aspects of the criminal experience of the four classes of gang member shows clearly the relationship of leadership to criminal involvement. In the course of the 20 month contact period, the average key leader was involved in known illegal incidents 18.8 times, the average standby leader 11.1 times, the average primary follower 5.8 times, and the average secondary follower 2.0 times, during each ten month period not spent in institutional confinement. During the same period the average key leader was confined to a correctional institution for 10 months, the average standby leader 7.3 months, the average primary follower 3.5, and the average secondary follower 3.0.

These figures show that gang members who were closest to leadership positions were also the most active in crime. The confinement statistics, however, suggest that maintaining a system of leadership on this basis poses special problems. The more criminally active a gang member, the greater the likelihood that he would be apprehended and removed from the neighborhood; thus substantially diminishing his opportunities to convert earned prestige into operative leadership. How was it possible, then, for the Senior Bandits to maintain effective leadership arrangements? They utilized a remarkably efficient system whose several features were ingenious and deftly contrived.

First, the recognition by the Bandits of five key leaders—a relatively large number for a gang of 32 members—served as a form of insurance against being left

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195 For definitions of the “incident” and “involvement” as measures of criminal activity, see Chapter Ten.
without leadership. It was most unlikely that all five would be incarcerated at the same time, particularly since collective crimes were generally executed by one or possibly two leaders along with several of their followers. (During the contact period, the largest number of key leaders confined at any one time was four, and the average number two). One Bandit key leader expressed his conviction that exclusive reliance on a single leader was unwise: “...since we been hangin’ out (at Ben’s corner) we ain’t had no leader. Other kids got a leader of the gang, like up in Cornerville, they always got one kid who’s the big boss...so far we ain’t did that, and I don’t think we ever will. We talk about ‘Smiley and his boys,’ or ‘Digger and his clique,’ and like that...”

It is clear that for the speaker the term “leader” carried the connotation of a single and all-powerful gang lord, and was not applicable to the diffuse and decentralized leadership arrangements of the Bandits. It is also significant that the gangs of “Cornerville” which he used as an example were Italian gangs whose rate of criminal involvement was relatively low. The “one big boss” type of leadership found in these gangs derives from the “Caesar” or “Il Duce” pattern so well established in Italian culture, and was workable for Cornerville gangs because the gangs and their leaders were sufficiently law-abiding and/or sufficiently capable of evading arrest as to make the removal of the leader an improbable event.196

Having five key leaders made it possible for the Senior Bandits to base prestige on criminal achievement, with the leaders, as exemplars, excelling in criminality, and at the same time to maintain an associational system which would not collapse when the consequences of their criminal activity forced the leaders to vacate their positions. A second feature, the use of “standby” leaders, made possible a relatively stable balance among the several cliques. When the key leader of his clique was present in the area, the standby leader assumed a subordinate role and did not initiate action; if and when the key leader was committed to an institution,

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196 For a description and analysis of leadership in gangs of the “Cornerville” type see Whyte, William F. “Street Corner Society,” etc.
he was ready to assume leadership. The standby leader knew, however, that he was expected to relinquish this position on the return of the key leader. By this device each of the five major cliques was assured some form of leadership even when key leaders were absent, and could maintain its form, identity and influence vis-à-vis other cliques.

A third device which enabled the gang to maintain a relatively stable leadership-and-clique structure involved the phenomenon of “optimal” criminal involvement. Since excellence in crime was the major basis of gang leadership, it might be expected that some of those who aspired to leadership would assume that there was a simple and direct relationship between crime and leadership: the more crime, the more prestige; the more prestige, the stronger the basis of authority. The flaw in this simple formula was in fact recognized by the actual key leaders. In striving for maximal criminal involvement, one also incurred the maximum risk of incarceration. Leadership involved more than gaining prestige through crime; one had to be personally involved with other gang members for sufficiently extended periods to exploit won prestige through specific actions. Such actions included wooing followers, initiation of non-criminal as well as criminal activities, and effecting working relationships with other leaders. Newly returned key leaders as well as the less-criminally-active class of standby leaders tended to step up their involvement in criminal activity on assuming or reassuming leadership positions in order to solidify their positions, but also tended to diminish such involvement once this was achieved.197

Those who failed to grasp the principle of optimal criminality were unable to convert their criminal achievements into leadership. Evidence for this is found by examining the criminal experience of the thirteen secondary followers. The average

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197 An increase in the criminal activity of gang leaders attempting to defend or consolidate leadership positions is also reported by James Short and his colleagues for gangs in Chicago. See, in particular, Short, J., “The response of Gang Leaders to Status Threats,” An. Jnl. Sociology, LXVIII (March 1963), 571-79. Their analysis of the “King Rattlers,” where the threat to leadership was posed by a social worker rather than another gang leader, was based in part on the previously reported experience of the Senior Bandits.
confinement rate of this class of gang member during the twenty month contact period was three months; this average, however, was a product of the contrasting experiences of two subclasses. Ten of the boys were confined for short periods or not at all; the other three, however, were confined for an average of 15 months each—three-quarters of the total period, and half again as long as the key leaders. This ratio between “in” and “out” time did not permit these criminally active boys to convert their prestige into leadership, and they were thus constrained to share with the criminally less-active the status of secondary follower. It would thus appear that the “optimum” ratio of freedom to confinement for Senior Bandit leaders was three to five months “in” for every ten “out,” and that a ration in excess of seven to ten precluded the attainment of leadership. It should be added that it was not only practical considerations that prevented the overly criminal boy from assuming leadership. The Senior Bandits had a concept of an “appropriate” degree of criminality; those whose crimes exceeded, in frequency or severity, the limits of appropriate involvement, were deemed to lack elements of control, balance, and restraint necessary to effective leadership.

One fairly evident weakness in so flexible and fluid a system of cliques and leadership was the danger that violent and possibly disruptive internal conflict might erupt among key leaders who were competing for followers or standby leaders who were reluctant to relinquish their positions. There was, in fact, surprisingly little overt conflict of any kind among Bandit leaders. On their release from confinement, leaders were welcomed with enthusiasm and appropriate observances both by their followers and by other leaders. The returnees took the center of the stage as they recounted to rapt listeners their institutional experiences, the circumstances of those still confined, and developments regarding policies, and personnel, and politics at the correctional school.

When they were together Bandit leaders dealt with one another gingerly, warily, and with evident respect. On one occasion a standby leader, who was less criminally active than the returning key leader, offered little resistance to being
displaced, but did serve his replacement with the warning that a resumption of his former high rate of crime would soon result in commitment both of himself and his clique. On another occasion one of the toughest of the Senior Bandits (later sentenced to an extended term in an adult institution for ringleading a major prison riot), returned to the corner to find that another leader had taken over not only some of his key followers but his “steady” girlfriend as well. Instead of engaging his rival in an angry and perhaps violent confrontation, he reacted quite mildly, giving vent to his hostility in the form of sarcastic teasing, calculated to needle but not to incite. In the place of a direct challenge, the newly returned key leader set about to regain his followers and his girl by active re-involvement in criminal activity. This course of action—competing for followers by successful performance in prestigious activities rather than by brute-force confrontation—was standard practice among the Senior Bandits.\footnote{Low level of aggression among leaders in a gang also reported by Short et al., 1963, op. cit.}

The intricate system for maintaining associational cohesion in the face of periodic absences by key members—a system which was flexible, fluid, and adaptive—illuminates several aspects of the relationship between the motivation to exercise leadership and the motivation to commit crimes. Although no member of the gang could have conceptualized the operation of this system as a set of abstract principles, it is evident that on some level of awareness the gang members realized the importance of shared and decentralized authority, and that this realization served to inhibit disruptive conflict among leaders; they realized also that optimal rather than maximal criminality was a precondition of their leadership system, and this realization served to keep criminal involvement within certain limits; they realized further that considerations of group cohesion took precedence over personal ambition, and this realization served to restrain attempts to gain exclusive authority.

The will to gain leadership and the desire to maintain a solidary group thus provided for the Senior Bandits both incentives for engaging in crime and incentives
for inhibiting criminal involvement. The successful leader had to be sufficiently active in crime to earn leadership, but not so active as to default its exercise. Membership in different intra-gang classes was associated with different levels of criminal involvement. Thus, despite the fact that the Senior Bandits were the most criminal of the intensive contact gangs, it is evident that their criminal behavior represented far much more than an impulsive “acting out” of uncontrollable inner impulses. On a partly cognitive, partly covert level, and in a most subtle and intricate fashion, the persistence and viability of the gang as an associational unit played an intimate part in the complex set of influences which motivated its members to commit crimes.¹⁹⁹

The Junior Bandits

The Junior Bandits were the second youngest of the four male gang subdivisions which frequented the Bandit corner during the intensive-contact period. Above them in the age hierarchy were the Senior Bandits, and below them the Midgets. The Junior Bandits numbered 34 active members, making them somewhat larger than the average Bandit subdivision. Their intensive contact period was just under 10 months, the shortest of all seven study gangs. At the start of this period their average age was 15.5 years, and at the end, 16.4. As was the case for the other gangs, 90% of the boys fell within a two year age span. As already mentioned, the Juniors were linked by kinship with the other Bandit groups, with almost half of the boys having siblings in other subdivisions.

The ethnic and social status of the Junior Bandits was similar to that of their older brother group. The boys were Catholic, predominantly Irish, and lower class

¹⁹⁹A psychiatrist in close contact with the Senior Bandits represented them as one of the most disturbed, disorganized, and anomic groups he had ever known. This appraisal was in part a consequence of a clinical perspective which used idealized patterns of normal middle class behavior as an implicit standard for judging normality, in part a consequence of taking criminal behavior as such as a direct measure of “sickness,” in part a result of data-gathering methods based primarily on office interviews with individuals rather than long-term group observation in the “natural” environment of the gang.
III in social status. Fathers held jobs such as elevator operator, truck driver, and factory laborer. The educational status of the Juniors, while consistent with lower class III status, was somewhat higher than that of the other lower class III gangs. Fifty-nine percent of the boys failed to complete high school, compared with 90% for the Senior Bandits and 82% for the Molls. So far as is known, none of the Junior Bandits graduated from college, although one was reported to have taken post-high school technical training.

Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership

On the basis of a variety of measures of criminality, the Junior Outlaws ranked as the second most criminal of the intensive contact groups. As of a year after the termination of the intensive contact period, 53% of the gang were known to have been arrested at least once; this compared to a 100% arrest rate for the Senior Bandits and a 50% rate for the next-ranking Junior Outlaw. About 40% had appeared in court. On some measures the criminality of the Junior Outlaws even exceeded that of their older brother group. Gang members were known to have been involved in 27 incidents of assault during the contact period—almost three per month; this compared with an all-gang rate of .5 per month, and a rate of .84 for the next-ranking Senior Bandits. Similarly the Juniors ranked first in the percentage of members known to have participated in assaultive activity. They also showed a slightly higher frequency of theft incidents than their older brother group—3.1 incidents per month compared to 2.7 for the Seniors, and a 1.5 male gang average. Despite their relatively high frequency, Junior Bandit crimes tended to be considerably less serious than those of their older brother group. This is evidenced by the fact that the average Junior Bandit had faced court charges 2.0 times by the time he reached 18, while the average Senior Bandit at this age had been charged 7.6 times. Even so, the Juniors ranked second in this respect since the next highest rate, that of the Senior Outlaws, was 1.4.
As the criminal specialty of the Senior Bandits was theft, so the specialty of the Juniors was assault. Their rate of involvement in incidents of assault during the contact period was six times higher than that of the average male gang, and almost four times that of their seniors. As was the case for their general criminal activity, the assaultive activity of the Junior Bandits, despite its high frequency, did not result in as much official action in the long run as that of their older brother group. Through age 18 the monthly rate of court appearances on assault charges for the Juniors was .22, compared to .58 for the Seniors. Even so, the Junior Bandits were involved in more serious assault incidents during the contact period than any other gang. In one instance a Junior Bandit hanging out in Ben’s inflicted a critical (but not fatal) skull fracture on a member of an “outside” gang. This incident triggered off a series of encounters between the two gangs which kept the neighborhood in a state of agitation for over two months. The Junior Bandits displayed the kind of appetite for fighting that their older brothers did for theft; it was a Junior Bandit who said, of an annual parade, “We have a fight there every year; we always go because if anybody wants to start a fight, we want to show we’re ready!”

Each of the seven gangs maintained a somewhat different set of arrangements for accommodating problems of leadership and the coordination of gang activity. The case of the Junior Bandits is of particular interest in that their leadership system combined certain features of the Senior Bandits (same social status, older, more criminal) and that of the Junior Outlaws (same age, higher status, less criminal). The Junior Bandits differed from their older brother group in two significant respects. Younger and less criminal, the issue of whether law-abiding or law-violating behavior would take precedence as a prime basis of prestige was as yet unsettled. Furthermore, the fact that their criminal behavior was less serious meant that they were not faced with nearly so severe a problem of achieving group cohesion in the face of periodic incarceration of key members.

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200 It should be noted that this non-fatal injury was the most serious to have resulted from assaultive activity for all gangs during the entire contact period. See “Assault” chapter, Chapter 13.
The 34 active members of the Junior Bandits were grouped into four categories; three relatively stable cliques and a fourth group whose clique affiliation was indefinite or subject to change. The three stable cliques formed a kind of triumvirate consisting of two subordinate cliques which were in direct conflict over the issue of violative behavior, and a dominant clique which served as a general organ of authority.\textsuperscript{201}

The two subordinate cliques numbered about seven boys each. As in the case of the Junior Outlaws, one clique was oriented to law-abiding activity as a major basis of prestige while the other was oriented toward law-violation. The leader of the “good boy” or law-abiding clique had no court record, was still in school, and held a steady after-school job in a food store. Settlement house and church personnel considered him well-mannered and well-behaved, an appraisal which enabled him to play a liaison role between the gang and adult agencies. This ability, along with his organizing talent and athletic achievements, formed the basis of his leadership role. He did not, however, utilize his position to act as a forceful advocate of law-abiding conduct; when this issue arose he generally assumed a noncommittal stance. The boy who was generally entrusted with gang funds was also a member of the law-abiding faction.

The leader of the violation-oriented or “bad boy” faction had dropped out of school, worked only sporadically, and was one of the most actively criminal members of the gang. Members of his clique were regarded as rowdies and troublemakers by “Set” personnel, and were refused access to settlement house facilities. When the Junior Bandits assembled to discuss lawful undertakings such as team athletics or a party to raise funds for athletic equipment, members of the “bad boy” faction were generally disorderly and disruptive—throwing bottles or baseballs at their fellows and pulling chairs from under those who were attempting to forward the business of the meeting. Junior Bandits of whatever clique who were

\textsuperscript{201} Among those contributing to the analysis of Junior Bandit cliques were Dr. Hildred Geertz, Dr. Mickey Clampit, and Dr. David Kantor.
contemplating an illegal escapade knew that they could get encouragement and direction from the leader of the “bad boy” clique.

During the contact period the two subordinate cliques engaged in a running battle in which the “good boy” faction pressed for lawful activity as a basis of gang prestige and the “bad boy” faction for unlawful. This battle, during the contact period, was essentially a standoff. Occasionally a member of the law-abiding faction succeeded in tempering the unruliness of the “bad boys;” more frequently, however, “bad boys” plans for illegal activity met with little resistance from the “good boys,” who were often enticed into acquiescence or even participation. Fragmentary knowledge of the post-contact period provided some evidence of a triumph for the proponents of illegality; the full course of developments, however, could not be followed as was possible in the case of the Junior Outlaws, where one side won a clear victory. The role of the dominant clique with regard to this conflict is of some interest, and will be discussed shortly.

Leadership of the Junior Bandits was exercised, in effect, not by an individual but by a group. The dominant clique of the gang consisted of about 10 boys, most of whom were slightly older than members of the two subordinate cliques. Each of the boys in the dominant clique had proven his ability in some activity valued by the gang. One was recognized as a skillful fighter and strategist, and assumed leadership when the gang became involved in combat. The organizational capabilities of another enabled him to take the lead in policy planning, and to maintain some degree of order among participants in planning activities. Two others acted as co-captains of the Bandit football team. Several were skilled in argument and debate, and acted as opinion leaders in policy discussions. It was a member of this clique, moreover, who was formally recognized as the “leader” of the Junior Bandits, although he was a mild, non-assertive person with

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202 The conflict within gangs between the advocates of law-violation and of law-adherence is discussed from a somewhat different point of view in “The Impact of a Community Group Work Program on Delinquent Corner groups,” op. cit.
no special talents in crime, athletics, or other prestige-conferring activities. The significance of this “weak leader” arrangement will be discussed later.

Members of the dominant clique did not exercise authority after the manner of permanent incumbents of established authority positions. Rather, particular boys assumed leadership for those activities whose conduct fell within their particular sphere of competence. Thus when the gang was engaged in football playing, in gang fighting, in policy discussions—boys recognized as best qualified in that activity assumed leadership. Similarly, when the gang was involved in theft expeditions or dealings with adult agencies, primary responsibility fell to the leaders of the subordinate cliques whose competence in these areas was recognized.

The right of the dominant clique to exercise leadership was, in general, readily accepted by members of the two subordinate cliques as well as those who were not definitely affiliated with a clique. Under ordinary circumstances, however, the dominant clique did not choose to exert their authority with respect to the continuing dispute between the subordinate factions over the issue of violative activity, maintaining instead a position of neutrality. It was only when the dispute became sufficiently intense as to threaten actual conflict that the dominant clique would intervene. In such intervention they acted primarily to resolve the dispute; they did not appear consistently to favor one side or the other.

On one occasion the police had been summoned to restrain members of the “bad boy” clique who were engaged in boisterous drinking and damaging public equipment in the park, during a period when the Bandit football team was doing well in municipal league competition. Members of the dominant clique began to pressure the leader of the “bad boy” clique to refrain from further misbehavior on the grounds that widespread police action against the gang would jeopardize the football team, and in particular, that a police order forbidding Bandits to use the park would leave the team without a practice field. The “bad boy” leader, who was not on the team, angrily pressed for further retaliatory harassment of the police to preserve the honor of the gang. “If I wreck the park, and the cops come down and
chase out the team, and I ain’t on the team, that’s the cops’ mistake, and the cops’ fault, not mine.” This reasoning was firmly rejected by the dominant clique. “We’re all agreed on this. Anyone that screws up the gang is screwing up the team, and he’s out! That’s it, and no more arguing!”

On another occasion, however, the dominant clique put its support behind the proponents of illegality. A Junior Bandit had been attacked by members of a rival gang. Members of the “bad boy” clique, along with others, gathered sticks and clubs and milled around the park, angrily discussing the incident. The “bad boy” leader was not in the area, and the aroused gang members seemed unable to mobilize an organized retaliatory force. At this point members of the dominant clique, noting the apparent leadership vacuum, stepped in and took command. “Okay—ya wanna fight? Here’s the way we do it. Any cops come, ditch ya weapons and clam up. We meet any of them (rival gang) guys, we jump ‘em. Anyone that don’t fight, I whip his ass myself...” Thus mobilized and provided with leadership, the attack party, which included members of the dominant clique, set out.

The leadership system of the Junior Bandits was, if anything, even farther removed from the “one big gang boss” pattern than was the “multi-leader power-balance” system of the Seniors. The intricate arrangement of cliques and leadership utilized by the gang enabled it to contain within a relatively unified associational orbit a variety of individuals and cliques with varying and often conflicting orientations. Three features of this system are worthy of note: leadership was situational rather than fixed; authority figures acted as an agent of consensus rather than a source of direction.

The Junior Bandits were not headed by a single individual invested with generalized and inclusive authority. Leadership for particular activities was provided as the occasion arose by boys whose competence in that activity had been established. Leadership was thus flexible, shifting, and adaptable to changing group circumstances. Insofar as there was a measure of relatively concentrated authority, it was invested in a collectivity rather than an individual. The several “situational”
leaders of the dominant clique constituted what was in effect a kind of ruling
council, which arrived at its decisions through a process of extended collective
discussion generally involving all concerned parties. Decisions affecting the group
were thus arrived at in such a way that those who were to execute a plan of action
had taken part in the process by which it was developed.

A final feature of this system concerns the boy who was recognized as “the
leader” of the Junior Bandits. When the gang formed a club to expedite involvement
in athletic activities, he was chosen as its president. Although he was an accepted
member of the dominant clique, he did not, on the surface, seem to possess any
particular qualifications for this position. He was mild-mannered, unassertive, and
consistently refused to take a definite stand on outstanding issues, let alone taking
the initiative lead in implementing policy. He appeared to follow rather to lead; one
night when the leaders of the two subordinate factions became infuriated with one
another in the course of a dispute, he followed both boys around for several hours,
begging them to calm down and reconcile their differences. At one point during the
contact period the gang was on the verge of splitting into irreconcilable factions over
a financial issue. One group accused another of illegitimate appropriation of club
funds; the accusation was hotly denied; angry recriminations arose which swept in a
variety of dissatisfactions with the club and its conduct. In the course of this melee
the leader of the “bad boy” faction complained bitterly about the refusal of the
president to take sides or assume any initiative in resolving the dispute, and called
for a new election. This was agreed to and the election was held—with the result
that the “weak” president was re-elected by a decisive majority, and was reinstated
in office amidst emotional outbursts of acclaim and reaffirmations of the unity of
the gang.

It was thus evident that the majority of gang members, despite temporary
periods of anger over particular issues, recognized on some level the true function
performed by the “weak” leader. Given the fact that the gang included a set of
cliques with differing orientations and conflicting notions, and a set of leaders
whose authority was limited to specific areas, the maintenance of gang cohesion required some special mechanisms. One was the “consensual” functioning of the dominant clique; another was the device of the “weak” leader. It is most unlikely that a forceful or dominant person could have controlled the sanctions which would enable him to coerce the strong-willed factions into compliance. The very fact that the “weak” leader refused to take sides and was noncommittal on key issues made him acceptable to the conflicting interests represented in the gang. Further, along with the boy’s non-assertive demeanor went a real talent for mediation; he was convincing and effective in promoting conciliatory action. But in addition to the concrete attributes which enabled the leader to function effectively, he also served on a symbolic level to represent the unity of the group. The intensity of the gangs’ emotional reaction to his removal and reinstatement was an indication that the leader in fact served as an embodiment of the notion that the gang could remain a cohesive unit, in the face of its intense factional rivalries and bitter disputes.

The Molls
The Molls were a relatively small gang of white girls whose primary hangout was a corner and back alley about a block from Ben’s store. Despite their proximity to the Bandit’s hanging corner, the girls had little contact with the Bandits. Their primary affiliation, instead, was with the Hoods, a boy’s gang of about the same age as the Junior Bandits. The Hoods, numbering 18 active

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\[204\] The bulk of field data was recorded by Beverly Ross Fleigel. Associational and offense analyses were done by Dr. Mickey Clampit and Rosetta Mcneil, Aparicio.
members, were not part of the Bandit aggregate, although two or three also hung out with the Junior Bandits. Unlike the Bandit, Outlaw, and Royal gangs, the Molls and Hoods were not part of a larger multi-subdivision gang; instead, the two units, one male and one female, comprised the total aggregate.\footnote{Despite the fact that the Molls as a gang were not affiliated with the Bandits, there were kin ties between the two groups. Two of the Molls had brothers in the Bandits, and another later married a Bandit.}

Although the size of the hanging group varied according to the season and changing individual circumstances, the Molls could count about 11 girls of whom they could say “she hangs with us.” A female field worker maintained continuing contact with the Molls for 30 months. She also observed and reported on the Hoods, but contact was not sufficiently close as to warrant their inclusion as an “intensive contact” gang. At the start of the contact period the average Moll was 13.5 years old, and at the end, 16 years. All the Molls were born within two and a half years of one another.

Like the Bandits, the Molls were Catholic—mostly Irish, with one set of sisters of Irish-German background. Fathers who were known and who were employed (several of the Moll’s father were not in the area; several others were steadily unemployed) worked at typical lower class III jobs such as signhanger, plate glass cutter, and factory laborer. Typical also of lower class III life-ways, most of the girls’ mothers worked, holding low-skilled jobs such as housemaid, laundry-press operator, machine operation in a shoe factory, and kitchen worker in a hospital. All eight of the Molls’ families were known to have received some form of assistance from public welfare agencies. With 100% of their families having been on welfare, the Molls ranked highest among the intensive-contact groups in this respect.

The educational experience of the Molls was consistent with the social status of their parents. In accordance with the compulsory education laws, all 11 girls were attending school at age 14; once past age 16, all but two dropped out; none entered college. The Moll’s drop-out rate of about 80% was second only to that of the worst-
educated Senior Bandits. As the girls approached the age when leaving school was permitted, they truanted with increasing frequency. Upon leaving school, most of the girls took low-skilled jobs in local factories.

**Law-Violation, Cliques, and Leadership**

As fourteen year olds, the Molls were known in the neighborhood as “bad girls.” This reputation derived largely from the fact that they dressed in tight dungarees, white shirts, and garrison belts, hung out at night with the Hoods, used obscene language, insulted and played pranks on passers-by, drank beer in public, showed little respect for workers and “good kids” at “the Set,” and were less than dedicated in the matter of school attendance. The Molls themselves, in one sense, shared this appraisal. The principal leader of the Molls once said of herself—“I’m a real gang girl!” In another sense, they felt this reputation to be unfair. To most neighborhood adults, it was axiomatic that girls who were “bad” after the fashion of the Molls must also be sexually “bad.” The Molls resented the lumping together of sexual immorality and what they regarded as conventional illegal behavior. The same girl who boasted of being a real gang girl, fondly reminiscing at 16 of her gangs’ misbehavior at 14, said... “But we never was really bad—not in that (sexual) way...”

What, in fact, was the character of the Molls’ criminal behavior? Later chapters designate as “central complex crimes” a set of offenses conventionally engaged in by adolescent males in low-status urban communities. These include theft, assault, and drinking offenses, but not sex offenses. Although they were girls, the criminal behavior of the Molls closely approximated this complex. Their illegal activity mirrored in lesser intensity that of the local boys, particularly that of their brother group, the Hoods.

By the time they were 17, all 11 of the Molls were known to have engaged in some form of illegal behavior. Five of the girls had been arrested, four had appeared in court, and two had been confined to correctional institutions. The Molls thus
shared first place with the Senior Bandits in the percentage of members known to have been arrested. Their rate of involvement in illegal acts ranked them well above two of the male groups—the higher status Kings and Senior Bandits. Their arrest percentage of 45% compared with a percentage of 8% for the other female gang, the higher status Queens. An examination of the more prevalent forms of illegal activity among the Molls will provide an impression of its character. Their six most frequent offenses were: truancy (15 involvements per ten girls per ten month period); theft (4.7); drinking violations (3.3); property damage (2.8); sex offenses (1.3); assault (0.7). In the number of girls known to have engaged in each offense, rankings were 1- theft, truancy (7 girls); 2- drinking violations (6); 3- property damage (5); 4- sex violations (3); 5- assault (1).

Truancy, the failure to attend school for a day, several days, or extended periods, was for the Molls the most frequent offense. Seven of the eleven girls were known to have truanted, with 44 instances of truancy having been recorded during the contact period. One girl deliberately stayed out of school for three weeks in hopes of being expelled from one school so she could enter another. While out of school the girls often stayed home, sometimes to perform household duties, sometimes to play records and gossip. Mothers’ reactions to truancy varied, both among mothers and by the same mother at different times. In some instances daughters stayed home to care for younger siblings or do other household chores at the request of their mothers (especially those who worked during the day, who then wrote fraudulent excuse notes for the girls). Other mothers were opposed to truancy and punished their daughters if they were discovered skipping school. The girls themselves gave a variety of reasons for truancy, ranging from home obligations to boredom with studies. Whatever their reasons, the Molls’ pattern of irregular school attendance between the ages of 14 and 16 represented an advance manifestation of their ultimate permanent discontinuation of schooling.

Theft was the Molls’ second most frequent offense, and as many girls were known to have stolen as to have truanted. Moll theft was generally quite minor in
comparison with the well-patterned and flamboyant theft of the Senior Bandits. Girls stole post cards, magazines, popcorn, fountain pens, etc., from local stores. Three of the girls engaged in shoplifting from downtown stores, and one was put on probation when caught. In one instance three of the girls stole $31 from the aunt of one of them and bought clothes with the money. This theft was considered by the Molls themselves as their most serious, and they later made some attempts at restitution.

Illegal drinking was the third most frequent offense, with six girls known to have been thus involved. The girls drank at home, on the corner, at school; by themselves and with the Hoods they drank beer, wine, liquor. Most Moll drinking was relatively light, resulting primarily in boisterous behavior; occasionally they drank more heavily and got drunk. One girl who had been drinking quite heavily made a game of darting into the street to see how closely she could avoid being hit by cars. Several times the Molls were caught in illegal possession of liquor; once two girls brought a bottle of whiskey to school; in another instance police caught the Molls and Hoods drinking beer in the park. None of these apprehensions resulted in official action; in the school incident the girls told authorities they had mistaken the bottle of liquor for a bottle of perfume.

Property damage or vandalism, the Molls fourth most frequent offense, ranked high in its capacity to exercise neighborhood residents. Two rough categories of property damage could be distinguished: acts undertaken primarily for excitement and amusement, and those undertaken primarily out of hostility. Examples of destructive acts which appeared to be motivated primarily by a desire for “fun” were the burning of rubbish barrels in the Molls’ hanging alley, burning the name “Molls” on the ceiling of the housing project recreation room, and breaking

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206 The issue of the “motivation” of gang crime of various kinds will be treated at length in later chapters. “Fun” and “anger” are also seen as two of a number of possible incentives for theft. The treatment of motivation stresses the multiple nature of motives for particular criminal acts; it is thus recognized that acts of property damage here characterized as motivated “primarily” by a desire for fun or to show anger may also involve other motives as well. Property damage is examined in greater detail in Chapter Eleven.
windows in abandoned houses. Examples of destructive acts directed against persons who had aroused their anger were the breaking of housing project windows after the project manager denied the girls’ use of the (Moll-marked) recreation room, and window-breaking at the house of a neighborhood woman whom the Molls believed to be spreading untrue stories about them. The clearest instance of hostility-motivated vandalism occurred when the Molls’ principal leader was committed to a correctional institution on the complaint of her mother. The mother had just bought a white Buick sedan with her recently deceased husband’s life insurance; the girls attacked the car with nails and glass and scratched it so extensively that it had to be completely repainted.

With regard to sexual offenses, while much of the Molls’ sexual behavior violated the moral standards of middle class adults (See Chapter Six), their involvement in sexual activities which violated legal statutes was low relative to other offenses.207 No substantiated instance of extra-marital sexual intercourse was recorded during the observation period, although indirect evidence indicated that three of the Molls, and possibly a fourth, had engaged in sexual acts which could have resulted in arrest had they been detected. None of these, however, actually did produce official action. This in itself is significant; the Molls were sufficiently circumspect about what illegal sexual activity did engage in so that its existence was hidden from both official and unofficial view. This contrasts with their involvement in offenses such as truancy and vandalism, which they talked about quite freely and even boasted about, under appropriate circumstances.

Direct involvement by the Molls in assaultive offenses, the favorite delinquency of the nearby Junior Bandits, was rare. Only one clearly illegal incident was recorded during the contact period; from their perch on the roof of the housing project Molls threw rocks at a customer leaving the “Delly” below. The rarity of assaultive offenses cannot be attributed simply to the fact that the Molls were

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207 The Molls also ranked low among the study gangs with regard to morally-violative sexual behavior, ranking lowest of the seven gangs. In this respect they differed from the Negro Queens, who ranked second in “disapproved” sexual actions (See Table 2.8, Chapter 8).
female, since the other intensive-contact female gang, the Queens, showed 18 involvements in assaultive acts during the observation period, thus besting one of the male gangs in this respect. This difference between the two female gangs will be discussed shortly.

The Molls also engaged in a number of other offenses during the observation period which do not fall readily under the above categories. One summer they adopted the practice of killing neighborhood cats; several times they provided hideouts for correctional escapees; at other times they carried knives and other weapons for Hoods who were involved in gang fighting.

The actual character of the Molls’ offense pattern has been discussed in somewhat greater detail than is the case for the other gangs because, by and large, the nature of female gang crime is less well known than male, and is subject to a considerably greater degree to distortion and exaggeration. Several points of interest emerge from the foregoing brief description of the Molls’ offense pattern.

The Molls’ major offenses were truancy, theft, alcohol violations, and vandalism. Of these, truancy falls into a special category because its illegality is so directly related to a particular chronological age. Non-attendance at school was no longer illegal once the Molls passed the age of 16, and, in fact, the girls abruptly terminated their involvement in this offense, in the absence of any behavioral reform, by the simple expediency of dropping out of school once they reached the age of 16. The remaining three major violations approximate the “central complex” crimes characteristic of lower class adolescent males; the patterns differ only in that “property damage” appears in place of “assault.” This suggests that vandalism played a role for the Molls similar to that played by assault for the other gangs. It has been noted that much of the Molls’ vandalism represented direct expressions of hostility against particular persons; the Molls attempted to hurt someone by hurting something he owned. It would thus appear, particularly by comparison with the Queens whose rate of assault was much higher, that vandalism served for the
Molls as a vehicle for expressing hostility, in much the same way as did assault in other groups.

One reason that the Molls’ pattern of criminal involvement so closely resembled that of the males was that they had engaged in a serious attempt, particularly between the ages of 13 and 15, to find favor in the eyes of the Hoods, and to become recognized as their girls. The Hoods were among the most criminal of the 14 male gangs whose court experience was examined, ranking fourth in frequency of court appearances between the ages of 14 and 17 and third in court appearances for theft. Their criminal behavior in many respects more closely resembled that of the Senior Bandits than did that of the latter’s own younger brother group.

The Molls’ campaign to gain the trust and affection of the Hoods involved an attempt to show that they shared their general orientation to law-violation. One way of doing this was to approve, support, and abet their criminal activities; another was to themselves commit, if only in an attenuated form, the same kinds of offenses. The Molls themselves, while recognizing their desire to emulate the boys as only one of several kinds of motives, made it quite clear that the wish to gain acceptance by the Hoods was an important reason for committing crimes. One used these words: “Ya know, if ya been hangin’ with them every night, ya wanna do the same things as they do. Ya don’t wanna be an outcast! When the boys hooked pickles, we hooked pickles...” During this period failure to engage in male-type criminality invoked male-type sanctions. A Moll who refused to go along on a property-destruction venture was taunted with the words “Fairy! Fairy!” This accusation of non-masculinity was deserved, one of the girls explained, —“because she won’t do vandalism with us no more.”

The Molls’ attempt to emulate and be accepted by the boys also influenced their sexual behavior. One popular image of girls’ gangs pictures them as freely

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208 See Chapter Nine (Male Sex and Mating), for a more detailed treatment of this phenomenon, as well as a more general discussion of the relationship between male and female gang units.
available concubines, and much writing on female delinquency stresses the centrality of sexual offenses. The behavior of the Molls, particularly during early adolescence, appeared to be predicated on the assumption that the way to get boys to like you was to like them rather than accessible to them. As already noted, the Molls did not flaunt their sexual exploits in order to win esteem, as they did in the case of other offenses; on the contrary, they were quite secretive about what sexual misbehavior they did engage in. Although the social status of the Molls was lower than that of the Queens (Negro, Protestant), it is possible that their reluctance to engage in and/or exploit sexual misbehavior was related to their status as white Catholics.

A further aspect of the Molls’ pattern of illegal behavior concerns their reputation as “bad girls.” It has frequently been observed that standards applied to female behavior are stricter than those applied to male, and that a degree of criminal involvement which might appear as rather modest for boys is seen as quite serious for girls. How “bad” the Molls are adjudged to be depends a great deal on the basis of comparison one uses. Compared with male gangs of the same social status the Molls were not very criminal. Their rate of involvement in all forms of illegal behavior, including truancy, was approximately 25 offenses for each ten girls per ten month period—less than one tenth the rate of the male gangs of the same status (Bandits, 278.1). On the other hand, their rate was approximately the same as that of the higher status (lower class II) Junior Outlaws, and compared to middle class girls, or even with the Queens whose comparable rate was 6.8, the Molls appear quite criminal. Acts such as nightly public drinking by 13 year olds, carrying knives for gang fighters, drinking whiskey in school, chronic and parent-abetted truancy—while scarcely unheard of among higher-status girls, are relatively infrequent and seldom widespread.

The leadership and clique situation among the Molls reflected the fact that their gang was small relative to those of the boys, that they were female rather than male, and that criminal involvement was an important aspect of gang activities.
During most of the contact period the Molls comprised two categories of member—more active and less active. The more active clique comprised six girls who hung out frequently and participated regularly in gang activities. The less active clique was made up of five girls who hung out less frequently and participated less frequently in gang activities. The more active clique was clearly dominant; it set the tone for the gang and provided its leadership.

The Molls’ leadership arrangement could be seen as a truncated version of that of the Senior Bandits. There were two leaders—a principal leader, whose authority was clearly recognized, and a secondary leader. Both girls were members of the more active clique. As in the case of the Senior Bandits, the secondary leader served as a standby who assumed leadership when the principal leader was institutionalized, and relinquished it when she returned.

The more active clique was unequivocally the more criminal. The rate of involvement in illegal acts for the active clique was 23.7 involvements for each ten girls per 10 month period, compared to a rate of only 1.3 for the less active girls. Active members accounted for 43 of the gangs’ 44 recorded truancies; all had been arrested at least once; two had been sentenced in court. None of the less active girls had gone to court, and only one was known to have truanted. The two girls who finished high school both belonged to the less active clique.

It is thus clear that it was the more criminal clique which represented the dominant orientation of the gang as a whole. Further, the principal leader showed the highest rate of illegal involvement of all 11 girls, and the secondary leader the second highest. As in the case of the Senior Bandits, there was little direct conflict between the two leaders. Instead, also like the Senior Bandits, they competed for prestige by striving to excel in illegal accomplishments.

In addition to those associational patterns which resembled those of the boys’ gangs, there were other patterns which reflected the fact that the Molls were female. Prominent among these was a “best friend” pattern which cross-cut the two major cliques. Two girls would develop crushes on one another and spend much of
their time together. They were then known as “best friends,” and shared secrets and
confidences until some violation of trust or competition over a boyfriend dissolved
their special intimacy into the ordinary ties between gang members. Best-friend
pairings were generally of limited duration, with different pairings and re-pairing
succeeding each other during the contact period. The relative instability of the best-
friend pattern, generally involving two girls but sometimes three, was more
prevalent during the summer months, when jobs, visits, and other pursuits reduced
the size and stability of the hanging group, and during the latter part of the contact
period, as an increase in the tempo of mating and a divergence of life paths
weakened ties to the larger gang.

An understanding of the particular forms of criminal behavior, leadership,
and associational patterns found among the Molls may be approached by a
consideration of their major status characteristics—particularly those of age, sex,
social class, and ethnic status. As younger adolescents their involvement in mating
was more collective than that of older adolescents. As females they were less
criminal than males of similar social status and shared associational forms with
other non-gang female groupings. As lower class III gang members they were more
criminal, and more masculinely criminal, than females of higher status, and shared
associational forms with “tough” male gangs. As white and Catholic, they were less
active in sexual violations, and more active in theft, than their black Protestant
counterparts, the Queens. This approach to the explanation of gang behavior, both
criminal and non-criminal—one which views differentiated forms of customary
behavior as responsive to the simultaneous influence of the subcultures of a set of
“status classes”—plays a major role in the present work, and will be treated in
greater detail in the later theoretical discussion of “subcultural conjunction.”

*The Outlaw Neighborhood*

The Outlaw street corner was less than a mile from that of the Bandits. The
neighborhood environment, however, was quite different. Like the Bandits, the
Outlaws were white, Catholic, and predominantly Irish, with a few Italians and Irish-Italians. But their social status, here designated as lower class II, was sufficiently higher than that of the Bandits as to be reflected in significant differences in both their gang and family life.\textsuperscript{209}

The Outlaws hung out on a classic hanging corner—complete with drug store, variety store, a neighborhood bar (Callahan’s Bar and Grill), a pool hall, and several other small businesses such as a laundromat. The corner was within one block of a large park, a convenient locale for card games, lovemaking, and athletic practice. Most residents of the Outlaw neighborhood were oblivious to the deafening roar of the elevated train that periodically rattled the houses and stores of Midcity Avenue, which formed one street of the Outlaw corner. There was no housing project in the Outlaw neighborhood, and none of the Outlaws were Project residents. Most of their families rented one level of one of the three-decker wooden tenements which were common in the area; a few owned their own homes.\textsuperscript{210}

In the mid-1950’s the Outlaw neighborhood experienced significant changes as a consequence of the in-movement of Negroes previously described. During this period most of the white residents, gradually and with reluctance, left their homes and moved out to the first fringe of Port City’s residential suburbs, abandoning the area to the Negroes. Prior to this time the Outlaw corner had been a hanging locale for many years. The Outlaw name and corner dated from at least the late 1920’s, and perhaps earlier. One local boy who was not an Outlaw observed disgruntledly that anyone who started a fight with an Outlaw would end up fighting son, father, and grandfather, since all were or had been Outlaws. A somewhat drunken and sentimental Outlaw, speaking at a farewell banquet for their field worker, declared

\textsuperscript{209} The bulk of field recording for all Outlaw gangs was done by Mason Moton. Analysis of cliques, leadership, and associational patterns were done by Dr. Mickey Clampit and Rosetta McNiel.\textsuperscript{210} All the buildings on and near the Outlaw corner, as well as much of the surrounding area, were completely razed during the “urban renewal” phase of the 1960’s. At the time of writing, no new construction had been undertaken, and for a good part of the decade the Outlaw neighborhood described here consisted of rubble-strewn fields.
impassionedly that any infant born into an Outlaw family was destined from birth to wear the Outlaw jacket.

One consequence of the fact that the Outlaw corner had been a hanging locale for many years was that the hanging aggregate, during the 30 month observation period, included a full complement of age-graded subdivisions. Another consequence was that the subdivisions were closely connected by kinship. There were six clearly differentiated subdivisions on the corner: the Marauders, boys in their late teens and early twenties; the Senior Outlaws, boys between 16 and 18; the Junior Outlaws, 14 to 16; and the Midget Outlaws, 11 to 13. There were also two girls groups, the Outlawettes and the Little Outlawettes (the two are merged in Table 1.5). The number of Outlaws in all subdivisions totaled slightly over 200 persons, ranging in age, approximately, from 10 to 25 years (Table 1.5).

The several subdivisions were closely interrelated by a complex network of kinship ties.²¹¹ Seventeen of the 26 Senior Outlaws had relatives in other subdivisions; for example, four had brothers in other subdivisions, two had sisters, and one had a nephew. Within the group itself were three sets of brothers and a pair of cousins. Twelve of the 24 Junior Outlaws had relatives in other subdivisions; most were brothers, but there were some uncles and cousins as well. The group itself contained two sets of brothers (one of them twins) and two sets of cousins. Three of the Outlawettes were sister of Outlaws.

On the conservative assumption that 1930 was the first year that gangs began to hang out on the Outlaw corner, and that a new subdivision formed every two years, there would have been a minimum of a dozen groups bearing the Outlaw name and perpetuating the Outlaw tradition by the time the study period

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²¹¹ Kinship ties among gang members were not studied on a systematic basis. Data on kinship presented here and elsewhere were obtained through information which appeared in field records and other sources, and do not represent exhaustive counts. Kinship figures thus represent minimum estimates; it is most likely that a systematic study would have revealed such ties to have been even more extensive than indicated by available data.
This fact, along with the intricate kinship intermeshing of the age-graded subdivisions, makes it difficult to conceive the Outlaws as anything other than a “group.” Although it is quite likely that some among the many kinds of gangs found in American cities comprise relatively ephemeral and casually interrelated congeries, it is quite evident that the Outlaws with their clear sense of group identity, their multi-generational background, their well-ordered system of subdivisions, their kinship ties, their esprit-de-corps and fierce group loyalty were indeed a “group” in the truest sense of the word.

The cohesiveness of the Outlaws, during the 1950’s, was enhanced in no small measure by an adult who played a central role in their lives. This was Rosa—the owner of the variety store which was their principal hangout. While older members of the Marauders congregated nightly in Callahan’s Bar, and some of the Senior Outlaws hung out in the drug store where one of their number worked as clerk, most of the Outlaws most of the time, and all at some time, remained close to the wooden door stoop and unpainted planked floors of Rosa’s Variety.

Rosa was a stout, unmarried woman of about 40 who was, in effect, the street corner mother of all 200 Outlaws. But she was a most extraordinary kind of mother, since she was intimately familiar with the world of the corner, and obviously in sympathy with it. For example, her knowledge of big league baseball and basketball was so detailed and so current that one Outlaw bestowed upon her the ultimate compliment—that in this respect she hardly seemed like a woman at all. On rainy summer afternoons when the Outlaws had too little money for the movies or pool they sat in Rosa’s store, watching television and playing whist. They were seldom denied permission to congregate in the store, although occasionally when they became too boisterous or stayed too long, Rosa would shoo them out.

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212 1930 is the earliest year for which a reliable informant reported a group bearing the Outlaw name to be present on the Outlaw corner; it is highly probable, however, that Outlaws were on the corner prior to this date.

213 Ref. to Yablonsky, “near group” issue.
In return, the boys minded the store for Rosa on those occasions when she was called away, and even during the age period when they were most active in thievery, served as trustworthy and responsible clerks. On one wall of her store Rosa mounted a bulletin board where the Outlaws could post notices, telephone messages, and athletic rosters. She acted as banker for funds earned by the group, and loaned money to improvident gang members. One Outlaw who decided to save as much money as he could before entering the service was torn between the alternatives of banking his money with Rosa or in a commercial bank. Over and again Rosa scolded the Outlaws for their misbehavior, gave them advice on all sorts of matters from love problems to work prospects, sympathized with the occasional gang member who had fallen into disfavor among his mates, instructed them in the techniques of holding raffles and running dances, and wept when the Outlaws presented her a gift at a banquet given in her honor.

Rosa’s store remained an effective clearing house for all information relating to the Outlaws. Most of the Outlaws who entered the armed services wrote faithfully. Rosa maintained a large scrapbook containing pictures of the Outlaws and newspaper accounts of their athletic activities, and kept on her highest shelf the baseball trophy won one year by the Seniors. Asked about an Outlaw who had moved to another neighborhood, Rosa was hurt and upset. “I can’t figure out what’s wrong! He ain’t been around or phoned in two weeks!” In 1965 Rosa’s store was demolished as part of the Midcity Urban Renewal Program. By this time most of the Outlaws had left the neighborhood, and Rosa had leased her store to a black man who served an almost totally Negro clientele.

Relations Among Outlaw Subdivisions
Each of the six subdivisions of the Outlaws maintained an identity as a distinct group with definite group boundaries. The nature of the aggregate did, however, allow for a considerable degree of associational flexibility. Both the size and composition of subgroups could be adapted to the associational requirements of
different circumstances. One such circumstance was team athletics. Most male gang members maintained some order of involvement in football, baseball, basketball, or some combination of these. Although the typical male subdivision averaged approximately 30 members, the full complement was seldom available on a consistent basis for team participation. Thus, one subdivision could generally provide the personnel for two basketball squads (five men per squad) or one baseball team (nine men), but it was almost impossible to compose a football squad (25 to 30 men) out of a single subdivision. The Outlaws generally entered such a team (“The Midcity Outlaws”) in the municipal recreation department league, drawing on the manpower resources of the Juniors, Seniors, and even, on occasion, the Marauders.

It was not unheard of, moreover, for the Outlaws to utilize non-Outlaws as team members. But the conditions of such utilization illustrate nicely the Outlaws’ conception of aggregate boundaries. In one instance several football-minded members of the Senior Bandits, whose own ranks were too depleted by incarceration to permit them to form a team of their own, approached the Outlaws (their sometime gang fighting enemies) with the unusual request that they be permitted to play on the Outlaw team. Since they were able athletes they were accepted. But it was clear that acceptance as team members did not mean acceptance as gang members. When the Outlaws bought jackets one of the Bandits asked if he, too, could buy one. He was told firmly and explicitly, “You don’t hang with us, so you ain’t an Outlaw, and nobody but Outlaws gets Outlaw jackets.” Nor were the Bandits permitted to wear football uniforms purchased out of Outlaw funds, having instead to obtain their own.

On the other hand, quite a few of the boys who hung out on the Outlaw corner but did not play with the teams were authorized to get and wear Outlaw jackets. It was thus clear that the principal and necessary criterion of membership in the group was hanging out; participation in athletic activities alone did not provide a sufficient basis for being considered “one of us” by the Outlaws. These
examples show clearly that the Outlaws maintained a distinct sense of identity vis-
à-vis outsiders and other corner groups. It is equally evident, despite instances of
joint action by two or more subdivisions—that each age-graded subdivision
regarded itself as a distinct group. This was so obvious to the Outlaws that it was
difficult for them to understand how outsiders could perceive the total aggregate as
an undifferentiated “gang,” without distinguishing between subdivisions.

When a local priest donated a check to the “Midcity Outlaws” football team
(the name used by the merged Junior-Senior-Marauder team) the boys were quite
puzzled as to why the priest failed to specify which of the Outlaw subdivisions was
to receive the money, and were amused at his ignorance of group structure. Both
Juniors and Seniors could lay claim to the check as made out, and in an effort to
avoid possible Junior-Senior conflict, a leader of the Seniors visited the priest and
asked him to make out two separate checks (hinting, in addition, that each should
be in the same amount as the first). He explained that the team was composed
primarily of Seniors, and that a few of the more able “little kids” were permitted to
play with them as an act of kindness. This explanation upset the Juniors, who
resented the implication that players from their group were merely an unimportant
adjunct to a Senior team.

With few exceptions, gang members remained with the same subdivision
throughout adolescence. An unusual instance of a change from one subdivision to
another provides an insight into the psychic significance of the subdivision as a unit
of affiliation. Ordinarily membership in one or another of the age-graded divisions
was fairly well determined by one’s age. Boys near the higher and lower age limits,
however, had some choice in this respects. Both the Junior and Senior Outlaws,
during the observation period, formed “clubs” to facilitate their involvement in
athletics. The youth serving as vice president of the Juniors was somewhat older
than his fellows, and handled his job competently. Both these characteristics
attracted the attention of the Seniors, who encouraged him to hang out with them
instead of the Juniors, and to attend their meetings. Flattered, the boy began to
move toward the orbit of the older boys. Shortly afterwards he dropped the name by which he was known to the Juniors, and adopted the new (and tougher) nickname of “Rocky.” He did so well with the Seniors that he was made treasurer of their club. He was unable, however, pulled by divided loyalty, to relinquish his position with the Juniors. His dilemma was resolved for him, forcefully. One night the leader of the Seniors strode into a meeting of the Juniors and solemnly announced—“Rocky is in the big clique now; he’s with the wheels. You guys’ll haveta get someone else...”

This incident illuminates the nature of affiliation with a subdivision as well as certain aspects of relations between subdivisions. The boy’s adoption of a new name is a classic practice, found in many primitive, and less primitive, societies, whereby one’s assumption of a new group affiliation is perceived as a fundamental change in one’s identity. Equally classic was the formal announcement whereby ties to the old group were ritually severed and ties to the new ritually confirmed. The boy’s powerful reluctance to give up his affiliation with the younger group, and the necessity of executive fiat to pry him loose, attests to the intensity of the affiliation, and the gravity of relinquishing it. The incident also shows that in the world of the lower class gang as in other worlds competence is at a premium, is competed for, and is rewarded. The capacity of the older group to entice the boy away from the younger and to impel their acceptance thereof attests to their superior prestige, and in this respect, at least, the legitimacy of their authority.

Although each subdivision zealously guarded its own identity (the Seniors were particularly upset at being mistaken for the Juniors) and were in many respects competitive with the others, their mutual relations were, for the most part, friendly and cooperative. The Juniors and Seniors, in addition to joint athletic participation, played cards together, and sometimes hung out in Rosa’s at the same time. Their common identity as Outlaws was particularly in evidence during periods of conflict with other gangs. At one point the Juniors were “going for bad”—attempting to establish a reputation as tough fighters—and deliberately provoked a fight with another gang. The Seniors, past the age when fighting was a prime basis
of “rep,” scolded the Juniors for their provocative actions. Nevertheless, along with some of the Marauders, they joined with the Juniors to retaliate against retaliation by the outside gang.

Relations of the younger groups with the oldest subdivision, the Marauders, were less intensive than those between Juniors and Seniors. Most of the older boys were out of school and working; quite a few were married; most preferred Callahan’s bar to Rosa’s as a hangout, and thus spent less time on the corner than the 14 to 18 year-old Juniors and Seniors. Several of the Marauders had established city-wide reputations as athletes and thieves, and thus were held in great respect, especially by the Juniors—one of whom said of the Marauders, in awed tones—“Them are some rough cats!” Leaders of the Marauders often exercised the prerogatives of their superior age and prestige by acting as mediators in the case of disputes between the younger subdivisions. When members of the younger subdivisions became discouraged at athletic defeats, they were given support and encouragement by the Marauders—one of whom said to the Seniors that someday, if their team kept improving, they might be as good as the BIG kids (viz., themselves).

Alliances between subdivisions with respect to local matters shifted according to circumstance. During the gang fighting incident just described, the Marauders sided with the Seniors in censuring the Juniors as troublemakers. On the other hand, when a Marauder attempted to order out of Rosa’s a noisy group of Juniors, which included one or two Seniors, the Seniors warned the Marauder to be less high-handed, since a larger group of Seniors was hanging outside on the corner, and could be quickly enlisted as allies of the Juniors to form a group so formidable that the Marauders “couldn’t touch” them.

This brief discussion shows that relations between Outlaw subdivisions were complex and subtle, involving, in varying degrees, mild to intense inter-division competition, shifting patterns of alliance and rivalry, situations of teaching and learning, dominance and subordinancy, and an over-arching sense of common identity as “Outlaws” which was most strongly activated during times of conflict.
with other gangs. In these respects inter-division relations closely resembled those of numerous other kinds of multi-unit collectivities, such as blocs of nations, states of the union, and sets of siblings. It should be noted, however, that relations both within and between the several Outlaw subdivisions were more solidary than those of either of the other multi-subdivision gangs—the Bandits and the Royals. While both class and ethnic influences probably affected these differences, (the Bandits were of lower status; the Kings Negro), the higher degree of residential stability of the lower class II families which fed the Outlaw gangs was in all probability a major factor. The following sections will describe briefly the two Outlaw subdivisions which were studied most intensively—the Junior and Senior Outlaws.

*The Senior Outlaws*

Second oldest of the male Outlaw subdivisions, the Senior Outlaws, numbered 25 active members. They were under intensive observation for a period of 27 months, having been contacted for study three months after the Juniors. At the start of the observation period the Senior Outlaws ranged in age from fifteen and a half to seventeen (average age 16.5), and at its termination, seventeen and a half to nineteen and a half (average age 18.7). The ethnic and social status of the Senior Outlaws was similar to that of the Juniors, the two groups being linked, as has been shown, by kinship. In the Senior Outlaws, as in the Juniors, there were four boys with Italian family names. About half were Irish, and the rest bore names of Scotch, French Canadian, English, and Scandinavian derivation. Consonant with lower class II social status, the fathers of the Seniors held jobs such as cook, bartender, carpenter and mechanic.

It would appear, however, for reasons to be discussed later, that a fair number of the Senior Outlaws aspired to positions higher than those of their fathers. In this respect they differed from their age mates, the Senior Bandits, and,

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214 Poss. Reference to Evans-Pritchard “fission-fusion” concept.
to a lesser extent, from their gang mates, the Junior Outlaws. Almost two-thirds of the Senior Outlaws finished high school, compared to about one-half of the Juniors, and only 10% of the Senior Bandits. More Senior Outlaws took some form of post-high-school training than did any of the other white gangs. While none of the boys followed the conventional middle class pattern of going directly from high school to a four year liberal arts college, five of the Seniors did attend local colleges, generally taking night courses in technical fields such as electrical engineering. Two of the Seniors were known to have received college degrees. The occupational status of the Senior Bandits as young adults reflected their educational experience. By the time the average gang member had reached the age of twenty-six the gang ranked with the lowest of the five male gangs in percentage of members holding “low manual” jobs (50% compared to 53% for the Junior Outlaws and 83% for the Senior Bandits: See Table 2.4). The highest skilled jobs held by gang members included those of electronics technician and draftsman; more typical jobs were those of machinist, bookbinder, and policeman.

Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership

During the age period from 17 to 19, when the Senior Bandits were under direct observation, their criminal involvement was low relative to the other male gangs. For example, they ranked lowest among male gangs in their rate of involvement in illegal acts (7.6 per 10 boys per 10 month period, compared to the all-male-gang rate of 53.3), and lowest in both theft and assault involvements (See Tables 3.4 & 4.4). Pre-observation-period data, however, reveals that they were considerably more criminal during earlier adolescence. For example, during the 14 to 17 age period they ranked third in court appearances for theft, with higher rates than the Junior Outlaws and Kings at the same age. This and other evidence indicates that up to age 17 the Senior Outlaws had been just about as active in crime as the other lower class II male gangs, but had reduced such activity thereafter. They engaged in an unusually low amount of theft during the
observation period, and about half of the boys were not known to have been involved in law violation of any kind. Of those who were, however, seven were arrested and appeared in court, and three were committed to correctional institutions.

The Senior Outlaws thus provide an example of an older adolescent gang whose level of criminality was relatively low. In this respect they furnish an instructive comparison with the three male gangs thus far described. In both of the younger gangs, the Junior Bandits and Outlaws, leadership and clique structure reflected an intense struggle between advocates and opponents of law-violation as a prime basis of prestige. The lower class III Senior Bandits, having passed the age during which this struggle was most acute, had clearly resolved it in favor of criminality. There was no evidence during the observation period of factional polarization around the issue of crime as a basis of prestige. This resolution was directly reflected in Senior Bandit leadership; all five key leaders sought and gained prestige through violative behavior.

Leadership in the same-age, lower class II Senior Outlaws reflected in like manner a resolution of the law-conformity versus law-violation conflict, but with opposite results. Although the gang was not under direct observation during their earlier adolescence, the experience of the two gangs who were, along with the evidence that the Senior Outlaws themselves had been more criminal when younger, would suggest that the gang had in fact undergone a similar struggle, and that the proponents of law-conformity had won.

In any case, the events of the observation period made it clear that the Senior Outlaws sought “rep” as a gang primarily through effective execution of legitimate enterprises such as athletics, dances, and other non-violative activities. In line with this objective, they maintained a consistent concern with the “good name” of the gang, and in “keeping out of trouble” in the face of constant and ubiquitous temptations. For example, they attempted (without much success) to establish friendly relations with the senior priest of their parish—in contrast with the Junior Outlaws, who were on very bad terms with the local church. At one point during the
contact period when belligerent Bandits, claiming that the Outlaws had attacked one of the Midget Bandits, vowed to “wipe out every Outlaw jacket in Midcity,” the Senior Outlaws were concerned not only with the threat of attack but also with the threat to their reputation. “That does it,” said one boy. “I knew we’d get into something. There goes the good name of the Outlaws.”

Leadership and clique arrangements in the Senior Outlaws reflected three conditions, each related in some way to the relatively low stress on criminal activity: the stability of gang membership (members were rarely removed from the area by institutional confinement); the absence of significant conflict over the prestige and criminality issue; and the importance placed on legitimate collective activities. The Senior Bandits were the most unified of the direct observation gangs; there were no important cleavages or factions; even the distinction between more- and less-active members was less pronounced than in the other gangs.

As in the other gangs, leadership among the Senior Outlaws was collective and situational. There were four key leaders, each of whom assumed authority in his own sphere of competence. As in the case of the Bandit gangs there was little overt competition among leaders; when differences arose between the leadership and the rank and file, the several leaders tended to support one another. In one significant respect, however, Outlaw leadership differed from that of the other gangs; authority was exercised more firmly and accepted more readily. Those in charge of collective enterprises generally issued commands after the manner of a tough army sergeant or work-gang boss. Although obedience to such commands was frequently less than flawless, the leadership style of Outlaw leaders approximated the “snap-to-it” approach of organizations which control firmer sanctions than do most corner gangs. Compared to the near-chaotic organizational behavior of their younger brother gang, the organizational practices of the Seniors appeared as a model of efficiency. The “authoritarian” mode of leadership was particularly characteristic of one boy, whose authority prerogatives were somewhat more generalized than those of the other leaders. While he was far from an undisputed
“boss,” holding instead a kind of “prima inter pares” position, he was as close to a “boss” as anything found among the direct-observation gangs.

His special position derived from the fact that he showed superior capability in an unusually wide range of activities, a circumstance which permitted him wider authority than the other leaders. One might have expected, in a gang oriented predominantly to law-abiding activity, that this leader would serve as an exemplar of legitimacy, and rank among the most law-abiding. This was not the case. He was, in fact, one of the most criminal of the Senior Outlaws, being one of the relatively few who had “done time.” He was a hard drinker, an able street fighter, a skilled football strategist and team leader, an accomplished dancer and smooth ladies man. His leadership position was based not on his capacity to best exemplify the law-abiding orientation of the gang, but on his capabilities in a variety of activities, violative and non-violative. Thus, even in the gang most concerned with “keeping clean,” excellence in crime still constituted one salient basis of prestige. Competence as such rather than the legitimacy of one’s activities provided the major basis of authority.

Why was leadership among the Senior Outlaws more forceful than in the other gangs? One reason emerges by comparison with the “weak leader” situation of the Junior Bandits. Younger and of lower social status, factional conflict over the law-violation-and-prestige issue was sufficiently intense to that only a leader without an explicit commitment to either side could be acceptable to both. The Seniors, older and of higher status, had developed a good degree of intra-gang consensus on this issue, and showed little factionalism. They could thus accept a relatively strong leader without jeopardizing gang unity.

A second reason also involves differences in age and social status, as these relate to the world of work. In contrast to the younger gangs, whose perspectives more directly revolved around the subculture of adolescence and its specific concerns, the Senior Outlaws at age 19 were on the threshold of the adult world of work, and some in fact were actively engaged in it. In contrast to the lower status
gangs whose orientation to gainful employment was not and never would be as “responsible” as that of the Outlaws, the activities of the Seniors as gang members more directly reflected and anticipated the requirements and conditions of the adult occupational roles they would soon assume.

Of considerable importance in the prospective occupational world of the Outlaws is the capacity to give orders and to take orders in the execution of collective enterprises. Unlike the Bandits, few of whom would ever occupy other than subordinate positions, the lower class II Outlaws belonged to that sector of society which provides the men who exercise direct authority over groups of laborers or blue-collar workers. The self-executed collective activities of the gang—organized athletics, recreational projects, fund-raising activities—provided a training ground for the practice of organizational skills—planning organized enterprises, working together in their conduct, executing the directives of legitimate superiors. It also provided a training ground wherein those boys with the requisite talents could learn and practice the difficult art of exercising authority effectively over lower class men. By the time they had reached the age of 20, the leaders of the Outlaws had experienced, in the gang, many of the problems and responsibilities confronting the army sergeant, the police lieutenant and the factory foreman.

The nature and techniques of leadership in the Senior Outlaws had relevance not only to their own gang but to the Junior Outlaws as well. Relations between the Junior and Senior Outlaws were the closest of all the intensive-contact gang subdivisions. The Seniors kept a close watch on their juniors, and served them in a variety of ways, acting as athletic coaches, advisers, mediators, and arbiters. The older gang followed the factional conflicts of the Juniors with close attention, and were not above intervening when conflict reached sufficient intensity or threatened their own interests. The dominant leader of the Seniors was particularly concerned with the behavior of the Juniors; at one point, lecturing them about their disorderly conduct in Rosa’s store, he remarked, “I don’t hang with you guys, but I know what you do...”
In important respects the position of the Senior Outlaws with regard to the Juniors resembled that of the dominant clique of the Junior Bandits. Like the dominant clique, they exercised, or attempted to exercise, major authority functions such as direction, mediation, adjudication, and arbitration. Their exercise of such authority did not, however, prevent rival ideologies within the Junior Outlaws from precipitating an open factional split, whereas such a split did not occur among the Junior Bandits. Why was Junior Bandit leadership able to forestall a factional split in their gang, while leadership exercised by the Senior Outlaws for their Juniors failed to do so? Several reasons may be noted.

The first concerns the locus of authority. In the case of the Junior Bandits, the dominant clique and the two rival factions were contained within the same associational orbit. In the case of the Outlaws, despite the relative closeness of the Junior and Senior subdivisions, the Seniors did not “belong” to the Junior gang. This was clearly evinced in the statement of the Senior leader—“I don’t hang with you guys, but…” Thus, the Junior Bandits saw their leadership as originating within their own gang; the Junior Outlaws as outside, with “outside” authority considerably less compelling.

A second reason has to do with techniques of authority. Within the Senior Outlaws, as has been seen, authority was exercised more forcefully than in other gangs. The Seniors used similar techniques in attempting to control the behavior of the Juniors, issuing tough commands and angrily berating those who failed to obey. However effective this may have been for the older group, it served primarily to antagonize the younger. Since the right of the Seniors to exert authority at all was, at best, weakly recognized by the Juniors, they were scarcely likely to embrace with enthusiasm its harsh or peremptory exercise. The dominant clique of the Junior Bandits, in contrast, generally kept a gentle hand on the helm, with their “weak” leader operating effectively through indirect authority. Further, the dominant clique seldom took sides with either of the rival factions; this contrasted sharply with the Senior Outlaws, who, in line with their own law-abiding orientation,
consistently threw their support behind the “good boy” faction of the Juniors. The obvious partisanship of the Seniors only served to accentuate the rebelliousness of the “bad boy” faction, who saw themselves unfairly beset by a hostile coalition of “good boys” and Seniors. Thus, in the case of Junior Bandits, the use of non-authoritarian leadership techniques along with the maintenance of a neutral position by the dominant clique militated against a factional split; in the case of the Junior Outlaws, the authoritarian methods of the seniors along with their partisan support of the “good boys” served to accentuate rather than alleviate inherent divisive forces.

The fact that the Seniors favored the “good boy” faction was not fortuitous, and relates to a third aspect of the failure of their leadership to prevent factionalization. The younger gang, during the observation period, was moving toward the age when lower class II boys experience the maximum sense of obligation to engage in crime, while the older boys were moving away from that age. Assuming the conventional stance of lower class males who have passed the peak of their criminal activity toward those who are in or moving towards it, the Senior Bandits made repeated attempts to reform the Juniors by pointing out the error of their ways. The general tenor of their advice was “Wise up, you guys. You’re actin’ just like we did when we was your age, but we finally learned that that’s just dumb kid stuff. Straighten out, and don’t be idiots like we was.” Upon hearing that some of the Juniors had started to hang out in Midcity Center with members of the Junior and Senior Bandits, the dominant leader of the Seniors used these words, “Them guys (the Bandits) ain’t no good. You hang around with them, you’re headin’ for a pack of trouble. We used to fight with them all the time. I never did like them bastards because they’re always goin’ for bad. You never see none of us guys (Senior Outlaws) around there now…”

The Seniors also tried to restrain the violative behavior of the Juniors on grounds that at first appear inconsistent with their “goin’ for bad is kid stuff” argument. They attempted to interdict certain forms of behavior, particularly
drinking and drinking-engendered disorderliness, on the grounds that the Juniors were too young for such activities. Neither type of appeal—that based on acting too young or that based on being too young—had much effect in restraining the Juniors. Driven by the urgent desire to earn their own manhood, they could not accept as a substitute for criminal behavior the knowledge that the older-and-wiser Seniors had earned theirs by such behavior. Nor were they willing to desist from illegality because of the assertion that they were too young; the assertion instead had the opposite effect of impelling them to pursue more ardently what they were told was a badge of adulthood.

One might suppose that the Seniors would have been in a particularly strategic position to influence the Juniors and to control their delinquent behavior. Operating within an identical neighborhood and subcultural orbit, admired and respected, eminently qualified through personal experience to understand the forms and reasons of youthful illegality, their failure to restrain the “bad boy” faction or to preserve gang unity is of more than passing interest, since programs of delinquency prevention frequently proceed from the premise that the best agents of control are “indigenous” persons with similar life experiences, preferably ex-gang members themselves.

There is little doubt that the Seniors were animated by a serious desire to curb criminality and maintain solidarity among the Juniors. Their failure to do so derives in part from the manner in which they attempted to assume direction toward this end. Their authority was exercised from a position which the Juniors perceived as external to their own immediate associational orbit; they utilized techniques of leadership which were effective for them but were unacceptable to the Juniors; they aggravated inherent factionalization by consistently favoring one faction over the other; they demanded of the Juniors adherence to behavioral standards which were appropriate for themselves but not for those two years younger. The Seniors were in fact too close to the Juniors and too emotionally involved in similar problems to command the degree of detachment, of sensitivity to
internal group processes, of awareness of the urgent need of the younger boys to earn their own manhood, that might have enabled them more effectively to achieve their objectives.

The Junior Outlaws

The Junior Outlaws, numbering 24 active members, were the third oldest of the four male subdivisions on the Outlaw corner. The intensive observation period was thirty months. At its start the boys ranged in age from 13 to 15, and at its close from 15 to 17. This two and a half year period, during which the average Junior Outlaw moved from the age of 14.9 to 17.4 years, was for them, as for many lower class II males, a period of substantial increase in the frequency and seriousness of illegal behavior. An account of the events of this period, recorded in detail as they occurred, provides insight into the process by which age-related influences engender criminality.215

The national and religious background of the Juniors was similar to that of their older brother gang, to which, as shown earlier, they were linked by kinship. Their fathers’ occupations also reflected lower class II status, including jobs such as bricklayer, mechanic, chauffer, and milk deliveryman. A small minority of these men had attained somewhat higher positions; one became the owner of a small electroplating shop, and another rose through the ranks to become a plant superintendent. This man’s family was one of the first to leave the neighborhood as Negroes began to move in. The educational status of the Juniors was higher than that of the Bandit gangs, but lower than that of their older brother gang; a little under half of the boys failed to complete high school. Only one of the Juniors was known to have entered and completed college; he had belonged to the more “law-

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215 The bulk of field recording for the Junior Outlaws was done by Mason M. Moton; supplementary recording by Reverend Carl R. Scovel. Preliminary analyses of leadership and factions were done by Rosetta McNeil Aparicio.
“abiding” faction of the gang, and attended a local Catholic college on a football scholarship.

**Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership**

Consistent with their age level and social status, the Junior Bandits were considerably less criminal than the lower status Bandits, but considerably more so than their older brother gang, the Senior Outlaws. They ranked third among the five male gangs in illegal involvements during the observation period (25.0 involvements per ten boys per ten months), well below the second ranking Senior Bandits (54.2) and well above the fourth ranking Kings (13.9). They ranked second in their rate of involvement in drinking violations, and fourth in theft and assaultive offenses. Seventeen of the 24 boys were known to have engaged in some form of illegality during the observation period; seven were arrested and appeared in court, and one was committed to a correctional institution.

It is clear that the affairs of the gangs thus far described were ordered not by autocratic ganglords, but rather through a subtle and intricate interplay between leadership and a set of elements such as personal competency, intra-gang divisions, and law violation. The case of the Junior Outlaws is particularly dramatic in this regard, since the observation period found them at a critical point of choice—the age period when boys of this social status level are faced with a serious decision—the amount of weight to be granted to law violating behavior as a basis of prestige. Because there were in the Junior Outlaws two cliques, each of which was committed quite clearly to opposing alternatives, the interplay of the various elements over time emerges with some vividness, and echoes the classic morality play wherein forces of good and evil are locked in mortal combat over the souls of the uncommitted.

At the start of the observation period, the Juniors, 13, 14, and 15 year olds, looked and acted, for the most part, like “nice young kids.” By the end of the period both their voices and general demeanor had undergone a striking change. Their
appearance, as they hung out in front of Rosa’s store, was that of rough corner boys, and the series of thefts, fights, and drinking bouts which had occurred during the intervening two and one half years gave substance to that appearance. During the early phase of the contact period the Juniors comprised three main cliques; seven boys associated primarily with a “good boy” who was quite explicitly oriented to law-abiding behavior; a second clique of seven boys associated with a “bad boy” who was just starting to pursue prestige through drinking and auto theft; and a third, less-frequently congregating group, who took a relatively neutral position with respect to the issue of violative behavior.

The leader of the “good boy” clique played an active part in the law-abiding activities of the gang, and was elected president of the formal club organized by the Juniors. This club at first included members of all three cliques; however, one of the first acts of the club members, dominated by the “good boy” leader and his supporters, was to vote out of membership the leader of the “bad boy” clique. Barred from formal club meetings, the “bad boy” leader and his followers continued to hang out on the corner with the other Juniors, and in this context attempted to gain influence over the uncommitted boys as well as members of the “good boy” clique. This effort proved unsuccessful, since during this period athletic prowess served for the majority of the Juniors as a more salient basis of prestige than criminal behavior. Disgruntled by this failure, the “bad boy” leader took his followers and moved to a new hanging corner, about two blocks away from the traditional Outlaw corner.

From this corner, a tangible symbol of the ideological split within the Juniors, the “bad boy” leader continued his campaign to wean away the followers of the “good boy” leader, trying to persuade them to leave the old corner for the new. At the same time, behavior at the “bad boy” corner became increasingly delinquent—invoking, among other things, noisy drinking and thefts of nearby cars. These incidents produced complaints by local residents which resulted in several police raids on the corner, and served to increase the antagonism between what now had
become hostile factions. Determined to assert their separateness, the “bad boy” faction began to drink and create disturbances in Rosa’s store, became hostile to her when she censured them, and finally stayed away from the store altogether.

The antagonism between the two factions finally became sufficiently intense as to bring about a most unusual circumstance; -- plans for an actual gang fight, (a “jam”) of the type characteristic of rival gang aggregates. The time and place for the physical encounter was agreed on; no one from either side showed up. A second battle site was selected; again the combatants failed to appear. Both the plan for the gang fight and its failure to materialize were significant from the point of view of intra-gang relations. The fact that a physical encounter between members of the same subdivision was actually projected showed that factional hostility over the issue of law violation had reached an unusual degree of bitterness; the fact that the planned encounters did not in fact occur indicated a realization that actual physical combat might well lead to an irreversible split.

A reunification of the hostile factions did not take place for almost a year. During this time changes had occurred in both factions which had the net effect of blunting the sharpness of the ideological issue which divided them. Discouraged by his failure to win over the majority of the Outlaws to the cause of law-violation as a major badge of prestige, the leader of the “bad boy” clique began to hang out less frequently.216 During this same period the eight “uncommitted” members of the Junior Outlaws, now moving toward their middle teens, began to gravitate toward the “bad boy” corner—attracted by the excitement and risk of its violative activities. More of the Juniors than ever before became involved in illegal drinking and petty theft. This trend became sufficiently pronounced as to draw in members of the “good boy” clique, and the influence of the “good boy” leader diminished to the point where he could count on the loyalty only of his own brother and two other boys. In desperation, sensing the all-but-irresistible appeal of illegality for his erstwhile

216 During the initial stages of contact the “bad boy” leader ranked first among his group in frequency of hanging out; a year later he ranked 7th among the 8 boys in his clique.
followers, he increased the tempo of his own delinquent behavior in a last-ditch effort to win them back. All in vain. Even his own brother deserted the regular Outlaw corner, although he did not go so far as to join the “bad boys” on theirs.

Disillusioned, the “good boy” leader took a night job which sharply curtailed the time he was able to devote to gang activities. Members of the “bad boy” clique now began a series of maneuvers aimed at gaining control of the formal club. Finally, about two months before the close of the thirty month contact period, a core member of the “bad boy” clique was elected to the club presidency. In effect, the proponents of illegality as a major prestige basis had won the long struggle for dominance of the Junior Outlaws.

This achievement, while appearing on the surface as a clear victory for the “bad boy” faction, in fact represented a far more subtle process of mutual accommodation. The actions of each of the opposing sides accorded quite directly with their expressed convictions; each member of the “bad boy” faction averaged about 17 known illegal acts during the observation period, compared to a figure of about two per boy for the good boy faction. However, in the face of these sharp differences in both actions and sentiments respecting illegality, the two factions shared important common orientations thereto. Both shared the conviction that the issue of violative behavior as a basis of prestige was a paramount one, and one which required a choice. Moreover, both sides remained uncertain as to whether the choice they had made was the correct one.

The behavior of both factions provides evidence of a fundamental ambivalence with respect to the “demanded” nature of delinquent behavior. The gradual withdrawal of support by followers of the “good boy” leader and the movement toward violative behavior of the previously “neutral” clique attest to a compelling conviction that prestige gained through law-abiding endeavor alone could not, at this age, suffice. Even more significant was the criminal experience of the “good boy” leader. As the prime exponent of law-abiding behavior, he might have been expected to serve as an exemplar in this respect. In fact, the opposite
prevailed; his rate of illegal involvement was the highest of all the boys in his clique, and had been so even before his abortive attempt to regain his followers by a final burst of delinquency. This circumstance, resembling the leadership situation in the Senior Outlaws, probably derived from a realization that a leader acceptable to both factions would have to show proficiency in activities recognized as prestige conferring by both.

It is equally clear, on the other hand, that members of the “bad boy” faction were less than serenely confident in their commitment to law-violation as an ideal. Once they had won power in the club they did not keep as their leader the boy who had been the dominant figure on the “bad boy” corner, and who was without question the most criminally active of the Junior Outlaws, but instead elected as president another boy who was also criminally active, but considerably less so. Moreover, in the presence of older gang members, Seniors and Marauders, the “bad boy” clique was far more subdued, less obstreperous, and far less ardent in their advocacy of crime as an ideal. There was little question that they were sensitive to, and responsive to, negative reactions by others to their behavior.

It is noteworthy that members of both factions adhered more firmly to the “law-violation” and “law-abiding” positions on the level of abstract ideology than on the level of actual practice. This would suggest that the existence of the opposing ideologies and their corresponding factions served important functions both for individual gang members and for the group as a whole. Being a part of the same associational orbit as the “bad boys” made it possible for the “good boys” to reap some of the rewards of violative behavior without undergoing its risks; the presence of the “good boys” imposed self-desired restraints on the “bad,” and helped protect them from dangerous excesses. The behavior and ideals of the “good boys” satisfied for both factions that component of their basic orientation which said, “violation of the law is wrong and should be punished;” the behavior and ideals of the “bad boys” that component which said, “one cannot earn manhood without some involvement in criminal activity.”
It is instructive to compare the stress and turmoil attending the struggle for dominance of the Junior Outlaws with the leadership circumstances, described earlier, of the Senior Bandits. In this gang, older and of lower social status (lower class III), competition for leadership had little to do with a choice between law-abiding and law-violating philosophies, but rather with the issue of which of a number of competing leaders was best able to demonstrate prowess in illegal activity. This virtual absence of effective pressures against delinquency contrasts sharply with the situation of the Junior Outlaws. During the year-long struggle between the factions the Juniors were exposed to constant pressures, both internal and external to the gang, to refrain from illegality. External sources included Rosa, whom the boys loved and respected; a local youth worker whom they held in high esteem; their older brother gangs, whose frequent admonitions to the “little kids” to “straighten out” and “keep clean” were attended with the utmost seriousness. Within the gang itself the “good boy” leader served as a consistent and persuasive advocate of a law-abiding course of action. In addition, most of the boys’ parents deplored their misbehavior and urged them to keep out of trouble.\textsuperscript{217}

In the face of all these pressures from persons of no small importance in the lives of the Juniors, the final triumph of the proponents of illegality, however tempered, assumes added significance. What was it that impelled the “bad boy” faction? There was a quality of defiance about much of their delinquency, as if they were saying—“We know perfectly well that what we are doing is regarded as wrong, legally and morally; we also know that it violates the wishes and standards of many whose good opinion we value; yet, if we are to sustain our self-respect and our honor as males we must, at this stage of our lives, engage in criminal behavior.” It is scarcely possible, in light of the experience of the Junior Outlaws, to maintain that their delinquency sprung from any inability to distinguish right from wrong, or out of any simple conformity to a set of parochial standards which just happened to differ from those of the legal code or the adult middle class. Their delinquent

\textsuperscript{217} See Chapter Five.
behavior was engendered by a highly complex interplay of forces, including, among other elements, the fact that they were males, were lower class II, and, of critical importance in the present instance, moving through the age period when the attainment of manhood was of the utmost concern. An adequate explanation of their behavior must engage these elements and others, a task to be essayed in future chapters.

The Royal Neighborhood

The Bandit, Outlaw, and Royal neighborhoods were located at the corners of a rough triangle whose sides were about three-quarters of a mile in length. Despite this proximity, however, the former two neighborhoods were predominantly white, and the latter predominantly black. The Royal corner stood at the intersection of two busy thoroughfares in a mixed residential-commercial district. At or near the corner were a drug store, a luncheonette, a barber shop, a beauty parlor, and other commercial facilities.

The Royal corner was, during the 1950’s, the “in” hangout for the Negro adolescents of Port City—some of whom would travel considerable distances from the several Negro neighborhoods scattered throughout the city to hang out in Midcity. It was here that the “action” was. An aura of excitement, of adventure, of promise pervaded the corner. It furnished a reservoir of attractive young men for girls seeking mates, and attractive young women for males. On summer evenings as many as 200 adolescents might be ground clustering around the four street corners of the Royal intersection. While the regular day-and-night habitués lived, for the most part, in the immediate area, the recurrent influx from other parts of the city imparted to the Royal corner a degree of cosmopolitanism that was lacking in the nearby white corners.

The attraction of the corner for adolescents from a relatively large geographical area made its gangs less homogeneous than those of the Bandit and Outlaw corners, and they included persons of a considerably wider range of social
status levels and life orientations. One extreme was represented by the Viceroys (known as “the winos”) whose involvement in drinking, narcotics, thievery, and pimping was extensive and serious; another by the college-oriented clique of the Kings, several of whom became successful professional men.

The relative heterogeneity of the Royal corner reflected several characteristics of the Negro population of Port City during this period. It was relatively small, as seen earlier, comprising about three percent of the population of the greater metropolitan area. Local neighborhoods thus contained smaller numbers of adolescents to feed local gangs; the desirability of larger groups, particularly for purposes of mating, prompted many youngsters to seek out a corner where large numbers congregated. More important, the fact of “being black” during this period carried more weight relative to social status than did the fact of being white. The whites of Midcity were sensitive to social status differences within their own race, and their associational patterns reflected this sensitivity. Black adolescents were also sensitive to social status differences, but their common racial status could override such differences to a greater degree than among whites. Moreover, the social status situation of Midcity Negroes during this period was highly fluid; many were ambitious and aspiring, so that adolescent gangs could and did include persons whose prospects of altering their social position were quite different.

Unlike the Bandit and Outlaw corners, there was no store on the Royal corner whose owner maintained a special relationship to gang members. There were two establishments whose owners might have filled this role but did not, each for a different reason. The logical “home” store was the Royal Drug, located at a favored hanging spot, and providing the Royals with telephone facilities, candy and cigarettes, and pinball machines. Its owner was a white man who had remained behind when the Jewish community formerly occupying the Royal neighborhood had moved away. Unlike Sam, who was also Jewish, he had taken no steps to develop a close relationship with his Royal clients. Directly across from the Royal
Drug was the Shabazz Luncheonette, whose proprietor was black. The Shabazz, however, was something less than ideal as a corner “home” for the Royals because it served as a center for a variety of illegal enterprises; its owner booked numbers and horses, and maintained a message center wherein pimps, prostitutes and their customers could negotiate business arrangements. The proprietor was not unfriendly to the Royals, but it would have been rather awkward all around had he afforded them the freedom of his establishment.

Lacking a corner “home,” the Royals generally hung out on the door stoops of the dwellings near the corner (some of which were the homes of gang members), and in the summer frequented the small park nearby. Many of the girls, and some of the less criminally-oriented boys, also frequented a recreation hall run by a Negro Congregational church located about a half-block from the corner.

The Royal corner was more in the mainstream of community life than were either the Outlaw or Bandit corners. It was busy and active, and the Royals who frequented it could find amusement, diversion, and sometimes excitement in the flow of motor traffic, the passing of local drunks, the taxicabs which loaded and unloaded prostitutes and customers at the Shabazz luncheonette, and other activities of the corner. In the flurry of physical reconstruction which accompanied the massive urban renewal and social reform programs of the 1960’s, the whole of the Royal neighborhood and its environs was razed, and in its place was constructed an orderly and homogeneous housing development of the suburban subdivision type. The physical features and activity patterns of the Royal corner were wholly obliterated. The successors of the adolescents who frequented the corner in the 1950’s moved their base of activity to another corner about a mile away, where the luncheonette, variety store, pool hall, and other attributes of a suitable hanging corner were still standing.\footnote{It became fashionable during the 1960’s to refer to that part of Midcity where the Royal corner was located (prior to its physical destruction) as a “Black Ghetto,” and to picture it as characterized by unrelieved misery, hopelessness, frustration, and a radical restriction of mobility, both physical and social. Three years of intensive field observation of the Royal corner provided little direct information.}
Relations Among Royal Subdivisions

Due in part to the cosmopolitan nature of the Royal corner, in part to the large numbers of youth it attracted, in part to the fact that some neighborhood residents were relatively new to the community, and in part to a general tendency for Negro group relationships to be less solidary than white, the Royal gang and subdivision situation was rather more complex, and rather less structured, than that of the white corners. The general associational principles were, however, essentially the same. There were several sets of gang subdivisions, differentiated by age and sex. In some instances there were several distinct subdivisions at the same age level, something rarely found on the white corners. In general the basis of membership in one rather than another of these same-age subdivisions was, as in the case of intra-gang cliques in the white gangs, the complexion of one’s orientation to law-violation. For example, occupying a parallel position to the 16-18 year old Kings were the same-aged Knights. The average Knight was considerably more active in crime than the average King. However, consistent with a considerable degree of intra-gang heterogeneity among the Kings, the most criminal of the Kings “went for bad” to a greater degree than the least criminal of the Knights.

The major set of royal gangs comprised five subdivisions (see Table 1.5). On the male side were the Monarchs, ages 18 to 20; the Kings, ages 16 to 18; the Princes, ages 14 to 16, and the Squires, ages 12 to 14. The major female subdivision was the Queens, ages 14 to 16. A parallel and more criminally-inclined set of gangs included the Viceroy, boys 18 to 20, the Knights, 16 to 18, and the Ladies, girls 14 to 16. The clique situation of these latter gangs was fairly complex; the gang name “Ladies,” in particular, is used to refer to a number of cliques, some rather loosely related to others. The 270 adolescents comprising the eight gangs of Table 1.5 did support for such an image. Along with the problems and frustrations the Royals shared with other American adolescents and other American Negroes, there existed in this area an atmosphere of excitement, a level of creative expression, a sense of promise and opportunity, which seemed, impressionistically, to be greater than those of either Bandit or Outlaw corners. However appropriate the “ghetto” label may have been for some urban Negro slums, its application to the Royal neighborhood of Midcity involved a particularly restricted conception of the actual life-style of its residents.
not exhaust the number of habitués of the Royal corner; hanging out with regular variety were an additional number of youngsters not directly associated with particular hangs. Despite an impression that relations among the Royal gangs were more fluid than those among the white gangs, evidence derived from the analysis of the Kings would appear to indicate that they were connected by kinship to about the same degree.\(^{219}\)

While it is impossible to do justice to the heterogeneity and complexity of the Royal corner by describing only two of its gangs, the Kings and Queens—such description will provide a picture which is not wholly unrepresentative. These two gangs, when compared to the full range of Royal gangs, did embody a degree of internal heterogeneity which exceeded that of any of the white gangs thus far described.

**The Kings**

The Kings were the largest and most cohesive of the Royal gangs, numbering 39 active members. They were under direct observation for 34 months—the longest period of any gang.\(^{220}\) At the start of this period the average King was 16.4 years of age, and at the end, 19.1. Most of the Kings (70%) were born within two years of one another. Ancestors of most of the Kings were Africans brought to the American South as slaves. As is the case for most American Negroes, they varied in color according to varying degrees of white admixture in their ancestry. None, however, was as light as the “high yellow” of slavery days or as the average North American Caucasian; few were as dark as native Africans. Most of the Kings were Protestants, primarily Congregationalists and Episcopalians. A few, during the observation period, converted to Catholicism. One King, along with his ex-Queen

\(^{219}\) The relatively complex pattern of association of the Royal gangs and subdivisions has been somewhat simplified for purposes of clarity and economy.
\(^{220}\) The bulk of field recording for the Kings was done by two workers. The first, Henry R. Previte, maintained contact with the gang for 18 months, and the second, Reverend Jack F. Russel, for 16. Additional field data were obtained from the records of Ethel Grumman Ackley, the “Queen” worker, and Walter B. Miller.
wife, later became an active Black Muslim, and was involved in the killing of a prominent Black Nationalist leader during the 1960’s.

Relations between the Kings and the Monarchs, their older brother group, were rather distant. This was due in part to the fact that the general life orientation of the Monarchs was more characteristic of a lower social status level. Relations with the younger Princes and Squires, on the other hand, were fairly close. As was the case among the Outlaws, the Kings took an older-brotherly interest in their juniors. Several Kings organized and coached a Squire football team. Kings and Princes sometimes participated jointly in gang activities, and several of the Princes were regarded as quasi-members of the Kings. Some Kings were in fact the actual older brothers of Princes and Squires. The Kings were linked by kinship to other Royal gangs to about the same degree as the white gangs. At least one-third of the Kings had relatives in other Royal subdivisions. These included six brothers, six cousins, and ten sisters, seven of whom belonged to the Queens, the Kings’ sister gang. Within the gang itself were two pairs of brothers and a set of three cousins. Thus, while the average King family had lived in Midcity for a shorter period of time than the average Bandit or Outlaw family, the Royal gangs were interrelated by blood and marriage to a similar degree.

The Kings, in common with the Outlaws, are here categorized as lower-class II; this categorization, however, represents more of an averaging-out of a wider range of social status levels than is the case for the white gangs. The Bandits and Outlaws drew their membership from neighborhoods whose residents represented a relatively narrow social status range, and sons, by and large, pursued occupations similar to those of their fathers. The Kings, for reasons already discussed, drew their membership from a broader segment of the social class spectrum, and, in addition, included a larger proportion of boys who aspired to elevate their social position. In the case of generationally-stable gangs like the Senior Bandits, most of the indexes to social status—parents’ education, parents’ occupation, children’s’
education, children’s’ occupation—were mutually consistent; in the case of the Kings, there was less correspondence among the several indexes.

Most of the Kings’ fathers pursued characteristically lower-class II and III occupations, such as railroad station cleaning man, college dormitory janitor, and factory laborer. An important minority, however, held jobs more characteristic of somewhat higher status within the lower class. Among these men were a barber who owned his own shop, a pullman waiter, and an airline porter. The educational circumstances of the Kings, like those of their sister gang, the Queens, were quite typical of the circumstances of other American ethnic groups during that stage of their history when some substantial portion of the group is in the process of effecting a relatively rapid rise in social status. Only 26% of those Kings whose post-observation-period educational experience was known failed to complete high school—the lowest drop-out rate of any of the male gangs. Of the 23 Kings who did complete high school, 12 entered colleges, about half in Port City and half in the south, and 7 received college degrees. The 18% college graduation rate of the Kings well exceeds that of any of the other study gangs, and approaches the national average for all categories of young adults. In addition, one of the Kings, after making an outstanding record as an undergraduate in an Ivy League college, attended medical school and was awarded an internship in surgery, in a top west coast hospital.

The occupational circumstances of the Kings, like their educational circumstances, reflected the diversity generally found in a lower class ethnic group during a period of accelerated upward social movement. Toward the higher end of the occupational scale were the college graduates whose training had equipped them for higher status jobs; these included the surgeon just mentioned, a federal probation officer, an elementary school teacher, an IBM technician, an insurance salesman, and an engineer. Toward the lower end of the scale were men working in jobs such as car-wash attendant, shoe-factory worker, and railroad laborer. In a different category were two professional pimps, a man in and out of prison in
connection with the narcotics traffic, and a man sentenced to life imprisonment for a murder stemming from his involvement in a variety of illegal enterprises.

Despite the divergent nature of these extremes, however, the young-adult occupations of the rank-and-file of the Kings were quite similar to those of the average Outlaw, and not too different from those of their fathers. In their middle twenties just about half (51.5%) held positions in the bottom two occupational categories of the U.S. Census—a figure almost identical to that of the white lower class II Junior Outlaws (52.2%). All three lower class II male gangs fell within a similar 70-80% range with respect to occupancy of positions in the bottom five Census categories. The “average” King is readily assignable to the “lower class II” category on the basis of occupational status, but occupational variation within the gang was sufficiently wide so that some members fell above or below that category.

Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership

During the period of their adolescence the King's involvement in illegal behavior was relatively low. Rates based on both official and unofficial data were close to those of the Senior Outlaws. For example, they ranked lowest of the male gangs in the percentage of members known ever to have been arrested up to a year following the observation period (25.6%) and also in the percentage committed to correctional institutions (7.7%). They also showed the lowest rate of court appearances per individual up to age 18 (0.8 compared to an all-gang average of 2.7) and were tied for last place with the Junior Outlaws in the rate of court charges (1.0 per individual). The King’s level of criminality was thus closer to that of white gangs of similar status (e.g., Outlaws), than to that of black gangs of lower status (e.g., Lancers).

There were, however, some differences between the criminal experience of the Kings and that of the white gangs that reflected their heterogeneity, and also, perhaps, differences in ethnic subcultures. The overall volume of King crime was similar to that of the Senior Outlaws, who were of the same age and social status,
but age trends, particularly with respect to theft and assault, were somewhat different. The criminal activity of the Senior Outlaws peaked during their earlier adolescence and slacked off during the later teen years; the Kings were relatively law-abiding during earlier adolescence but became more criminal as they approached their twenties. For example, for the period up to age 17 the Kings ranked last among the male gangs in the rate of court appearances for theft, but for the period up to age 21 they ranked third in court appearances, and second in the rate of theft charges. The Kings also showed a relatively high rate of assaultive offenses both during and after the observation period, ranking second in assault involvements and third in court charges for assault.

The King’s late-teen peak in crime was primarily the work of a relatively small clique. As the socially-aspiring boys approached manhood they diminished their involvement in illegal behavior, while the socially-stable and criminally oriented boys increased theirs. This is of more than passing interest. Despite the presence in the gang of an influential group who were both higher-status-oriented and lawfully inclined, and a level of adolescent criminality consistent with lower class II status, one segment of the Kings continued to maintain a close involvement with criminal enterprises whose potential for violence was high. Within a decade of the observation period two Kings figured in dramatic murders, both arising out of the relationship between procurer and prostitute. One man shot and killed his woman; the other was shot and killed by his. Further discussion of the role of violence and of distinctive aspects of lower class Negro crime is included in later chapters.

Analyses of intra-gang cliques presented thus far have centered primarily on differing orientations to the role of violative behavior by youths of similar social-status circumstances. Cliques among the Kings reflected an additional important factor—that of “upward social mobility,” or ambition to elevate one’s social position. These two dimensions—orientation to illegality and orientation to status change—provided the major distinction of cliques within the Kings. Boys who aspired to
higher social status are designated as “socially mobile;” boys who did not, “socially stable.”

Five cliques could be distinguished on the basis of these two dimensions; socially-mobile and law-abiding, socially-mobile and conventionally criminal, socially-stable and law-abiding, socially-stable and conventionally criminal, and socially-stable and seriously criminal. There was no clique representing a sixth logical type, socially-mobile and seriously criminal. The Kings themselves were quite aware of these bases of differentiation, although they did not use the terms used here, nor make as fine distinctions. They conceptualized the difference between the socially-mobile and the socially-stable cliques primarily in terms of mental capacity, using the sarcastic designation “geniuses” for the mobile cliques, and the equally sarcastic designation “idiots” for the socially-stable. The Kings knew quite well that some of “the idiots” were considerably less than idiotic when it came to brainwork connected with horserace handicapping, poker, or managing a stable of prostitutes. Gang members used the term “hoodlums” to make the distinction between the criminally-oriented and law-abiding cliques, although they had no specific term for the latter.

The socially-mobile and law-abiding clique numbered six members, all of whom were planning to attend college. These boys hung out less frequently than did the other Kings, and tended to grant precedence to academic activities when the demands of gang and school came into conflict. During the latter part of the observation period most of these boys relinquished active participation in corner life as they intensified preparation for or began to attend college. One member of this clique, a major leader of the Kings, did continue his close involvement with the gang despite the imminence of his departure for college.

Eleven boys belonged to the socially-mobile and conventionally-criminal clique. Most of these boys were planning on post-high school-training, generally in local colleges or technical institutes. Their criminal activity, for the most part, was of the relatively mild variety characteristic of many higher-status and/or socially-
aspiring lower class adolescents, centering on petty theft, some bouts of heavy drinking, and participation in a gang fight or two. This type of youthful criminal experience is often borne like a banner in later years (in moments appropriate to disclosure) by males with origins in ethnic groups such as the Italians and Jews, whose peaks of upward social mobility occurred in the relatively recent past. The role of such violative behavior for these socially mobile boys will be discussed shortly.

The socially-stable and law-abiding clique numbered eleven boys. Their relatively low rate of criminal involvement was commensurate with one possible life-style within the lower class—that referred to in the unselfconscious prose of bygone years as “poor but honest.” Most of these boys aspired to, and eventually assumed, positions such as factory machinist, armed-forces non-commissioned officer, or policemen—jobs of which a “record” of more-than-average youthful crime can prove a drawback. The socially-stable and conventionally criminal clique comprised six members. This adaptation was a dominant one among Midcity’s lower class II males, although within the Kings it was pursued by a minority. While the vocations ultimately followed by these boys were similar to those of their more law-abiding counterparts, the potential handicap of youthful criminal involvement was a considerably less compelling consideration, during adolescence, than the lure of prestige via criminality.

The socially-stable and seriously-criminal clique, finally, was composed of five boys for whom adolescent participation in crime served as a possible training ground for continuing adult involvement. These boys, particularly in their late teens, sometimes joined members of the lower-status Viceroy and Knights to engage in crimes such as pocketbook thefts, store burglaries, and taxi-driver holdups. Several became involved in pimping operations during their teens, and continued such involvement into adulthood. Of the five socially-stable and seriously criminal members of this clique who had a try at more serious crime as part of the
role-practicing process of adolescence, three continued such involvement during their twenties, and two did not.\textsuperscript{221}

The criminal involvement of the several cliques reflected their basic orientations. As might be expected, the highest rates of involvement in illegal acts during the observation period were shown by the socially-stable and seriously criminal clique, and the lowest by the socially-mobile and law-abiding clique. Rather surprisingly, however, the second highest rate was shown not by the “conventionally criminal” boys who were socially-stable, but by the socially mobile group. This finding casts some light on the attitudes of gang members to upward risk of stigmatization thereby; those who did so aspire, on the other hand, ran a serious risk of being branded as unmanly or sissified.\textsuperscript{222}

The belief that academic interests were effeminizing carried considerable weight even in a gang which included a fair proportion of boys who were academically inclined. Far from constituting a basis for claiming prestige, the hope of elevating one’s status through educational achievement was regarded, within the context of gang life, as a kind of secret vice. It was most important, therefore, that

\textsuperscript{221} This delineation of King cliques is somewhat simplified. Some gang members were marginal to one or more cliques, and some showed “mixed” orientations, pursuing a life pattern in which legitimate and illegitimate enterprises were carried on simultaneously or in sequence. (A discussion of the mixed legitimate and illegitimate pattern of income acquisition is included in Chapter Eleven, “Theft.”) Probably the most dramatic case of this mixed adaptation was that of one extremely able and intelligent King who was pulled between the worlds of legitimate and illegitimate endeavor. Expelled from high school shortly before graduation after an angry encounter with a teacher, he moved into the world of procuring, and within a relatively short period established a reputation as the top pimp in Midcity— with an extensive stable of prostitutes, a luxurious car, and a handsome income. This achievement gained him community-wide respect—including that of his colleagues who were now engaged in middle class professions. A brush with the law and other events help him decide to leave “the life” and he became a successful real estate agent. This operation was infiltrated by narcotics operators, and he left Midcity to return to “the life”—this time with a procuring operation in a resort area centering on his white mistress. In the course of a violent scene whose details are not fully known, he murdered this woman, turned himself in, and was sentenced to life imprisonment. This case is one of the few involving the 200-odd members of Midcity direct-observation gangs where the concept of psychic conflict could be employed to good advantage to derive an amplified explanation of the motivation for violative behavior. Even here, however, it was the lower class subcultural milieu of Midcity which provided the basic definitions and conceptions of possible life-paths through which these conflicts were played out.

\textsuperscript{222} For a discussion of the use of the accusation of homosexuality as an epithet, see Chapter Nine (Male S. & M.). Discussion of tensions between “corner boys” and “college boys” in William F. Whyte, Street Corner Society.
the upwardly mobile boys be in a position to counteract the stigmatizing potential of academic ambition by showing that they were just as “tough” or tougher than the socially-stable boys. One quite effective way of doing this was to engage in criminal behavior of the “conventional” type.

Leadership arrangements in the Kings embodied still another combination of the elements of strong and weak authority, differing orientations to social-status change, and differing orientations to criminality. As in the other gangs, each of the five King cliques had a “leader” or most important boy. There were also, as in the case of the Junior Outlaws, two leaders with more generalized authority—one acting as the embodiment and proponent of law-abiding behavior, the other as the spokesman for the law-violating course of action. Both of these leaders were forceful and articulate. The leader of the “Hoodlums” was a sharp-witted boy who was, during this period, actively engaged in thievery from parked cars. The law-abiding leader was a member of the socially-mobile and law-abiding clique who hoped to convert his ability as a track star into a college scholarship.

The acrimonious dialogue between these two boys and their followers, locked in debate over a particular issue or course of action, continued unabated during the nearly three years of intensive observation. These debates covered a wide variety of issues; general deportment, modes of money-raising, relations with other gangs, relations with adult agencies. The respective positions of the antagonists reflected the polarity of their contrasting orientations.

However, unlike the Junior Outlaws, where the strength of the rival leaders was fairly equal, there was no doubt among the Kings as to the primacy of leadership. The law-abiding leader was clearly dominant; moreover, his style of authority exercise, as in the case of the Senior Outlaws, was direct and forceful. Why did the Kings, with the most diverse elements of any of the male gangs, tolerate a leader who was not only authoritarian but who consistently discriminated against important interests in the gang?
Several characteristics of the gang are relevant here. The first relates to the nature of interpersonal bonds among gang members. Compared to the white gangs, relations among gang mates appeared to be somewhat less intimate. Interpersonal relations were characterized by a lesser degree of mutual dependence, and gang members were less likely to submerge their individual identities into a corporate identity. There were more “characters” and “stars,” and fewer “team men.” It was thus somewhat more difficult for the gang to effect collective action by the processes of consensual agreement and voluntary cooperation. This created a problem, in that the achievement of important group objectives demanded effectively coordinated action. One device for coping with this problem was the use of relatively strong superordinate authority, and a fair degree of obedience to leaders who were willing and able to exercise it.

A second characteristic relates to one prevalent orientation to authority among lower class populations. As discussed elsewhere, many lower class people, while appearing on the surface to resent firm or forceful authority, in fact have a “covert” desire for strong external controls. Among the Kings this orientation had particular force in light of two attributes of gang members; all were adolescent, and a fair proportion were socially mobile. As male adolescents in a lower class Negro community, the Kings were conscious of powerful and persisting pressures to follow the path and gain the rewards of “sinful” living. At the same time, those who were socially ambitious knew that the maintenance of a pattern of law-abiding conduct was importantly related to upward social movement. The very existence within the gang of a clique, though small, of socially mobile and law-abiding boys, furnished a testament that such a course of action was possible; the conduct of the “good boy” leader, embodying and exemplifying this course of action, served as a behavioral reference point which was valuable even to the most violatively-oriented gang members. His effectiveness, exemplar an agency of virtuous behavior, was well served by the “authoritarian” manner of his leadership. The more compelling the

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223 Miller, W.B., Lower Class Culture...Milieu...Op. cit.
temptations to stray from the paths of righteousness, the more necessary it was that the voice of countermanding authority be strong. It is most significant that the “hoodlum” clique of the Kings, while constantly complaining about the arbitrary, unjust and discriminatory character of the “good boy” leader’s authority, did at no time elect to move out of his orbit of influence, which they were quite free to do had they so desired.

For the Kings, and particularly its “bad boy” element, the stern and punitive authority of the “good boy” leader served, after the fashion of the hell-and-brimstone Baptist preacher of the south, to chasten the sinful and buttress the tempted. It is of interest in this respect to note that the Kings, in their formal gatherings, employed the rituals of organized religion to a greater extent than did any other gang; each meeting was opened and closed with a prayer, during which all gang members, including the young thieves, pimps, gamblers and ladies-men of the “hoodlum” faction, sat silently, with heads reverently bowed.

A third characteristic of relevance to the “strong leadership” of the Kings involves occupational considerations. The Kings, like the Senior Outlaws, were older adolescents of lower class II status, and, also like them, assigned considerable importance to the effective conduct of collective activities. During the observation period they organized and executed a number of well-run collective enterprises including several large public dances and a scrap-paper drive. The Kings also organized a number of musical groups; one of these became sufficiently competent as to perform on a professional basis in local night clubs. The abilities necessary to such enterprises—formulating plans, directing action, accepting direction, resolving differences, raising and handling money—are also highly useful to adult participation in the world of work. The willingness of the Kings to choose and retain a “strong” leader was related in part to the realization that practice in the direction

\[224\] The tendency for lower-status Negroes to conduct certain kinds of secular collective enterprises after the fashion of religious enterprises, with respect both to the forms of collective interaction and the religious quality of commitment to objectives and ideals, was well exemplified in the general and specific social reform movements which played so prominent a role among American Negroes during the 1960’s.
and execution of collective activities could serve as valuable preparation for their future occupational circumstances.

The organizational skill of the Kings was also reflected in their experience with organized athletics. During the observation period the gang formed a club whose primary purpose was the facilitation of team athletics. The Kings were able to field successful teams in football, baseball, and basketball; their football teams were particularly effective, and a King team, in its third season, succeeded in winning the championship of the Port City municipal athletic league—winning out over an Outlaw team at the end of a hard-fought season.

The special role of athletics among the Kings merits brief attention. Whatever their differences with regard to social mobility or unlawful behavior, the majority of the Kings shared a common respect for the skills necessary to successful athletic performance. Included among their heroes were the stars, and particularly the Negro stars, of basketball, track, boxing, and baseball. This common interest, and the common participation arising from it, served as an important unifying influence in a gang composed of diverse elements.

Athletic competence, furthermore, was of particular import for the socially-mobile boys, on practical as well as symbolic grounds. Few King families were in a position to provide significant financial support to those with college aspirations; few Kings were sufficiently competent academically to earn scholarship aid through academic excellence; under these conditions the athletic scholarship became the logical route to college. The feats of King athletes, publicized in the sports pages, drew the attention of college coaches and others with athletic interests, and most of the Kings who were able to enter college did so on the strength of their athletic ability.

Athletic competence in general and school-connected athletics in particular also served on a symbolic level to ease the way for the socially-mobile King. Gaining a reputation as a “tough” athlete served in some measure to counteract the “effeminacy” stigma of academic interests. Many members of the socially-mobile
and conventionally criminal clique were active both in athletics and crime, seeking thereby double insurance against such stigma. The prestige of athletics even provided for the socially-mobile boys an acceptable excuse for engaging in study; since poor academic performance meant dismissal from school teams, one could say “I gotta go study so I won’t get kicked off the f-----g team,” without losing face.

Athletics, for the Kings, thus served a variety of useful purposes. It legitimatized academic involvement by the socially-mobile; it was able in some degree to counteract the stigmatization of academic ambition; and it served as an important unifying influence in a gang whose members represented diverse backgrounds and maintained diverse ambitions. In this respect, as well as others, the situation of the Kings closely resembled that of other ethnic groups undergoing the “separating-out” process characteristic of a period of high social mobility.\textsuperscript{225}

\textbf{The Queens}

The Queens, “sister” gang to the Kings, numbered 39 active members. The gang was under intensive observation for just two years, and close contact was maintained with a selected subgroup for an additional eight months. At the start of the 24 month observation period the average Queen was 16.0 years old, and at its close, 18.0. The educational and occupational status of the Queens, taking sex differences into account, was quite similar to that of the Kings. All of the Queens were Negro; in contrast to the Kings, several were quite light-skinned. The features of one Queen leader, whose white mother had married a black band leader, were essentially Caucasoid.

The social status of the Queens is here designated as lower class II. As in the case of the Kings, this designation involves a wider range of status variation than was found in the white gangs, and a lesser degree of concordance among the several measures of social status. The status range of the Queens did not, however, extend

\textsuperscript{225} This process is discussed in Miller, Walter B., “Implications of Lower Class Culture...” op. cit. 394
as far downward as was the case for the Kings. Although one clique within the Kings attained higher social status than most of the Queens, the status of the gang as a whole was the highest of all seven gangs. Their rate of high-school completion exceeded that of many lower class I populations; a substantial 80% completed high school, in sharp contrast to the 20% figure shown by the white Molls.

The educational capacity indicated by the Queens’ high school completion rate did not, however, result in a rate of college entrance equivalent to that of the Kings, whose high school completion rate was slightly lower (74%). While 12 of the Kings enrolled in regular four year colleges, none of the Queens did so. Two of the girls did take post-high school training—one attending secretarial school, the other nursing school. Both the higher rate of high-school completion and the lower rate of college entrance reflect differences between males and females in the role and significance of advanced education—differences discussed elsewhere.

The occupational status of the Queens and their parents, like that of the Kings, reflected the circumstances of an ethnic group in the process of moving up in the social scale. Occupations covered a fairly wide range. Most fathers held typical lower class II and III jobs such as barber, porter, shoe factory operative, and cab driver. A few held jobs more characteristic of higher status within the lower class. These included a bandleader, a carpenter, and a sandhog. One man worked as chauffer for a United States senator who later became president. As is common at this status level, many of the Queens’ mothers also worked, holding low-skilled jobs such as chambermaid, cook, waitress, and laundry worker.

Many of the Queens, like their mothers, became working women. Their occupations as young adults, however, showed that their education had prepared them for jobs of considerably higher status. The Queens ranked lowest of all groups in the proportion of members holding jobs in the bottom two census categories (36%), as well as in the bottom four (12%) and five (48%). Thus, about 27 of the young adult Queens known to be working held “white collar” jobs such as secretary, bookkeeper, and IBM punch operator. The occupational elite of the Queens, in the
world of legitimate endeavor, was represented by the girl who became a registered nurse.

Some of the Queens also held jobs in the lower skill categories, as did some of the Kings. Somewhat over one-third of the girls worked in low-skill occupations such as factory operative and housemaid. Two of the Queens, once the protective influence of the gang had waned, worked on a part-time basis as prostitutes. The most financially successful of the working Queens was a girl who became a full time prostitute. She rapidly gained a reputation as one of the best in her field, and within a few years of the observation period was able to purchase an expensive home for her mother and sisters in a middle class residential district. As a predictable and expected business hazard, the girl was arrested several times on charges of prostitution, and once, when unable to arrange the usual pay-off, spent several months in a women's correctional institution. The not-quite-complete quality of the Queens' movement toward higher status reflected in the diversity of their occupational experience also characterized the situation of their highest-status worker, the registered nurse. One of the major reasons that she gave for aspiring to this position, and working so hard to achieve it, was that it would greatly facilitate the task of raising and supporting her two children, both born out of wedlock.

The Queens had less of a sense of corporate identity than any of the other gangs, for reasons to be discussed. This did not mean, however, that there was any dearth of significant links among gang members, or between themselves and other gangs. On the contrary, kinship ties among the Queens, and between the Queens and Kings, were the most numerous of any gang. The Queens contained five pairs of sisters and three pairs of first cousins; over 40% of the girls thus had close relatives in the gang. Furthermore, five Queens had brothers, and three first cousins, in the Kings. One of the Queens, with cousins in both gangs, married a King. The density

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226 The role of the gang as an insulating mechanism against prostitution is discussed in Chapter Eight.
of kinship ties among the Queens was directly related to their clique structure, to be discussed shortly.\textsuperscript{227}

\textit{Law-violation, Cliques, and Leadership}

As might be expected from their educational and occupational experience, and consistent with their sex and class characteristics, (female, lower class II), the Queens ranked lowest of all seven gangs in almost every measure of criminality. For example, they ranked last in the percentage of gang members known to have been arrested up to a year after the observation period (7.7\%, compared to 25.6\% for the next-lowest Kings, and 45\% for the Molls), and in their involvement in illegal incidents (Queens, 6.8 involvements per ten girls per ten month period; Molls, 25.2; all-gang average, 31.4). No Queen was committed to a correctional institution during the observation period. The Queens also ranked lowest in every offense except one—assault. Here they ranked fifth in their participation in assault incidents during the observation period.

Comparing the Queens with the Molls with respect to the six offenses examined for the latter shows low or negligible rates of involvement by the Queens in those offenses which were most prevalent among the Molls—truancy, theft, drinking, and property damage. In assaultive offenses, by contrast, the Queens’ rate was higher. Only two involvements in assault were recorded for the Molls during the observation period, producing a rate of 0.7 involvements per ten girls per ten months; the Queens, with 18 recorded involvements, showed a rate of 1.9. With respect to known sexual offenses, both female gangs showed low rates.

Differences between the female gangs in offense-patterning reflect age, ethnic and social status differences which will be examined in some detail in later chapters. The lower rates shown by the Queens in the conventional lower status adolescent offenses of theft, drinking, truancy and vandalism are consistent with

\begin{footnote}{227 Further discussion of the relation of kinship and friendship ties in the gangs is presented in Chapter Five.}

\end{footnote}
their social status; their rate of assault is not so consistent, and raises the possibility of a special link between being Negro and assaultive activity. Evidence to be presented later does not show a direct association between Negro status alone and assault; among the 14 male gangs whose criminal records were studied, whites showed slightly higher (1.3 times) rates than blacks. (See Table 18.13, Chapter 13). The possibility remains that being Negro and female involves a particular disposition toward assaultive activity—a possibility to be discussed in the chapter on assault.

The relatively low rate of involvement in sexual offenses shown by the Queens as well as the Molls merits brief attention at this point, although a more comprehensive analysis of female sexual behavior awaits a later chapter. The Queens were Negro girls living in the major lower class Negro community of Port City; they were in a highly nubile age category (16 to 18); many were quite attractive and several unusually so; they were in close and constant contact with males of the same age and social status; some of the males were actively criminal; sex and mating were dominant concerns of both male and female gang members. These circumstances might lead one to expect a high rate of violative sexual behavior among the Queens.

The Queens did, in fact, engage in a good deal of sexual activity of a kind which seldom commands enthusiastic support by middle class adults, ranking second highest of the seven gangs in the frequency of their involvement in sexual actions seen as violating adult middle class standards. Such activity, however, was conducted in such a way as to attract very little notice by law enforcement officials. The Queens, like the Molls, were most circumspect about violative sexual behavior; rather than flaunting their sexual exploits they made every attempt to keep them secret. Moreover, their expressed sentiments with respect to sexual behavior were quite at variance with their actions; they maintained, on the surface, the most “moral” position in this respect of all the gangs, resulting in a substantial
discrepancy between word and deed (Chapter Four). These characteristics indicate an unusual degree of emphasis by the Queens on the control of sexual behavior.

As will be shown in the discussion of female sexual and mating behavior, a major function served by the gang for the Queens was that of delineating norms of sexual behavior and acting on a continuing basis to enforce these norms. One such norm enjoined habitual private rendezvous with male peers; such rendezvous were called “deals;” another norm enjoined unfaithfulness to one’s “steady” boyfriend; the act of being alone with another boy was called a “sneaky.” The very existence of explicit norms proscribing common forms of adolescent female behavior, along with a quasi-juridical system for enforcing them, to be described, testifies to a high degree of stress on the careful control of sexual behavior.

This phenomenon may be understood, in part, by considering that the development of such control could prove most useful in attaining at least two of the adult roles prospectively open to the Queens—that of middle-class-oriented housewife and that of prostitute. The utility of “controlled” sexual behavior to those who aspire to higher status has frequently been pointed out. The capacity to control one’s impulses in a situation where one is surrounded by attractive but socially-stable boys is a vital part of a policy of deferring intimate involvement until one can be sure that a prospective mate in fact aspires to higher status, and has the capacity to achieve it. In addition, the widespread perception that sexual looseness is an attribute of lower class status, and particularly of lower class Negro status, served for socially-aspiring Queens as a cogent incentive for the exercise of sexual control.

With respect to prostitution as an adult pursuit, the capacity to control one’s sexual behavior with a high degree of nicety is central to effective professional functioning. The successful prostitute must be able to control her immediate impulses, and to “turn love off and on,” to an even greater degree than the upwardly mobile female. One must make love only with the particular person, and in the particular way, and under the particular circumstances which will produce
maximum customer satisfaction, and maximum monetary return. A well-developed capacity to control one’s sexual impulses is a sine qua non of professional success. The Queens’ well-developed system of controls over sexual behavior thus served at the same time to inhibit legally-violative sexual behavior and to provide useful preparation for a number of possible adult pursuits.

Cliques and leadership in the Queens reflected several sets of related influences. One was their status characteristics (female, older, Negro, lower class II); another, their relationship with the Kings. As already mentioned, the Queens were less solidary, and had less of a sense of corporate identity, than the other gangs. This was in accord with several of their status characteristics. In Midcity, female gangs in general, and older female gangs in particular, were less solidary than male; Negro gangs were less solidary than Caucasian; socially-mobile gang members maintained looser ties than the socially-stable. Also involved was the Queens’ relationship to the Kings, which differed in certain respects from that of the Molls and the Hoods. The Hoods were definitely important to the Molls, but they also maintained a high degree of independent identity. The Queens were considerably less independent of the Kings, and their relationship with them was a major reason for their existence as a gang.

The “emulation of the boys” phenomenon reported for the Molls was also in evidence, to some extent, among the Queens. For example, they started a formal club shortly after the Kings started theirs. More important was the relationship of the Queens to the Kings as sisters, as sweethearts, as would-be sweethearts. Queens who had brothers in the Kings were enabled, through gang membership, to maintain a degree of common participation and mutual interest with their brothers in the Kings during adolescence which would serve them well in future years, when many would be faced with the responsibilities of motherhood without being able to rely on the presence of a legal spouse in the household. Even more important was the access to “boys” provided by gang membership. Girls with brothers in the Kings had a good “in” with their brothers’ gang mates; girls without brothers had a good
“in” with the brothers of girls who did. The importance of the Kings as a mate-
reservoir was underscored by the statement of a girl who, near the end of the
observation period, decided to leave the gang. “I ain’t had no luck with the Kings,”
she said, “so I decided I better find another corner.”

Once mating alliances were formed, membership in the gang served several
useful purposes. Joint participation with the Kings in a variety of gang-connected
ventures provided good opportunities for proximity and mating activities. The
Queens were loyal supporters of King athletic teams; they seldom failed to attend
their public contests, and took great pleasure in following, with pride and
excitement, the exploits of their brothers and sweethearts on the playing fields.
Membership in the Queens also enabled the girls to keep tabs on their boyfriends—
a most important consideration in the highly competitive mating atmosphere of
adolescent Midcity, where the possibility that one’s “steady” might pull a “sneaky”
was never far away. One reason the Queens gave for having their club meetings on
the same nights as the Kings’ was that in this way they could be reasonably sure
that their boyfriends were sufficiently occupied as to preclude sexual adventuring
with other girls. The Queens persistently (although unsuccessfully) attempted to
secure attendance lists of the Kings’ meetings, since the absence of a boy’s name on
such a list was presumptive evidence that he was engaged in pulling a “sneaky.”

The existence of the Queens as a group as well as the nature of their gang
activities were tied to their brother gang to a greater degree than was the case for
the Molls, but this does not mean that they lacked a distinctive identity. Their
pursuits significantly differed from those of the Kings, centering on activities and
concerns characteristic of adolescent females. Some significant portion of the Kings’
energies as a group were devoted to the organizational arrangements necessary to
effectively-coordinated collective action; the Queens, by contrast, utilized the group
in large part as a forum for discussion of matters such as dress, cooking,
entertaining, parties, who-is-going-with-whom, and standards of taste and
demeanor. The intensity of the Queens’ concern with the latter subject was
indicated by their participation in a practice they called “Topic Night,” to be discussed further in later chapters. This was a periodic gathering during which each of the girls in turn was subjected to critical review by her gang mates as to the acceptability of her conduct during the recent past. Forms of behavior such as wearing overly tight dresses, taking part in too many “deals” and failure to meet entertainment obligations were pointed out and censured.

As an associational unit the Queens differed in certain respects from the more solidary gangs. The clique, for the most part, was a more significant unit than the gang as a whole. There were four main cliques consisting of about eight girls each, and another seven girls who were not directly affiliated with any of the cliques. Like the Molls, whose dominant clique included a three-sister grouping, sister pairs formed the nuclei of three of the Queen cliques. Each clique, in fact, was roughly analogous in size and form to the Moll gang as a whole, and the Queens as a gang could be seen as a loose confederation of eight-girl cliques plus hangers-on.

The composition of the cliques remained fairly stable during the observation period, but there were some changes, as different girls moved in and out of the position of “best friends” and ex-“best-friends.” The making and breaking of best-friendships often depended on which girl’s brother her gang mate was interested in, or which girl was making a play for the “steady” of another. The composition of the cliques, similarly, was influenced by which of the Kings various girls might be going with.

Since activity-coordination was not a major concern of the Queens, clique leaders served more as opinion leaders in matters of taste, style, and current fads than as directors of organized enterprises. In two of the cliques with pairs of sisters, one or both of the sisters were recognized as clique leaders. There was also, as in the other gangs, a factional division centering on the issue of violative behavior. Two of the Queen cliques were seen as “good girls;” one as “bad girls;” the fourth shared features of both types, but inclined toward the good. As in the case of the Kings, the major “good girl” faction and its leaders were recognized as dominant.
The two sisters who were leaders of this faction were socially ambitious, highly concerned about the “good name” of the gang, and active in school activities. A major leader of the “bad girl” clique was the half-Caucasian daughter of the bandleader who, early in the observation period, was ejected from the major “good girl” clique for getting drunk several times, and particularly for urinating in public while drunk.

The Kings were quite sensitive to the “good girl” – “bad girl” division in the Queens, and referred to two subgroups within the “bad girls” as “the drinkers” and “the fighters.” The mainstays of “the fighters” were two sisters whose propensity to resort to physical force was decried by the “good girls.” Once when members of the “good girl” faction failed to invite the sisters to a party, they invaded the affair with their comppeers, and rapidly reduced it to a shambles by engaging the invited guest in fistfights.

A brief comparison of the Queens and the other female intensive-observation gang, the Molls, will serve at the same time to summarize some of the salient features of the Queens as a gang, and to suggest ways in which these features were related to their particular status characteristics. The Queens and Molls were alike in that their relationship to a boys’ gang was a major reason for the gangs’ existence and in that emulation of the boys’ activities played some part in the gang life of the girls. The brother gang, however, was more important to the Queens than to the Molls, and emulation of “the boys” was less important for the Queens, and mating more important, than for the Molls.

The two gangs were similar in that the basic associational unit was a clique of about eight girls, and that sets or pairs of sisters served as nuclei of cliques. The Queens, with four major cliques, were less solidary than the Molls, who had one dominant and one subordinate clique. With respect to crime, the Queens and Molls were alike in showing low rates of known sexual violations; they differed in that the Molls showed higher rates in theft, drinking offenses, truancy, and vandalism, while the Queens showed higher rates in assault. Both gangs maintained a similar
pattern of circumspection with respect to violative sexual behavior. Low truancy rates among the Queens reflected a stress on formal education which resulted in a high rate of high school completion; high truancy rates among the Molls reflected an orientation to education which resulted in a high drop-out rate.

The two gangs differed in that the “good girls” were the dominant clique in the Queens, and the “bad girls” in the Molls. Brother gang members who excelled in athletics were the principal heroes of the Queens; those who excelled in crime the heroes of the Molls. Finally, while the control of conduct and general demeanor was of concern to both gangs, the Queens placed far more stress on such control—particularly the control of sexual conduct. Both the similarities and differences of the two girls’ gangs reflected the fact that they shared in common the status of female, while differing in age, ethnic, and social status. It is important to remember in this connection that the Molls, more criminal and less well-educated, were white, and the Queens, less criminal and better educated, black. In this instance as in many others the influence of social status was clearly more significant than that of racial status. The nature of the relationship between these and other status characteristics to patterns of gang behavior will be explored in some detail in later chapters.
Male Adolescent Crime

and Demographic Characteristics

The fact that court rates in Midcity showed regular variation by social status level suggests that criminal behavior by male adolescents may be conceived as a behavioral practice which is related in a regular fashion to other social and cultural characteristics. One way of further exploring this possibility is to examine the degree of statistical association between male adolescent court case rates and community demographic characteristics. What was the nature of this association, and what does it reveal as to the origins of gangs and youth crime?

Chapter One examined some 50 demographic characteristics – first in comparing Midcity and Port City, and second in comparing social status levels within Midcity. There was no attempt to treat systematically the intercorrelations of these variables, neither to derive clusters (“factor analysis”) nor to determine the regression of one against others. One exception occurred in the case of the class-race issue, when three characteristics (education, occupation, race) were treated as “dependent” variables and correlated with 10 traditional features of low-status populations, to show that class status carried more weight than race. The present section will pursue a similar method – taking as a dependent variable the several measures of youth crime just examined, and analyzing the statistical association
between these and a range of demographic characteristics. This kind of undertaking – the determination of the degree of statistical association between measures of crime on the one hand and demographic characteristics on the other – is quite common in sociology. Several classic studies of this type have been made, and it is one of the few areas of sociological inquiry where the much recommended but seldom executed practice of “replication” has been undertaken. One reason for the popularity of this enterprise is that while details of execution are often complex, the underlying notion is extremely simple, and the appropriate methodology readily indicated. One simply collects measures of various demographic characteristics on the one hand (income, education, etc.) and one or more measures of crime on the other (police contacts, arrests, court cases for adults, youth, juveniles, etc.), chooses an appropriate measure of association, and proceeds to correlate one with the other.

In the face of the great abundance of findings derived from this obvious and popular exercise, it is undertaken once again for several reasons. First, most of the studies apply this method to relatively large and/or undifferentiated populations – generally a whole city; in the present instance examination is confined to a single urban district – one which has been examined in depth with respect to a wide range of features, may not include in the usual demographic repertoire. Second, as will be seen, a significant portion of the findings derived from the present examination are sufficiently divergent from those of other studies as to warrant reporting, and to raise the question of the reasons for these differences. Third, and most important, the interpretation of the correlational findings is quite different from those of most analogous studies; the use of classic demographic measures and classic correlational techniques as evidence for the thesis that criminal behavior comprises an intrinsic

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228 Following the practice of Chapter One, statistics for both dependent and independent variables will, for the most part, be derived from 1950-1960 averages. In a few instances only 1960 figures were available, and where used will be so indicted.

229 Reference to major studies: Shaw and McKay, Landers, Bardua, Schmid; ref. to summaries in President’s Crime Report, 1967.
part of an organized subcultural system is sufficiently novel as to merit presentation.  

Interpretation and understanding the following tables, as well as comparison with analogous studies, requires brief discussion of selected methodological considerations, although no extensive treatment on a more technical level will be included here. Several points will be discussed briefly; the definitions of the dependent and independent variables, the measure of association, and the scheme of presentation. The dependent variables (court case rates) used in Tables 1.6 and 2.6 were derived in a somewhat different manner from those used in frequency Tables 3.4 and 4.4. This difference might theoretically affect the character of the findings, but spot comparisons showed that such an effect was small.

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230 Ref. to Pre. Comm’n section on demog correlated. Ch IV: Crime and Its Impact: An Assessment. Significantly, of four explanations forwarded to account for good associations in different cities, is no mention at all of explanatory position that both crime statistics and other measures reflect a relatively organized subculture. In fact, even the term “social class” is not even mentioned, let alone subculture. Four explanations presented are:

1. Social disorganization
2. Criminals attracted to area, come in from outside
3. Denial of legitimate opportunity and presence of illegitimate
4. Attributes of urban-ness as such

231 For Tables 3.4 and 4.4 the formula for the numerator of the dependent variables was:

No. ct. appearances (1949+1950+1951/3) + no. ct. appearances (1959+1960+1961/3) divided by 2. This formula was used so that the same computations could be used separately for comparisons of the 1950 and 1960 periods, to be presented in the following section. For Tables 1.6 and 2.6 rate numerators were computed on the basis of the formula No. Ct. appearances 1950+1951+1952…. +1960/11. This formula was used on the basis of the finding, reported (elsewhere) (earlier) (later) that the use of the maximum number of values available for a given time period, affords a more accurate picture of the total periods, since it tends to correct for fluctuations due to possibly atypical periods or subperiods. For the latter as well as the former tables the population figures used as rate denominators were derived from the formula pop’n 1950+pop’n 1960/2. Table 1.6 uses as a dependent variable court rates for juveniles only, in contrast to Tables 3.4 and 4.4 which use “youth” and “adolescent” rates as well. This is due primarily to practical limitations; Table 3.4 and 4.4 were compiled at a later period on the basis of data prepared for computer processing, while all the associational computations were done by hand at an earlier time when “youth” and “adolescent” figures were not available. Table 2.6 does present some associations with youth and adolescent rates; these were computed separately for the specific analysis of that table.
Measures of the demographic characteristics used as independent variables are similar to those used in Chapter One. Most of the variables appearing in Table 2.6 also appear in the earlier chapter, and are defined identically. Most Table 4.4 variables have not previously appeared in exactly the same form, and are defined in the Table footnote. In a few instances where measurers of the variable were available only for 1960 or where 1950 and 1960 census definitions differed significantly, correlations are for the 1960 period only, and are so indicated.

The technique used here for determining statistic association reflects several considerations relating to the explanatory model of the present work. Statistical analysis is frequently employed in connection with what might be called a “linear-causality” model of explanation; the maximum number of independent variables are brought to bear in an attempt to “account for” the maximum amount of variation in one or more dependent variables; the relationship between dependent and independent variables can be expressed in the form of the formula \( X = f(Y + \frac{A^2}{\sqrt{B\log\ldots}}) \) etc. This model can also be described as an attempt to “predict” \( X \) or the variation of \( X \) from \( Y \) or the variation of \( Y \). The present work, as discussed earlier, employs a different kind of explanatory model. It perceives both criminal behavior and demographic characteristics as integral parts of a complex system of mutually interrelated elements wherein it is very difficult to determine “linear” relationships, or to ascribe causative primacy along the lines of the “\( X \) causes \( Y \)” model. Moreover, many of the variables seen to play a vital role in the total systemic complex are either extremely difficult to quantify (“religious orientations” “unconscious motivation”) or, if quantifiable, not generally available in usual statistical sources (numbers, sizes, frequency or congregation of youth gangs; frequency, circumstances of use, of non-school-taught linguistic forms). The statistical association data presented in this section, then, are conceived as providing one body of evidence among several, (some in very different conceptual forms or on different levels of analysis) adduced in support of a more generalized explanation of the role of subcultural influences in the generation of gangs and youth crime. They are
intended as a statistically rigorous attempt to demonstrate causality via statistical association. In addition, the model which attempts to “account for” variation of dependent variables in terms of variation of independent variables is also employed in the present work, particularly in those sections which adduce subcultural factors in an attempt to “explain” gang delinquency. The use of such a model in such instances can be seen as an heuristic device to order and facilitate the task of explanation, in cases where one selects for special attention one of the interrelated elements of the complex. From this perspective the interrelated complex model may be conceived as more closely representing the “reality” of the analyzed phenomenon, and the linear-causality model as an artificial construct useful for analytic purposes.

Several features of the associational method reflect these considerations. The measure of association is Spearman's rho – a non-parametric statistic. Correlation coefficients in all cases are computed on the basis of 21 units – the 21 census tracts of Midcity. Coefficients are computed on an item-by-item basis; there is no

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232 Complex issues involving mathematical models, causality and explanation; can’t go into. Present work if predicated on the thesis that for certain types of explanation the interrelated-complex model is more appropriate, or affords greater explanational adequacy, than the linear-causality model. No claim that this is the case for all or even most explanations. Case can be made for position that interrelated complex model merely represents a more “primitive”, less developed, more “generalized” version of the linear-causality model – one in which variables are not sufficiently well defined or isolated, and/or relationships of variables involved in the generation of criminal behavior are this far so poorly known or isolated so that the attempt to restrict explanational approaches only to those variables or bodies of data which can feasibly be handled within a mathematical framework would severely constrict the development of adequate explanations.

233 Spearman’s rho, the oldest and best-known of the rank correlation coefficients, is related to (and can be derived from the formula of) Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient, which is more powerful but computationally much more involved. See, for example, S. Seigel, Nonparametric Statistics, McGraw Hill 1965, pp. 202-213, and E. A. Maxwell, Analysing Qualitative Data, Methuen and Co. London 1961, pp. 115-117. Since present dates were hand-processed, computational simplicity was a major consideration in the choice of an associational measure. It was possible, however, when some of these data were later prepared for computer processing to compare Pearson and Spearman coefficients for some of the same variables, and results in most cases were quite close (Seigel states that rho is 91 percent as “efficient” as r, the most “powerful” of the correlation coefficients.) For example. 1960 juvenile rates and annual income under $6,000, rho= .52, r=.43. While the Pearson coefficients are lower in actual magnitude, significance levels are about the same (e.g., rho, 52, sig. lev. Between .01 and .05; r .43 sig. lev. Between .01 and .05). Pearson coefficients run for all of Port City (152 census tracts as units) were also in many cases close to those based on Midcity alone.
attempt at “cluster” analysis along the lines of one of the several factor analysis techniques – a method more consistent with the more rigorously mathematical models of explanation. Nor is there any direct use of significant levels as such – a usage which is also more consistent with these models, where “support” of specific hypotheses involves “testing” against designated levels of statistical significance. Instead, the correlation coefficients are grouped into four general categories, as follows: “Excellent” association, rho = .75 or over; “good”, .60 to .75; “fair” .45 to .60; “poor”, .40 or less. Only a small fraction of all computed correlations will be presented here. In the course of examining a range of demographic variables for association with court rates, over 500 separate rank order correlations were computed by hand. A major objective of this examination was to ascertain which characteristics showed the best association and which the worst. On the assumption that the meaning of the large number of middle-range coefficients (generally between .4 and .6) was too ambiguous to warrant much attention, tabulated coefficients were selected from the higher and lower extremes. Table 1.6 presents characteristics which showed the “poorest” association with court rates, and Table 2.6 those showing the “best”.

Table 1.6 lists 14 demographic characteristics which were poorly associated with juvenile court rates in Midcity during the 1950-1960 period. The correlation coefficients range from +.38 to -.35, indicating “poor association” under the present scheme. The fourteen characteristics reflect various aspects of seven more general

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234 These categories were developed on the basis of a number of considerations, including, most prominently, the distribution of hundreds of computed correlation coefficients and the significance levels for rho. Since the major objective of this analysis was to ascertain which of a wide range of variables showed better or worse associations with court rates rather than to “test” any specific hypothesis via statistical methods, the direct use of the significance levels to characterize the degree of association was not deemed appropriate levels is not given, but depends instead on how “harsh” or “soft” the investigator wishes to be in testing hypotheses. In the present instance, with the design as a whole falling well along toward the “soft” end of the scale, the decision was made to categorize results according to considerably “harder” criteria than are afforded by the conventional one or five percent levels. Thus, the present scheme requires a coefficient of .60 or more for “good” association, while a coefficient of .55 is “significant” at the .01 level. Approximate two-tailed significance levels for rho, n=21, are as follows: .10, rho= 38; .05, .44, .01, .58, .005, .66.
features – residential movement and stability, housing circumstances, household size, age composition, sex compositions, racial status, and national origin. Each of these is or has been held to be directly associated with youth crime, and some have shown good association in other studies.

The “social disorganization” explanation of delinquency, authored principally by the “Chicago School” of the 1930’s, holds that residential transiency and/or recency of in-movement into an urban area are directly related to crime rates. No such relationship was apparent in Midcity in the 1960 period. The association of court rates with residence of five years or more was -.35, and with movement to Midcity from outside the greater Port City area in the previous five years, -.04. The propensity of youth to appear in court apparently had little relation to whether their families were recent or long-term residents. Similarly, it has been held that living in older houses and renting rather than owning are conducive to delinquency. In particular, the prevalence of renters has shown strong associations with delinquency rates in several well-known studies (e. g., Shaw and McKay, Chicago; Lander, Baltimore; Bordua, Detroit), as has residence in older housing units (e.g. Schmid, Seattle).

Legend for Table 1.6
Extended Residence: Percentage of residents five years and older living in the same house for five-year period; Prevalence of Children and Youth: Proportion of males and females 19 and under to all residents; Households with Young Children: Primary families with one or more children 18 or under; Prevalence of Negroes: Proportion of non-whites to all residents; Large Households: Dwelling units containing 6 (1950) or 7 (1960) or more persons; Prevalence of Irish: percentage of persons born in Ireland; Prevalence of Italians: Italian birth, as above; Recent Inmovement: Percent persons moving to community from outside Metropolitan area within previous five years. No. Persons in Household: Self-explanatory;

Table 1.6
Demographic Characteristics Showing Poor Association with Juvenile Court Rates: 1950 - 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Association with Court Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportions of Population in Households</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Blacks</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households with Younger Children</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Male Negro Youth</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Persons not owning own Home</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Italians</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Household</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Negro Children and Youth</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Inmovement from outside City</td>
<td>-0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence in older Dwelling Units</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Irish</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Persons per Household</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Jews</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Residence</td>
<td>-0.35*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a  Definitions for Table 1.6 in text
b Spearman's Rho: N = 21
*1960 only

From Youth Crime in an Urban Lower Class City City Gangs, Chapter Three
Not to be used in published references without permission W. Miller  October 1968

Both the conventional and scholarly wisdom indicate that a preponderance of young people in an urban slum, large families, and crowded housing conditions create fertile grounds for youthful malfeasance. In Midcity the associations between juvenile court rates and a cluster of measures reflecting these conditions were generally low. The association between juvenile rates and the proportion of

236 Poss. Ref. to Calif. Aerospace Study and age-class frequency reason for increase in j. d. rates Referred to by J. Wison in Pub Interest Article.
primary families with children under 18 was .25; with the number of persons per household, -.22; with the proportion of dwelling units containing six or more persons, .08; with the prevalence of Negro children and youth, .06; with the prevalence of male Negro youth, .25. As already shown (Chapter One) the generally accepted notion that the lowest status families have the most children did not hold in Midcity, and the relationship between family size and social status was weak. Table 11.1 does, however, show a better association between the number of young children per family and educational status than appears here between similar measures and court rates. Similarly, somewhat better associations appeared between dwelling units with an average of more than one person per room and education/occupation, in comparison with the low association shown here with large households. With respect to family size and density of residential occupation, present findings are less clear-cut than those relating to other low-association characteristics.

The relation of racial status to delinquency rates was of particular interest in the 1960’s – the era of the Poverty-and-Civil Rights Movement. As already mentioned, both the supporters and opponents of increased resources for Negroes took as a premise that crime rates are higher in Negro communities – the former to support their contention that deprivation and discrimination produce crime, and the latter to support the factual assumptions common to both positions and this diverge quite sharply from generally-accepted premises. In Midcity during the 1950’s the association between the proportion of Negroes in the several neighborhoods and juvenile court case rates was poor (.28), as was the association between court rates and the proportion of male Negro youth (.25).

These findings are, however, in direct accordance with those of Table 11.1, which show similarly poor associations between the prevalence of Negroes and a variety of sum-population characteristics. The explanation in both instances is indicated the data of Table 10.1, which show that Midcity Negroes – despite a disproportionate representation in the lower status levels – were found at all levels,
and were more prevalent in middle class than lower class I neighborhoods. Thus, the case of juvenile delinquency as well as other characteristics, the presence of higher status Negroes in any number tends to wash out the traditional association between Negro prevalence and those population characteristics which in fact reflect social status subcultures rather than race-related propensities.\textsuperscript{237}

Findings with respect to delinquency rates and national origin reflect earlier findings with respect to the social status distribution of Midcity’s ethnic groups; associations are low and negative coefficients in the case of Italians and Jews reflect the fact that persons with foreign backgrounds were found in higher status areas. Arguments have been forwarded to the effect that the solidarity and firm controls of Jewish and Italian family life insulate their offspring from delinquency. In the case of the Italians, the force of the argument is somewhat diluted by the fact that the relative scarcity of Italian juvenile delinquents is balanced by the relative abundance of Italian adult criminals; in any event, present data fail to provide evidence for the purported delinquency-inhibiting capacity of Italian and Jewish families, but suggest instead that ethnic influences affect crime insofar as they find expression in the differential likelihood of finding different ethnic groups at different social status levels. The relationship between Irish prevalence and juvenile court crime, for example, is very low, reflecting the existence of Irish at the highest and lowest status levels in Midcity.\textsuperscript{238}

With measures of housing circumstances, residential stability, race, and national background showing poor association with youth crime, what kinds of measures showed good association? Table 2.6 lists twelve measures with correlations of .60 or more, here categorized as “good” or “excellent”. These

\textsuperscript{237} Ref. to other correlations, e.g., Lander. For the 1960 period only associations between prop of Negroes and juvenile rates only were somewhat higher – in the “fair” range. However, associations with youth and adolescent rates were low on the basis of computations for 1950, 1960 and the combined period. Add, here or elsewhere, ref. to Sylvester study: Independent processing of some data, similar results, include “adult” criminal records.

\textsuperscript{238} Weakness of ethnic associations vs. earlier “unassimilated ethnic” position; e.g., Shaw and McKay, r of .60 with Irish.
measures reflect five more general features – occupational status, educational status, expenditure patterns, income, and child-rearing arrangements. The importance of the Table is clear; measures of education, occupation and expenditure showed strong and consistent association with crime rates; measure of income showed good association, and measures of child-rearing arrangements fairly good but less consistent association.

Measures of education, occupation, and rent payment showed consistently high association with all three measures of crime – juvenile, youth, and adolescent. In most cases juvenile rates appeared more sensitive than youth rates to those status-related characteristics, in line with the findings of Table 2.6. Associations with adolescent rates, as would be expected, generally fell somewhere in between, but were in most instances closer to the juvenile figure. Particularly impressive is the correlation of +.91 between juvenile rates and the prevalence of male manual laborers. This coefficient is the highest of the many hundreds computed, with the exception of the association of +.93 between manual laborers and failure to finish high school (Table 2.6).

This finding, which reflects numerous other high associations between juvenile rates and similar occupational measures not reported here, is of particular significance because the characteristic at issue -- a measure of the character and skill-level of customary occupational involvement -- represents a normal and essential feature of human life which does not involve pathology or disorganization in any direct fashion. There is no simple or obvious link between working in manual jobs and engaging in crime.
Table 2.6
Demographic Characteristics showing Good Association
With Court Rates: 1950-60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Association with Court Rates $^b$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Juvenile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male manual laborers</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults not completing high school</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults not completing college</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately low rent</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low rent</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults not entering high school</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females in low skilled jobs</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males unemployed</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income: $6,000 and under</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income: $3,000 and under</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females Separated &amp; Divorced 1960</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem. separated 1960</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Definitions in Table 2.6 footnote
b. Spearman’s Rho: N = 21

From Youth Crime in an Urban Lower Class City City Gangs, Chapter Three
Not to be used in published references without permission W. Miller  October 1968

The fact that the best statistical associations of this study were involved between the proportion of male manual laborers and juvenile court rates poses a task of explanation quite different from what would have been involved had characteristics such as over-crowding, dilapidated housing, large families, race, ethnic status, or residential transiency shown the best associations. After occupational status, the best associations with crime rates were shown by educational measures. This is to be expected, since the two characteristics are themselves well associated. Failure to complete high school, one of the defining
characteristics of status level, shows the best association of the educational measures. This characteristic with the highest level of association is rent payment. This accords with findings reported in Chapter One; they are good, but not as good as those shown by occupational and educational measures.

The fifth set of “good association” measures - - those associated with child-rearing arrangements - - are of interest in that they are the least well associated of the high-association characteristics. Of the various measures examined, only those reflecting the proportions of separated an/or divorced women showed association in the “good” range; related measures such as female-headed families, proportion of single males, children living with both parents, fell below that range. Some showed “fair” association with crime measures, but none showed associations as strong or consistent as (those shown by) measures of occupation and education. This finding will be discussed in the next section.

Demographic Correlates and Subculture Bases of Delinquency

A major thesis of the present work is that the practice of criminal behavior by low-status urban youth derives in large part from the combined influence of a specific set of subcultures, with subcultures associated with social-status levels playing a prominent role. How do we present findings as to demographic correlates of court rates? Bear in mind that census-derived demographics data are not here considered as direct measures of subcultural characteristics, but rather as “indexes” thereto or “locators” thereof. However, despite the indirect nature of the evidence, and despite some areas of ambiguity or even contradiction in the complex pattern of statistical correlations, the general picture presented by the data is surprisingly consistent. To what extent does this picture support the notion that youth crime is systematically related to social-status-based styles of life?

The 26 measures presented in Tables 1.6 and 2.6, along with hundreds of others which were computed but are not tabulated here, may be taken as indexed to
13 more general features of social-status-based subcultures which may vary from class to class. These are: educational status, occupational status, income, expenditure patterns, household and child-rearing arrangements, sex composition, age composition, racial composition, national origin, residential movement patterns, housing occupancy, household size, and physical aspects of housing.\textsuperscript{239}

In the present context, two questions may be asked with respect to each of these features. First -- to what extent does the feature bear a logical relationship to a theoretical model of social-class-based subcultures; that is, to what extent can it be expected logically to show variation between status levels? Second, how good was the statistical association between each feature and male adolescent court-crime in Midcity? Present data indicate a division of the 13 into four categories. “Central core” features are those which court crime: for example, juvenile rates with proportion of male manual laborers, +.91, with adults who did not complete high school, +.89, and with moderately low rents, .87. These analogous indexed to the same three features also differentiated well among the status level of Midcity, including the three intra-lower-class levels (See Tables 2.6, 11.1). In general, indexes to the same features also show good statistical associations with crime indexes in most comparable studies, although occupational and educational characteristics do not, for the most part, show as strong a pattern of association as obtained in Midcity.\textsuperscript{240}

Indexes of two features -- income levels as well as household-and-child-rearing arrangements -- do show good logical and empirical relationships to the subcultural model, but not as good as the “central core” characteristics. Income, as discussed in Chapter One, is the most obvious and commonly-recognized criterion

\textsuperscript{239} For some of these, large numbers of “measures” per “feature”; e.g., occupation -- seven levels, both sexes, employment both sexes, for other features are fewer or even one measures -- e.g., sex-composition. Thus, for multiple-measure features, characterizations represent major thrust of measures relating thereto, many of which not tabulated here. For a somewhat different listing of subcultural features of low-skilled laboring class see 10 characteristics in “Elimination of LC” paper, 1969.

\textsuperscript{240} On other study results; e.g. Lander, education, .51; Schmid med’n sch. 55 Schm male unem .85, but % laborers only. 38 etc.
for distinguishing social status levels, and does, in the present instance, show relatively good associations with court-crime. Since income is, in general, commensurate with occupational skill and training, it would follow that low-skilled laborers would receive commensurately low incomes. But, the relationship between income level and subcultural status, also discussed earlier, is not nearly as directed as that of the educational and occupational measurers and its relationship to status level is less “linear.” For example, as is well known, skilled and unionized manual laborers often are paid more than lower echelon clerks, teachers, and similar “white collar” workers. Expenditures, as shown, serve more sensitively than income to discriminate social status levels. Indexes to income status, in general, show somewhat lower associations with court crime than is the case for the “central core” features; some indexes, in fact, show rather poor associations. Findings of other studies with respect to income resemble those presented here; good associations often appear, but the complexities of the relationship between income and social status prevent a clearly-defined pattern from emerging.241

The situation with regard to child rearing and household arrangements (often referred to, here and elsewhere, as “families”) in some respects resembled that of income. The present theory postulates a general relationship between social status and the form of the child-rearing unit; at the lowest levels the attachment to the child-rearing unit of a male acting in the role of parent and assuming the responsibility for the conduct and welfare of the household is less frequent and less consistent than at higher status levels.242 However, statistical associations shown here between indexes to “female based” households and court crime are not nearly as strong as the theory would predict. There are several fairly good associations between juvenile rates and some indexes of female based households - - for example, percentage of women living without husbands (.65) and (“separated”) females (.63),

241 On other studies, e.g., Schmid, mdn inc .53
242 References to Implications paper, Chapter on Fem Sex and Mating, Chapter I “Elimination” Paper
but associations with less indirect indexes are weak. Several reasons for this may be cited.

The first related to the distribution curve for female-based units and the associational measure used here. Evidence in other chapters indicates that the distribution of female-headed households is considerably less “linear” than is the case for other “central” characteristics -- that is, prevalence is greatest at the lower class III level, dropping off quite sharply as social status increases, so this form quite rare even in lower class II populations, and becomes almost non-existent in lower class I. The form of the child-rearing unit (although not its functioning) thus shows very little variation from lower class I through middle class. Even in lower class III populations, as shown in Chapter Eight the “pure” female based unit is far from universal, and its prevalence varies in different kinds of lower class III communities.

Consequently, the fact that the particular associational measures used here (Spearman’s rho), is considerably less sensitive to non-linear variation than are others (e.g., Pearson’s “r”) is partly responsible for the absence of strong associations between indexes to female-based households and crime. Of considerably more importance are deficiencies in the nature of available indexes to female based households. As shown in Chapter One, measures provided by the U.S. Census are relatively insensitive to female-based households, and are considerably less efficient in “detecting” their existence than in the case of characteristics such as educational and occupational status. Further, the least indirect measure to such units, “families headed by persons other than the wife of the primary hear” was not available for 1950, thus ruling out the possibility of obtaining the stronger associations obtained here by using the full 1950-1960 period as the basis of computation.

However, despite the fact that present associations are not as strong as those shown for education, occupation and expenditures, for the reasons given, child-rearing and household arrangements are still considered a “central” feature of social-class-based subcultures. In face of citied deficiencies in available measurers,
this feature was well associated with social status levels, and fairly well with educational and occupational characteristics. This existence of field-recorded data presented elsewhere is used, in this instance, in an attempt to correct for the deficiencies of census data in characterizing household and child rearing arrangements as a “central” feature of class-based subcultures in Midcity.

Three of the demographic features examined here may be considered “extrinsic” to social status subcultures, in that they show no direct relationship, logical or empirical, to their central features. All relate to housing; the size of households, the age of dwelling units, and the length of residence in a particular residential area. Each of these features has shown good to excellent associations with crime rates in other studies: Why do they fail to show significant associations in Midcity? Some of the reasons have already been suggested. With respect to the size of households, it has been shown that the conventionally-accepted association between large families and lower status populations did not obtain in Midcity and the larger Port City area. Logically, both higher and lower status communities can contain both larger and smaller families, and this situation appeared to obtain in Midcity. Similarly, the conventionally-accepted association between “residential instability” and lower status was not in evidence. Lower status residents of the central city areas moved around a good deal within particular residential zones, but appeared no more prone, in the 1950’s, to move out of these zones than did higher status people. Measures which reflect movement between residential zones rather than movement within such zones were not sensitive, in Midcity, to social status differences. Likewise as already suggested, the age of the dwelling units in which one lives bears no intrinsic relation to social status subcultures. While there may be a tendency in some communities for poorer to live in older houses, this was not the case in Midcity. Many lower status residents lived in newly-constructed housing projects, and many higher status residents were proud to occupy Midcity’s “old” houses built anywhere from Colonial times onward.
A forth “low association” factor, home ownership, requires special consideration. This characteristic figures among the best correlates of crime and delinquency in several well-known studies. The poor association between home ownership and crime rates shown here is readily understandable on the basis of knowledge of the community, but presents some difficulties with respect to more general considerations concerning class and subculture. As already shown (Table 14.1), Midcity was predominantly a community of renters. The absence of association between home ownership and social class status differences is readily explainable on the grounds that there were two principal kinds of “renters” in Midcity -- lower class III people whose subculture is not compatible with home ownership, and middle class adults who were not raising children and who occupied the relatively “good quality” residential apartments. Numbered among the latter were older couples (often Jewish), whose children lived in other areas, and unmarried staff members of the nearby medical center (nurses, interns, secretaries). With both the highest and lowest residents of Midcity numbered among the “renters” class related associations are not in evidence.

What fails to fit the present theory is the low percentage of home owners (16%) in lower class I neighborhoods. Home ownership and the conscientious maintenance of the dwelling unit are central aspects of lower class I life. One possible reason for the lack of evidence of the phenomenon in Midcity relates to the nature of the dwelling units in lower class I neighborhoods. Most of these were three-unit structures (“triple-deckers”) owned by the occupants of one of the units who had purchased the house with an eye on the rental income of the other two. Many of those who rented these units were lower class I married couples who lives as renters until such time as they could accumulate enough money to buy their own house -- a major ambition. Those who did achieve this objective moved out of the community to purchase small single-family units of a type that was all but unavailable in Midcity. This would account for the low percentage of home owners
in lower class I areas, but in the absence of concrete evidence must remain speculative rather than proven.\textsuperscript{243}

Indexes relating to age groups, sex composition, national origin and racial status show relationships to social status subcultures and associations with court rates, which are, in the present study, “ambiguous”. None show a clear-cut pattern of good or poor association; some show correlations which are mutually consistent, but in the “fair” or “fair to poor” range; others show moderately good associations for one index but fair or poor associations with others; some show fair but conflicting associations. The age and sex composition of different communities often figure in explanations of differential crime rates. Both conventional wisdom and some scholarly studies indicate that communities with disproportionate numbers of youth, particularly male youth, will be more likely to have high rates of youth crime. One influential study of the 1960’s concludes that changes in the proportion of younger people (14-29) to total population were the major cause of apparent increases in juvenile delinquency rate.\textsuperscript{244} The popular notion that lower status communities swarm with disproportionate numbers of unrestrained youth has obvious implications for explanations of crime.

In Midcity, as shown in Table 6.6, there was no marked concentration of adolescents and young adults at the lowest status levels, and, except for some over-representation of young adults at the lowest status levels, and, except for some over-representation of young children (0-9) at lowest levels, little differentiation of the several age classes by status levels. Associational statistics accord with these findings. Associations with a variety of indexes to the prevalence of children, youth, and young adults cluster around .40 to .50, a level characterized here as “fair”. There is little differentiation by race or sex; associations with proportions of male children or adolescents, Negro adolescents, or male Negro adolescents are similar to

\textsuperscript{243} Oct. ’68 article, survey of age-group and housing types. Sid life-cycle was major determinant of house-type. Locate if possible. (Transaction ?)

\textsuperscript{244} Space-General Corporation for the California Youth And Adult Correction Agency Prevention and Control of Crime and Delinquency 1965
those for these age groups as a whole. There would thus appear to be some tendency
to find higher court rates in neighborhoods with higher proportions of youth, but
nothing approaching an established trend.

Similarly, the proportions of males and females in different kinds of
communities are frequently seen as relevant to crime. There are at least two
conflicting theories. The first posits higher crime rates in areas where males
predominate. In cities such areas are likely to be of the “skid row” type, with high
rates of alcohol offenses, petty theft, and related violations. The second theory
expects higher rates in communities with an excess of females. These areas are
frequently visualized as containing higher proportions of fatherless families, with
the “absent father” situation engendering uncontrolled behavior by youth and
consequently high delinquency rates.

Midcity data supports neither of these theories. Correlations between
adolescent court crime and the relative prevalence of females were consistently low,
indicating little association between sex ratios and delinquency rates. Several
correlations in the .30 to .40 range were, however, negative, indicating a slight
tendency to find lower rates in areas where the preponderance of females was
greater. As already shown, females predominated in all parts of Midcity, with the
ratio of women to men increasing with age. There was, however, no evidence for
higher ratios at lower status levels; in fact, ratios were slightly higher at higher
levels.

Reasons for female predominance differed at higher and lower levels. At
lower levels it was due largely to the prevalence of female-based households; at
higher levels to the prevalence of older widows, nurses, secretaries, and other
“white collar” workers of the nearby medical complex. The preponderance of females
was slightly greater in the latter instance, resulting in some association between
higher status and the percentage of women (Table 9.1). This association was
sufficiently in evidence as to account for the slight negative association between
female prevalence and youth crime, but not strong enough to indicate a significant relationship.

The relationship of national origin and race to social status and crime has been discussed several times in past chapters, and will be discussed again in connection with gangs and gang delinquency. Evidence presented in Chapters One and Two indicates that subcultural characteristics associated with particular racial or other ethnic groups manifested themselves primarily as they reflected differences in social status. Chapter One showed a slight inverse relationship between foreign origins and lower social status, and surprisingly weak associations between the prevalence of Negroes and ten classic characteristics of low status urban slums. Chapter Two showed that some portion of each of Midcity’s major ethnic groups (Irish, English, Jews) manifested subcultural characteristics of different status levels at different time periods and that some portion of Negroes manifested subcultural characteristics of each status level, including middle class, during earlier and later periods.

Data relative to the association between ethnic status and court crime accord with these findings. The classic Chicago studies of the ‘20’s and ‘30’s show good associations between “foreign-born or Negro family heads” and delinquency rates. Such associations were not in evidence of national groups such as Irish, Italians, Jews, and English Canadians were consistently low. However, despite the fact that national origin was related to social status and crime neither logically nor empirically, this feature is characterized as “ambiguously” rather than “poorly” associated primarily because of the negative associations shown by national origin, with correlations in some cases falling into the range categorized here as “fair.” This was due, as shown, to the tendency for people with relatively recent foreign origins to live in the higher status sections of Midcity.

Similar considerations prevail in the case of the Negroes. Statistical associations between the prevalence of Negroes and juvenile, youth, and adolescent court rates were consistently low (Table 1.6), as were associations with most of the
demographic characteristics generally associated with slums (Table 11.1). However, the relationship of crime and other subcultural characteristics to Negro status is characterized as “ambiguous” because of the good association between the prevalence of Negroes and intra-lower-class status levels (Table 10.1), and because a few of the computed correlations fell into the range characterized as “fair”. The higher associations were found in the case of juvenile rather than youth or adolescent rates, further evidence for the conclusion that racial differences manifested themselves primarily as they reflected social status differences.

An additional consideration relates to the character of demographic characteristics as “indexes to” rather than as direct measures of social-status-based subcultures. Analyses of the Port City metropolitan area as a whole show that positive association between crime and the prevalence of Negroes often do not mean that the crimes are committed by Negroes, but rather that areas containing higher proportions of Negroes are more likely to be lower in social status. This phenomenon emerged clearly in a correlational analysis of 42 Port City suburbs whose Negroes population averaged well below 1%, with only two communities containing over 2% non-whites. Some computations showed fairly good associations between crime rates and the percentage of Negroes, but since the number of Negroes was negligible, it was quite obvious in this case that the associations were due to the fact that lower status communities contained more Negroes rather than the fact that Negroes committed more crimes.

The conclusion afforded by the present examination of statistical correlates of youth crime and delinquency rates in Midcity, despite areas of considerable complexity and some ambiguities, is surprisingly clear. Court rates, in general, showed the best associations with indexes to those demographic features which are most closely related, logically and empirically, to social-status-based subcultures, and which serve most sensitively to discriminate social status levels. The practice of

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245 Ref. Sylvester thesis. Similar findings, different and independent analysis of materials -- including “adult” crime data. See, e.g. Table I, also p.17 passim.

246 Ref. to “Suburban Delinquency” study; cite “ecological fallacy”.

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crime by male adolescents in low status communities thus appears to comprise an intrinsic element of the subcultures of those communities, and to be related in a systematic and orderly fashion to other subcultural characteristics.

How, then, does one account for divergent findings in other studies - - particularly with respect to characteristics such as race, national origin, housing, age and sex distribution, home ownership, and residential movement? This complex issue cannot be explored in any detail, but it is clear that one major factor relates to differences in the character of various urban lower class communities. As shown in Chapter One, Midcity in the 1950’s was predominantly lower class, mixed residential and commercial community containing Negroes and other ethnic groups at all status levels. Most of its households were engaged in the rearing of children.

It did not contain a substantial skid-row population, which could have produced better associations between crime and the proportion of males. It did not include colonies of bohemians, which would have increased the degree of social-class mixed in local neighborhoods. It did not contain any substantial number of higher-status home-owners, which could have resulted in better associations between home-ownership and crime. Many of its lowest-status residents occupied relatively new public housing, reducing the possibility of good associations with the physical condition, crowding, or age of dwelling units. The fact that the majority of residents of Midcity shared a common involvement in the work, child-rearing, and other customary practices of the lower class residential community made it possible for statistical measures of lower class subcultures to show a high degree of concordance with one another with measures of youth crime.

Male Adolescent Crime and Demographic Change

The present examination of youth crime and demographic characteristics in Midcity has, thus far, deliberately ignored the element of change. The attempt to find out which population characteristics showed the best associations with court rates was predicated on the assumption that information covering longer time periods provides a better picture of existing relationships. This was particularly important in the case of court rates, which, as already mentioned, tend to fluctuate considerably on a year to year basis, but which level out substantially when longer time periods are taken into account.

The element of change is, however, of considerable importance, and merits examination. Chapters One and Two cited numerous changes in the social circumstances of Midcity, of greater and lesser magnitude, before and during the decade of Midcity gangs. Among changes prior to the 1950’s were in-and out-movements of several national groups, increases in population, and changes in technology. Among changes noted for the decade of the 1950’s were a decrease in population, an increase in the proportion of Negroes, increases in income levels, and considerable construction of new housing. A central assumption of this work - - that crime rates are closely related to particular community characteristics - - has several implications with respect to social change: significant changes in relevant community characteristics should be accompanied by significant changes in crime rates; changes in “central” subcultural features should have the most direct effect on crime rates; and such effects should be detectable through available measurement techniques.

Unfortunately, the kind of examination indicated by these expectations cannot be undertaken here, for several reasons. A sound statistical analysis of change trends in this area is enormously complex, and requires resources not available on the present study. A second and related reason is that it was not possible on the basis of the relatively simple techniques which were afforded by available resources to arrive at results whose validity was comparable to that of
other aspects of the study. Thirdly, it would appear that a particular local community such as Midcity is less appropriate as a basis for an examination of changes in crime rates than is the case for most of the analyses of this study. Many of Midcity’s court-rate trends during the 1950’s paralleled national trends reflecting developments in many different kinds of communities.

The present analysis would benefit greatly through the use of equivalent data on a national level, or by careful comparison with other analogous communities. Fourth, sound conclusions as to change trends, as shown in Chapter Two, require examination of a considerably longer time period than the ten years which form the basis of the present analysis; while some important conclusions can be derived from the examination of a single decade, many others could not reasonably be expected to emerge in so brief a period. For these and other reasons the length and development of this analysis of change trends will be commensurate with the importance of the issue.

The decade between 1950 and 1960, as already mentioned, was considered by some as a period of radical change in Midcity. This perception was based primarily on several of the more visible manifestations of a complex pattern of change and stability - - a decrease of about 25% in the number of residents, an increase from 23% to 47% in the proportion of Negroes, a substantial exodus of lower class I and II white residents, and considerable movement by lower status persons into higher status residential areas. Concomitant with these changes was a rise in the rate of adolescent court appearances. It seemed obvious to many that these trends were directly related - - particularly the increase in the percentage of Negroes and the amount of court-handled crime. The very obviousness of this assumption calls for some attempt, however curtailed, to assess its validity, and to examine, in addition, the relationship of these obvious changes to other aspects of community life -- particularly those related to social status levels and their subcultures.

The present brief examination will be based primarily on the period between 1950 and 1960, with 1940 data cited in a few instances. Three principal questions
will be addressed: What were some of the changes affecting the major community characteristics under consideration? What changes occurred in the volume of male adolescent court crime? And what relationships could be detected between changes in demographic characteristics and the volume of court crime? Of particular concern will be implications of these findings for the issue of subculture and the generation of criminal behavior.

Changes in Demographic Features

Associations between court rates and thirteen demographic features of Midcity during the decade of the 1950's have just been presented. The present section will summarize briefly 10-year trends affecting these features both for the community as a whole and, selectively, for the several intra-community social status levels. Midcity numbered about 107,000 persons in 1940; about 113,000 in 1950 and about 85,000 in 1960. The 25% loss between 1950 and 1960 did not, however, markedly alter the social status composition of the community. With the exception of lower class I areas, both the numbers and proportions of persons at different social status levels remained quite stable. Residents of lower class II areas numbered 18,000 in 1950 and 20,000 in 1960; of middle class areas, 12,000 in 1950 and 11,000 in 1960. The major change affected lower class I areas; these carried the burden of population loss for the whole community, with population dropping from 28,000 to 7,000. Changes thus ranged from 8% (gain) to 13% (loss) for all levels except lower class I, which showed a striking 75% loss. Lower class II areas experienced some, but not much, loss.

Changes in the proportions of persons at different social status levels reflected the substantial loss of lower class I residents, but otherwise were relatively slight. The proportion of Midcity residents living in lower class III areas

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248 Fifteen detailed tables showing numbers and percentages for 1950 and 1960, and percentage differences between 1950 and 1960 provide the basis of the present analysis. Data will be summarized rather than presented in full.
rose from 16 to 23% the proportion in lower class II areas from 47 to 54%; in middle class areas, from 11 to 13%. The percentage in lower class I areas fell from 25% to 9%. The 1960 community thus contained relatively larger proportions of residents at the two lower status levels and in middle class areas.

Age and sex distribution also changed little over the decade. The proportions of old people and children increased slightly (8% to 11%; 18% to 21%) but the other age classes showed high stability (e.g., adolescents 1950, 15.0%, 1960, 15.3%). Distribution among the several social status levels also changed little; in general there was remarkable stability in the proportions of persons of different ages (e.g., percent older adults: middle class, 25.3 to 23.2; lower class I, 23.0 to 22.5; lower class II, 18.8 to 18.4; lower class III, 18.4 to 20.4). The ratio of females to males increased somewhat during the decade, with the bulk of increase occurring in middle rather than lower class areas. Otherwise ratios remained similar (e.g., Percent Female: lower class I, 55.6% in 1950, 56.0% in 1960; lower class III, 52.9% in 1950, 53.8% in 1960).

Changes affecting the Negro community are of particular interest. As already mentioned, many Port City residents believed that Midcity had changed radically during this period due to a massive influx of Negroes, and had become an almost entirely black community. It was true that the number of Negroes did increase by about half during the decade - - from 25,000 to 37,000 -- but Negroes still comprised a minority in 1960. Further, the increase in the proportion of Negroes from 23% to 47% was due more to the outflux of white lower class I residents than to an inundation of black immigrants. The proportion of Port City’s Negroes living in Midcity remained about the same -- about 10 times that of the larger metropolis. Furthermore, the distribution of Negroes in the various neighborhoods of Midcity remained remarkably stable; the correlation coefficient for the percentage of Negroes living in each of the 21 census tracts in 1950 and in 1960 was .90. The tendency to find greater concentrations of Negroes at the lower status levels also remained similar during the decade. At the same time, the numbers of Negroes in
middle class areas increased somewhat, this accentuating the bimodal distribution noted in Chapter One.

The tendency for persons of more recent foreign origins to live in higher status areas, noted earlier, changed little during the decade. A small in-movement of Puerto Ricans raised the percentage of foreign-born in lower class III areas from 6% to 9%, but otherwise proportions of foreign groups remained similar. There was little change in the distribution of groups such as the Irish, Jews, or Italians. How did the population movements of the 1950’s affect the central criteria of social status in Midcity -- occupation and education? Both these characteristics showed remarkable stability in the face of population shifts. The percentages of manual laborers in each of Midcity’s three intra-lower class status levels varied by less than two percentage points between 1950 and 1960. Median grade completed was 8.3 for both years. Similarly, the distribution of adults who failed to complete high school among Midcity’s lower class social status levels remained virtually unchanged (lower class III, 75 to 78%; II, 65 to 66%; I, 56 to 59%). These figures provide impressive statistical documentation for the process of “class stability via ethnic replacement”, described in Chapter Two as a major feature of Midcity’s historical development.

The nature of available information as to the other three demographic features of “central” relevance to social status -- income, expenditure, and child-rearing arrangements -- does not provide an adequate basis for reliable comparisons of 1950 and 1960. As discussed in Chapter One, the financial indexes present difficulties related both to differences in data categories for the two periods and changes in dollar values; the child-rearing indexes suffer primarily from the absence of equivalent census categories. Taking these difficulties into account, the income figures of Table 12.1 show that the relative distribution of income among the several social levels in 1960 was quite consistent with that of 1950; this is despite differences in the purchasing power of the dollar and the identity of the reporting units. Similar considerations obtain in the case of rents; a comparison of the several
levels for 1950 and 1960 (Table 14.1) shows a persisting consistent relationship between social status levels and rent payment. It should be noted, however, that there was no evidence for an increased in “poverty” between 1950 and 1960 -- even for the lowest status populations. To the contrary, the available evidence indicates increases in income at all social status levels.\textsuperscript{249}

Available data with respect to household and child-rearing arrangements, categorized as “central” to social-status-based subcultures, are too meager to support accurate conclusions. For most of the more direct indexes comparable data were not reported for 1950 and 1960. However, what data are available indicate little change during the decade. For example, the percentage of the population living in households was almost identical in 1950 and 1960. The number of persons per household declined slightly in the ten year period (less “crowding”), and the distribution of household size throughout the community remained very similar.\textsuperscript{250}

The demographic “shape” of Midcity with respect to demographic characteristics of central relevance to social status -- occupation, education, and the like -- was surprisingly unaffected by the substantial population loss occurring during the decade. Changes in characteristics related more directly to housing were more in evidence, but even here the degree of stability in general distributions was surprising. Most changes in this area reflected a phenomenon already mentioned -- the substantial out-movement of lower class I whites. Housing data reveals that the exodus occurred among both owners and renters. The number of homeowners in lower class I areas dropped from 1,200 to 400 in ten years; the number of renters from 6,500 to 1,700. For the other status levels, however, both numbers and percentages of owners and renters remained similar. The community as a whole contained 4,425 owner-occupied units in 1950, 15% of the total, and 4,390 in 1960 -- 17% of the total. The 26,000 rental units in 1950 comprised 85% of all units, and the 22,000 in 1960, 83%. With the exception of lower class I, the several social status

\textsuperscript{249} To H. Miller references in “Elimination” paper.
\textsuperscript{250} Household data in “Demographic Char’s by Census Tract: 1950, 1960; 1950- 1960; Poss. add data on % fem. div. and sep.
levels manifested little change in the numbers and proportions of owners and renters. The percentage of owners in middle class areas fell slightly, and rose due to bargains in low cost units vacated during the decade.

Room occupancy showed similar trends. The low percentage of “crowded” units (over one person per room) in 1950 (16%) became even lower in 1960 (11%), with incoming and remaining residents spreading themselves out among the units vacated by those who left. The rather weak relationship between room occupancy and intra-lower-class status levels shown for 1950 (higher percentage of “crowded” units at lower levels) disappeared entirely in 1960, with all three lower class levels showing virtually identical percentages. Middle class areas showed lower percentages of “crowded” units in both years. The percentage of “older” buildings dropped slightly during the decade as the result of some “urban renewal” construction, but the distribution of older units throughout the community changed very little.251

This brief examination of demographic change appears to indicate, in the face of a widespread conviction that Midcity had altered radically between 1950 and 1960, that most of its major characteristics showed remarkably little change. The one really marked change was a substantial out-movement of lower class I whites, whose effects were felt in several other areas; for example, a moderate numerical increase in the number of Negroes produced a large increase in their relative proportions in the community. There was a general spreading out of the resident population, particularly those of lower status, as those who remained took over the vacated housing units. This resulted in a lowering of the already low density of residences, and has as a further consequence the lessening of the concentration of lower status persons in particular areas; Midcity as a whole became somewhat more homogeneous with respect to social status, and this homogeneity was in the direction of somewhat lower status for the community as a whole.

251 Trends with respect to residential duration, the 13th feature examined in the last section, could not be ascertained due to the absence of comparable data for 1950 to 1960.
Despite these changes, there was surprising stability with respect to features of central relevance to social status -- education and occupation. Nor was there much change in age or sex distribution, and distribution of Negroes and other ethnic groups, or patterns of renting and home ownership. Data were inconclusive with respect to changes in income levels, expenditure patterns, child-rearing arrangements and residential duration, but what data was available did not indicate marked changes. To the casual observer, a high degree of stability is a fundamental characteristic of the community.

*Trends in Crime Rates*

What changes occurred between 1950 and 1960 in the propensity of Midcity’s adolescent males to appear in court in connection with crimes? Rates presented in Table 3.6 would appear, at first glance, to indicate a substantial increase in court-handled crime. In the years 1949, 1950, and 1951, the yearly number of court appearances among boys between 7 and 20 averaged about 7% of their numbers; ten years later, about 13%. It would thus appear that rates almost doubled. This appearance is, however, deceptive. As indicated earlier, court rate statistics may serve most effectively, at a given point in time, to indicate relative relationships between one set of rates and another, or between rates and other characteristics, but are quite unreliable as indicators of the “true” volume of criminal behavior. This generally has little effect on the validity of relational findings based on the same time period, but may substantially affect direct comparisons of crime at different time periods. Considerations relating to statistical trends in court rates between 1950 and 1960 resemble those relating to income. In fact, the two sets of trends are quite similar, both with respect to percentage changes and distribution among status levels. The major contrast is in the direction of trends; income figures appear to indicate a substantial drop in the percentages of low-income persons, while court figures indicate a rise in crime rates.
Table 3.6: Male Adolescent Court Rates by Social Status Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>157.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>128.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midcity</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>128.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. See text for definitions
b. No. cases per 1,000 males 7-20
c. No. cases 1949 + 1950 + 1951/3 per 1,000 males 17-20 1950
d. No. cases 1959 + 1960 + 1961/3 per 1,000 males 17-20 1960

Table 6.1 shows a decrease from 63% to 27% in the percentage of persons with incomes under $3,000, while Table 3.6 shows an increase from 7% to 13% in court case rates. The discussion of income interpreted these figures as reflecting some actual increase in income, but attributed the bulk of the substantial increase primarily to changes in the value of the dollar, and differences in methods of tabulating data. Similarly, it would appear that 1950-1960 trends in court rates reflected some actual increase in crime, but that the bulk of the change was due primarily to differences in methods of handling and recording court cases.

A year-by-year examination of male adolescent court rates shows that the increase from 67.0 to 128.3 per thousand did not occur evenly throughout the decade. Between 1950 and 1956 rates showed a relatively gradual increase; juvenile rates rose from 38 to 44 per thousand, and youth rates from 155 to 202. Between
1956 and 1958 both sets of figures showed a radical jump; juvenile rates from 44 to 67 per thousand, and youth rates from 202 to 329. After 1958 rates again became fairly stable. There were, on the other hand, several quite pronounced changes in the policies and procedures of law-enforcement agencies which fell precisely during this period. The chief of police was dismissed due largely to his laxness in record keeping, and his successor instituted a new computerized crime-recording system. The Port City police department established a juvenile bureau for the first time in history, and its chief instituted a policy of more stringent enforcement which increased juvenile arrests. These changes had some indirect effects on court rates; a far more direct effect, however, was a change in record-keeping procedures of the central state criminal records agency. Prior to 1956 cases which were “continued without finding” were not included in the official statistics of the department, on which present results are based. In that year the decision was made to include such cases in subsequent tabulations. In the case of Midcity, the number of juvenile cases “deleted”, in the words of the agency, prior to 1956, ran from about 100 to 150 per year, or about one-third of all court-handled cases. A rough recomputation of rates for several years prior to 1956, including available figures on the number of “continued” cases, virtually eliminates the rate differential of the earlier and later periods, and in fact indicates a slight decrease in rates (-2.4%) rather than a radical increase from the 1956-58 period. It would thus appear that there was some increase between 1950 and 1960 in the volume of court-handled adolescent crime in Midcity, but how large it was is difficult to ascertain on the basis of available data. The increase was certainly less than indicated by the figures of Table 3.6, probably substantially less, and was, in all likelihood, rather modest.

Within the community the larger increase appeared at the lowest and highest status levels. Middle class areas showed the largest relative increase, although the

---

252 Not feasible to recomputed all data systematically. All nec. data available, lack of comparability between officially-released figures and in-house data of agency.

253 Ry ASR Juv. Article: rate & rate
actual amount of change in rates in middle class areas was about the same shown by lower class III. Reasons for the relatively greater increase in middle class rates have been discussed. Within the lower class, increases in lower class I areas were considerably lower than in the two lowest levels, making lower class I rates more stable than those of any other levels. In fact, areas which were lower class I in both 1950 and 1960 showed virtually identical rates in the years 1950 and 1960 (31.0/1,000 and 31.8/1,000); considering that the former figure did not include “continued” cases, this actually represents a drop in rates for these areas. It will be recalled that it was these areas which experienced the greatest loss of population, at once suggesting the possibility of some relationship between changes in population size and changes in court rates. This possibility, along with others, will be examined in the next section.

Demographic Change and Change in Crime Rates

During the decade of the 1950’s certain of Midcity’s demographic characteristics changed in greater or lesser degree, while others remained quite stable. At the same time official indexes of male adolescent court rates showed a general increase. The question logically arises – what was the relation between the pattern of demographic change and changes in the volume of court crime? Answers to this question bear directly on the issue of the causes of youth crime. On the basis of theories which ascribe central importance to factors such as overcrowding, racial injustice, unemployment, overproduction of children, and the like, one would expect to find associations between increases in crime and increases in room crowding, Negro prevalence, employment rates, the proportion of young people in the population, and the like. On the basis of present theory, one would expect to find increases in youth crime only where there is good evidence for a general lowering of social status -- as evidenced primarily by changes in educational and occupational levels. What does present evidence show?
One obvious aspect of change analysis has to do with the magnitude of observed changes. One set of gross changes can be shown to be associated with another set of gross changes by the use of relatively crude statistical techniques. If changes in either or both sets of changes are relatively small, the discovery of associations which may exist requires statistical techniques sufficiently sophisticated to be sensitive to such changes. Implications of this for present findings will be discussed in the course of their interpretation.

Table 4.6 shows statistical associations between changes in crime rates and changes in selected demographic indexes for the period between 1950 and 1960. The measure of association, Spearman’s rho, is the same used in previous sections to ascertain associations between indexes to crime and demography during the same time period. Post sections have shown that substantial changes affected one set of demographic characteristics during 1950’s, while another, including characteristics of central relevance to subcultural status, showed little change. The more pronounced changes were: a population loss of 25%; an increase in the proportion of Negroes from about one-quarter to about one-half; substantial out-movement of lower class I and II whites; and movement by lower status persons into dwellings vacated in higher status areas. Changes in central indexes to social status such as education and occupation, on the other hand, were quite minor. On methodological grounds, then, one might expect the “high change” characteristics to provide the

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254 On Methods. Issue of ascertaining changes when “rates” or percentages involved. When raw numbers, simple. Subtract ’50 from ’60 figure, compute differences as a percentage of ’50, rank 21 tracts in order of magnitude of difference. When rates, more complex. Two alternatives, considered, among others, differences between % and ratio between two percents. Both have disadvantages, no evident solution. After consid consultation w statisticians and experimentation w dif methods, decided on ratio. For magnitude of change, census tracts ranked acc’g to ratio of rate or percentage in 50 to rate of % in ’60. For example: Tract A, juvenile rate ’50 44.96/1,000; rate ’60, 50.88. Ratio ’60/50, 1.08. Tract B, rate ’50, 38.76; rate ’60, 38.04, ratio ’60/50, 0.98. In the case of most characteristics, as in the above example, some tracts showed increases and other decreases. For purposes of linear ranking, all tracts were ranked on the basis of one direction of change, usually the dominant direction. Thus the designation “Increase” in crime, manual laborers, etc., might include tracts which showed decreases; in such instances “decreases” are actually non-increases, with the larger decreases ranked as the larger non-increases. (Poss other consids, if nec). Overall increase 50-60 due to records change has little, import on synchro analysis, still hold.
best possibility of good associations, and on theoretical grounds, the “culture-
central” characteristics. In point of fact, neither set showed statistical associations
of any real significance. Coefficients of associations between changes in these areas,
along with scores of other indexes examined, were uniformly low. What is most
impressive about Table 4.6 is the magnitude of the associations. With one exception,
all fall into the “poor association” category. The one exception, a -.60 for population
loss and juvenile rates, and the highest among the many indexes computed, still
remains within the limits of the “fair association” category.

Correlations between “central” indexes to social status levels and court rates
are low, although a few of these are among the higher of the low associational
figures. The correlation of +.36 between the increase in the proportion of male
workers in the lowest two occupational categories and juvenile rates was the
highest of the “positive” correlations computed. This relates to social status, but
changes in the proportion of male manual workers – the characteristic best
associated with crime rates as a “stabilized” basis (Table 4.6) is only +.14. Similarly,
a change index combining educational and occupational criteria of social status
showed an association of only .23. These “low association” findings are, however,
directly consistent with the subcultural thesis forwarded here. The magnitude of
change in the “central” was low; the association between changes in these
characteristics and changes in crime rates was low; there is thus no evidence for
any significant independence of association between the two sets of characteristics.

The situation with respect to race is quite different. The increase in the
percentage of Negroes in Midcity was among the most marked of all the changes of
the 1950’s. Assuming first that changes of the greatest magnitude provide the best
possibility of good associations, and second that the prevalence of Negroes and the
volume of crime are related, one might then expect good associations between the
increase in Negroes and crime increases. In fact, the association between the
increase in proportions of Negroes and changes in juvenile rates was only .19. To
further check this finding, associations with increases in the actual numbers of
Negroes were also computed, producing a virtually identical figure of +.18. These findings are consistent with many others of the present study which indicate that racial status was not independently associated with central aspects of lower class subcultures, but found associations only as it was related to social status.

Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Change</th>
<th>Association with Increase in Juvenile Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in proportion of lowest skilled male workers</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in proportion of persons of lower educational and occupational status</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in proportion of Negroes</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in number of Negroes</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in proportion of low-skilled female workers</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in proportion of male manual workers</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in proportion of male white-collar workers</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in proportion of “crowded” units</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of male adolescent population</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in proportion of “long-term” residents</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population loss</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. “Increases” in some cases are “decreases.” See text
b. Rates averaged; see notes c and d, Table 3.6

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The most pronounced change in Midcity between 1950 and 1960 was the decrease in its population from 113,000 to 85,000 – a loss of 25%. It is not surprising then, on the basis of considerations just discussed, that the best of the consistently
low “change” associations involved this phenomenon. With the exception of the “male white collar workers” indexes, representing the obverse of the “positive” occupational associations, each of the “negative” associations shown here in some way reflects the overall population loss. The general relationship was: the greater the population loss, the smaller the increase in juvenile rates. Some of the “high loss” areas, as seen above, actually showed decreases in rates. Each of the other “negative association” characteristics of Table 4.6 reflects the “loss” phenomenon. Those areas with greatest population losses showed relatively greater losses in the proportion of adolescent males, since whole families moved; greater losses in the proportion of long-term residents, since most movers were “old residents”, greater losses in the proportions of “less crowded” units, since those who left had occupied the more spacious dwelling units. Each of these characteristics thus showed negative relations, albeit weak ones, with crime increases.

Two of these latter three associations – the fewer the male adolescents the less crime, and the fewer long-term residents the less crime – accord both with common expectations and research findings. The third – the more “crowded” units the less crime – runs contrary to expectations. The magnitude of association in this case is too low to warrant serious considerations, but the direction of association suggests that simple relationships like “the more crowding, the more crime” must be regarded with considerable caution, and that characteristics such as room crowding have little direct influence on crime rates independent of other related demographic changes.

The correlation of -.60 between population loss and increase in court rates – indicating that those areas of Midcity which lost most residents experienced the least rise in rates -- is the one finding of the “change” analysis which merits consideration. Compared to correlations along “stabilized” characteristics and crime rates it is only “fair”, but it is uniquely high relative to all other “change” correlations. Reasons for this association are by no means obvious. No simple or direct relationship was found between the extent of population change in the
various parts of Midcity and any other demographic characteristic. Further, evidence with respect to possible correlates was ambiguous, and in some cases contradictory. Moreover, even though the majority of census tracts in Midcity showed losses between 1950 and 1960, the loss figure for each tract represented the final balance between those who moved out and those who moved in. It is not possible on the basis of available data to know the size of these two components of the loss figure, nor the social characteristics of either the emigrants or the immigrants.

General knowledge of the circumstances of Midcity, along with some clues furnished by available data, provide a possible explanation based on the relationship of population size, concentration, and geographical extent to youth crime rates. Those areas of Midcity which experienced the greatest loss in population were, as has been shown, lower class I. These areas also showed the lowest increases in both juvenile and youth court rates. In 1950, lower class I areas comprised 28.5 thousand persons – about one quarter of Midcity’s population and one-third of its geographical area. In 1960 they comprised 7.5 thousand persons – under 9% of the total population and about one-sixth of its area. Incentives for youthful criminal behavior inherent in lower class I subcultures are less compelling than those of lower class III, but considerably more compelling than in middle class subcultures. Lower class I sections in Midcity contained numerous corner gangs whose members customarily engaged in violative activity – albeit the less serious forms, and with less frequency. The reduction in the size and population of the lowest class areas – both absolutely and relatively – diminished the force of those incentives for engaging in criminal behavior which derived from the extensive visible presence and proximity of others sharing a similar subcultural tradition.

255 Relation between loss in population and crime rates in other studies. If opposite – more the loss, the more the increase – cite implications for “social disorganization” position.
256 A more extensive analysis of forms of lower class I youth crime and its subculturally-based incentives is undertaken in Suburban Delinquency Study, op. cit.
257 Poss. role of gangs, thinning out of reduced gang membership component of crime incentive.
Similar considerations prevail in the case of lower class III areas, although in the reverse direction. In 1950, these areas, with a population of 18.3 thousand, comprised about 16 percent of the population of Midcity and about one-fifth of its geographical extent. In 1960 they comprised 19.7 thousand persons, about one quarter of the total population and one-third of its area. One consequence of this gain was to increase the numbers and geographical spread of persons manifesting a lower class III subculture, thus serving to reinforce its well-developed incentives for engaging in violative behavior. However, while lower class I areas ranked consistently lowest in court rate increases, lower class III areas did not rank consistently highest. They did show the highest rate of increase for youth rates, but showed ambiguous standings with respect to juvenile rates. Juvenile rate increases in middle class areas, already discussed, were equal to or greater than lower class III increases. This was due in part to the statistical phenomenon whereby a given magnitude of change computed from an initially low baseline results in a much higher percentage of chance than when computed from an initially high baseline.

For the rest, it must be assumed either that influences undetectable by the present analysis were in operation, or that the influences of discoverable change processes themselves was not sufficiently strong as to provide a basis for good statistical associations. The -.60 figure at issue here, while larger than any other change-analysis coefficients, is still considered statistically to “account for” only about one-third of the “variance” in the associational analyses. The process whereby subcultural reinforcement produced increases in crime rates cannot therefore be considered to have been supported by the present evidence, but remains as a possible explanation which is not discordant with present data.²⁵⁸

The finding of some degree of association between population loss and crime rates, albeit a weak one, along with the finding that different social status levels showed differential losses, raises the possibility that the population shifts of the

²⁵⁸ Further examination of this process in Suburban Delinquency Study, op. cit.
1960’s might have affected the strong relationships between social status and crime shown in previous analyses. To test this possibility, the lower class areas of Midcity were divided into three “population loss” categories – “high”, “medium”, and “low”. Results are shown in Table 5.6. In general, the amount of loss experienced by the several social status levels between 1950 and 1960 bore surprisingly little relationship to juvenile court rates in 1960. On the basis of a “social disorganization” hypothesis one might have expected higher rates in areas that experienced the most loss; there is no evidence for this. The “medium loss” areas showed somewhat higher rates, figures for lower class I and III run opposite to the social disorganization thesis, in that areas with higher population losses show lower rates – which accords with the “more-loss-less-increase” phenomenon just discussed. Areas whose population remained most stable during the 1950’s showed higher rates in 1960.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status Level</th>
<th>High (32% and over)</th>
<th>Medium (18-31%)</th>
<th>Low (0-17%)</th>
<th>1960 Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class III</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>_ b</td>
<td>78.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class I</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Lower Class</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Rates averaged; See Notes c and d, Table 3.6
b. No lower class III tract with “low” loss

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What is most significant about this table, however, is the evidence it presents as to the influence on court rates of population loss as compared with that of social status. Rates for high, medium, and low change areas were, respectively, 58, 65, and 55 cases per thousand; for lower class III, II, and I areas, 79, 60, and 39 per thousand. These findings suggest that social status differences exert far more influence on crime rates than changes in population size, in that the tendency to find higher rates at lower levels was virtually unaffected by the amount of population loss experienced by the several levels. There is a further possibility; that the changes of the 1950’s might have weakened the strong associations reported earlier between court rates and demographic characteristics central to social status subcultures. Table 6.6 presents measures of six such characteristics, showing correlations separately for 1950 and 1960 as well as for the full decade. Results are surprising.

In every instance associations computed on the basis of the extended time are higher than those of the shorter periods – in some cases considerably higher. Some influences of change is indicated; for five of the six characteristics associations are lower in 1960, reflecting some decrease in the correspondence between social status and residential locale during the decade. But far more impressive is the evidence for stability in a crucial area – the relationship between crime and social status. One should bear in mind that Micity during this period experienced a substantial loss in population, a substantial increase in the proportion of Negroes, a marked loss in the population of “working class” areas. In the face of these changes – seen by some as the most radical in over a century - - statistical associations between crime rates and the central measures of social status not only failed to weaken, they became

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259 These are six of the 10 “good association” characteristics of Table 11.1; the other four were not computed. As explained earlier, crime rate numerators for the single-year periods were the averaged rates for that year, the preceding, and the following years; denominators were census figures for that year. The numerator for the full-decade period was the average of all years of the decade, and the denominator the sum of the 1950 and 1960 figures divided by two.
significantly stronger! This is indeed compelling evidence for the strength and durability of the link between social status and crime.

Table 6.6

Demographic Correlates of Juvenile Court Rates\(^a\)
1950 and 1960 Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Association with Juvenile Rates(^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Manual Laborers</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Unemployment</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults failing to complete high school</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults failing to enter high school</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual income $3,000 or less</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual income $6,000 or less</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Rates averaged; see notes c and d, Table 3.6
b. Spearman’s rho: 21 census tracts

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This finding may be better understood on the grounds that none of the changes involving out-migration, intra-community movement or radical composition sufficiently altered the range of social status differentiation or the degree of correspondence between social status and residential areas as to significantly reduce the capacity of the statistical measures to discriminate social status differences. It was therefore possible, given this capacity, for a method of analysis which utilized longer-term rather than shorter, measures of both crime rates and demographic characteristics to reflect more accurately the closeness of the
relationship between crime and social status, and to detect, through the complex of welter of change, the essential stability of this relationship.

A final point with respect to change trends: findings of the “change” analysis of the present section stand in marked contrast with “extended duration” analyses of previous sections. The latter yielded a large number of good to excellent associations; the former virtually none. For example, the association between juvenile rates and the proportion of male manual laborers was .91 (Table 2.6), but the association between changes in juvenile rates and changes in the proportion of male manual laborers only .14 (Table 4.6). This contrast has important implications for theoretical formulations concerning the role of social change in the genesis of criminal behavior.

One major tradition in American sociology customarily attributes to origins of certain social phenomena – particularly those defined as “social problems” – to changes in social and economic conditions. This tendency was particularly pronounced in the well-known “Chicago School” of criminology discussed in Chapter One. A major generative paradigm of this school, one which still maintains considerable currency, proposes that social changes produce social disorganization which produces “anomie” which produces crime. Thus changes such as immigration and emigration, movements of Negroes and other ethnic groups, fluctuating employment rates, increases in room crowding, and the like, produce a climate of unrest, malaise, uprootedness and frustration which finds a logical culmination in criminal activity. A corollary of this position suggests that crime rates fall as the prevalence of such “disruptive” change diminishes. The present work, by contrast, suggests that the more fundamental sources of criminal motivation are to be found in persisting characteristics of certain well-established subcultures. Changes directly affecting subcultural conditions will, of course, affect crime rates, but the independent generative potency of such changes is low compared to that of the originating subculture.
The failure of the present analysis to obtain significant associations between demographic changes and changes in crime rates by no means establishes that such associations do not exist. As stated at the outset of this chapter, available resources were not commensurate with the requirements of a sophisticated change analysis. Had appropriate resources been available it is quite probable that associations would have been higher. But this fact in itself is of direct significance. As it happened, and enormous amount of effort was expended in the fruitless effort to tease out significant correlations between changing characteristics -- far more than was devoted to the analysis of extended – term correlates. It is most significant that relatively simple statistical techniques were able to produce excellent correlations between measures of crime and demography analyzed as “endemic” characteristics, but that techniques of the same order of simplicity failed almost completely to produce significant associations between changes in crime and demography. This would indicate, as already suggested, that relationships between “endemic” subcultural characteristics and crime are sufficiently direct and sufficiently patent to be detected by relatively simple methods, while relationships between changing characteristics are sufficiently subtle, elusive, and complicated as to require far more elaborate and sophisticated techniques.

The meager evidence concerning the change process produced by the present analysis lends little support to the social disorganization thesis as to change and crime. If one were to ask, “what single change contributed most to the general rise in Midcity court rates between 1950 and 1960?” the answer would have to be “a change in the method of recording court crime by the Central Records Agency.” Other studies indicate that similar changes in other cities also played a part in the marked rate increases shown nationally during this period. The only other factor showing any noteworthy association with court rates was the population decrease; this indicated that areas experiencing the greatest population changes showed the

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260 The research assistant responsible for most of the present computations was a dedicated advocate of the “social-change-generation” position, and pursued all possibilities of documenting this position with great vigor and persistence.
least increase in crime -- a finding running directly counter to the assumptions of the change-and-disorganization position. The volume of court-handled youth crime in Micity in the 1950's was associated most directly with population characteristics of direct relevance to subcultural status; these varied little during the decade, and crime rates, in consequence, showed little variation attribution to changes in other demographic characteristics.

Summary: Youth Crime and Demography: Theoretical Relevance

A major objective of the present work is the development of a general explanation of criminal behavior among low-status urban youth -- particularly gang youth. The empirical findings of the present chapter therefore serve the purpose, in addition to providing descriptive data, of bringing evidence to bear on relevant theoretical issues. The process of relating complex bodies of empirical data to theoretical formulations is never easy. It is particularly difficult in a subject area where there is so little agreement either as to the identity of the major relevant variables or their definition, let alone their casual relationship to the object of explanation. Further difficulties result, in the present instance, from the rather primitive character of analytic techniques. The attempt, therefore, to render this extensive body of findings as a set of relatively direct statements, and to relate them in any unequivocal manner to theoretical issues, must necessarily involve oversimplification, and impart an artificial degree of consistency to the thrust of hundreds of varied findings, some which were ambiguous or even contradictory. The following summary should be interpreted with this in mind.

The community of Midcity during the decade of the 1950’s provided the basis of the analysis. Two major bodies of data were utilized-- the first comprising measures of criminal involvement by male adolescents (7-20), the second measures of demographic characteristics. It is important to reiterate that neither of these were particularly direct measures of the actual forms of behavior or population
characteristics at issue. The “court case” used as a measure of criminal activity relates in a complex way to actual behavior, and reflects only frequency of illegal involvement, not form or seriousness. Many of the census figures used as measures of population characteristics are similarly indirect, and few of them are adequate indicators of the kinds of subcultural characteristics which figure importantly in the theoretical analysis.

It should be noted, however, that the two bodies of data-- some of whose constituent measures showed extremely good statistical association-- were quite independent, having been compiled at different times, under different circumstances, by different methods and by different agencies. The demographic data were collected by the Federal Bureau of the Census primarily by means of questionable administered every ten years; the court data were recorded by the state corrections division on a yearly basis. The demographic data were derived largely from answers to questions; the crime data were based on events (court appearances by individuals) recorded as they occurred. Both bodies of data were subject to both “synchronic” and “diachronic” processing. The first provided the basis for “extended duration” analysis by averaging figures over the decade; the second compared figures at different points in time and to ascertain change trends.

Findings with respect to the volume of court-handled youth crime were clear. They indicated that male adolescents in Midcity engaged extensively in behavior which results in court action. Youth rates (age 17-20) were substantially higher than juvenile (7-16), both because older adolescents are far more active criminally, and because statistics based on the “juvenile” category included a large percentage of “non-contributing” younger children. The number of court appearances every year among older male adolescents in Midcity was equivalent to about one-third of their number. This figure is well above national rates (about 7% for 18-20 year olds in the 1960’s), and marked higher than the 2-3% figure cited in some FBI reports. Incidence figures of this order indicate clearly that the practice of violative behavior was not confined to a small or “deviant” minority, but was instead sufficiently
common and sufficiently widespread as to constitute an established and customary feature of urban lower class life. This becomes even more evident when one considers that the number of offenses acted on by the courts is smaller than the number acted on by the police, and that the latter, in turn, is substantially smaller than the number of offenses actually committed.

A second finding of central theoretical relevance emerges clearly from these data. There was a direct community where offenders resided. Midcity rates were higher than those of Port City, and well above those of higher-status Port City areas. Moreover, there was a similarly direct relationship between crime and social status within Midcity itself—within rates increasing directly from the highest to the lowest of a set of intra-community social-status levels. The fact that differences of this order were found on the basis of social-status differences as refined as those between lower Class I, II and III is one piece of evidence, among others, that the higher rates found at lower levels are not a consequence of more stringent law enforcement, but reflect instead the actual existence of more crime, and more serious crime. The ubiquity of youth crime at the lowest levels is forcefully attested by the finding that yearly court rates among older youth in the average lower-class III area were equivalent to well over one-third of the populations, and in the lower class III area with the highest rates, well over half! Findings of this kind make it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the roots of a phenomenon so widespread and so clearly related to social status must be sought in the subculture of these strata rather than in the idiosyncratic motives or deviant behavior of individuals.

Figures showing that crime rates are clearly higher at lower status levels provide a statistical basis for positing a close association between social status and crime, but say nothing as to the nature of that association. Evidence bearing on this latter issue is presented here through an examination of the degree of statistical association between court rates in Midcity and a range of measures of demographic characteristics. While the general conclusion of this analysis is relatively clear, many of the individual findings are considerably less definitive than in the case of
the prevalence statistics. Several methodological reasons for this are indicated. The likelihood that close empirical relationships between subcultural characteristics and criminal behavior will be reflected in good statistical associations is weakened by the fact that many of the available measures of both sets of variables are far from satisfactory; few are sufficiently direct or sensitive as to support definitive conclusions. Moreover, for some characteristics of central theoretical relevance such as the nature and prevalence of kinship networks, religious beliefs and practices, the number and size of street corner groups, measurers are very poor, or even lacking entirely. Additional methodological problems arise from the fact that the relationship between crime and subculture is conceptualized, on a theoretical level, in terms of mutually interrelated complex characteristics, while the present analytic techniques relate measures of crime and demography on a one-to-one basis.

Despite these methodological problems, however, the general thrust of the associational findings is surprisingly clear. The best associations were shown by measures of those characteristics which are most central to a model of social-status based subcultures; characteristics seen as peripheral to or independent of this model showed poor or ambiguous associations. Measures of educational status, occupational status, and expenditure patterns showed strong associations with rates of youth crime. Measures reflecting intra-community movements, length of residence, age of housing, and size of households, showed poor or indifferent associations. Of special interests were associations with racial status and national origin. These showed statistical association with crime primarily insofar as they reflected social status differences, but otherwise showed little independent relationship with illegal behavior.

These associational findings would thus appear to support two additional generalizations with respect to youth crime and subculture. The high statistical association of crime rates and central indexes to social status suggests that the practice of criminal behavior by male adolescents is itself a “central” component of the subcultures of low status populations. Second, the findings suggest that the
relationship between youth crime and other central components of the subculture is hardly casual, but sufficiently close and intimate as to indicate the profit of exploring the logical as well as the statistical relationships between crime and culture. They also suggest that such explorations require information derived from more direct and intensive observation of actual behavior than is afforded by census-gathering methods.

The decade of the 1950’s witnessed a number of marked changes in Midcity. Prominent among these were a substantial loss in population -- primarily in lower class I areas; an increase in the number of Negroes, and a considerable amount of intra-community movement. The occurrence of these changes afforded the opportunity to address an additional set of questions of relevance to a general explanation of gangs and delinquency. Were changes in demographic characteristics accompanied by changes in the volume of youth crime? If so, which characteristics? Did the increase in the size and proportion of the Negro population affect crime rates? Did demographic changes diminish the direct correspondence between lower social status and higher rates of crime? Did they weaken the strong associations between crime rates and central measures of social status subcultures? In the face of some expectations that rapid social change disrupts the kinds of relationships found in more “stable” communities, that more Negroes mean more crime, that change in itself may generate a criminal response, many of the present findings were surprising.

Three major conclusions emerged from the analysis. First, despite the highly visible nature of the changes just noted, there was remarkably little change in the “central” indexes to social status -- particularly indexed to educational and occupational status. Second, there were marked increases at all status levels in the volume of youth crime handled by the courts. Third, there was little significant statistical association between changes in crime rates and changes in any of the demographic characteristics examined. How are these findings to be interpreted?
The rise in crime rates noted in Midcity was paralleled in many other American cities during this period, raising the possibility that adequate explanation requires consideration of nation-wide trends. In the case of Midcity itself, the factor most obviously related to the increase was a change in official methods of recording court cases. About half way through the decade a category of cases not previously included was added to the yearly totals, increasing the number of tabulated cases by about one-third. The failure of the analysis to show significant associations between crime increases and changes such as the increase of Negroes is noteworthy. One minor exception to the “low association” findings was the “fair” association between degree of population loss and crime increase -- indicating that areas which suffered the largest population losses experiences the smallest increases in crime. This finding runs counter to the notion that the “disorganization” resulting from social flux enhances crime, as do other findings bearing on changes in population size and racial composition.

The finding of consistently low association between measures of demographic change and measures of crime change accords directly with the “subcultural generation” position of the present work. On the basis of this theory one would expect to find good associations only in the event of substantial changes in the “central” measures of social status or other relevant subcultures since these are seen to bear a “casual” relationship to crime rates. Changes in non-central characteristics, on the other hand, would not be expected to show significant associations, since they are seen relatively independent of criminal activity. Results accord directly with these expectations. Since “central” measures of social status as occupation and educational status showed very little change, there was little statistical association with crime trends. In the case of non-central characteristics such as racial status and internal population movements, changes even of substantial magnitude failed to produce good statistical associations with crime rates.
Two additional findings provide important evidence as to the relationship between crime and subculture. To test the relationship of higher crime rates and lower social status over time, rates were compared for areas showing high, medium, and low population loss, and associations were compared for longer versus shorter analytic periods. Results in both instances indicated a high degree of stability in the relationship between crime rates and subcultural characteristics even under conditions of considerable change. The effect of high, medium or low population loss on rate differentiation by social status was negligible; associations between central measures of social status and crime rates actually became stronger as longer periods of time were encompassed by the analysis. It should be noted in the concluding summary that the present statistical evidence for good relationships between youth crime and subcultural characteristics relates primarily to only youth crime -- that based on social status. Evidence with respect to the subcultures, primarily those of sex and age, is presented in future chapters.
Family Relationships of City Gang Members

Family and Gang as Agents of Socialization

The family, conceived primarily as a child-rearing agency, and the gang, defined in some detail in the last chapter, were both prevalent forms of associational units in Midcity. It is important to repeat at this point that the term “family” as used in the present work refers to that kinship-based associational unit which bears primary responsibility for the rearing of children—particularly during the pre-adolescent period. This usage does not specify the age, sex, or marital status of those who perform the primary child-rearing tasks, and in this respect differs from prevalent conceptions of the family which incorporate the notion of a “husband,” a “wife,” and their mutual offspring. Since the term “the family” evokes in many persons an image of the husband-wife household, the more neutral term “child-rearing arrangement” is used elsewhere in this work to characterize the unit at issue, and the term “family” as used here is meant to convey the same meaning.\textsuperscript{261}

\textsuperscript{261} Definitions of “the family” on the level of national-culture concepts are presented in David M. Schneider American Kinship: A Cultural Account, Prentice Hall, 1968. According to Schneider “the family” in American usage means “a unit which contains a husband and wife and their child or children...” The bulk of data which provides the basis of Schneider’s analyses was derived from interviews with people whom he terms “middle class whites,” 90\% of whom were involved in
This conception of the family is a response to the fact that the actual form and composition of child-rearing arrangements in Midcity varied widely. The husband-wife-based unit was only one of several alternative forms; another common form was the “female-based” arrangement, wherein major child-rearing functions were performed by one or more females—often including the mother’s mother or other female relatives, and where the conduct of the child-rearing enterprise was not predicated on the consistent and long-term presence in the household of an adult male performing the functions of parenthood. Since the composition of non-husband-wife households could vary considerably both from household to household and through time for the same household, the “family” as an associational unit was able to perform similar tasks of child-rearing (language teaching, rules of interaction, and so on) through a variety of different structural arrangements.262 Non-husband-wife child-rearing units in Midcity are seen as alternative forms of child-rearing unit rather than as “broken” versions of the husband-wife-children unit. On this basis the street gang is not represented as a “product of the broken home”—that is, a consequence of the defective functioning of the family—but rather as an associational form articulated with and complementary to the family, in whatever form it appears. Family and gang are seen as partners in the difficult enterprise of rearing the young, with their relationship involving a complicated mixture of cooperation and competition, affection and hostility, assistance and hindrance—as in the case of any partnership.

The family and the gang, each taking various forms, served the adolescents of Midcity as bases of affiliation and objects of identification, as well as agents of

“husband-wife” arrangements, and in this respect contrasts with present data relating to families in Midcity.

262 Female-based households are discussed in several places in the present work. Estimates of prevalence in Midcity are given in Chapter One, and the relationship between actual forms and cultural ideals is discussed in Chapter Eight (Female Sex and Mating). An earlier discussion is contained in W. Miller, 1959, “Implications...” Op. Cit. Other authors have presented different perspectives on female-based households One reason for these differences is that the present study treats “the family” in the context of the question “What are the actual forms of child-rearing arrangement found in low-status urban communities?” rather than the question “What forms of child-rearing unit are best adapted to producing well-adjusted or healthy personalities?”
The kinds and degrees of affiliation with each, the tasks of socialization assumed by each, as well as the actual amount of time spent with each, showed variation according to the major status characteristics used here as axis of analysis—principally age, sex, and social status. The strength of ties to family and gang, the intensity of allegiance granted to each, the degree of cooperation and competition between the two—were different for males and females, older and younger adolescents, higher and lower status gang members. Most of the present discussion centers on the circumstances of the boys; a later section deals separately with the girls.

One of the major tasks facing adolescents in the United States is that of loosening ties—both physical and psychic—with their parental families. They spend more time outside the home than during childhood, and transfer some part of their loyalty, their sense of affiliation, their allegiance, from the parental family to outside, non-kin groups. In Midcity, as elsewhere, the process was not an easy one, either for parent or child. Family and gang often came into conflict with both units competing for the loyalty and physical presence of their shared members. But a significant feature of the relationship between gang and family in Midcity, relative to that of middle class communities, was the comparatively high degree of legitimacy granted the gang by parents. This is not to say that parents explicitly applauded gang membership as such. They could and often did object to particular activities of the gang, and were frequently critical of their offspring's street corner associates. But such disapproval seldom took the form of blanket condemnation of the gang, or denial of the right to membership. Parents used, or tried to use,

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263 Family and gang are not, of course, the only important agents of “socialization” or “enculturation” for lower-status adolescents. Units associated with schools and world of work, for example, also play important roles, as discussed in later sections. In the present discussion family and gang are artificially isolated from the larger context in order to focus on their special relationship. A discussion of the several agencies of adolescent socialization, the contributions of each to the total process, and changes over time in the roles of each is presented in A. Inkeles “Social Structure and Socialization,” in D. A. Goslin, Ed., Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research Rand McNally, 1959. See also his paper “Society, Social Structure and Child Socialization” in J. Clausen, Ed. Socialization and Society, Little Brown, 1968.
temporary bans on going to the corner as a form of punishment, but the very fact that these were temporary, and that the denial of access to the corner was seen as punishment, testified to a parental conception of the gang as occupying a relatively conventional place in the scheme of things.

Most of the lower class parents of Midcity showed a higher degree of acceptance of the gang than their middle class counterparts, but there were also differences in this regard among the lower class families themselves. In general, greater legitimacy was accorded the gang by lower status (lower class III) than by higher status (lower class I and II) parents. Among the lower-status Bandits, for example, parents not infrequently acted to assist the gang in its chosen activities—particularly the more law-abiding ones. One father painted a banner bearing the legend “Junior Bandits” to adorn a bus which was to transport the gang football team to a non-local game, and another solicited a local veteran’s organization on the gangs’ behalf for funds to support the team. The mother of a gang member departing for Navy service gave a farewell dinner to which she invited the whole gang. These parents did not, however, involve themselves in gang affairs other than as donors; they did not attempt to interfere with its normal activity patterns, nor to “infiltrate” the gang in an attempt to mitigate the separation between family and gang. It should be recalled in this connection that the Junior Bandits, despite their involvement in “legitimate” enterprises such as football, were among the most criminally-active of the intensive-contact gangs.

Parents of the higher-status Outlaws, by contrast, involved themselves only minimally in the affairs of the gang, and there was no evidence of direct contributions to gang endeavors, as observed for the Bandits. Moreover, Outlaw parents were more likely to express sentiments reflecting unfavorably on the gang, such as, for example, blaming their children’s misbehavior on the influence of their “bad companions” on the street corner. As higher-status parents, one might have expected the Outlaw parents to be more rather than less involved in the affairs of the gang, on the premise that one finds greater parental concern with the group
affiliations of their offspring as one moves closer to the middle class. How can one account for these differences among lower-class Midcity parents?

The higher acceptance granted the gang by lower status parents accords with another circumstance noted in earlier chapters—that gangs were better developed, more prevalent, and longer lasting in the lower-status neighborhoods of Midcity. These findings appear to support an important conclusion concerning the relationship between gang and family; considering the totality of tasks involved in the training and rearing of youth (“socialization” / “enculturation”)—particularly during the adolescent period—it would appear that the gang assumes a larger part of this total, relative both to the family and other agents of enculturation, at lower social status levels. A major element in this situation involves differences between lower and middle class males in the “peak years” of their life cycle. A gross comparison of the occupational experience of lower and middle class males indicates that the average white-collar worker reaches his occupational prime considerably later in life than does the manual worker. The “prime years” of the manual worker generally occur during that period when the predominantly physical qualities of strength, endurance, physical dexterity, and the like, are at their peak. This period generally falls roughly between the ages of 20 and 40, after which time the “old man” begins to “slow down” and move toward the less active period of old age. The average middle class male, by contrast, attains his occupational prime roughly between the years of 40 and 60—a period when his “brainwork” capacities such as administrative or managerial skill, knowledge of the workings of a particular organization, or “control” over the extensive body of knowledge of his profession or other field of endeavor culminate the long prior period of specialized education and experience at lower levels in a variety of professional or organizational systems. The youth of the professional’s prime is the old age of the laborers’.

264 In 1950’s, comparison between Sugar Ray Robinson and John Kennedy. Re Robinson, great wonder and admiration at really old man still doing well in boxing. At same time, all sorts of jokes about Kennedy as a baby, what he will do when he grows up, etc. Yet both men exactly the same age—40. Clear social recognition that “youth” and “age” are evaluated differently within the context
The fact that the occupational prime of the lower class male occurs earlier than that of the middle class male means that many of the major events and stages of the life-cycle occur earlier in life. These include termination of formal education, courtship, entry into the work world, marriage, fatherhood, grand-fatherhood, departure from the work world. The stage of child socialization is correspondingly shorter, and many of its developments occur earlier than in the middle class. One such development involves the capacity of the child to function outside the orbit of the family—a complex process sometimes referred to as the achievement of “independence” from the family—although the process of lessening family ties seldom involves complete “independence.” The lower class child is “on the street” and “on his own” at an earlier age. From the child's viewpoint this involves learning to function outside the family circle at an earlier age; from the parental point of view, granting the child greater freedom from family ties and obligations at an earlier age. These developments are frequently perceived by middle class observers as undesirable or pathological, and referred to in terms such as “premature independence” or “parental neglect.” In many instances such characterizations are a consequence of applying to lower class child-rearing practices a set of criteria of appropriate practice derived from the requirements of the slower life-cycle pace of the middle class but inappropriate to the faster pace of the lower class.

The faster life-cycle pace of the lower class also means that street gangs and similar forms of adolescent peer association play a more important role at lower social status levels than at higher, and are more integral to the total socialization system. One reason for this is the relatively early age at which the lessening of basic affiliational ties to the family gets underway. The gang, like the family, is a “primary” group—a relatively small unit composed of individuals with many of lower class and middle class occupations. Differences less marked among females, period of “prime” (child-bearing) years directly related to physiological developments. However, influence on cultural/socialization system of male occupational system and related age cycles influence rhythm of women’s lives, lower class female “prime” also earlier.

265 Other side of evaluation, calling middle class later practices “postponements” of child-bearing, marriage, etc.
common characteristics who maintain close face-to-face relations with one another and which assembles frequently and regularly at known local locales. For the 9, 10, and 11 years olds who are in the process of achieving “independence,” the corner gang provides many of the elements of security, mutual support, and “comfortable” interaction which had been provided by family units. These common characteristics of gang and family serve to facilitate the transition of the lower-class adolescent and pre-adolescent from family to outside world, with the gang serving as a kind of a way-station, combining some element of the intimacy, nurturance, and mutual protection afforded by the family with elements of autonomy, independent functioning, and risk-taking-experience necessary to effective adulthood.

One characteristic of the gang, noted earlier, is particularly relevant to its role as a major agency of lower class adolescent socialization. This is its “versatility.” As indicated in the last chapter, the gang is not a “specialized” form with restricted functions, but rather serves as a staging base for a variety of differing enterprises, ranging from courtship through economic undertakings. Participation in these activities not only renders an immediate return in direct experience, but also serves a “training” function, providing practice and experience in a range of endeavors which figure importantly in the conduct of adult life. One of the most obvious of these is the establishment and maintenance of relations with the opposite sex; gang members acquire experience in this difficult enterprise through a series of trial courtships conducted in a context which provides rapid and continuing feedback in the form of evaluative reactions to ones’ conduct and demeanor by highly interested peers. The gang also provides a staging base for activities related to athletic participation, recreational enterprises, economic ventures, social gatherings, and the like. In those cases where the gang serves as a basis for formal or quasi-formal organizations (“clubs”, “athletic associations”), participation provides experience in the range of practices involved in organizational conduct (selection of officials, committee work, etc.). In addition, the gang provides a learning context for a range of less specific skills, such as the
achievement of group consensus, affecting collective interaction, maintaining relationships with peers, accepting and initiating authority, and many others. It is evident that many of the lower class parents of Midcity perceived, explicitly or implicitly, that the gang was better fitted than they to perform some of the major tasks of adolescent socialization—particularly those of the kind just cited. This perception was more strongly developed among parents at lower status levels, and accounts in large measure for the greater legitimacy granted by them to the gang. One corollary of this perception was manifest in parental attitudes to non-family adults who became involved in the affairs of the gang. Adolescent street gangs in urban communities customarily become the objects of attention of representatives of various organizations, some of which take as a major objective the alteration of gang behavior. Included among these are settlement house workers, church personnel, probation and parole workers, members of police juvenile divisions, student participants in volunteer service enterprises, and so on. In Midcity, lower status parents generally accepted the presence and activities of such adults more readily than those of higher status. After initial periods of suspicion of and hostility to “new” service workers, the lower status parents usually came to regard them as sources of aid and assistance. Thus, as has been seen, parents of the Junior Bandits cooperated with the efforts of a social worker to organize the gang into a club and to facilitate their athletic activities. Similarly, mothers of the Molls, after an initial period of hostility to social workers, cooperated with those who offered services to them. Parents of the higher status Outlaws and Royals, by contrast, were considerably less accepting of “outside” adults. Rather than perceiving them as allies in the demanding task of shepherding their offspring

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266 Treatment of the “training” afforded by the gang with respect to different areas of activity is included in those chapters and/or sections devoted to these areas. See, for example, the discussion of fund-raising enterprise in the description of the Senior Outlaws and of “income-acquisition-activities” in the “theft” chapter for “economic activities”; treatment of courtship, mating, and learning of sexual behavior in the chapters on sex and mating behavior; the learning of the “limits” of acceptable behavior in the chapter on drinking behavior; practice in job-seeking in the section on work behavior.
through the hazards of adolescence, they saw them more as competitors for the loyalty and affection of their children, as a challenge to their right to perform the duties of parenthood. The very presence of the workers, to some, was a reflection on their adequacy as parents, and carried the lightly veiled implication that they were failing in the performance of their parental obligations.

The greater willingness shown by parents of the Bandits and Molls to avail themselves of the services of local youth workers is only one manifestation of an orientation not uncommon among lower status parents—namely, a willingness to delegate certain of the more (central) aspects of adolescent care and socialization to certain “outside” agencies. One of the more extreme manifestations of this orientation concerns the act of institutional commitment. On the level of expressed sentiment there was little difference among Midcity parents with respect to the incarceration of their offspring; it was regarded almost universally as a source of shame and stigma. On the level of practice, however, differences between lower and higher status parents were clearly in evidence. During those times in their lives and those of their offspring when the tasks of parenthood appeared so arduous and so taxing as to be overwhelming, lower status parents more frequently than higher arranged to have the major burdens of child-care assumed by duly-constituted public correctional agencies.

Several instances of this course of action were observed during the study period. The mother of one of the Molls who had separated from her heavily-drinking husband was in the process of trying to establish a relationship with a new man. The daughter strongly disapproved of the prospective step-father and embarked on a course of behavior which her mother regarded as so disruptive that she formally charged her daughter as a “stubborn child,” and in consequence the Moll was committed to a residential unit for troublesome girls.\textsuperscript{267} Similarly, the mother of a

\textsuperscript{267} Ref. to offense categories “stubborn child;” “incorrigible” “beyond control” “ungovernable” etc. Is much opposition to these by those who regard experience in a correctional institution as having detrimental affect on child, in light of the fact that is large difference between these offenses, which really reflect parental tolerance levels, and “real” crime, where individual violates specific statutes
Senior Bandit informed the police of her son’s participation in a store theft, resulting in his arrest and commitment to a correctional institution. Similar instances where parents reported their children’s illegalities to officials were not at all uncommon during the study period. Acting so as to bring about the arrest and/or incarceration of one’s own children appears abhorrent to most middle class parents, although many have some knowledge of parental action whose intent, if not substance, was not dissimilar. While the behavior of these mothers is regarded as reprehensible by most people, and obviously involved a great deal of anger, it was animated by motives which were fairly complex, and not readily reducible to pure malice or a simple refusal to shoulder the rightful duties of parenthood.

In the case of the Moll it was quite clear to her mother that the presence in the household of a 15 year old daughter who was adamantly opposed to the idea of a new father would greatly complicate the already difficult task of trying to solidify a relationship with a man she hoped would be a better husband for her and father for her children—several of whom were younger than the Molls. Elements of competition with her daughter were also involved, as will be seen in later sections. In this situation she utilized the device of a formal charge against her daughter in order to remove her from the household during the critical period. The strategy was in fact successful, and the new husband and father joined the household. The daughter was furious at her mother at the time of her commitment, and provoked a high level of hostility among her gang mates as well. It is most significant, however, that the daughter returned to the household at the termination of her correctional term, and resumed good relations with her mother. It is quite possible that she realized, once her anger had subsided, the reasons for her mother’s action, and understood them. At any event, the two women were still close and cordial at the time of the “follow-up” investigations some eight years later. Similarly, there was no which also apply to adults? Consideration both of justice and child’s future development support position, but overlooks “covert” function of these categories—namely, to provide a very important external resource to low status parents whose own resources are taxed to the limit. Device enabling parent to remove child from home serves similar functions to boarding school, trip to Europe, alternatives which are within means of their parents.
evidence that the Senior Bandit harbored a lasting grudge against his mother because she had been instrumental in affecting his confinement.

The practice of using the correctional institution in this fashion reflects a more general pattern whereby lower status families resort to agencies of the state as a temporary expedient during critical periods when such resort appears as the only feasible alternative. It is likely that the children have some awareness that this pattern, which is also reflected in the sporadic use of welfare funds by many low-status families, represents a temporary “crisis” measure rather than lasting parental hostility. It is not unlikely, moreover, that there are elements of validity in the perception by some lower-status parents that organs of the state may be better equipped than they to assume responsibility for certain aspects of adolescent socialization and care—particularly during times of crisis in their own lives, and during periods when the behavior of their adolescent children appears most “difficult.” The issue of the impact, functions, and role of the juvenile correctional facility is enormously complex, and cannot be expanded here.\(^{268}\) There is no doubt that many features of such institutions, as presently administered, impede the objective of forestalling future illegality, but it is also clear that the availability in the better institutions of trained supervisory personnel, psychological or psychiatric services, vocational training, and other facilities provide for the institutionalized youngsters some of the elements of the “specialized” school that are provided for higher status families by the private boarding school.

The greater legitimacy granted the gang by lower status parents, their greater willingness to accept the services of community youth workers, their greater readiness to utilize the recourses of state agencies such as public welfare and correctional institutions, have been cited here as evidence of differences between lower and higher status families within the lower class with respect to conceptions of the “appropriate” division of labor in the socialization of adolescents. But it is quite obvious that the tasks of child-care and socialization are divided among

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\(^{268}\) Full chapter on gang and corrections was written, not included in this volume.
different agencies at all levels of our society, and that higher status parents also
avail themselves—often quite extensively—of “outside” child-socialization adjuncts.
Differences among status levels do not center on whether the tasks of child rearing
are shared, but rather on which tasks, with what agencies, and the manner of
sharing. Important contrasts appear between the lowest status levels (lower class
III) and the middle class.

For the parents of middle class adolescents, the school serves as the principle
adjunctive agency. The school, like the gang, is “versatile” in that in addition to its
“official” task of classroom teaching it serves as a staging base for a variety of
“extracurricular” activities such as school clubs (drama, debating, chess, film),
athletic teams, publications (newspaper, magazine, yearbook), student government,
and so on. Participation in these activities serves in a manner similar to
participation in gang activities to provide experience in a variety of enterprises
which figure importantly in adult life. In addition, most middle class adolescents
participate in the activities of one or more of a variety of formally-organized youth
organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, YMCA, and so
on. The church also serves as a staging base for a range of youth organizations and
activities—both church-related and secular (CYO, Sodalities, Epworth League,
Pilgrim Fellowship, Scout Troops). In addition, middle class parents often arrange
for their children privately paid instruction in a variety of special skills, often
centering on artistic endeavors such as music, dancing, and crafts.

Both middle and lower class parents, then, utilize “outside” non-kin agencies
in the tasks of caring for and enculturating their adolescent offspring, but there are
important differences in the manner of such utilization. Some of these involve the
degree of parental “control” over these agencies, their financial contributions
thereto, and the proportion of the total range of socialization tasks assumed by
outside agencies. Middle class parents exercise greater control over outside
agencies, both in their initial choice thereof and with regard to their operating
policies. In most communities they can choose quite freely from a variety of kinds of
“private” instruction (dance or music; piano or guitar; classical or folk) and instructors, and are often in a position to choose their locale of residence with an eye to the “quality” of the public school system. Once their children are involved in such enterprises middle class parents generally monitor agency conduct rather closely, and put themselves in a position to affect organizational policies as members of various boards and committees (PTA’s, Scout Troops, church youth organizations). Parents at the lowest status levels, by contrast, seldom play an active role with respect to the policies of agencies which involve their children—schools, social agencies, correctional institutions—either as members of organized parents, groups, or organization-affiliated boards or committees. The degree of control exercised by parents at different social status levels is related, among other things, to differences in subcultural focus and to the financing of the socialization agencies. Middle class parents pay directly for “private” instruction and thus can choose within fairly wide limits; similarly, since they make substantial contributions in taxes or other fees to organizations such as public schools and churches, they feel entitled to some say in the conduct of these enterprises.

Taking into consideration the sum total of tasks involved in the care and socialization of adolescents, it would appear that the street gang and correctional institution assume a larger proportion of this total relative to the family, than do agencies such as the school, the church, or the formal youth organization for middle

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269 One major objective of the public anti-poverty efforts of the 1960’s and ‘70’s was to increase the degree of involvement in and influence over public agencies whose policies affect their lives and those of their children—particularly the schools and public welfare agencies. Such efforts had considerable success engaging some sectors of the lower class population—particularly upwardly-aspiring urban blacks—but large numbers of low status urban residents remained little affected by these efforts.

270 While lower status parents generally have less direct “choice” in these matters than higher, the issue of which class of persons has more “freedom of choice” in broad life areas is a complex one, not readily accommodated by the easy notion that people at the lowest levels are helpless prisoners of external agencies over which they have no control. It is possible that middle class parents have more choice in details but less in their freedom to pursue certain broad alternatives. For example, middle class parents have a broader range of choice as to which high school their children will attend, but virtually no choice as to whether graduation from high school should be an objective at all. In this latter area lower status parents have greater “freedom” in decisions respecting the allocation of limited resources to educational versus other life activities.
class youth. This would suggest that at the lowest social status levels non-kin agencies assume a larger portion of the job of adolescent socialization than is the case in the middle class. The street gang, in consequence of its versatility, frequency of congregation, solidary nature, and other characteristics noted earlier, plays a more important role during certain periods of adolescence for many lower status males than does the family, serving as an object of allegiance and affiliation, an arena for learning, a prime locus of interaction. The correctional school, as a “total” institution, assumes all major tasks of providing residence, nurturance, education, and so on for its inmates, leaving the family almost completely free of such responsibilities during times of commitment. One might generalize, more suggestively than accurately, that for slum boys at the lowest status levels the gang serves many of the functions performed for the middle class boy by the public school, and the correctional institution many of the functions performed for the upper class boy by the private boarding school.

This is not to suggest, however, that lower class parents in Midcity reacted casually or with indifference when it appeared that the gang was playing a more important role than they in the lives of their homes, or when official agencies assumed major responsibility for their offspring. Their feelings, for the most part, were mixed. A similar kind of ambivalence, although of considerably lower intensity, is experienced by many college-educated parents with respect to the issue of television-viewing by their younger children. Most feel that the time devoted to this activity should be limited, and that the programs viewed subject to direct parental control. Nevertheless, during those periods in life when the press of events or preoccupations of adult life make it difficult to devote to the children the degree of time and attention felt to be proper, many parents accept with secret relief the capacity of the television set to occupy the time and engage the attention of their young children. Reality conflicts with principle; one does it, but one feels guilty. Similar kinds of ambivalence with respect to matters of greater import affects those lower class parents whose adolescent offspring become the responsibility of the
state, or spend long hours on the street with the gang. It is likely as well that the
degree of stigma attached to such eventualities, and the corresponding degree of
guilt, is less for parents at the lowest status levels, although there are few if any, as
noted earlier, for whom feelings of shame, regret, and perplexity are not in evidence.

**Family and Gang as Separate Spheres**

Although the lower class parents of Midcity granted a considerable degree of
legitimacy to the gang, they were not above applying pressure on their sons to
devote more of their time and energy to the family and less to the gang, or
attempting to exert some influence over gang activities. To these pressures the boys’
response was clear and consistent; they concerned themselves assiduously with
maintaining as clean and as complete a separation as possible between the world of
the family and the world of the gang. This separation was both physical and
conceptual in character, and applied to both the members and customary pursuits of
the two kinds of unit. It was maintained less through direct opposition to parental
desires and directives than by a pattern of avoidance, deception, concealment and
circumvention—as well as the classic pattern of boy-parent non-communication.\(^{271}\)

Since these devices were quite successful, their operation was most directly in
evidence during those relatively rare times when the gang and family were actually
or potentially in contact.

Boys responded to temporary bans on hanging out by sneaking out of the
house to join their companions on the corner. When gang members played truant
from school to pursue some gang activity they took particular pains to avoid those
parts of the city where there was a possibility of encountering a parent or parents.
Forms of behavior which met with parental disapproval but which were approved
by the gang caused little difficulty so long as family and gang remained separate,
but posed a problem when there was contact between the two. Smoking was one

\(^{271}\) Robert F. Smith’s sensitive account of the world of a lower middle class urban pre-adolescent boy
Smith; W. W. Norton Inc. 1957.
such practice—an activity of almost ritual significance in the gang. When the father of a Junior Outlaw, who had forbidden his son to smoke, attended an Outlaw football game, the son accommodated the dilemma by finding a place to smoke where he could be seen by his gang mates but not by his father.

The practice of maintaining a separation between different categories of persons or spheres of activities is extremely common in primitive societies, where it is heavily invested with ritual significance, and often accompanied by specific taboos and/or notions of ritualized contamination. In Midcity the practice was not explicitly ritualized, but was sufficiently well developed in concept and practice as to embody much of the substance of its primitive analogues. A vivid illustration of the conceptualization underlying this practice is provided by the fantasy of a seven story house detailed by one of the Senior Bandits. In his vision of ideal living arrangements, it will be noted, the boy placed himself between the space allotted his family (two floors) and that allotted his gang (four floors), thus effectively insulating the worlds of the two. The force of the underlying principle was also manifest in the fact that its violation—doing something for or with ones’ parents in the presence of ones’ gang—could provide the basis for the kind of teasing prank so common in the gang. A group of Junior Bandits was hanging out in a park when the mother of one of the boys approached with an armful of packages. While her son attempted to hide himself in the group, his companions shouted out to the mother—“Hey! Jimmy’s over here! Get him to help you!” The boy, acutely embarrassed, was forced to carry his mother’s packages while his gang mates stood on the sidelines cheering and shouting mock encouragement. It is clear that the capacity of a forced violation of the gang-family separation ethic to produce such discomfite rested on

272 Probably the best known of the “avoidance” relationships is the mother-in-law taboo, present in most primitive societies (A discussion of avoidance relationships is contained in G.P. Murdoch Social Structure MacMillan, 1949, pp. 272-283). The discussion of “sex-segregated activity-spheres” in Chapter Nine (Male Sex and Mating) treats analogous processes. Schneider’s discussion of the physical separation of “home” and “work” in American Kinship (op. cit.) is in the same general vein.
a well-developed conception of that ethic shared by both authors and victim of the prank.\textsuperscript{273}

In contrast to the girls, as will be shown, the boys’ gang devoted little attention to the family, let alone using the gang as a forum for substantive discussion of family matters. When the family did figure in gang affairs, it was dealt with, for the most part, in such a way as to serve gang-related purposes. While they were adept in circumventing, ignoring, or “forgetting” the expressed desires of their parents when these conflicted with the demands of the gang, the boys could, under certain circumstances, become very solicitous of such desires. The invocation of parental authority as a device to justify ones actions was an extremely common practice. Several members of the Junior Bandits, threatened by a rival gang reputed to be unusually ferocious, became very conscientious in attending the reported desire of their parents that they remain at home the night of the planned engagement. Similarly, a Junior Outlaw who failed to appear as a supporting witness at the court trial of one of his gang mates justified his action on the grounds that his father had made him stay home. As in the case of the “forced pregnancy” and “ball-and-chain” explanations discussed in later chapters, gang members invoked the authority of their parents in order to justify behavior which ran counter to gang standards, and their fellows granted credence to such invocation on the implicit recognition that this tactic enabled them to affirm the validity of gang standards in the very act of violating them.

Since it was the boys who assumed major responsibility for maintaining the separation of gang and family, their parents often viewed their efforts as manifestations of opposition, or even hostility, to them. Is it possible to explain this phenomenon in terms other than directed opposition to parents? The fact that the separation of family and gang is not confined to Midcity, or lower class populations, or the United States, suggests at once that it reflects certain basic and general

\textsuperscript{273} Forcing the violation of a taboo as a prank also has direct analogues in primitive societies where mildly malicious teasing may take the form of forcing a man to come into direct contact with his mother-in-law, or into the vicinity of the dwelling or hut of a menstruating woman.
aspects of the adolescent subculture in a wide variety of societies, primitive and contemporary. As discussed elsewhere, one of the basic “tasks” or “jobs” of adolescence is that of learning to display that degree of independence or autonomy necessary to the effective conduct of adult life. The child, for the most part, is the object of authority and responsibility authored by others; the adult must be the author of responsibility and authority with respect to others; one does not achieve this sharp role-transition overnight or by magic; it involves complex skills and orientations which are learned and practiced during the period of adolescence.

A major component of the set of characteristics involved in adult “independence” is the capacity to face risks, experience risks, and accommodate to the consequences of failure in taking risks. The family does provide some training in these difficult capacities, increasingly so as children grow older, but it seldom goes far enough. The risks faced by the child or adolescent within the context of the family are buffered risks; there is a quality of artificiality, of play, about them, since the parents are waiting in the wings, ready to bail out the child, if he falters or cries out at the moment of truth, interceding in fights with neighboring children, etc. This is not hard to understand; the whole thrust of parental endeavor in this respect during earlier childhood is precisely that of shielding the child against dangerous risks (setting fires; ingesting poisons; injury by falling). It is very difficult for parents—especially female parents—to alter this momentum fast enough or far enough to accommodate the changed risk-requirements of adolescence.

It is, then, the adolescent peer group that takes over the major burden of this essential job. Adulthood requires the ability to accommodate true risks, unbuffered risks, where the consequences of failure may be acutely damaging or painful. The adolescent peer group provides a major arena for the experience and learning of these capacities—not one in which one faces risks unshielded—since the group provides its own shielding for its members—but one in which the shielding is

274 Probably best developed in ritualized “age-classes” or “regiments” in certain African societies. For example, I Schapers, Ed., Bantu Peoples of South Africa.
accomplished by persons other than the family. The average 12 year old boy faces risks in his peer group that would turn his mother's hair grey if she knew about them. But, for the most part, she doesn’t. The ethic of secrecy and concealment: “Where did you go?” “Out.” “What did you do?” “Nothing” serves to protect parents from exposure to information that would distress them terribly. It is almost impossible for the adolescent boy to communicate to his parents the fact that his flirtations with real risk in the gang are necessary and important; in the first place he doesn’t conceptualize it himself in these terms, and secondly, couldn’t convince his mother even if he could. There is a deeper wisdom in the adolescent subculture as to its own needs and conditions, and the virtual impossibility of communicating this to adults is one of the major bases of the separation of family and gang.

In Western societies many of the specific kinds of risk-taking activities conducted within the context of the gang or adolescent peer group involve the violation of legal statutes. Such activities fulfill the conditions of “true” risk either because the activity itself is inherently dangerous (fighting with weapons), or because legal sanctions may be evoked if the act is officially detected, or both. Illegal activity thus provides one of the more “efficient” ways for adolescents to undergo the experience of “true risk.” Customary forms of illegal behavior are for the most part quite mild, but under some circumstances can be quite serious. Among the more common forms of illegality engaged in by adolescents at all status levels are vandalism (breaking windows, defacing property, setting fires), throwing missiles (stoning passing automobiles, snowballing passersby), petty theft (shoplifting, stealing holiday decorations), motor vehicle violations (underage driving, driving dangerously), intoxication, and using drugs. It would appear, then, that one set of incentives (among others) for illegal behavior—something that is generally disapproved by most adults—is related quite directly to the experience of risk,

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275 See Chapter 10 on drinking behavior for a discussion of the learning of drinking behavior in the “shielded” atmosphere of the gang.
276 Ref. to suburban delinquency data.
which in turn is related to the achievement of independence—something generally approved by most adults. As is so often the case with respect to youth crime, it is difficult analytically to divorce specifically illegal behavior from a behavioral matrix which also includes socially-approved aspects.

Activities involving specific elements of risk, along with illegality as one means of actualizing risk, are customarily found in American society wherever maleness and adolescence occur in conjunction. But such activities—a long with the concealment ethic and gang-family separation which generally accompanies them—occur more frequently and in more accentuated form at the lower status levels of the society. There are several reasons for this. Among these are the fact that general living conditions in slum communities are more hazardous than in higher status areas; there is greater likelihood of violence, of destruction by fire, of recurrent financial emergencies. Furthermore, many occupations customarily pursued by lower class males involve considerably more physical risk than do higher status occupations; among the better developed with respect to the family than at higher status levels, so that subcultural definitions and conceptions centering on gang life as such have greater scope for actualization. Closely related to this is the fact that lower status parents, in granting greater legitimacy to the gang, exert less effective counter-pressure on the “natural” tendency of the male adolescent peer group to pursue risk, excitement, and concealment.

It is important to repeat, however, that the features of gang-family relationships discussed here (separation of gang and family, risk-taking as a component of gang activity patterns, illegality as an instrumentality of risk-activity) are not at all unique to lower class communities, but are found in all sectors of the society. Differences are primarily those of degree—with the degree being of considerable importance. As in the case of many other aspects of lower class subcultures, it is misleading to represent these manifestations either as utterly different from those at higher levels (two separate and distinct societies) or as only inconsequentially different (middle class and lower class delinquency is the same
except for the frequency of legal action). A more accurate representation sees such forms in terms both of resemblances and differences. By virtue of their common status as males and adolescents, lower status persons share with higher numerous subcultural characteristics; by virtue of their different social class status, the subculture of lower status adolescent males reflects distinctive aspects of lower class life conditions, just as the subculture of higher status people reflects distinctive characteristics of their life conditions.277

Closely related to the maintenance of a separation between the spheres of family and gang is a phenomenon which can be called “the suppression of kinship.” Analysis of observational data concerning the quality of interaction among gang members disclosed a well-developed pattern; family ties, in the context of gang life, were for the most part underplayed, ignored, or even, in extreme cases, denied altogether. A dramatic instance of the denial of kinship occurred when a group of Senior Outlaws was playing baseball in the park near their corner. The stepfather of one of the boys, mildly intoxicated, appeared on the scene and proceeded to bestow upon the assemblage the fruits of his long years of baseball experience offering, among other things, valuable pointers on the tactics and strategy of winning baseball. At first the boys were amused and tolerant, but as their self-appointed mentor came increasingly to interfere with their playing, one of the gang called out to the son—“Hey Billy! Come get your daddy!” to which the boy replied, “He ain’t no daddy of mine! He’s just some guy I know…”

An even more telling, if less dramatic, manifestation of the suppression of kinship concerns relationships of siblings. As will be shown, sibling or “lateral” relationships tend to be particularly close and significant in low-status families. There were many sets of siblings in Midcity gangs, but relationships among them more often than not were cool, or even hostile. Brotherhood, in particular, was granted surprisingly little recognition. There was little evidence of the mutual

277 Subcultural conjunction as a process and its role in the explanation of customary behavior is explicated at some length in the final chapter of this volume.
support and loyalty among brothers which represents the intra-family ideal; in the
gang brothers were distant and often quite competitive; in several instances gang
members had to intervene to cool down intense disputes between brothers. One of
the more extreme examples of sibling coolness involved the brother-sister
relationship—ordinarily one of the most nurturing and protective of low-status
familial relationships. Upon hearing a report that members of a rival gang were
planning to attack his two sisters, members of the Molls, a Junior Bandit
remarked—“It would serve them right. The way they been actin lately, they deserve
to get beat up…”

The reasons for the suppression of kinship ties within the slum street gang,
particularly ties among brothers, are not immediately obvious. One possible
interpretation involves differences between higher and lower status families with
respect to the relative importance of “lateral” and “vertical” relationships. These
differences can be illustrated by a partial comparison of the street gang and the
college (and/or high school) fraternity—a common form of non-kin associational unit
among higher-status male adolescents. The ethos of the fraternity lays central
stress on the notion of “brotherhood,” and carries the implication that relationships
among fraternity brothers should embody the characteristics of the idealized
relationship between true brothers—mutual loyalty, reciprocal obligations,
affection. The term “fraternity brother” itself indicates the centrality of this ideal by
incorporating the term “brother” twice—once in Latin (frater) and once in English.
One thus finds in the fraternity an affirmation of brotherhood where it does not
exist, and in the gang a suppression of brotherhood where it does.

These contrasting characteristics of gang and fraternity reflect certain
differences between lower and higher status families with respect to the respective
tasks performed by family and gang in the socialization of adolescent males. In
middle class families the “vertical” relationship between parents and children is
generally more important relative to “lateral” sibling relationships than in lower
class families.\textsuperscript{278} One common middle class situation finds brothers in active competition for what they perceive to be limited amounts of parental attention, care, and recognition. Under these circumstances the relationship between brothers can be tense and difficult, involving elements of rivalry and hostility which depart substantially from cultural ideals of “true brotherhood.” In many lower class families, by contrast (particularly lower class III), brothers are often close allies in common opposition to their father, whom they perceive, largely through their mother’s influence, as meriting little respect, or even as an object of considerable hostility.

Both of these situations—an overdevelopment of lateral affiliation at the expense of vertical, or of vertical at the expense of lateral, provide potential for difficulties in the adult world of work. Work situations at all social status levels involve both “lateral” relations with peers and “vertical” relations with superiors or subordinates. Most middle class boys, by virtue of their early family experience, are relatively well equipped to handle authority relationships in the world of work, but their experience with siblings, so often characterized by rivalry and hostility, provides a considerably less adequate basis for the development of effective work relationships with peers. It is thus important for them to acquire, sometime between childhood and adulthood, additional experience in learning and practicing the skills and attitudes necessary to close and cooperative relations with workmates. The fraternity, with its fictitious brotherhood based upon an ideal seldom realized by true middle class brothers, provides a major arena for such experience.

More important for low-status boys, by contrast, is additional experience in relating to peers on grounds other than kinship. In addition to the fact that most low-status children learn to maintain close and mutually-supportive sibling ties in the family, most low-status people feel most comfortable with “personalistic” relationships—those based largely on close personal contact and familiarity—in

\textsuperscript{278} Schneider: Lower Class vs. Middle Class Re. “pattern of solidary emphasis”
contrast to the “impersonal” relationships characteristic of many middle class work contexts such as large corporation or educational institutions. Most work contexts of low-status males tend to be considerably more personalistic than the latter, but effective functioning in the world of work still requires a capacity to relate well to workmates who are not kinsmen. The street gang, with its suppression of kinship as a basis of interpersonal ties, provides for its members an opportunity to develop and experience peer relationships based on the less personalistic factors of common age, residence and interest rather than the more personalistic factor of direct blood relationship.

The suppression of kinship also accords directly with the strong emphasis on “achieved status” in the street gang. The most valued assets of the gang—acceptance, prestige, leadership, friendship, ones’ position in a clique network—must be earned directly through the exercise of one’s own efforts, abilities, and talents. The “free-market” operation of this system would be seriously impeded by an emphasis on kinship. Any extensive recognition of special rights, obligations, or privileges based on brotherhood or other forms of kinship would introduce a complicating and disruptive element into the “free-achievement” milieu of the street gang.

**Girls, Gangs, and Families**

Most of the previous generalizations concerning families and gangs apply most directly to the boys; the circumstances of the girls were sufficiently different as to require separate treatment. This accords with the finding, discussed in some detail in later chapters, that differences between the subcultures of males and females, of importance in all sectors of the society, are of particular consequence at

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279 The distinctions made here reflect those of the “pattern variable” concepts of “universalism-particularism” and “achievement-ascription” introduced by Ralph Linton and developed by Talcott Parsons.
the lower social status levels. Midcity girls did congregate on street corners and form gangs, but these were neither as large, as numerous, as autonomous, as solidary, or as long-lasting as those of the boys. Figures presented in Chapter Five show both that girls’ gangs in Midcity were considerably less numerous than boys’ and that the average girls’ gang was considerably smaller.

A major reason for the lesser degree of “autonomy” of the girls’ gangs was that while the boys’ gangs stood at one pole of a “bipolar” relationship of gang and family, the girls occupied one corner of a triangular relationship, with the family and boys’ gang at the other two positions. It was quite clear that the existence and character of the girls’ gangs depended a great deal more on the existence of the boys’ than vice versa. Behind the hyperbole in the statement of a Junior Bandit—“They ain’t nothing without us, and they know it!”—lay the reality of the fact that a large part of the raison d’être of the girls’ gangs inhered in the nature of their “auxiliary” relationship to the boys—a relationship involving followership, imitation, reflected prestige, mating involvement, and other elements discussed in later chapters. A second major reason, to be discussed shortly, was that the girls maintained a closer and more dependent relationship with their families, and a commensurately lower degree of independence as an associational unit.

The girls’ gangs were also less “solidary” than the boys’. Their sense of allegiance and affiliation centered to a greater extent in two- and three-girl friendship groups and the various intra-gang cliques, and to a lesser extent in the gang as a collective entity. Ties among the several cliques were also looser than in the boys’ gangs. Reasons for this are similar to those noted in the case of autonomy; the greater salience both of the boys’ gangs and of their families made it more difficult to maintain a strong and independent associational “center of gravity.” In addition, particularly as the girls grew older, active competition among them for

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280 Ref. to discussion of sex-segregated activity spheres, Male Sex and Mat. Chapter Nine; male and female subcultures, Chapter 13; Schneider discussion of “sex-role principle.”
available males served as a disruptive force in the maintenance of close and continuing ties among gang mates.

The shorter life span of the girls’ gangs (girls seldom hung out with any regularity after the age of 17 or so) also reflected important differences in the purposes served by the gang for males and females. As shown earlier, the gang can serve as a major device for enabling adolescents to shift some portion of their allegiance and affiliation away from the family, and in Midcity it did serve this purpose for both males and females during that period of earlier adolescence when the achievement of such independence was a major priority for both sexes. But in later adolescence the developmental requirements of males and females diverge quite substantially. As will be shown, girls in Midcity achieved the status of “woman” (adult and female) primarily through involvement in mating and motherhood, while for boys the status of “man” (adult and male) depended to a much greater extent on specific kinds of achievement in a range of “masculine” activity spheres—athletic, occupational, criminal, and so on. For the boys the gang could provide an arena for such activities through the teens and into the twenties, while for the girls, continued gang membership after the major pairing-off phase contributed little, or was even detrimental, to the attainment of major female objectives.

Male and female gangs also differed with respect to the “separation of gang and family” discussed earlier. This phenomenon, so pronounced in the case of the boys, appeared in a considerably attenuated form in the case of the girls. Not that it was non-existent; the girls quite commonly engaged in acts involving elements of deceit, concealment, and avoidance which were not at all dissimilar from those of the boys. One of the Molls, for example, enlisted the aid of her gang mates in the project of smearing her hands with ink so that it would appear to her mother that she had been in school instead of playing truant. But the ethic of avoidance and concealment was considerably less developed among the girls, and in fact was most prominent during that period of earlier adolescence (12-15) when the likelihood of
conflict between mother and daughter over the “independence” issue was greatest. Furthermore, unlike the boys, who maintained their separation from the family for the most part through a policy of quiet and continuing evasiveness, there was a quality of almost deliberate ostentation in the manner whereby the girls manifested their separateness.

One particularly dramatic example involved a runaway by three of the Molls. All three, aged 14 and 15, had been embroiled in difficulties with their parents (one was the girl who was angry at her mother for cultivating a new man) and decided to run away from home. Significantly, rather than aiming to lose themselves in the impersonality of a big city, they set out in the direction of an aunt who lived in a small town about 50 miles away, and were picked up by local police about half way en route. From this point on the girls became the central figures in a drama of great intensity and passion, with weeping, anger, accusations, recriminations, justifications. Before the incident was over it had swept up in its wake members of all three families, two police departments, two schools, a medical examiner (school authorities demanded a gynecological examination as a condition of re-admission) a priest, nuns, social workers, and others.

It would thus appear that the loosening of ties with one’s family—a process apparently accepted with relative equanimity by the boys as an inevitable part of maturing—had a far deeper impact on the girls. In contrast to the boys, who accommodated the situation by an almost routine policy of avoiding direct engagement wherever possible, the separation process was accomplished through a series of emotional confrontations—mostly with mothers—over specific incidents arising out of conflicts over independence and parental control. The girls engaged in these confrontations with great intensity and conviction, but there was a sense, nonetheless, of persons compelled by forces beyond their control to play their parts in a distasteful drama they had never sought, and whose ending they earnestly desired.
Just as there was less psychic separation of gang and family for the girls, there was less physical separation as well; the opposition between “home” and “corner” was far less marked. For the girls the dwelling unit served as a perfectly acceptable locale of congregation under appropriate circumstances. It was common practice for several gang mates to accompany a girl to her house or flat and keep her company while she did housework or took care of younger siblings. This very practice, in fact, increased the likelihood of family conflict; since mothers were likely to be in the home, or to return while the girls were there, the likelihood of confrontation was enhanced. Increased potential for interaction meant increased potential for hostile interaction. This and other aspects of the mother-daughter relationship will be discussed in the next section.

Similarly, in contrast to the boys who seldom acknowledged the existence of their families in the context of the gang, let alone discussing family matters except under certain special conditions to be noted later, the girls in the gang did not exclude the family as an explicit object of attention. On the contrary, relationships with one’s family were subject to concentrated attention by the girls, sharing the stage in this respect with relationships with “boys.” The gatherings and conversations of the girls were characterized by a continuing rehearsal of the past, present, and future status of their relationships with persons of significance in their lives. These dispositions—detailed, analytic, introspective—were focused on persons and personalities—their motives, their appearance, the rightness or wrongness of their conduct, their likeability or lack thereof. Among the Queens this kind of enterprise was sufficiently well-developed as to comprise a distinct and quasi-ritualized form of activity called “Topic Night,” in which the behavior of each girl and her significant relationships were subject to critical review by the gang. This preoccupation with personalities and relationships stood in contrast with the emphasis of the boys on “action”—the current and future activities and enterprises of their own and other groups of males.
These interests and concerns of the Queens and Molls are not unique to the girls' gangs of Midcity. They reflect, instead, fundamental aspects of the female subculture and its focal concerns. It was no accident that the family played a far more important role in the lives of the girls than the boys; it was related quite directly to their status as females. While the actual substance and expressions of these concerns were colored by the particular age, social status, residence, and racial/ethnic characteristics of the females described here, the more generalized manifestations of these concerns with family and interpersonal relationships are intrinsic to female subcultures in all parts of the society. Compared to the boys, the Molls and Queens, by virtue of their common status as females, resembled one another closely in these respects; compared to one another, differences between the two gangs can be seen as reflections of differing status characteristics. The Queens were of higher social status and more ambitious socially, as well as black; it is very likely that the greater degree of ritualization and explicitness granted the exploration of relationships by the Queens reflected greater sensitivity to the nature of “appropriate” conduct, and in particular a concern with recognizing and avoiding those forms of behavior stereotyped as low-status black.

Finally, the fact that the girls’ gangs served as a forum for discussion of families and family problems, rather than insulating the worlds of gang and family, suggests that the girls made use of the gang, in this respect, quite differently from the boys. Given the greater frequency of direct confrontations with parents, and the highly emotional character of such confrontations, it would appear that the gang provided for the girls a source of security—a refuge from the stress and tension of parent-daughter conflict. The ready availability of a group of peers of similar age, similar circumstances, and similar family problems provided the girls with allies, sympathizers, and understanding listeners during that period of adolescence when conflicts with parents reached their peak. It would follow that as the likelihood of such conflict lessened with the passage of time, the need for the gang as a refuge
would lessen commensurately, and this among other factors already discussed played a part in the shorter life-span of the girls’ gangs.

School- Extended Education as an Option

The Midcity adolescent’s reluctance to accept “discipline” was not, however, of primary importance in connection with his school attendance. While the gang member’s desire for autonomy often conflicted with the ideas of school officials and truancy officers, the source of disagreement was related to more fundamental differences in attitude.

For the middle class youngster schooling is virtually mandatory between the ages of six and twenty-two. Education is deemed as necessary to provide children with the basic cultural skills and graces that are essential to the acceptable standard of living and to equip them with the requisite professional or occupational training. Middle class parents no more question whether their children will finish school than whether they will wear clothing. From a child’s point of view at various ages, considerable question about both the practice of wearing clothing and the practice of attending school may arise, since neither behavior is particularly “natural” to human beings. But such doubts are resolved by the massive coercion which a cultural system can bring to bear on its youngest and most dependent members.

By contrast, Midcity’s cultural system had not evolved a consistent orientation toward education, and school was not seen as the central pursuit of childhood. However, state law required all children to attend school until the age of sixteen and cultural practice in Midcity encouraged school attendance from age six to about age fourteen. One of the school’s primary services to lower class families was that it cared for children during the working hours, when parents and older siblings could not be expected to find the time for them. In addition, elementary schools provided training in certain of the basic skills required by lower-class culture: the fundamentals of arithmetic and a rudimentary literacy. It was
generally conceded in Midcity that some ability with numbers and reading was helpful in life. Thus the earliest years of education were imposed upon Midcity children with coerciveness comparable to that experienced by middle class children.

But schooling beyond age sixteen, although by no means condemned, was not regarded as a cultural and social necessity. The last years of high school might be completed and a year or so of vocational training or night school, but once the age of sixteen had been reached the decision of whether or not to stay in school was largely a matter of individual choice. Little or no coercion was applied to try to keep the Midcity adolescent in school at that point. Since the culture of Midcity accommodated a fairly wide range of attitudes toward education and schooling, numerous factors might affect a corner youth's decision about his schooling. Family background, social status, individual inclination, and the prevailing attitudes on the corner were all influential as a youngster decided about schooling.

The gang as a representative institution of lower class culture tended to support attitudes that were consistent with the maintenance of lower class life patterns. And high school education offered training of uncertain utility to youngsters who came from lower class families and whose prospects were likely to remain substantially lower class. Hence one Jr. Bandit remarked: “What good does a high school education do me digging up the street? Give me a pick and shovel and I don’t need to do homework so’s I can dig;” one of the Molls expressed similar sentiments in saying: “I want to get married and school doesn’t help;” and a Jr. Outlaw declared frankly: “I'm just going to be a laborer anyway.” While the school places value on education per se and on education as vocational training, the corner saw little value in the former and questioned the effectiveness of the school in connection with the latter. The idea of education “for its own sake” was alien to most Midcity residents. And in addition, there was often the conviction that from the point of view of practical utility, “they don’t teach you nothin’ in school.”

It may be noted in this connection that a 1963 Presidential Commission examining U. S. education reported that vocational education is not “sufficiently sensitive to supply-and-demand
was felt that the army, night school, or on-the-job training programs would provide more practical instruction. Hence, Midcity adolescents often expressed the belief that a high school education was virtually useless to “ordinary” persons, that it was a waste of time—in the lower class literally some of the best years of one’s life—which would better have been spent making money. A Sr. Bandit phrased this attitude most succinctly: “Only suckers go to school.” A Jr. Outlaw explained in more detail, “I ain’t going to school all my life. I’m gonna get one of them sharp cars.”

But the utility of schooling for advancement and social mobility did not go unrecognized in Midcity. And the higher status residents particularly took the position that school was a means to a better future—and especially to a higher income. This more affirmative attitude toward school when actually expressed was not popular among corner boys; but some members from each gang—varying largely according to class position—were certain to finish high school, though unlikely to continue with additional technical or college training. To attend school beyond age nineteen was unusual; the youth who pursued his education into college was admired for his determination and dedication, but such admiration was, to a degree, uncomprehending. The college boy became a deviant from his culture’s norms—a willful defector from the milieu in which he had been reared.

On one occasion a Jr. Bandit announced his intention to enter college and was promptly ridiculed for it by a fellow gang member. Two weeks later the second boy said that he wanted to go to college, and he in turn was ridiculed by a third gang mate, who, in fact, had previously spoken of continuing his education beyond high school. None of these boys ever did go to college nor seriously prepared to do so. A boy who lived in the Bandits’ neighborhood, and wanted to join their club in order to play with its football team, was never accepted—by his own account—because he was serious about school and in other similar ways was a deviant from local norms factors in the labor force.” (See Fred M. Hechinger, “Jobs and School,” New York Times, June 30, 1963).
(he had “funny ideas”). The Bandits, as a group, were the most “anti-schooling” of the Midcity study gangs. Their opposition to schooling was based on an adherence to the norms of their lower class III milieu. At times, indeed, it appeared as if the Bandits were engaged in serious cultural warfare, battling for a belief in the lower-class way of life; the schools were among their arch-opponents.

The main argument in favor of studying held that education was a means to higher social status although it might be a long-term process, difficult in execution and dubious in outcome. To make good on an attempt at “self-improvement,” a gang member would have had to renounce many familiar pleasures and some behaviors which he had accepted as fundamental to “normal” life. Attending school and working at academic assignments required a dedication to more than the tasks at hand; it required a commitment to the salient values and concerns of the middle class. If, however, a student was willing to make necessary concessions, he could embark on a course of upward social movement in the Midcity schools. One of the Kings, in talking about his plans, made it quite clear that he conceived the choice between academic and “trade” courses in school as a choice of class position. He was trying, at the time, to decide whether he would switch from a trade course to a college preparatory course in high school. He chose the trade course because he felt that entering college would force him away from his neighborhood and its life. He left school at the age of sixteen, and within a few years had achieved a high measure of success as a pimp.

But the question of whether or not to complete one’s high school education was not necessarily cast in terms of a choice between lower-class status and movement into a higher position. The majority of Midcity’s gang members were not oriented towards “achievement” and social mobility. Hence many of those who did not regard school as useless for them, viewed high school completion as a means toward attaining greater monetary rewards. The interest in such “success” as opposed to “achievement” in the middle class careerist sense can help to account for the fact that while gang members might confer prestige on someone who had
finished high school, they would certainly derogate anyone who spoke of attending college—a clear symbol of moving out of the class. Moreover, completion of high school did not necessarily mean the incorporation of middle class values. Thus, for example, while 87.9% of the Queens were graduated from high school, 45.8% engaged in non-conventional sex and mating behavior (i.e., were unwed mothers pre-martially pregnant, separated, or engaging in prostitution).

In generally, the lower class youngster had more opportunity for exercising “choice” in relation to school than did his middle class counterpart, since there was no established pattern dictating that a Midcity child would “of course” finish high school and go on to college. In the middle class, a child’s development is usually conditioned to a large extent by the content and level of his parents’ aspirations for themselves and their progeny. His choice of occupation and level of aspiration is likely to be the direct outgrowth of parental opinion about what is and is not appropriate work for persons of their status—actual or imagined. The amount of education completed is often quite directly a function of parental ambition—expressed in various ways: “It’s time for you to come home and learn the ropes of the business,” “Of course we’ll help you while you’re getting your Ph.D.!” or “We can’t afford to put you through law school.”

In Midcity some parents had quite high aspirations for their children and strongly supported good performance in school while vehemently disapproving of truancy and discouraging participation in gang activities (which took time away from studies). A few of the Kings and Outlaws came from such families. The parents of twin brothers in the Jr. Outlaws exerted steady pressure upon their sons to do well in school and at intervals sought to lure their boys away from the corner with hunting trips and occasional holidays at the seacoast. (Such activities give some evidence of the parents’ relatively high-status style of life). Curiously, these boys remained tenacious, though not militant, gang members even after their family had moved out of Midcity and into a lower middle class suburb. Aspiring families in Midcity generally shared middle class opinions of the value of education, but in
common with their lower class neighbors were more frank in their appraisal of its basic value as a social and economic asset.

Parents of most Midcity gang members appeared not to have strong aspirations for their children. They made little apparent effort to influence educational careers and occupational choices, and their moral involvement in issues of truancy and attendance was relatively slight. They conceded, at least tacitly, much autonomy to their children, expecting them to exhibit some discretion in the uses to which they put their freedom. Insofar as decisions about attending and finishing school involved no conflict with the law, such parents were unwilling to interfere extensively in the process of decision-making. It was uncommon for Midcity parents to push their children to do well in school but even more rarely were gang members pressured to quit school and go to work. Had jobs been more available to adolescents, no doubt more pressure would have been exerted on them to go to work, but most parents must have realized that it was foolish to expect material support from sixteen-year olds in an area where opportunity for the remunerative employment of adolescents was relatively rare. Part-time jobs were more readily available, but they generally did not conflict with school hours and represented no strong financial incentive for quitting school.

In contrast to the lack of concern with school manifested by most Midcity parents, the gangs maintained a steady undercurrent of opposition to schooling—implicit among the girls, often quite open among the boys. The Molls and the Queens indicated that they thought high school graduation a worthy goal for themselves, but only the Queens as a groups realized this ambition. The boys’ groups varied rather widely in the intensity of their expressed disapproval of schooling. The lower status Bandits were quite vocal in derogating boys who continued high school. The Outlaws were more reserved in their disapproval, and the high status Kings were quite tolerant of their scholar-members. But in all the boys’ gangs there was a sense of real separation between the corner world and the school yard. As the boys grew older, gang and school tended to become exclusive of
each other. Boys of fourteen to sixteen who decided to pursue their education were bound to drift to the peripheries of their gangs.

The younger gang boys (ages 10-13) felt little pressure to choose between gang and school. Homework as yet was undemanding, and their gangs were not as self-contained and busy as the older boys’ groups. They could confine participation in gang life to the late afternoon and early evening after school. But as the boys approached age fourteen, collective explorations of alcohol, sports, sex, automobiles, theft, and friendship consumed much time and energy, and at the same time school was increasing its expectations. Time was becoming a scarce commodity, and this was a major factor in forcing a separation of the worlds of school and gang.

The more time a boy spent on his gang’s corner, the more secure was his position in the gang. Regardless of the boy’s personal qualities, if he failed to spend much of his time on the corner, he was likely to lose prestige and influence. Only the very talented—boys who could do their school work quickly and manage to spend time on the corner as well—could succeed in achieving considerable prestige. Especially among the higher status Outlaws and Kings such boys were among the leaders of the gang. The Bandits tended to exclude good students from their ranks, but not solely because they were good students. They had objected to the “funny ideas” and “funny talk” of one boy, but if he had been more discrete, his interest in school might not have been as disruptive of his relationship with the gang.

In all the gangs, a set of good marks from school was discretely flaunted by its possessor. His gang mates then were likely to challenge him, accusing him of taking easy courses, cheating, or currying favor in order to get good marks. The boy who had boasted would deny their charges, and the teasing was rarely continued. Bad or ordinary grades carried no disgrace with them, as they represented the acknowledged norm, but getting good grades in high school only marked one as unusual, not as seriously deviant.

Nevertheless, boys of sixteen who decided to stay in school did tend to drift to the periphery of their corner groups. It was largely drop-outs and the potential
drop-out who formed the core of a gang. Membership in the senior, the more active, gang segments could be extremely time-consuming because group activities were not regarded merely as opportunities for recreation; to a degree they were mandatory. Participation was the equivalent of dues in a Midcity gang; the boy who became involved in school work or in the school’s extracurricular activities jeopardized his standing in the gang in a way that was treated rather legalistically by the Outlaws and much less kindly by the Bandits. The Kings were most tolerant of reduced participation in their gang, but the two major subgroups differed in this respect. The stable core group was composed of drop-outs, and their conduct was typical of lower-status gangs. The higher-status and more aspiring group, which eventually sent seven members to college, although it provided leadership for the Kings, was rather different from other gang groups. It would seem that a large factor in the perplexity of the King who was contemplating a choice between trade and college courses was a wish not to be alienated from those lower-status Kings who were his closest friends.

It would appear then that the opposition of the gangs to school was in large part based upon “practical considerations.” The life style of the lower class Midcity gang demanded a great deal of time, energy, and involvement from its participants which was often incompatible with a serious investment of time and energy in academic pursuits. While the boys back on the corner might admire a serious student for his guts, they were perplexed by his lack of common sense. The effort expended and the loneliness experienced in acquiring an education could not be justified in their eyes by the rewards which seemed so important to the industrious student.

Pattern and Dynamics of the Drop-out Decision

Once the various factors involved in the decision of whether or not to stay in school have exercised their influence, the net result—for the 178 members of the study gangs about whom information is available—is that 52.8% were graduated
from high school and 47.2% dropped out of school prior to high school completion. Figures for the United States as a whole indicate that of all persons aged 25 and over as of 1960, 41.1% were high school graduates and 58.9% failed to complete high school. It must be noted, however, that these figures include not only all regions of the country and rural as well as urban population, but also a substantial proportion of older people. This latter group contains persons of foreign extraction as well as many persons of rural and small town backgrounds. Moreover, the educational requirements for various employment position were considerably lower years ago, when many of the members of this 25 year and over population were of high school age. In comparison with these national figures, the Midcity gang members show a higher rate of high school completion. However, for the reasons indicated, the relevant comparison would be with persons of comparable age.

The most important factor in distinguishing between those who graduated and those who dropped out of high school was, as might be expected, social class position. An examination of the percentage of drop-outs and graduates within each of the seven study gangs clearly documents the effect of the class factor. The highest drop-out rates are found among the lower class III Bandits and Molls, while the Outlaws show considerably lower drop-out rates and the Negro Kings and Queens have the highest percentage of high school graduates. The differences become even more apparent when the data are ordered by social class position (Table 2.7).
Table 1.7

Seven Intensive-Study Gangs
High School Drop-outs & Graduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gang</th>
<th>Drop-outs</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.7

Lower Class II & Lower Class III
High School Graduates and Drop-outs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lower Class II</th>
<th>Lower Class III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-outs</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One can see here that the relative proportion of graduates and drop-outs among the lower class II gang members is almost the exact reverse of the lower class III pattern. Hence, despite all the idiosyncratic factors which might enter into the decision of any given Midcity gang member, when the sum total of decisions is
at hand, class position seems to have the greatest power in determining the customary practice with respect to school attendance.

But within the higher status groups, the percentage of Negroes who completed high school is considerably higher than that of their white counterparts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Negro</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-outs</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>81.25</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The striking difference in the number of lower class II Negroes and Whites who completed their high school education requires some explanation. Midcity Negroes during the 1950’s—like many other Northern urban Negroes—were probably exposed to heightened awareness of their low status and to exhortations to overcome their racial handicap via education and occupational training. It may be assumed then that the high rates of high school completion among the Kings and Queens represents in part an increased concern among Negroes with raising one’s status by means of the approved route of education. Moreover, while only two gang members (a Jr. and a Sr. Outlaw) out of the entire white study group population were graduated from college, seven Negro Kings became college graduates (including one graduate of a medical school). The existence of these seven college graduates—or 22.6% of the total King population for which educational information is available—represents a clear indication of mobility aspirations.

For the white gang members there was no substantial difference between males and females with respect to the percentage within each group that were
graduates and drop-outs. But it is interesting that for the Negroes, the number of high school graduates among the female Queens is even higher than that among the allied male group, although no Queens extended their education on into college. This is probably understandable in terms of both the educational level considered as appropriate for females and the nature of the available job supply. A high school education enables a Negro girl to find secretarial and white collar employment; and such work was of relatively high status in her environment and considered sufficient mobility for women. Her male counterpart, on the other hand, was not likely to achieve much success or mobility by means of a high school education. Few jobs were likely to be available for Negro high school graduates that would be much above the level of those open to his high school-drop-out friends. Hence, many Negro males decided either to leave school before high school graduation or to commit themselves to a path of mobility for which a college education was mandatory.

In comparing the rates of high school completion among older and younger gang members, one finds a fairly high degree of stability. Thus, excluding the two Negro groups (which were both older and would therefore skew the results because of the substantially higher educational attainment among Negroes), one finds the following pattern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Older</th>
<th>Younger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent  Number</td>
<td>Percent  Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-outs</td>
<td>65.4 34</td>
<td>61.3 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>34.6 18</td>
<td>38.7 24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7

Older & Younger Gang Members - Whites Only
High School Graduates & Drop-outs

497
If, however, one compares Jr. Bandits with Sr. Bandits and Jr. Outlaws with Sr. Outlaws, the results are not as uniform. Among the lower class III Bandits there appears to have been a trend towards greater educational attainment, while the lower class II Outlaws showed decreasing school completion, as seen in the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior Bandits</th>
<th>89.6</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>10.4</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This apparently anomalous situation in which the high school completion rates of the higher status gang members declined through time, while the lower status group shows some increase in the number of high school graduates can be explained in terms of the general trend in education throughout the United States and conditions specific to Midcity. The fact that there was an increase in the proportion of high school graduates within the lower class III group is in line with the educational trend in the United States as a whole; the percentage of high school graduates within the total U.S. population aged 25 and over increased from 24.1% in 1940 to 33.4% in 1950 and 41.1% in 1960. The decreasing percentage of high school graduates among the younger as compared to the older lower class II gang is probably in large part a reflection of population movements within the Midcity.
community. Census tract data have shown that during the 1950’s there was a substantial influx of lower class III people into the Outlaws’ neighborhood. If one assumes that the decision of whether or not to stay in school is in part based upon moods within the peer group, one can see the smaller percentage of high school graduates among the Jr. Outlaws as a reflection of their increased interaction with lower status peers—an influence to which their older brother group was not subject.

The In-School Experience

Attitudes toward school were not based exclusively on long-range considerations. Overlapping with economic attitudes was another set of attitudes toward school as an experience in the here-and-now. Again the spectrum ranged from ongoing hostility to lukewarm approval. Some of the corner youth found school an irredeemable bore, while others managed to develop a certain modicum of affection for school. The latter group contended that school was not all bad; it could even be pleasant if one ignored its scholastic side. Athletics were probably the school’s primary redeeming feature for these Midcity boys. School social life and extracurricular activities made getting an education at least bearable and sometimes enjoyable.

Participation in school athletics afforded pleasure and prestige to many boys. The more athletic gang members often found it difficult to choose between playing for their school or their gang team. The most skilled athletes, those who had a reasonable chance to play on the first team at school, frequently did put most of their effort into school athletics. Playing for the school team represented quite a large investment for gang boys, since school athletes were required to maintain acceptable attendance and grade records; this investment could, and did, conflict with a boy’s involvement in his gang’s activities, drawing him away from his mates, much as the decision to finish high school forced some withdrawal from the gang.

Members of the higher status Kings and Outlaws were most likely to experience the conflict of choosing between the greater prestige and better coaching
of a school team on the one hand, and the high spirit and intense loyalties of the
gang on the other. Each year, two, three, or possibly four of the Kings and one or
two of the Outlaws would turn out for school teams. For the duration of the season,
they would be absent from gang or club functions, and would appear on the corner
only rarely. These periods of absence and alienation were not necessarily
permanent; a new season might bring the less competent school athletes back to the
corner; for the gangs’ sporting activities were generally a good deal more rewarding
to the less expert players. The gang teams were more tolerant of non-expert players
and more often in need of players.

The lower status Bandits, with virtually no exceptions, did not lose players to
the school teams. The Sr. Bandits, most of whom had left school, were relatively
inactive in baseball, basketball, and football leagues organized by the Recreation
Department, although they did occasionally play scrimmage and sandlot games
among themselves. Among the younger group, the Jr. Bandits—many of whom were
still in school—there was considerably more active involvement in sports of all
kinds, but only one of their regular members ever played on a (parochial) school
team.

Corner girls, particularly the higher status Queens, involved themselves in
high-school sports to the extent of attending games in which their boyfriends were
playing. However, in general, it was not the school games that interested the
Queens but the various contests in which their companion group, the Kings, were
playing as a club. For the girls, school plays and musical performances were of some
interest, though very few gang members actually participated in such events. One
of the Queens, however, was quite active in talent shows and plays, and another
sang with her high school’s glee club. The Kings, on the other hand, were largely
inactive in school programs, although four of them did start a singing group which
was popular at least among other gang members. One of the Sr. Bandits was
obviously excited and proud to be among those selected to sing at a Christmas
recital in his school, although he passed it off as a “pain in the neck” when his
accomplishment was mentioned. Only three out of over 200 Project gang members—two Queens and one Bandit—actually participated in school performances, though others went to various events as spectators.

Dances and graduation rituals received some attention from the corner youth, especially the girls, for whom a new dress was indispensable on class day or at graduation. Eighth-grade graduation was especially important to the Molls, as it was to be their only one. The Queens, almost with exception, graduated from high school, and that graduation acquired considerable emotional importance to them. These rituals seemed to affect and involve the boys rather less than the girls. School dances and parties were attended only rarely. Here again, the gang, rather than the school, was the main focus of social activities, and the gangs often spend considerable time and effort in sponsoring large dances which were well-attended.

Oddly enough, gang activities sometimes provided the best justification for schooling. The Outlaws in particular found that some of the skills which they had acquired in school could be useful to them in their more pleasurable activities. In the course of preparing for a gang-sponsored dance, one boy used the school printing shop, and his printing skill, to prepare tickets; another was allowed to make posters for the dance in his art class; and a third, who had taken bookkeeping, was entrusted with the fiscal operations involved. Although school facilities and schooling were thoroughly exploited on this occasion, the boys did not convert their experiences into favorable attitudes toward school attendance. They largely manifested the attitude that they were lucky to be able to use what they had been forced to learn, but this was not to be constructed as a blanket justification for learning even more.

Indeed, the academic curriculum of the Midcity schools generally did not find favor with Midcity’s youth. It was adapted to an ethos and a pattern of behavior characteristic of upwardly mobile individuals, not of those who tended to remain stable in their lower-class status. While the Midcity schools did not, on an explicit level, recognize social class difference, the education they provided was adapted to a
hypothetical median of mediocre intellects from lower-middle class backgrounds. The background of the corner youth was lower class but many of them had better than mediocre intellects; and the traditional course material, aimed at another kind of person, was highly unsatisfactory to the Midcity students. Thus a Jr. Outlaw, very typically announced:

I'm getting damn sick of school. The same old thing every day...shop one week and classes the next—English, history, and all that junk. I like shop, but all we do is set type all day. I guess I'll go to work with my ol' man. I can make twenty-five dollars a week.

Shop, he evidently felt, had possibilities, but English and history were beneath serious consideration—certainly not as valuable as twenty-five dollars a week. It is customary to write off such attitudes as short-sighted. However, the boy's judgment may well not have been totally unsound; his evaluation of the utility of Midcity High's English and history training deserves to be taken seriously, despite its less than graceful phrasing. Clearly, he found no pleasure in studying, and its usefulness to him was, realistically, debatable.

Teachers faced the problem of reconciling a middle-class-oriented curriculum with lower class students; this impasse made recruitment of able teachers doubly difficult in the Midcity area. Vocational courses were not much better taught than academic ones, in the gang members' opinions. A Sr. Bandit said, in despair, "

I get sick of all that crap. They don't teach you nothin'...Shop is all right, but all we do is make joints. I want to make things. All that guy does is to tell you to start another joint just after you finished one, and then he goes around the corner to get all beered up.

As noted previously, recent studies have tended to point to the inadequacy of vocational curriculum, and especially their tendency to lag behind the realities of local economic situations and the prevailing patterns of employment. And Midcity gang members were continually complaining about their vocational courses—not that they were hard, not that teachers were unfair or cruel, not that they found themselves unable to learn—but that there was a limited course offering and that
the courses themselves were poorly or uninterestingly taught. Several of the quotations already cited are representative of their complaints: “All we do is make joints;” “We just set type;” “I want to make something.”

The boys were quite capable of engaging in routine and monotonous activities, such as practicing set-shots in basketball, or working in unskilled positions on construction jobs, but such tasks were frequently rewarded, as by the opportunity to play basketball games for fun and in competition, or by the weekly pay-check, which was readily convertible into pleasures and activities which were not routine and monotonous. The teacher’s rationale for working to perfect the technique of joining and typesetting was spurious to the boys. Although it was possible that a few of the students enrolled in a printing class might find work in this trade—a common one in Port City—few of them had any “vocation” for printing, and few of them were so naïve as to expect that their high-school course in typesetting would assure them of jobs later on. Carpentry and cabinetmaking seemed to promise Midcity boys even less of a future than did printing. Although several of the Project’s gang members did work in printing shops, only one of them worked as a carpenter’s assistant—for the same company that employed his father.

Contributing to the economic, ideological, and curricular factors plaguing the Midcity schools in their work with lower-class youngsters were the legal problems of school attendance and non-attendance. The Midcity schools, like most public schools, were required to harmonize two mandates: (1) that all children be kept in school until age sixteen, and (2) that they be educated during that time. Coercive enforcement of school attendance—omnipresent in public school systems, but not obvious in communities where legal standard coincide with cultural practices—was oppressively evident to Midcity gang members. As they saw it, confinement, punishment, and legalism were salient features of the school system.

Moreover, the school system’s enforcement of attendance regulations often presented problems for Midcity parents. Since absences from school could be legitimated only by signed notes from adult relatives, parents were effectively held
responsible for their children’s attendance. This situation was uncomfortable to Midcity parents who could not easily arrange to supervise their adolescent children and who, as observed in the previous section, were not habituated to the exercise of authority in the personal sphere of activity. The presence of the truant officer forced most Midcity parents to take some stand with regard to their children’s absences from school. The common response was to avoid judging an adolescent’s behavior—leaving that up to him—but to insist that he not get his parents into trouble. Consistent with this attitude, most Midcity parents tended either to write excuses for absences which were not, properly speaking, justifiable or, if a child was frequently truant, to report him to the authorities. By and large, it was more common for parents to cover up for their children than to turn them in. Although, as noted earlier, lower-class culture seemed to induce a high degree of acceptance toward institutional assistance with child-rearing; yet there was an opposing tendency to be contemptuous of the “stool pigeon,” an image which must have deterred many parents from exposing their children to the authorities.

From the point of view of the schools, rounding up skillful and determined truants was a constant burden that placed demands on teachers and principals as well as truant officers. And ironically, successful enforcement of attendance regulations brought disruptive and difficult students into the classroom, where they became academic as well as administrative problems. The several parochial schools in Midcity could avoid this dilemma by expelling incorrigibles, whereupon public officials were bound by law to resume responsibility for them. In Midcity, “hooking school” was likely to be among the earliest and most common of law-violations engaged in. No one ever became quite blasé about truancy—the blasé got caught—but few appeared to suffer from moral anguish or the dread of reprisal. Nor was the act of truancy seen to have any particular value in itself; it was not a symbol of daring defiance or rebellion. Truancy was rather a means to other ends. If one decided not to go to school, legally one was truant. And if such truancy was discovered, the appropriate measures were taken, regardless of any divergences
between lower class ideas of a “legitimate” excuse and the regulations of the school system.

The reasons for truancy were various and occasionally somewhat comic. Often the Midcity adolescent was simply best able to arrange a busy schedule by skipping school for a day. Sometimes, older gang members, already out of school, made plans for an athletic practice or an excursion which conflicted with school; it was then up to the younger member to decide between losing a day of school and losing face and status within their gang. Apparently, the rather impersonal punishment received at school was more easily tolerated than the highly personal censure of one’s gang mates.

Even among the Kings, who placed a higher value on education than most of the other gangs, truancy occurred out of a desire to avoid certain specific unpleasant situations by staying away from school. Thus, for example, one of the Kings who later attended college was encountered in the street during school hours. When asked why he had not gone to school, he explained that he had played badly in a basketball game the night before and wanted to avoid being teased. Performing poorly on an examination, getting into trouble with the teacher, failing to understand a classroom subject, perhaps even trouble with another student—these and other difficulties commonly precipitated isolated acts of truancy.

As opposed to such isolated cases of truancy, there was often a patterned type of consistent truancy. The latter type may be subdivided into two categories—“habitual” and “chronic” truancy—according to the nature of causation involved. The child who became “chronically” truant did so, it appears, as the result of a self-reinforcing series of unpleasant experiences with school. Among lower class persons, avoidance is often a common response to difficult situations. When applied by the Midcity child to his problems in school, avoidance generally meant truancy. But without the active collusion of a parent truancy resulted in punishment, such as being kept after school “to make up the time.” And the disadvantages resulting from missed classes, compounded by the humiliation and irritation of punishment, could
result in new difficulties and fresh antagonisms. These in turn might lead to further avoidance, so that a sequence of truancies reinforced by punishments (or bad marks in class) easily developed into a pattern of “chronic” truancy. This was largely the case for several of the Molls, who were frequently out of school from age twelve until they were able to leave for good. Two of the Molls made valiant attempts to help each other get out of bed in the morning and go to school, but their successes were fettered and short-lived. They agreed that their non-attendance was a “problem,” but found no effective cure for it.

“Habitual” truancy, on the other hand, was characteristic of older gang members, and was largely anticipatory of withdrawal from school at age sixteen. For these fourteen and fifteen-year olds, school attendance was a nuisance, but not problematic. The decision to quit school was not, of course, made suddenly at age sixteen. From about age fourteen, the Midcity youth was in the process of easing himself out of school, and his truancies were largely a matter of convenience or disinterest. The schools of Port City had accommodated to this pattern in a limited way. For more than seventy years, legislation had permitted the issuance of part-time and full-time work certificates to boys aged fourteen to sixteen, but issuance was contingent upon a “Promise of Employment.” Thus, absence from school was legitimated only by a guarantee that the youth would be gainfully employed. In fact, the Midcity schools were rather free with employment certificates, since the certificates provided their one legal recourse for ridding themselves of the perennial absentees and of the actively disruptive who had little interest in the curriculum, but continued to attend school for “kicks.” “Habitual” truancy, then, was merely a larger aspect of the drop-out phenomenon.

The Pattern of Disapproved Behavior

It has been observed that in contrast to middle class youth for whom schooling is a major focus of activity, Midcity adolescents tended to be relatively unconcerned with their school lives. The data collected by the Midcity Project
support this assertion in that disapproved actions and sentiments with respect to school, although common, were not outstandingly frequent.

The Project applied its middle class standards in evaluating school behavior (See Table 6.7). These standards were not very rigorous, and undoubtedly could have been met with ease by many lower class youngsters. It was somewhat more difficult, however, for gang members to meet these criteria, since the choice of being a good gang member was to some degree mutually exclusive with that of being a good student.

The ranking of the various groups according to the incidence of disapproved actions and sentiments, as presented in Table 7.7, is quite consistent with the ranking of the groups in terms of school completion. Thus, the Sr. Bandits—only 10.4% of whom completed high school—rank highest on percentage of disapproved actions and second highest on disapproved sentiments. Similarly, the Kings and Sr. Outlaws, whose memberships included a high percentage of high school graduates, show low percentages of disapproved actions and sentiments. The Jr. Outlaws, on the other hand, show a higher percentage of both disapproved actions and sentiments than would be expected on the basis of their school completion rate (47.4%). This discrepancy, however, makes sense in terms of the demographic shifts noted earlier. It was stated in connection with the lower school completion rate among this group than among their older brother group that at the time the Jr. Outlaws were in high school there was an influx of lower class III people into their neighborhood. The latter group was assumed to have exerted some influence on the attitudes of the Outlaws towards school. Hence, even if the decrease in school completion rates among the Jr. Outlaws was not that radical, the increased negativity toward school was expressed in a comparatively high rate of disapproved behavior. The pattern of disapproved behavior among the Queens was also somewhat inconsistent with their rate of school completion. But this group (as noted earlier in connection with their relatively high rate of non-conventional sex and
mating behavior) maintained many of the attitudes and behaviors of their lower
class milieu despite their very high rate of high school completion.

In general, the table of discrepancies indicates that in their school behavior,
the groups maintained a relatively high consistency between word and deed. The
Molls, who showed the greatest discrepancy between actions and sentiments, had a
consistent pattern of expressing few disapproved sentiments while continuing to act
in a fairly ordinary disapproved pattern. This might have been due to their attempt
to make a favorable impression on their worker, who was popular with them.

When compared with the percentage of disapproved actions and sentiments
in other behavior areas, the pattern of disapproved behavior with respect to school
is quite undistinguished. The percentage of disapproved actions for all groups is
40.3%, which places schooling eighth among the fourteen behavior areas.
Interestingly, school is flanked by the judicial (seventh at 43.3%) and police (ninth
at 38.7%) areas. All three of these areas are similar in that they reflect the
characteristic behavior of gang members in their dealings with community
organizations which are run by predominantly middle class adults. The actions of
the gang members toward these areas are distinguished by their moderation. There
is no indication here of rebellious defiance. The percentage of disapproved
sentiments for all groups is even lower, and school here ranks twelfth among the
fourteen areas. The discrepancy between actions and sentiments is quite low –
3.7%, which places school eleventh among the behavior areas in degree of
discrepancy. These figures suggest that schooling was an area of relatively little
conflict for youngsters in Midcity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Approved by Project</th>
<th>Actions Disapproved by Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Attending school</td>
<td>1) Truancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Doing homework, achieving good marks, studying for college</td>
<td>2) Not studying, doing poorly in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Seeking help from school facilities, e.g., guidance, from teachers, or from knowledgeable adults</td>
<td>3) Delaying or failing to seek guidance with school problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Participating in school's extracurricular activities, giving them priority over others</td>
<td>4) Giving priority to other activities in preference to or in lieu of school extracurriculars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Encouraging others to attend, complete school, do homework</td>
<td>5) Encouraging others to be truant, drop school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Seeking reinstatement after suspension or dropping out</td>
<td>6) Breaking school rules, getting expelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentiments Approved by Project</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sentiments Disapproved by Project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Intending to attend school regularly</td>
<td>1) Intending to be truant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Intending to do well in school</td>
<td>2) Expressing indifference to school work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Intending to complete, continue, schooling, considering college</td>
<td>3) Intending to leave school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Regarding schooling as important, necessary</td>
<td>4) Deriding, devaluing schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Positively evaluating school personnel</td>
<td>5) Negatively evaluating school personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Approving friends who attend school</td>
<td>6) Mocking friends who attend school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Disapproving of truancy</td>
<td>7) Advocating, supporting truancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7
Forms of School Behavior
(Relative to Project Evaluative Positions)
Table 7.7
Group Standings in Project-Disapproved Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Actions</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Avg.</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>Group Avg.</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrepancy between Actions and Sentiments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sentiments/Minus Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>-16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>-8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Avg.</td>
<td>-3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Work**

While the world of school did not engage most Midcity gang members too greatly, few could ignore the world of work. For the middle class youngster there is frequently a relatively smooth transition from school to work commitments: his education prepares him for his occupation, while his class milieu supplies him with the requisite attitudes toward work and career. The lower class too generates attitudes toward employment, but it is the gang rather than the school which plays the major part in preparing its members for assuming work roles.
I. Getting a Job

Lower-status youngsters tended to be job-oriented at a much earlier stage in their life cycles than most middle class young people. Not only did they leave school earlier and marry at a younger age, but there was also an early acquaintance with the economic “facts of life.” Most gang members had experienced the consequences of unemployed fathers, lack of money, and scarcity of jobs quite early in life. Among the families of the seven Project groups, 78% were receiving welfare assistance of some kind at one time or another. (The percentages for each group ranged from a low of 52.6% among Jr. Outlaw families to a high of 100% for Sr. Bandit and Moll families).

Lower class children are not usually sheltered from the exigencies of life as are many middle and upper class children. Poverty is clearly visible all around them; their parents have little choice but to keep them aware of the problems of supporting a family. And by impressing upon their children the difficulties of meeting the expenses of food, clothing, and shelter, Midcity parents encouraged them to feel some responsibility for financial maintenance. Thus, the desire to cease being a financial burden and to help in the family upkeep acted as an important incentive to get a job. And it was generally accepted among gang members that they would turn over part of their week’s pay to their parents.

This desire to get a job in order to be of financial assistance to the family may be seen as resulting from several related pressures. First of all, there was the direct pressure from parents who urged their children to get after-school or full-time jobs. Gang members frequently reported that their parents had ordered them to: “go out and make some money” or “go out and get a job.” And they spoke of their parents as being “bitchy” when they did not contribute to their own support, especially if they had already left school. In extreme cases, parents might issue an ultimatum to get a job or leave the house. But often such commands were unnecessary; the exigencies of the situation were sufficient to maturate him to look for a job. Evidence for this
can be seen in the expressions of great urgency which accompanied requests for the worker’s assistance in securing jobs. One Jr. Outlaw told the worker, “I just gotta get a job, I just gotta.” It turned out that his mother was unemployed and his father was in imminent danger of losing his job. A Jr. Bandit expressed a similarly urgent need when his father’s income was cut short by an operation and confinement in a hospital.

A second and more subtle family-related impetus towards getting a job may be seen to lie in the feelings of guilt generated by remaining a financial burden to one’s parents. One Moll specifically expressed this feeling in asking her worker to find her a summer job so that she need no longer be a burden on her mother. A King exhibited remorse at having gone fishing instead of working and expressed the hope that his mother did not find out about this. Similarly, a Sr. Bandit, during a drunken crying jag, bemoaned his “lousy” behavior in not sticking to his job.

By getting jobs, the gang members not only assuaged whatever guilty feelings they may have had, but they also established their own independence. In assuming responsibility for their own support they took an important step in the process of severing the dependence on their parents. Having jobs and their own spending money meant that they were free of humbling requests to their parents for carfare, cigarette money, club dues, athletic equipment, etc. In fact, the relational positions were reversed; their parents had to request, or expect, board and room from them. It was the parents who were then in a dependent positions, and many gang members seemed to relish this role reversal. But this situation was not an unmixed blessing, since it meant that they had less money at their disposal for their own use. In dealing with this problem, some gang members surreptitiously withheld some of their pay. One Jr. Bandit remarked that though he was starting a new job the following day, he would not tell his mother for at least another day so that he would have at least a day’s pay for his own spending. And one member of the Kings took delight in “getting back at” his mother by not working. She had told him that because of his asthma he should quit school and go to work. He refused, arguing
that “if I’m too sick to go to school, I’m too sick to work.” Another technique was to refuse to work if they could not secure jobs that would assure them sufficient money for their own spending. Thus, a Sr. Bandit explained that he would be “wasting his time” in working for low wages since he would have too little left after paying so much to the family. Then too, some gang members would quit their jobs or deliberately have themselves fired after they had secured sufficient spending money.

The acquisition of money was of course a powerful incentive for working. There was an almost constant awareness among Project members of the value of money. They frequently borrowed money from their workers for carfare, cokes, movies, etc. Those groups which had formal clubs experienced great difficulty in collecting 25 cents per week for dues. There were many discussions about club finances, and members were periodically being expelled for failure to pay dues. In all of the gangs, the possession of money brought prestige. All members were elated when they could pay off their debts, pay dues, and gain prestige by treating the group to beer, movies, popcorn, and the like. They “felt good” when they could jingle some change in their pockets and flash a roll of bills.

Yet while the value of money was appreciated by all, it was not of sufficient importance to motivate them to work steadily. Often they would take jobs in order to accumulate enough money for a specific goal, and once this was accomplished they would stop working for a while. Thus, one of the Kings went looking for a job in order to get money to invest in his car and “make it look like something;” and one of the Queens explained that she wanted to work until after Easter so she could get a new suit.

Those gang members who were on probation or parole were under special pressure to get jobs. It is the responsibility of the parole and probations officers to see to it that their charges either remain in school or find employment. Since all of the Project group members who were under the jurisdiction of some official agency had either left school or were disinterested in furthering their education, it would
have been rather futile to attempt to force them to remain in or return to school. Hence, parole and probation officers tended to exert pressure on them to secure jobs. One of the most frequent reasons for getting a job was thus the insistence of these law enforcement officials. Conversely, gang members often declared that so long as the probation officer did not bother them they would do as they pleased and work only if they wanted to.

Perhaps the most clear-cut and widely recognized incentive for working was the decision to get married. For it was generally accepted that marriage necessitated steady employment. In fact, one Sr. Bandit remarked that he didn’t want to get married precisely because this would require him to work all year round, whereas he preferred to work only in the winter when it was too cold to hang out on the corner. And indeed, this preference for hanging over employment was often a major factor in preventing gang members from securing jobs. Despite the strong incentives to work resulting from parental pressures and the desire for money and independence, there were also strong inhibitory factors in the form of gang ties and loyalties and the anxieties involved in dealing with members of different age and class subcultures.

Most of the Project group members had been associating with their particular corner groups for many years, during which they had built up a complex network of primary group relationships. This resulted in such interdependency that group members were reluctant to engage in many kinds of behavior unless they were accompanied by other group members. They had become accustomed to going swimming together, dancing together, stealing together, etc., and they had come to rely upon the predictability of intra-group behavior under a wide variety of circumstances. The corner group had much to offer in terms of established patterns of prestige and comfortable roles and statuses. Hence it is not surprising that there was much reluctance to leave the securities and enjoyments of the corner. Also, as noted with respect to school attendance, participation in gang activities and the requirements for gaining prestige demanded considerable expenditures of time,
which cut down on the amount of time available for other activities. Thus there was often a kind of continuation of the school-truancy pattern after the gang members had left school and were involved in looking for and/or holding jobs.

But the process of joining the labor force meant more than simply tearing oneself away from gang allegiances. For it involved facing the unknowns of the work world. The anxieties of entering into the adult world were often compounded by the lack of occupational skills and basic employment knowledge. Gang members frequently did not know how to go about getting jobs, dressed improperly when applying, made faux pas, and exhibited considerable anxiety about approaching employers. It was common practice for them to request their Project workers to accompany them to interviews, help them fill out forms, and tell them how to behave. Their parents often gave them little more than the injunction to “go out and get a job;” in the actual process of finding a job they were usually left to their own devices. The gang often helped to fill the gap here: the older boys or those who had gotten jobs first served as advisors to their less experienced friends, transmitting information as to where and how to get jobs.

In addition to the problems created by inadequate knowledge of the techniques of job hunting, group members also had to cope with the strains involved in crossing generational and class lines. The discomfort in interacting with persons outside one’s usual associational orbits was evident for example in the comment of one Queen that she preferred to work in a warehouse job similar to that of a friend of hers; she explained that then she “wouldn’t have to dress up for work.” “Dressing up for work” was a symbol of the middle class world. Indeed, gang members would frequently characterize the occupation of someone in their acquaintance whose precise job they did not know by saying that “he gets dressed up for work.” Age as well as class differences were sometimes a focus of comment. Thus, for example, one Queen quit her job because she “was always working with older people.”

Also, the discomforts of associating with members of different status classes were tied to the aforementioned difficulties experienced in connection with the
procedures of applying for jobs. Feelings of insecurity in this area led gang members
to assume an antagonistic front towards potential employers, which led employers
to reject them in favor of higher status applicants who had learned to behave
“properly.” One Jr. Bandit reported that prospective employers would usually turn
him down in favor of kids from other neighborhoods that did not have “a reputation
of toughness.” A fellow Jr. Bandit who wore blue jeans and went unshaven to apply
for a job felt that “bosses and people in charge don’t give a damn how we feel.”

One device which all groups utilized to reduce the tensions connected with
these barriers was to work with kin and members of their own group. By working in
the same plant or getting a job through kin, group members were able to move into
a situation in which there were close-knit personal relationships similar to those to
which they had become accustomed. The presence of kin helped to ease the tensions
by providing ready entrée and one or more sets of established relationships. It is
easier to talk to a prospective employer if someone has already explained who you
are and put in a good word for you. This same principle was used when Midcity
youth sought “connections” (non-kin agents with inside knowledge or experience) to
facilitate job-seeking.

Group members also attempted to reduce the tensions of job-hunting by going
in groups. Some even refused to apply for jobs at all unless someone accompanied
them; and some refused to accept jobs unless they could work with fellow gang
members. One Jr. Outlaw, when asked if he had gone to the State Employment
Service to see about a job, answered: “I can’t get any of these kids to go down there
with me.” There are several instances among the Jr. Outlaws and Sr. Bandits of
boys refusing jobs where there was no opportunity to work together or quitting jobs
simultaneously if employed in the same place. Thus, while gang loyalties often
served to hamper job-hunting because members were reluctant to leave the corner
group in order to work, they simultaneously facilitated the process by providing
information and moral support. This dual role of the gang in connection with job-
hunting is carried on to some extent with respect to the maintenance of jobs. For
gang members often quit their jobs or took days off to participate in some gang activity; but they also were given some incentive to hold on to their jobs if their peers were doing likewise.

But in a larger sense, the gang provides some training for the assumption of work roles. For it is in the gangs that Midcity youth learned to engage in various organized activities, such as athletics and dances, which involve some of the same requisites as do their jobs: continued periods of effort, expenditure of energy, cooperation with others, and accepting some responsibility for carrying things out. Moreover, it is in the gangs that they learn various skills such as the mathematics necessary for handling club finances and expenditures as well as such skills as betting, pool, and card-playing which can provide income during unemployment or supplementary income.

Perhaps most important of the skills learned in the gang is the development of an ability to interact within an all-male peer group. Many typical jobs which lower class boys acquire are in all-male work groups. Such jobs as fireman, logger, serviceman, merchant seaman, etc. require continuous isolation (often for long periods) from women. The one-sex corner group associational patterns give the lower class boy the opportunity to acquire the interactional skills necessary for successful performances in such a milieu. These skills include the ability to give and take joking and kidding, toleration of long periods of loafing, development of skill at aggressive verbal repartee, competitive spirit and verbal fluency.

Moreover, there are some lower class jobs which call for the same type of alternation of times of quiet with periods of intense activity that is so characteristic of the corner groups. The fireman, for example, sits around the station house for long periods of time with very little to do except talk, joke, discuss sports, etc. Suddenly he is called upon to exert every ounce of energy and rush off to some emergency. Danger and possible loss of limb or life may hinge upon some exigency. Such highly specialized compartmentalization of energies and skills cannot be developed overnight. Typical middle class boys would have great difficulty in
acclimating themselves to such polar types of activity. Trained to be persistent, dogged, energetic, and unflagging in their efforts to attain a particular goal, they would find frequent and periodic shifts in activity from hanging around to frantic bursts of energy very disconcerting. But the lower class boy is quite prepared for this rhythm, since gang life consists of just such rounds of behavior. While all gangs thus served as training grounds, the gangs varied amongst themselves in the attitudes exhibited towards work and the patterns of employment they encouraged and supported.

II. Attitudes Toward Work and Patterns of Employment

The maxim of “work a few days...goof a few days, that’s my motto” cited at the opening of this chapter expresses an orientation towards work which was prevalent to some degree in all the gangs. But while specific individuals in each of the Project groups could be found to hold to such a position, this pattern was a fully sanctioned expectation only among the Sr. Bandits. The reluctance of this group to engage in steady work took a form which has been termed “voluntary unemployment.” This consisted of seeking work simultaneously and then quitting almost as if by signal. Gang members would go job hunting in groups of three to seven and would give up in their attempts to secure employment if they could not find plants that would employ them together, if the wages were too low, if the weather was inclement, or if some other more exciting activity intervened. Whenever there was a choice between allocating time to gang activities or work responsibilities, the former clearly took precedence. In contrast to the other groups, which sanctioned non-participation in group activities for those members who were working, the Sr. Bandits retained the expectation that the member’s primary allegiance was to the gang. Thus, for example, they refused to seek work when one

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of their members was scheduled to return to the area, since they wanted to be around to greet him.

Deciding when to seek employment and when to quit was a matter of looking to the group for cues as to whether the time was ripe. Members often indicated that as long as “the others” were not working, they had no interest in jobs. Also, there were several instances of boys approaching the worker to inquire about job opportunities, but becoming flippant or changing the subject when other members were within earshot.

Once having secured jobs, the Sr. Bandits would frequently take days off when an outing or a ball game or some such group activity was planned. And even in the absence of such alternative activities, the boys would from time to time play “hooky” from work, much as they had done when they were still in school, simply because hanging around was a more pleasurable activity than working. Indeed this too was often a group pattern to which members were expected to conform. Thus, for example, one Sr. Bandit who had been sick during the early part of the week had been convinced or teased by his gang mates into taking the remainder of the week off as sick leave, even though he was now well. Such deliberate absences from work were often the prelude to quitting a job. The boys could thereby provoke their employers into firing them so that they would then have legitimate reasons for not working. But provoking one’s own dismissal was certainly not the only route towards returning to the state of unemployment. For the prevalent attitudes toward employment and employers facilitated the pattern of sporadic work by providing numerous legitimate reasons for quitting a job.

One major type of acceptable reason for leaving a job stemmed from a hyper-sensitiveness about the employers’ stance towards them. Two questions were of primary concern here: (1) was the employer taking advantage of them? And (2) did the employer manifest too much authority? The great emphasis that the boys placed on being “smart” and being “taken in” was quite naturally extended towards dealings with employers or potential employers. There was a tendency to suspect
employers of trying to “con” them into doing the most possible work for the least possible wages. One Sr. Bandit who had just secured a job in the morning told his friends that he felt he was taken in by his employers and that therefore he might get himself fired so that he could collect his pay immediately. And a Jr. Bandit of the same philosophy admitted candidly that he went to a job interview with a negative attitude: “prepared to screw the employer before he screws you.”

Closely tied to this attitude of watchfulness was the difficulty in accepting authority, which was noted earlier. The boys were quick to notice and respond to instances in which their employers seemed to show their authority. Thus, one Sr. Bandit quit his job because the boss’s son tried to give orders. Another left his job as a counter boy in a café because the manager had asked him to wash dishes—which he felt was beneath his dignity. Similarly, one Jr. Outlaw said that he was quitting his job because his boss “gets in my hair—he’s a young punk that tries to be bossy.”

In addition to the perceived attitude of the employer, there were also factors directly associated with the job which were deemed to be worthy reasons for quitting. Very hard work, very boring work, or too much supervision (“the boss is always on my back”) served equally well to justify leaving a job. Which of these conditions was important was largely a matter of personal preference so that one boy said that he couldn’t keep a job because he got bored and couldn’t take discipline, while another liked his job because he had very little to do: “even though it gets boring, it’s better than working.” But even without such provocations, the Sr. Bandits and some Jr. Outlaws would stop working because their friends did. One group member who continued working in a place from which two of his friends had recently departed reported that “they are sore at me” for keeping his job longer than they kept theirs.

Given this variety of legitimate reasons for leaving a job it is easy to see how the boys could go from job to job in rapid succession, staying with any given job just long enough to accumulate sufficient spending money for the periods of unemployment. This pattern of sporadic employment or voluntary employment was
noted by Clifford Shaw in his classic study of *The Jack-Roller* in 1930. The portrait of “Stanley” includes a record of 33 jobs held during his early adolescence, beginning at age 12. Four months was the longest period of time spent on any one job and two weeks was the most typical; there were some thirteen types of jobs involved (e.g., errand boy, machine operator, stockroom worker, pieceworker in a factory). These jobs were quite like the jobs secured by Midcity teenagers in the 1950's.

It should be noted that this pattern of sporadic employment served to acquaint the lower status Midcity adolescent with a variety of different job situations and to provide basic skills in several fields which are of potential usefulness. Periodic unemployment is a highly likely adult employment pattern in the lower class. Unskilled and semi-skilled workers have always been the first to feel the pinch of hard times. Thus for the lower class worker, having command of several different skills can be an “ace in the hole” during difficult periods. And indeed many a Midcity adult male took pride in the fact that he could do so many things such as pipe fitting, masonry, construction work, building wrecking, handling dynamite, cracking safes, and burglarizing. While he was not fully trained in all of these, any one of these skills could be put to good use in an emergency.

This pattern of employment stands in sharp contrast to that of the typical middle class adult, who becomes highly specialized in one field. The typical member of the middle class undergoes a long period of training to prepare him for his occupational career. Indeed one may say that the longer the duration of one’s education, the more one becomes “locked into” a particular type of occupational involvement (e.g., law, medicine) and the less flexible one becomes in terms of shifting occupational roles. The greater the extent of education, degree of skill, and occupation specialization, the less possibility there is for flexible adaptation in case of shifts in the general occupational structure. For the middle class this greatly restricted flexibility usually poses no problems. But at the bottom of the economic

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ladder, such flexibility is often essential. Forces over which the lower class has little control—strikes, recessions, automation, movement of industry—will periodically cause loss of jobs. The individual must be prepared for such eventualities. He must be able to “roll with the punches” so to speak, or he may “go down for the count.” Unless he has a range of skills upon which he can fall back, several subsidiary means of making money, and a philosophy which enables him to accept occupational shifts, he will not be able to survive a depression. Lower class subculture does provide the opportunity to learn other means of making money and a milieu in which “trying out” of jobs—by which to learn several skills—is not defined as “deviant.”

Moreover, the pattern of sporadic employment provides the lower status Midcity adolescent with some psychological preparation for periodic unemployment. By stating beforehand how much he will work for, where he will work, whether he will work overtime or not, the corner boy becomes the master of his own fate. He wards off feelings of worthlessness at being unemployment by accepting a range of reasons—deemed “flimsy” by the middle class—for quitting or not accepting work. And it may be psychologically more comforting to feel that the choice of working or not working lies within the individual rather than in some distant “economic system” or impersonal employer.

This pattern of voluntary unemployment that was so prevalent among the Sr. Bandits existed in an attenuated form among the less delinquent Kings, Outlaws, Jr. Bandits, and Molls; it appeared to be almost entirely absent among the Queens. The major difference between this pattern among the Sr. Bandits and the other groups was that it was not given group-wide support in the latter. Only a clique of three of four boys in each age segment actively supported voluntary unemployment, while the rest of the group acknowledged the priority of jobs over club and athletic activities.

In sharpest contrast to the pattern of employment among the Sr. Bandits was that of the Sr. Outlaws. The Outlaws did not as a rule engage in job-hunting as a
collective activity and the group clearly supported a pattern of steady employment and gave priority to job over corner group activities. The difference in attitude toward employment between Bandits and Outlaws is perhaps most clearly manifested in the Outlaws’ expressions of concern for the future and the desire for steady work. Thus, one Sr. Outlaw sought help in securing a “regular job” because he was tired of working at odd jobs here and there. And in a discussion among several of the boys, one Sr. Outlaw who had recently changed jobs was reprimanded and told that “if you want to get a good job you have to stick to it.” A Jr. Outlaw who had been remiss in checking upon a specific job possibility responded when asked about it, “No, I guess I’m just a lazy bastard. I don’t wanna work—everybody says I’m a lazy bastard.” Clearly, were he a member of the Bandits “everybody” would not say he was “a lazy bastard.”

The Outlaws tended to be somewhat more selective in accepting jobs since they generally intended to stay with them longer. Thus, one Sr. Outlaw began looking for another job after he had been laid off. He refused to return to his former job because “my old man told me that if a company ever lays you off there’s no point in ever going back.” On the other hand, some Outlaws recognized the advantage in accepting certain kinds of jobs for the accumulation of experience. One Sr. Bandit, when asked whether he liked working in a hospital, answered that he figured he would get some good training there which he could use later.

Such concern for the future was conspicuously absent among the girls’ groups. While the girls were indeed concerned with their futures, their interest was centered about the family sphere. Mating was clearly the primary focus among the girls. While they were involved in the labor force after they quit school (Molls) or were graduated (Queens), their working was largely but a temporary stop gap until they got married. Some of the Queens did continue to work after marriage; these girls were engaged primarily in secretarial work.

Despite the fact that a large percentage of the Molls would probably be facing the world of work again sometime after they were married—because of desertion or
unemployment of husbands—there was little attempt made to prepare for this eventuality. The attitude of one of the Molls perhaps most aptly characterizes the prevailing sentiment: she said that her goal was to get married at age 16 or 18; she felt that school did not educate her for marriage and that if she had to work, she would work in a factory as did her mother. In a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of various occupations, one of the Molls commented that “it’s really nice to be a nurse ‘cause you’re really independent and you can always go back for a couple of hours when you’re married.” But such remarks were in the nature of “pipe dreams” which one idly speculated about. More typical of the real situation was the girl who proclaimed that she didn’t want to learn typing now to get a job since she expected to get married soon.

III. Types of Employment Secured

While marriage marked the ending—at least temporarily—of occupational involvement for the girls, it was clearly an inducement to steady working for the boys. From follow-up data secured in 1964, employment information is available for 130 out of the total male study group population of 154. Of these 130, 123 were in the labor force; 6 were in the service, and one was in school. Using the categories of manual labor, distribution and service, crafts, clerical-managerial-professional, and sporadic employment or unemployment the distribution for the sample is as follows:
The last category – “unemployment” – seems to require some explanation. Of the thirteen boys so characterized, seven were “in and out of jail” at the time; the rest were described as either “not working” or “changes jobs every other week.” No Kings or Sr. Outlaws fell into this group. It is interesting to note that the percentage of unemployed in each of the remaining three male groups followed the same rank order as the percentage of school drop-outs in these groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Unemployed</th>
<th>Percent School Dropout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship between class status, school completion, and occupation is further documented when the distribution of occupations among the different groups is compared. Contrasting the lower status Bandits with the higher status Outlaws and Kings yields the following picture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clerical-managerial-professional</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution and service</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual Labor</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>123</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The percentages of gang members within the top two occupational categories show a clear progression upwards as one moves from Bandits to Outlaws to Kings: 22%, 29.3%, and 37.5% respectively. And of course conversely, the lower the status, the higher the proportion in the bottom three categories: 88% among the Bandits, 70.7% among the Outlaws, and 62.5% among the Kings. The Kings’ supremacy in terms of occupational status is related to their high educational attainment, as can be seen from their comparatively high percentage of members in the top occupational category which requires the greatest amount of education. There is further evidence here of the tendency towards polarization among the Kings: the bulk of their membership is concentrated at the top and the bottom, with only 9.4% involved in the middle-level craft occupations—a figure that is lower than both Bandit and Outlaw percentages in this category.

The tendency to prefer working together that was noted earlier is especially clear among the lower status members of the Kings. Of the eleven manual laborers, six worked in the same factory. Among the Sr. Bandits, six (out of a total of 21) were roofers; and 6 (out of 29) Jr. Bandits were in printing. No such clustering around given occupations can be seen in the case of the two Outlaw groups. It would appear then that the closer one comes to approximating middle class status, the greater is

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the tendency to choose occupations on a more individualistic basis. The peer-group orientation would appear to be less strong among the higher status Midcity groups. This is a continuation of the initial job-seeking pattern in which the Bandits tended to view the process of getting a job as a collective activity, while the higher status Outlaws usually applied for jobs independently.

IV. The Pattern of Disapproved Behavior

As might be expected, the lower status groups generally manifested a greater amount of disapproved behavior in the area of work. The Bandits exhibited the highest and the Outlaws the lowest proportion of disapproved actions, with the Kings and the two girls’ groups in the intermediate position. The girls’ groups—who showed little concern with working—were at least expressive of negative sentiments in this area. The Sr. Bandits, among whom the pattern of voluntary unemployment was most pronounced, exhibited the highest degree of disapproved sentiments as well as actions. The high degree of disapproved sentiments among the Kings may have resulted from the fact that the lower status members of this group were more vocal about their attitudes towards work than were their higher status peers. And it is to be noted that the highest degree of discrepancy between sentiments and actions is to be found among the Kings. This would tend to support the idea that the majority of the group tended to be more middle class in orientation, and the high discrepancy is a result of the disapproved sentiments being expressed by the lower status members while the actions of the group as a whole tended to fall in line with Project standards.

On the basis of comparative standings of both disapproved sentiments and discrepancy between sentiments and actions, the area of family-oriented behavior would appear to have been most problematic of the three areas considered in this chapter. (The mean discrepancy rate for family-oriented behavior was 29.4% as compared to -3.7% in school-related behaviors, and .2% with respect to work-oriented behavior). But in terms of disapproved actions, the high degree of
absenteeism and the large drop-out rate are probably responsible for the percentage of disapproved actions being highest in the area of school-related behaviors. (The mean rate of disapproved actions in respect to school was 40.3% as compared with 28.1% in the area of work and 26.3% in family-oriented behavior).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Actions Approved</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Purchasing instead of stealing from store where clear option exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Maintaining job obligations in preference to competing demands such as swimming, hanging, games, pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Complying with directives of store owners, managers, other business personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Maintaining friendly relations with business personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Working steadily, obtaining, keeping, continuing on job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Compensating for fraudulently obtained goods and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Seeking, engaging in job finding activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Seeking, desiring, specific occupational training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Appreciating, desiring job seeking assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Actions Disapproved</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Obtaining goods or services illegally or fraudulently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Quitting job on grounds unacceptable to general business practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Behaving in manner designed to produce dismissal from job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Engaging in, affiliating with illegal business enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Obtaining job under fraudulent conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Conning, duping, deceiving, defrauding, business concerns, personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Rejecting job finding aid, non-activity in re: job finding; failure to pursue opportunities re: job finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Giving competing demands such as hanging, games, swimming, etc. priority over job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Evading, avoiding work when in legal employment status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Hostile interaction, conflict with business personnel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sentiments Approved</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Expressing definite occupational role aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Seeing financial support of family as cogent motive for seeking, keeping employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Disapproval of voluntary unemployment status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Enjoying, expressing pleasure in job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Disapproval of aggressive, unethical behavior towards employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Valuing job finding aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Admiration, respect for ethical legitimate business practices, personnel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sentiments Disapproved</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Valuing, boasting of, admiring the duping, outwitting of business personnel or organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Disapproval of full-time work when employable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Disapproval of, joking about, teasing for working, steady employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Blanket or arbitrary condemnation of business personnel, organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Intending to, approving of quitting work on grounds unacceptable to general business practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Rationalizations of, support of fraudulently obtaining goods or services, or of illegal business practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Admire, respect for illegal bus, rackets, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Disvalue job finding aid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 12.7

**Group Standings in Project Disapproval Orientation to Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Disapproved Actions</th>
<th>Disapproved Sentiments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=580</td>
<td>N=284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent Actions</td>
<td>Percent Sentiments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>Kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>Molls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>Queens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.1%</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.3%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 13.7

**Discrepancy Between Actions & Sentiments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sentiments Relative to Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>-5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>-17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean = -.2%**

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**Summary**

**I. Gang as Representative of Lower Class Adolescent Subculture**

One clear picture which emerges from this examination of the family, school, and work behaviors of Midcity gang members is the role of the gang in representing the attitudes of the lower class adolescent subculture. The gang as an adolescent
institution mirrors the primary concern of the members of this age group, which occupies a position intermediate between the joys and difficulties of childhood and the concerns and rewards of adulthood. While a tendency to look forward and back might be seen as characteristic of all age categories, the subculture of adolescence is particularly prime to reflect such meanderings into the past and the future. Thus, the adolescent in particular may be seen as trying to hold on to “the best of both worlds:” the vanishing world of childhood and the approaching world of adulthood. And the oscillations of gang behaviors with respect to the family and work arenas can be seen as resulting from this Janus-faced orientation.

The gang at one and the same time acts to help and to hinder preparations for the assumption of adult responsibilities in the family and occupational spheres. Gang values and behavior provide assistance to members in the preparations involved in establishing their own families insofar as: (1) the gang helps “boys” to establish themselves as “men;” (2) the process of finding mates is aided by the pairing of male and female gangs and the collective support given to mate-hunting; (3) the gang enforces loyalty to mate as a value; and (4) the gang may (unintentionally) help induce marriage in that marriage becomes a legitimate form of breaking away from the gang.284 By the same token, however, the existence of the gang hinders preparations for marriage in that: (1) the nature of the gang as the primary object of its members; allegiance weakens the strength of other ties or at least produces some conflicts of loyalty; and (2) gang activities involve patterns which do not easily blend with family-orientation, e.g., the practice of frequently going out with “the boys” rather than staying with the family.

Similarly, with respect to work, the gang helps prepare members for assuming work roles by: (1) providing information as to where and how to get jobs; (2) offering more direct assistance in securing jobs, as members attempt to get each other jobs in the same place; (3) teaches various skills which are useful for employment and which can provide supplementary income or a source of income

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during unemployment; and (4) engaging in organized activities which help members
to learn to use their energies constructively, co-operate with other men, and accept
responsibility for carrying things out. On the other hand, gang affiliation may
produce disinclination to accepting work responsibilities because: (1) gang ties can
lead to an unwillingness to break away from corner group security for the non-
solidarity of the work would; and (2) getting a full-time job can lead to a lower
status position within the gang because of the smaller amount of time available for
hanging and participating in various group activities.

All adolescents must sooner or later move into the realm of adult subculture,
and the over-all functions of the gang tend to support and guide members along this
path. But gang influence is not entirely uni-directional here, since the gang as
primary representative of adolescent subculture also reflects the desire to hold on to
some of the joys of youthful irresponsibility. Gang members as a group are
characterized not only by a common age status, but also by a common class position.
Hence, the gang is an instrument of lower class as well as adolescent subculture.
Membership in the lower class of course colors the nature of gang values and
behavior. The gang’s functions in preparing Midcity adolescents for their adult work
and family responsibilities are clearly tied to the nature of lower class subculture; in
the middle class there would not be any need for learning techniques of coping with
unemployment for example. And conflict between peers and family would, in the
middle class, perhaps be translated into conflict between familial and occupational
obligations.

But the gang functions most clearly as an expression of lower class
subculture in its encounter with the representative of middle class subculture—viz.,
the school. Whereas school completion can serve as an avenue to mobility, the gang
acts to maintain lower class patterns and thus supports non-completion. While the
middle class places a high value on education per se and on education as a means of
occupational training, the gang places no value on the former and deems the school
to be ineffective with respect to the latter. And finally the gang’s emphasis on
autonomy is contradicted by the school’s authority/custodial functions. Moreover, as with work and family obligations, the demands of school involvements may be seen as offering competition for the time, energy, and loyalty of gang members.

II. Family-School-Work Interrelationships

The notion of a lower class subculture implies that there is a complex interweaving of the different institutions or functional spheres in which lower class persons participate. Such patterning is evident in the relationships between the family, school, and job lives of Midcity adolescents. The nature of lower class work affects the parent-child relationship in that there are no particularly adolescent jobs. Thus, there is little status differentiation between parents and children in the area of work. This helps to weaken the authority of parents over children. Conversely, the nature of lower class family structure often influences the decision to enter the labor force. With fathers frequently absent, the female head of household becomes dependent to some degree upon the earning capacity of her offspring. This results in pressure upon the adolescent to get a job to help support the household, which in turn has ramifications for family structure. For once the adolescent is financially independent he gains increased independence from the family; and in some cases the dependency relationship is reversed so that parents become dependent on their children.

In part because of this need for financial assistance and in part because of the absence of any firm commitment to the values of school, Midcity parents put little or no pressure on their children to remain in school. Moreover, as school is marginal to the central interests of most Midcity youth, so there is but minimal involvement of Midcity parents with their children’s schools. Lower class parents by and large do not participate in such school-related organizations as the local PTA. But the school frequently places some demands on parents. The truancy of their children which results in part from the relatively small concern of the parents with the school—presents parents with the problem of discipline. Confronted with the demands of
school officials and truant officers, the parents must come to some decision as to how to deal with their school-hooking youngsters. And so once again, the problem of authority within the family is brought to the foreground by extra-familial institutions.

Midcity adolescents' relative lack of interest in school and consequent high drop-out rates result in their being unprepared for anything other than low skill jobs. Conversely, the nature of the lower class work world helps to prove the inadequacy of or lack of necessity for schooling. The family, school, and work lives of Midcity gang members offers a picture in miniature of the world of the lower class urban adolescent, who responds to and is a product of the meshing of his subcultural memberships.
Female Sexual and Mating Behavior

Daughter: Ma, I’m gonna have a baby.

Mother: Where’s the father?

Daughter: I wrote him a letter, but he didn’t answer it.

Mother: I hope it’s a boy! We haven’t had a boy in the family for a long time!

--Moll and Mother

Sex and Mating as Separable Spheres

A conventionalized image of sex life on the street corner has become a staple of much current literature dealing with the adolescent corner group. Sexual behavior is pictured as extensive, untrammeled, and lurid—as a constant round of wild sex orgies, collective perversions, and unrestricted promiscuity. The urban slum is portrayed as the operating arena par excellence of the rogue male and the loose woman. This image is conveyed not only by writers of numerous “juvenile gang” paperbacks—whose covers almost invariably feature a young girl in a tight sweater being eyed lasciviously by corner boys—but also by writers less committed to sensationalism. Harrison Salisbury, for example, uses phrases such as “sadistic contempt,” “primitive sexual needs,” and “collective sex exhibitions” to characterize
sexual behavior in the “gang.” The picture of corner-group sexual behavior as lurid and shocking, as “primitive,” as an uninhibited sex spree, as wholly beyond the limits of “conventional” morality was not borne out by Project data.

Sexual and mating practice of Midcity gang members were governed by well-defined conventions which prescribed acceptable forms of behavior and prescribed unacceptable forms. These practices, rather than representing uncontrolled deviations from “normal” forms, constituted logical stages in the development of adult behavior patterns which were geared to the realistic requirements of mating and childrearing in a lower class community. At the same time, many behavioral adaptations involved serious attempts to accommodate the fact that certain practices common in Midcity were stigmatized in other communities or explicitly forbidden by legal and moral injunctions.

“Sexual” behavior and “mating” behavior can be considered as closely related components of a unified complex—especially when viewed within the context of female behavior. However, a distinction can be made between those aspects of this complex which relate more specifically to “sex” and those which relate to “mating.” In this study, “sexual” behavior will be defined as that which entails direct physical intimacy or sensual stimulation—such as lovemaking, sexual intercourse, contraception, pregnancy, prostitution, procuring, and homosexuality. Behavior concerned with seeking out, arranging, maintaining, and terminating alliances between male and female partners will be called “mating;” “mating” thus involves activities such as dating, making “pick-ups,” “going steady,” betrothal, marriage, “cheating,” separation, and divorce. That “sex” and “mating” can legitimately be considered as separate and distinguishable spheres of activity is documented by the finding, to be presented, that these two areas shared contrasting developments both in regard to the patterning of “disapproved” forms of behavior and in regard to behavior-change trends. For example, “sexual” actions changed little while

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sentiments were volatile; for “mating,” actions were volatile while sentiments remained stable.

Analysis which makes it possible to treat “sex” and “mating” both separately and jointly is also responsive to a difference between the sexes as to the appropriate relationship between these two areas. From the point of view of Midcity females, sexual activity and mating activity appeared, under most circumstances, as integrally related; many males, on the other hand, were able to view “sex” and “mating” as relatively independent areas of activity. Such differences between men and women as to the significance, forms, and meanings of sex and mating necessitate separate treatment of male and female sexual behavior. The present chapter will explore these areas from the perspective of Project females; later sections will explore the sexual and mating behavior of Project males.

**Two Forms of Childrearing Unit**

The sexual behavior of Project girls takes on meaning only when viewed within the context of mating, marriage, and childrearing practices of the adult female community, and only by assuming an essential continuity between adolescent and adult roles. In common with their age-mates in other parts of the country and in other social status groups, Project girls maintained a lively and consistent interest in the vital issues of physical attractiveness, “boys,” dating, dancing, “going steady,” one’s “personality,” and one’s “reputation.” However, in specific manifestations of these concerns—in the kind of boy one dated, in what constituted a good “reputation,” in how one handled the relationship between “boys” and babies—definite distinctions existed between the corner girls of Midcity and their sisters in the wealthier residential suburbs.

Sexual patterns of lower class girls which differ from those condoned by the middle class community are frequently characterized by terms such as “loose sexual morality,” “infidelity,” and “promiscuity.” Such behavior is often attributed to “inadequate impulse control,” and is seen as the forerunner of “broken homes,”
ruined lives, divorce, desertion, and neglect. Mating patterns which entail a series of sexual alliances of limited duration are considered to be harmful to offspring, and to produce personality disturbance and other undesirable effects. This state of affairs is often explained, in simplified terms, by the notion that many lower class girls and women are unable or selfishly unwilling to limit their desires for more extensive sexual and mating experience, or to trade the thrills and excitement of “romance” for the more routine gratifications of monogamy, motherhood, and home care.

Such concepts create a picture of a mating and childrearing system suffused with immorality, pathology, and disorganization. The sexual behavior of Project girls appears considerably less “pathological” or “anti-social” when examined against the actual pattern of local mating and childrearing practices rather than against an implicit concept of idealized middle class practice. Much of the sexual behavior of Project girls is illuminated on the basis of one simple assumption: two major forms of mating or “marriage” were prevalent in Midcity. These two forms corresponded to two forms of childrearing unit—the monogamous, extended-duration, husband-wife household, and the serial-mating, plural-mother, female-based household.

Characteristics of these two household forms have been dismissed elsewhere.\(^{286}\) Briefly, the “female-based” type of household is one in which “...a male acting in the ‘father’ role is either absent from the household, only sporadically present, or when present, only minimally or inconsistently involved in the support and raising of children. The household usually consists of one or more women of childbearing age, frequently related to one another by blood or marriage ties, and often includes two or more generations of women; e.g., the mother and/or aunt of the principal child bearer. Associated with the female-based household is the ‘serial monogamy’ mating pattern in which a woman of childbearing age has a succession

of temporary mates during her procreative years. The distinguishing feature of this type of household is that its successful functioning is not predicated on the consistent presence of an adult male. The unit has the capacity to absorb and utilize an adult male if one is available; however, if such a person cannot be induced to become a “permanent” member of the household, or if he leaves the household after having been a member, the unit is so organized as to remain socially and economically viable. The primary mechanism for securing this viability is the utilization of a group of females to perform certain of the economic and childrearing functions generally executed by males in extended-duration monogamous households. For example—women who do not have small infants requiring constant care will get jobs to help support those who do; they in turn will reciprocate when the situation is reversed. Public welfare payments may be utilized as a routine source of income.

The extended-duration monogamous household includes an adult male who assumes consistent responsibility for securing financial support and who devotes a substantial amount of time and energy to the rearing of children. Households of this type in Midcity differed from the corresponding middle class form in that males generally evinced a lesser degree of focused concern with childrearing and related concerns.

Given the existence of these two household types and their corresponding forms of mating, it would follow that the adolescent sexual experience of Midcity girls, if it were to be effective and adaptive, would have to prepare them for participation in either or both types of unit. Put somewhat differently, each adolescent girl faced a reasonably high probability that some or most of her adult life would involve membership in a female-based household, or in some other way proceed outside the framework of an extended-duration monogamous household. One sixteen year old girl undertook a sober and calculated appraisal of the odds that a man who fathered your child would marry you, and after citing various

287 Ibid., p. 225.
factors relating to the man’s personality, the circumstances of conception, and so on, decided that there was about a fifty-fifty chance. Assuming that this reflected a fairly accurate estimate of the true odds, simple discretion alone would indicate the wisdom of some sort of systematic preparation for participation in the “female-based” life pattern.

It is important to note that the choice between these alternative mating forms was a choice within the local community and not a choice between an indigenous form (intermittent monogamy) and an extrinsic form (extended-duration monogamy) peculiar to the middle class community. Thus, sentiments supportive of the extended-duration form did not reflect a subscription to “middle class values,” but rather to those values within the local cultural system which were supportive of the “extended” rather than the “intermittent” alternative. It should also be noted that these two types are presented here as “ideal” or polar types and that women did not have to maintain an exclusive commitment to one or the other; one’s life experience could include both types—involving either alternating participation in each, or mating-household situations which reflected various combinations of features of the two forms.

Project data do not furnish direct evidence on the proportion of female-based to extended-duration husband-wife households in Midcity. However, limited surveys revealed several areas where 40% of the households were female based, and one area where as many as 80% of all households were of this type. Assuming that the two types of household were at least equally prevalent in some areas, one might expect to find that sentiments supportive of both types would also be equally prevalent. This was not so. On the level of explicit sentiment—and in the dreams, fantasies, wishes, and hopes reported by the girls—sentiments favorable to and consonant with the female-based form were infrequent and fragmentarily developed.

288 On Boston Housing Authority statistics.
Why were sentiments supportive of the extended-duration husband-wife household so much more prevalent than the empirical prevalence of this form? One reason relates to culturally available images of the “ideal” household. The mass media of the United States, through movies, magazine articles, television plays, and radio serials, project a constant and consistent picture of “conventional” home and family life. The creators of this image are largely of middle class origin or affiliation, and the picture itself generally revolves around idealized middle class family practices involving mom, dad, buddy, and sis, living in a well-tended suburban row house and involved in characteristic middle class concerns such as family solidarity, education, community betterment, and self-improvement. Concerns familiar to Midcity residents—maintenance of a female-based household, coping with local police and politicians, dealing with welfare workers and truant officers, and handling drunken mates—seldom enter this picture.

Midcity females thus had at their command a commercially manufactured image of “correct” behavior against which they could measure their own way of life and find it lacking. No analogous image of conventional practice in the urban slum was readily available as a basis of comparison. When the conditions of slum life are portrayed in national media, they are presented, for the most part, as morally inferior or as regrettable deviations from “correct” forms.

A second reason concerns the relationship of publicly expressed sentiments—especially those expressed in the presence of middle class people—to deeper more personal feelings and to actual practice. Residents of Midcity early acquired knowledge of customary middle class practices and of the sentiments supporting them. This knowledge was utilized throughout life as one device for adapting to a social milieu where the possibility of obtaining important economic and other resources depended on one’s capacity to present the “right” set of pictures to agents of the middle class community. In this process, one frequently expressed sentiments supportive of middle class practice and at the same time maintained quite divergent forms of behavior.
For Midcity females, discrepancy between expressed sentiment and actual practice was particularly marked in the areas of sexual and mating behavior—areas where middle class women were known to maintain strong views. This discrepancy was well documented by quantitative findings relating to “disapproved” behavior of Project girls in regard to sex and mating. As shown in Table 2.8, the two girls' groups stood at extreme positions in regard to discrepancies between sexual notions and sexual sentiments; in addition, the all-group act-sentiment discrepancy in the area of sexual behavior was among the highest of all forms of behavior. In mating behavior (Table 4.8), the most extreme manifestation of discrepancy between act and sentiment was shown by the white female “Molls.”

It would be misleading to regard the discrepancy between what Midcity women claimed to favor and what they actually did primarily as deliberate deception or fraud. These forms of misrepresentation reflected attempts to accommodate to certain basic conditions of female life in Midcity. For example, one skill which was quite useful in maintaining the economic viability of a female-based household was the ability to present to welfare workers, public health nurses, settlement house personnel, and others, a set of sentiments which accorded with “official” forms. A woman was adjudged to have proper attitudes and to merit public assistance in maintaining her household to the extent to which she was able convincingly to espouse these forms. In addition, many Midcity females were sensitive to the moral judgments of higher status women with whom they had contact—employers, welfare and settlement house workers, medical personnel, etc.—and misrepresented their actual practices in an attempt to avoid moral censure.

The discrepancy between image and actuality was particularly evident for Project girls and was related to certain characteristics of female adolescence. In common with girls in other sectors of society, Midcity adolescents constructed fantasy images of marriage and family life which included highly idealized concepts of devoted and constant husbands who would nurture them tenderly and shield
them from toil and discomfort. Fantasy content was derived from images of middle class marriage and family life presented in movies, television, and magazines. Midcity girls, however, in contrast to middle class girls, were constantly in contact with women—including their own mothers—whose actual life pattern contrasted sharply with these idealized images.

Readily apparent discrepancies between the ideal and the actual served for Project girls as a vehicle for criticizing the behavior of adult women—a practice prevalent among adolescent girls in and out of Midcity. A fifteen year old member of the Molls was particularly critical of young mothers in her neighborhood whom she claimed neglected their children, spent all their time visiting one another, and kept on the prowl for new boyfriends. By the time she was eighteen, however, she herself was engaged in behaviors identical to those she had criticized so strongly at the age of fifteen.

Beneath the mistiness of adolescent fantasy there was, for some girls, an almost fatalistic conviction that the ideal could never be realized. Another member of the Molls reported a fantasy about her current boyfriend wherein they had married and she had become pregnant. When her husband learned of this he became very tender, and assured her she would have to do no work and had only to rest and be cared for. Then, also in fantasy, her baby died and her husband left her. Even the freedom of adolescent imagination could not erase the girl’s sense of the inevitability of separation and tragedy.

Given, then, a prevalent discrepancy between image and actuality, one might have expected Midcity females to be chronically dissatisfied or discontented. That some measure of discontent existed was undeniable; however, the actual intensity of this discontent, and its impact on overt behavior has been commonly exaggerated. Much of the evidence for extensive discontent reported by some observers derives from a pattern of behavior which might be called “ritualized griping.”

Every social role generates dissatisfactions—even such roles as corporation executive, college professor, and suburban housewife. Every social role also provides
for conventional methods of “letting off steam” or complaining in regard to role-generated dissatisfactions. Such “safety valve” complaint patterns, especially when expressed in the presence of those occupying similar roles, generally involve one or more scapegoats toward whom some measure of blaze for role-generated discontent is directed. The executive gripes about “labor,” the professor castigates administrators, the housewife complains about the unremitting nurturance demands of her young children.

The role of lower class woman is no exception. In fact, the ritualized griping pattern of the lower class woman represents a classic form of this phenomenon in our culture. Countless popular songs and personal accounts of the “True Confession” type present the components of this complaint pattern in vivid detail. The primary object of hostility is “My Man” or just “Men,” who are pictured as deceitful, cruel, inconstant, irresponsible, philandering, and neglectful. Other common objects of complaint are living conditions (“this lousy dump”), the “rotten neighborhood” which is no place to bring up kids, and chronic shortage of money. The very prevalence and constancy of these complaints indicates that they reflect a set of real and persisting conditions. However, a major purpose of the complaint pattern among lower class woman—as among other groups—is to facilitate adaptation to situations which engender displeasure but which are integral components of life conditions to which the complainer may be strongly committed. The subcultures of graduate students and enlisted men, among many others, incorporate numerous examples of this process. Among lower class women, the acceptability of griping to other women about men may be extremely helpful in sustaining man-woman relationships. Many of the songs of ritualized complaint, after recounting injustices suffered and wrongs sustained, end by saying, “I know it’s crazy, but he’s still my man and I love him in spite of everything.”

A question of considerable importance is whether the patterned complaints of lower class females indicate a degree of inner discontent significantly greater than that indicated by the complaint pattern of other roles. The vividness and detailed
nature of the lower class female pattern make it most convincing to those with limited familiarity with the life conditions it reflects. Can it be said, however, that the actual discontent of most lower class women is significantly greater than, say, that of the middle class housewife, with her frequent complaints shout the unceasing demands of housework, the limited amount of time her husband allots to her and to “the family,” the conflicting demands of the contemporary female role, the pressing obligations of “community service,” her inability to keep her temper in dealing with her children, and so on? This must remain an open question. It is important, however, to exercise considerable caution in accepting the ritualized griping of lower class women as an accurate measure of true inner “discontent.”

Sentiments expressed by Midcity women, as already mentioned, accorded primarily with the conditions of the extended-duration type of household; however, some degree of support for the female-based type was also manifested. This generally appeared as approval of specific feature of the extended-duration system rather than support for the system as a whole. Women indicated support for the female-based system when, for example, they emphasized the unreliability of males as parents and household members, when they claimed to prefer non-marital alliances with males, when they expressed determination to shelter male children from the influence of their father and men like him, and when they expressed approval of childbearing outside of marriage. Such sentiments were more common among adult women who had experienced the conditions of both types of household than among adolescents with their still-untreated vision of the ideal husband-wife form. As in other instances, one might question whether such sentiments in fact represented genuine support of the female-based system; in this instance, the expression of these sentiments in the face of widespread “official” support for a different system would appear to constitute a more accurate indication of “true” inner feelings.

Adult concepts of men and marriage were reflected in the reaction of the mother of one of the Molls to the worker’s announcement of her own impending
marriage. Expecting the usual congratulations and expressions of delight customarily attending such an announcement in middle class circles, the worker was rather taken aback when the girl’s mother assumed an attitude of condolence. “Well,” she said dubiously, “maybe you’ve gotten yourself a good man, but I doubt it. I don’t think there are any. I guess it’s just somethin’ you gotta go through.” Another Midcity woman, also white, whose living room well was adorned with pictures of three prior mates, each with his offspring, said to the worker who suggested she marry her current mate, “Dearie, I’ve had more experience with men than you, and I’ve learned something. Before you marry ‘em, they pay a lot of attention to you and stay around. As soon as you’re married they change. They’re always out foolin’ around somewhere. So I’ve learned that if you want ‘em to stay around, don’t marry ‘em.” Another woman in the Moll neighborhood, living at the time without a man, was talking about her troubles to one of the Molls. Then she added, “But it’s nothin’ like if I was married. Then you really have troubles, fightin’ with your husband all the time, and all.”

Exposed to adult sentiments such as these, it was not surprising that adolescent girls, although less frequently than the older women, also expressed sentiments congruent with the female-based system. A member of the Negro Queens, for example, reflected the outlook of the multi-mated white woman who advised the worker on the ways of men. The girl, who had become pregnant by a local man, said to the Queen worker, “He’s so nice to me. He sent me a big heart of candy on Valentine’s Day, and he’s going to pay all the expenses for the baby. He wants me to marry him, but I’m afraid if I did he might change…”

**Plural Mating and Collective Motherhood**

The bearing and rearing of children in Midcity, then, could be effected through the medium of two alternative arrangements—the female-based and the extended-duration-monogamous types of household. The effective functioning of this system necessitated a set of supportive values which accorded with its operating
requirements. Central to this system was the relationship of mating and motherhood. These two activities are dominant concerns for all American women. For most middle class women, however, the two are perceived as intimately associated and occupying given sequential positions in the life cycle; one fist finds a mate, then legitimizes the relationship by legal-religious sanctions, then bears and rears children within the context of this relationship. The concerns “getting a man” and “being a good wife” are, in general, felt to be equal in importance to “having children” and “being a good mother.”

For women in the Project community, the two concerns of “mating” and “motherhood,” while seen, of course, as related, were accorded a considerably greater degree of independence; mating was one set of activities, with a rationale and patterning of its own: motherhood another set, with its particular arrangements and preoccupations; the two could be engaged in quite independently, and with different males involved in each sphere. As has been mentioned, the concept of the organically associated mating-motherhood system embodied in the middle class ideal was, of course, familiar, and on one level represented a desirable eventuality; on another level, however, the separability of mating and mothering was recognized and accommodated to. Furthermore, these two concerns were granted differing degrees of importance. Most women wanted to have children and also to have a man who would act as father to the children; however, in those frequent instances where such a conjunction could not be arranged, or, having been arranged, became untenable, it was motherhood, without any question, which commanded first priority.

The importance of motherhood and the intensity of concern over babies were outstanding features of female life in Midcity. It could be said that the fundamental objective of the Midcity mating and childrearing system was the achievement and maintenance of responsible collective motherhood. The fact that the problem of maintaining long-term mating relationships was granted lesser importance could be seen as a direct consequence of the paramount value accorded to motherhood. If
having a “steady” man and having a baby could be achieved concomitantly, good; however, the persisting and predictable difficulty of assuring the former could not be allowed to forestall the possibility of the latter. Impregnation was easy to come by, a “steady” man difficult; forms of childrearing and related bodies of sentiment had to be geared to this reality.

Given the fact that “motherhood” was the single most important concern of Midcity females, it would follow that the role of “Mother” was the highest prestige role in the female subcultural world. The desire to assume this role was strong and frequently in evidence. A leader of the Queens, out walking with her eight year old niece, stopped to inspect the occupants of several baby carriages wheeled by her friends. As they walked on, she remarked, “Gee, I wish I had a baby. All the in-town girls are having them this spring.” Her niece responded, “I thought you had to be a woman (viz., grown up) to have babies.” “That’s right, you do,” was the answer, “and when you’re a woman it ain’t too hard to get the stork to pay you a visit.”

This incident illustrates several relevant points. The attitude of the Queen toward the “in-town” girls who were following current fashion by becoming pregnant, and who, like herself, were unmarried, was one of envy, not censure. The statement “I thought you had to be a woman to have a baby,” indicates that the eight year old child already shared the conception that maturity rather than marital status was the basic precondition of childbearing. The incident also shows how concepts associated with the female-based system were taught and learned. Rather than seeing the child’s question as an opportunity to clarify and support the concept of marriage, the Queen chose instead to direct attention to the ease of becoming impregnated. It is quite likely that a middle class aunt would have told the child, “No, dear. You have to be married to have babies.”

The experience of those Midcity girls who conceived children while unmarried illustrates the circumstances under which one became an unwed mother and some of the incentives for assuming this role. During the course of the study or within the following year, seven Project group members became pregnant. Three were
members of the fifteen year old white “Molls” (about one-third of the group), and four of the sixteen and one-half year old Negro “Queens” (about fifteen percent of the group). None of these girls was married at the time of delivery. The sequence of events in each case was similar.

In the face of some community condemnation of “cheapness,” the girl engaged in intercourse with a male who was her age or slightly older. In only one case was this male a member of the girl’s “brother” corner group. During the early stages of pregnancy there were some attempts at concealment, but once the girl’s condition was evident it became a topic of open public concern. None of the girls left the community. Extensive discussions of the circumstances and consequences of the pregnancy were conducted by the girl’s peers and neighborhood women—discussions in which the girl herself was an active participant. There was little direct censure of the fact of pregnancy itself; one peer remarked, “When a girl get pregnant the first or second time, no one says much about it. By the third time, they start to say she must be kinda stupid.”

Following disclosure of pregnancy, efforts would be made to persuade the father to marry his child’s mother. If the boy were known locally, pressures would be exerted by the girl, her female relatives, her corner group peers, and, to a lesser extent, by the boy’s peer group. These pressures were not very forceful, and the boy who rejected them risked neither exclusion from his group nor continued community censure. In one instance, a member of the Molls informed her mother that she was pregnant, and when the mother asked, “Where’s the father?” the daughter replied, “I wrote him a letter, but he didn’t answer it.” The mother then said, “Gee, I hope it’s a boy! We haven’t had a boy in the family for a long time!” No serious attempt to arrange marriage was made by either mother or daughter. In none of the seven cases did the boy agree to marry his child’s mother. In several instances, the girls’ mothers initiated paternity suits against the babies’ fathers; however, such action was not taken primarily as a means of forcing the boy into
marriage, but rather because it was easier to obtain welfare funds if it were known that there had been court action against the father.

Following these rather cursory attempts to secure a husband-father for the girl’s baby, the group of females in the girl’s interactional orbit rallied around to attend to the serious business of arranging the birth, placement, and nurturance of the expected child. This activity was undertaken with much excitement, enthusiasm, and energy. For many of the girls, the period of “pregnancy” for the mother-to-be was conceived as generally equivalent to the period of “engagement” for the wife-to-be. The prospective mother became the center of much excited female attention. Elaborate and well-attended baby showers were held; one of the Molls, with much satisfaction, told the worker, “I didn’t have to buy a single thing for the baby! Between my family and the girls I got all I needed—crib, carriage, layette, everything.”

Prior to birth, discussions were held among the involved females as to which household the baby would be placed in, and how mothering responsibility would be allocated. These decisions were made on the basis of practicality, feasibility, and convenience. In none of the seven cases was the baby given for adoption, nor was any reported consideration given to the possibility of placing the baby anywhere except within the orbit of its mother’s friends and female relatives. In one instance, it was decided that the baby would go to the home of the father’s mother since the mother’s mother’s sister was extra-maritally pregnant at the time, and it was felt that two new babies added to that household would overtax its facilities. The girl moved into the father’s household and primary mothering responsibility was assumed by the father’s mother.

This arrangement appeared to be quite satisfactory to all—including the father’s “steady” girlfriend, who did not view this situation as particularly disruptive to their relationship. The one person who evinced some dissatisfaction was the father’s sister, who was less than enthusiastic over the idea of sharing the household with a peer whose motherhood would make her the center of attention. It
is notable that in this situation, despite the actual and potential bases of friction among the various women involved, mothering duties for the baby were performed by at least five women—the mother, the two grandmothers, the boy’s sister, and his girlfriend. Each of these women devoted some period of time, as her work or school schedule permitted, to the cooperative venture of caring for the new baby.

The sequence of events attending birth and the arrangements for baby care outlined here resemble the classic pattern described for lower class Southern Negroes, urban and rural, in the early 1900’s. It was, however, unexpected to find this pattern in so “pure” a form among contemporary northern urban Negroes of considerably higher social status (the mother of the child in the situation just described completed high school and attended nursing school), as well as among the white girls. Furthermore, although this pattern has been most closely associated with Negro culture, the similarities between Midcity’s whites and Negroes in this regard were far more impressive than the differences.

Becoming pregnant while unmarried was part of a pattern which included non-marital intercourse, bearing and keeping one’s baby, and raising children within the context of the multiple-mother, female-based childrearing system. Unwed motherhood was an integral component of this system, and its prevalence undergirded the vitality of the system itself. But unwed motherhood, while not in itself illegal, violated moral standards which were well known to the girls and to the Midcity community as a whole. Why, then, was this practice so prevalent, and why was it so effectively accommodated by the subcultural system of Midcity? Surely these girls and their mothers were not deliberately motivated to violate well-known standards. Nor were the girls “abnormal” in the sense that they lacked the capacity to control their impulses in the face of known prescriptions. The prevalence of unwed motherhood, as well as its entrenched nature, provides an opportunity to examine the part played by certain cultural influences in inducing and sustaining

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References to H. Powdermaker, Davis and Dollard, Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong.
this practice.\textsuperscript{290} The genesis of unwed motherhood, as in other forms of violative behavior, can be seen as the product of a complex and dynamic interaction between inhibitory and supportive forces.

A major inhibitory influence in all communities where married motherhood represents a culturally supported standard is the practice of stigmatizing females who became pregnant while unmarried. In middle class communities the process of stigmatization, while probably not as extensively developed as in the past, still constitutes a relatively effective deterrent to that order of sexual involvement which has a good probability of eventuating in unwed motherhood. Stigmatization operates in two related levels: through socialization the girl learns to fear the stigma of “illegitimate pregnancy,”\textsuperscript{291} and acquires an “internalized” desire to avoid the associated feelings of guilt, shame, and humiliation. On the level of practice, stigmatization of a middle class girl who in fact does become pregnant outside of marriage may take several forms, including hostile gossip, imputations of moral culpability, or actual exclusion from certain social groups—including, in some instances, kinship groups.

Another inhibitory influence lies in the concept of “reputation”—one of whose implications is that a girl whose pre-marital sexual behavior causes her to be categorized as “bad” will suffer reduced opportunities of getting a “good” husband. In most instances, desire to avoid the real or alleged consequences of stigmatization and of acquiring a “bad reputation” serves fairly effectively to counteract those pressures which might induce the unmarried middle class girl to engage in pregnancy-producing activities.

Unmarried motherhood was also stigmatized in Midsity, and the conception of a “bad reputation” was present as well. However, the nature, weightings, and operation of these inhibitory influences differed significantly from the corresponding

\textsuperscript{291} The term “illegitimate” used in this connection is inaccurate since there is no specific law against being pregnant while unmarried.
middle class forms. The concept of “reputation” will be discussed in the following section. Stigmatization in Midcity differed from the middle class form in a number of respects.

First, the intensity of stigma was considerably less. As already mentioned, there was a tendency to excuse a girl’s first few pregnancies on a sort of “girls-will-be-girls” basis. The lesser weight of stigma was also evidenced by the patterning of secrecy in regard to unwed motherhood. The stringency of secrecy and urgency of concealment which characterizes non-marital pregnancy in middle class communities was virtually absent in Midcity. The fact of unwed motherhood was widely and openly discussed both in and out of the presence of the girl. Nor did unwed motherhood constitute an adequate basis for exclusion from most social groups. In fact, as shown, the status of unwed motherhood could put a girl in a favored position among her group mates and female relatives.

A second difference concerns the forms of behavior which were subject to stigmatization in Midcity. Although the label “cheap” was applied to certain sexual practices, other practices which are stigmatized in middle class communities were not so labeled. Examples of these will be cited in the next section. A third difference between Midcity and middle class communities involves the phenomenon already described whereby certain practices which were condemned on an “official” level were in fact supported on an “unofficial” level or exemplified through prevalent practice, or both. This phenomenon, of course, is present in all communities, but the difference of primary relevance here involves the extent to which, in Midcity, the “officially” condemned was “unofficially” supported.

It is thus evident that the stigmatization process had less inhibitory force in Midcity than in most middle class communities. But the relatively weaker press of stigmatization could not, in itself, account for the substantially greater prevalence of unwed motherhood or for its culturally patterned nature. To understand these features it is necessary to search out the positive incentives which
undergirded this practice. The following sections will cite five kinds of incentive to bear children irrespective of one's marital status.

Bearing a child, for the young mother, could represent an attempt to secure attention, to actualize the role of adult female, to strengthen affiliation with one's mother, to achieve greater closeness to a man, and to achieve greater community acceptance. For the adolescent girl, motherhood was one highly effective way of securing attention and becoming the object of affectionate solicitude. It was also, as will be discussed, a way of restoring important female relational bonds which may have weakened by resentment-provoking mating behavior. Attention was primarily sought from and granted by females—one's mother, other female kin, and female peers. Project girls were well aware of the attention-securing power of motherhood, and could be quite explicit about using pregnancy as a means to this end. The leader of the Molls frequently expressed envy of her older sister who had become non-maritally pregnant at the age of sixteen, claiming that by so doing she had obtained for herself the lion's share of their mother’s affection. Throughout the course of the Project the younger girl attempted quite directly to obtain maternal affection by the same means; although she did not succeed in bearing a child, several miscarriages gave evidence of continued effort. The effectiveness of pregnancy in securing the attention of one’s peers was attested by the baby showers given for the pregnant girl by her peer group as well as the many peer-conducted discussions of her forthcoming motherhood.

Female social workers furnished for the potential mother an additional source of attentive concern, and the presence or availability of such workers in the local neighborhood may have strengthened incentives to become pregnant. The “unmarried mother” is a major focus of contemporary social work. Female workers in particular manifest this concern—both as an obligation of their professional role and as a “natural” concomitant of their status as adult females. Local social workers were thus a particularly effective source of attention and nurturance for the unwed mother—because they numbered among the group of females in the girls’ relational
orbit who were expected to focus attention on the new mother, and because of their professional obligation to devote special attention to such girls.

In addition, the social worker had access to important sources of aid and support for the expectant mother—including financial aid—so that an affiliation with a worker could prove a most valuable resource for the girl embarking on a career of childbearing. Further, since social work education trained the female worker to mute her personal moral reactions to non-marital pregnancy, the potentially deterrent power of stigmatization by a middle class woman was only indirectly brought into play. The Queen worker, in particular, assumed the role of social-work mother for a sizeable group of pregnant girls both in and out of the Queens. Local girls who were not members of the Queens, in fact, utilized the worker more directly as a source of nurturance and attention than those girls who wore more intimately involved in a female network.

A second incentive for unmarried motherhood was the desire to be grown up. The potency of this motive in the case of the boys has already been discussed; for example, the desire to be seen as a “man”—an adult male—was a major reason for assuming the pattern of entrenched drinking. The press to achieve adult status was also compelling for the girls. While for the boys no single practice or set of practices could fully validate the status of “adult male,” in the case of the girls, “adult women” and “mother” could be seen as virtually coterminous. Becoming a mother was the single most effective way of actualizing the status of adulthood and the role of a female. Since the adolescents of Midcity assumed the status of “adulthood” at an earlier age than their middle class peers, for girls, the press to achieve this status through motherhood was commensurately greater.

A third order of incentive involved the relation between the girl and her mother. Aspects of this relationship which supported the assumption of unwed motherhood were complex and often not readily discernible. The bond between mother and daughter, important in all cultural systems, was particularly important
in Midcity where the successful functioning of the childrearing system depended heavily on the maintenance of close mutual ties among females.

During childhood the relationship between mothers and daughters was generally quite warm and cooperative, with daughters starting at an early age to help their mothers in many childrearing and home-caring duties. At the onset of adolescence, however, the relationship between mother and daughter tended to become increasingly strained. Tension between the two was manifested in many ways—ranging from chronic bickering to violent arguments. Daughters felt that their mothers were unreasonable and arbitrary; mothers saw their daughters as rebellious and intent on causing “trouble.” A major element in this increased tension was the entry of the girl into the mating arena.

As mentioned elsewhere, the sense of generational distinctness was less well developed in Midcity than in middle class communities; mothers began both earlier and more acutely to see their daughters as direct competitors rather than objects of nurturance. As their young daughters became swept up in the exciting world of boys, dating, and sexual intimacy, the mothers became increasingly envious. Such envy was seldom forwarded as an explicit basis for maternal dissatisfaction; rather, mothers complained about the “type” of boy their daughters’ associated with, the exclusivity of their preoccupation with “boys,” and the girls’ neglect of household obligations.

Since the mothers’ envy was seldom made explicit, the girls were perplexed and upset by what appeared to them as an unjustified degree of bitterness inexplicably arising in a formerly affectionate relationship. The girls were aware of the fact that shared motherhood solidified bonds between females; having a baby was a way of reversing the trend toward increasing estrangement and re-solidifying the bond between mother and daughter. Joining one’s mother in the role of mother was not explicitly recognized as a reason for becoming pregnant, but, as in the case of other incentives, an awareness on a deeper level of the uniting power of shared motherhood served to support the girls’ assumption of the “mother” role.
Mothers served in another important way to spur motherhood on the part of their daughters. In the Western cultural tradition it is most often the mother who assumes major responsibility for inculcating attitudes which are designed to forestall premature impregnation. Mothers caution daughters to be careful in contacts with men and enjoin them to guard their virginity and their “reputation.” Midcity mothers also played this role, warning their daughters against irresponsible sexual involvement and telling them that one had to remain a “nice” girl to get a “good” man. But at the same time as they were explicitly urging their daughters to maintain a “good reputation,” mothers were frequently communicating on an implicit level quite a conflicting message which said, in effect, “bring a new baby into our household.”

In a cultural system where the role of mother was so highly valued by females, it is not surprising that the desire to act as mother remained strong throughout a woman’s life. As women grew older, it became more difficult to operate facilely in the turbulent world of mating and men, but the desire to mother remained strong. Infant babies were especially prized and were regarded with great delight, particularly as older children became “problems” which were difficult to cope with. But while the possession of a new infant was highly gratifying, the process of obtaining one’s own—involveing men, pregnancy, delivery—became increasingly arduous, and finally, after the menopause, impossible. Under these circumstances, an adolescent daughter—young, vigorous, fit for childbearing, surrounded by men and eagerly participating in sexual and mating activities—provided the ideal vehicle for conceiving and bringing a new baby into the household.

The mother-grandmother knew that there was a high probability that she would become the de facto mother of the new child; she knew that after the initial excitement and gratification of becoming a mother, her daughter, still young and swept up in the excitement of the world of mating, would become increasingly reluctant to perform the tedious and demanding tasks involved in the care of an
infant, and would more and more leave the basic responsibilities of motherhood to her. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that many mothers made only perfunctory efforts to see the new grandchild placed in a separate husband-wife household; this would remove the treasured new infant from her orbit of care.

The pattern of having the new baby placed in the household of the grandmother, who then shared basic mothering functions with the actual mother, meant that for many children only a vague distinction was made between “mother” and “grandmother,” and the woman one called “mama” might well be one’s grandmother, or even great grandmother. This blurring of generational distinctions was sometimes effected quite deliberately. A member of the Kings said of his new sister (or niece), “Ma and sis both went away, and when they came back, I had a new sister. But no one said whose it was.”

A fourth incentive for motherhood involved the attempt to solidify relational bonds with one’s lover. The girl who estimated that there was a fifty percent chance that her baby’s father would not marry her could also focus on the fifty percent chance that he would. In a situation where girls controlled few really persuasive devices to bring about an agreement of marriage, it was always possible to hope that the knowledge by one’s mating partner that he was your baby’s father would serve as the critical factor which would tip the scale in favor of such an agreement. Even if this pressure did not succeed, the chance was often seen as worth taking; a member of the Queens said of her baby’s father, “I never really expected him to marry me. But at least I have his baby. This way I feel that there will always be a part of him that really is mine.”

A fifth kind of incentive related to the concept of “reputation,” discussed in the next section. The girl who risked condemnation as “cheap” while engaging in those activities which led to pregnancy knew that malicious gossip and aspersions on her “reputation” would be muted or fade once her baby was born. When she moved from the role of “bum” to “mother,” the female community would rally around with support, attention, and nurturance. The new mother would be
attended, worried over, babied. A girl who felt her acceptance by the community endangered by a worsening “reputation” as “cheap” could semi-deliberately court pregnancy, knowing that the advent of a child would reverse the process by which she was being excluded, and would produce active re-immersion in group life.

It will be noted that most of the incentives just cited also apply in the case of middle class girls. Becoming a mother, for middle class as well as lower class girls, may serve to secure attention, to actualize the role of adult female, to strengthen bonds with one’s mother, to please one’s mother, and to strengthen ties with one’s mate. Why, then, is unmarried motherhood so much more common in communities like Midcity? A principle applicable to various forms of violative behavior as well as unwed motherhood can be articulated here. Violative behavior occurs as customary practice when culturally derived incentives to engage in that form of behavior outweigh the force of culturally derived inhibitants.

The amplification of this principle and its application to a range of violative practices will be undertaken in subsequent sections. In the present instance, the occurrence of unwed motherhood can be viewed as the product of a complex interplay between incentives and inhibitants. Some, but by no means all, of the inhibitory pressures were the stigmatization of unmarried motherhood and the concept of “bad reputation;” some, but by no means all, of the incentives were the gaining of attention, achievement of adult status, strengthening mother-daughter bonds or ties between lovers. All of these influences—inhibitory and incentive—were culturally defined and culturally supported.

All individuals exist in a cultural environment of competing choice alternatives. Midcity girls who became unwed mothers were those for whom the strength of cultural incentives overbalanced the strength of inhibitory influences. It was not that unmarried motherhood is stigmatized in middle class communities and un-stigmatized in Midcity, or even that stigmatization is stronger in middle class communities and weaker in Midcity. What is critical here is that in the complex balance between inhibitory and incentive forces in the two types of community, the
overall cultural balance in Midcity was more strongly weighted in favor of the violative form of behavior. This means that there was a greater likelihood that more people would become involved in such behavior as customary practice. An additional factor in these sets of weightings is the fact, already cited, that the difficulty of obtaining a married mate and the ease of obtaining an unmarried mate was considerably greater in Midcity than in middle class communities; this aspect of the cultural milieu added further weight to that constellation of forces which could tip the balance in the direction of unmarried motherhood. Unmarried motherhood, then, can be viewed as the product of a complex balance of cultural influences rather than as a simple consequence of any single influence, or as an uncomplicated sort of moral laxity, or inability to control impulsive behavior.

**Sexual Intercourse and the Concept of “Reputation”**

There is no known cultural system which does not specify with considerable precision the circumstances under which sexual intercourse should or should not occur. The Midcity situation was no exception. It is also true that in all societies sexual intercourse does occur under circumstances which do not accord with “official” cultural definitions. Here, too, Midcity conformed to principle. It is particularly important in a society like the United States in which different social subgroups follow different patterns of practice to distinguish at least three levels in regard to sexual behavior: “official” norms—standards of acceptability which are incorporated in legal statutes; “operative” norms—definitions of acceptability maintained on an explicit level by a specified subgroup; and actual practice—what people actually do.

It has already been shown that the “operative” norms of Midcity in many cases did not correspond to “official” norms; for example, intercourse among unmarried adolescents was in direct violation of “official” norms but did not seriously violate “operative” norms. It is also important to determine how patterns of practice related to the “operative” norms of Midcity. What proportion of Project...
girls actually engaged in sexual intercourse, and how did such involvement relate to “operative” standards of acceptability? For boys, as will be shown, engagement in heterosexual intercourse could serve as a basis of prestige, so there was little reticence in admitting to such activity—although the actual identity of sexual partners was not usually specified. Among the girls, however, the actual nature and extent of one’s sexual involvement was rarely made explicit. In the presence of other females the girls neither affirmed nor denied such activity; they simply failed to include it as an appropriate topic of discussion—if the topic was broached, it was referred to obliquely and by indirection.

There were several reasons for the dearth of overt discussion of sexual intimacy. Among one’s peers there were good reasons for maintaining an aura of ambiguity; if a girl claimed to be engaging in intercourse with men, she risked being considered “cheap” or being accused of boasting; if she denied intercourse, she risked stigma as immature, prudish, or inexperienced. It was safest simply to avoid mention of the topic. In the presence of middle class adults a major barrier to open discussion was the existence of two sets of terms to refer to sexual matters—the “polite” or middle class set, which the girls could not manage, and the “traditional” four-letter or lower class set, which was quite familiar but which the girls were more reluctant to use in the presence of a middle class adult.

With their male peers, in contrast, discussion of sexual matters was quite free and easy—primarily because it could be conducted within a framework of humor. There was a good deal of public teasing about sexual availability, experience, and even specific techniques. In such exchanges references were direct and revealed considerable knowledge of the mechanics of intercourse. Girls who were teased by boys about being sexually experienced or available generally responded in kind. One girl who had been roughhoused and tumbled about by a group of younger boys complained to them that if she went home in disarray her mother would think she had been engaging in sexual intercourse; she was told by the boys not to worry since her mother already knew that she did. Allegations of
this type were generally accepted by the girls in good humor, and with little
evidence of resentment.

Largely because of the girls' reluctance to share the actual details of their
sexual experience with one another or with workers, specific information as to the
nature of their sexual involvement was difficult to obtain. Even a worker who knew
a particular girl quite intimately could never be quite sure whether or not she was
engaging in intercourse with her current boyfriend or other males. However, despite
the impossibility of complete certainty in all cases, there were two orders of
evidence of such involvement. One was incontrovertible; a girl who became
pregnant could be supposed with a high degree of certainty to have engaged with a
male in such a way as to produce the observed result. The other kind of evidence
was obtained through the workers' intimate long-term involvement in the
neighborhood situation. On the basis of observation, reports by peers, and informed
inference it was possible to obtain quite reliable knowledge as to who “did” and who
“didn’t,” and to discriminate unfounded rumor from fact.

Of fifty Project girls, seven became pregnant during the study period. This
means that an absolute minimum of fifteen percent of the girls had engaged in
intercourse. As already stated, the percentage of involvement was higher among the
white girls. There was reliable evidence that about twelve other girls had had
sexual relations with one or more men. Thus, about forty percent of the girls in
Project groups, on a low estimate, had had an intimate heterosexual experience. As
to age at initial intercourse, there was evidence of such involvement, usually
pregnancy, for several girls of thirteen or fourteen. However, girls who became
pregnant at earlier ages tended to be outside the orbit of established corner groups.

Little data on comparable groups of girls is available; with some exceptions,
the majority of studies on incidence of extra-marital intercourse are based on self-
reported information furnished by college level women—a group representing a
small minority of the total female population. Kinsey reported that 2% of 3,300
white college level girls admitted to intercourse by age fifteen, and an additional
18% by age twenty. The highest percentage of self-reported involvement in sexual intercourse by unmarried college level women aged sixteen to twenty-three, as reported by Ehrmann, was 25%, a figure obtained by several investigators. If forty percent is a low estimate of the actual proportion of fifty unmarried corner girls who engaged in intercourse before age eighteen, it would appear, as would be expected, that the incidence of extra-marital intercourse among these corner girls was higher than among college level girls, unless the college girls were consistently under-reporting true incidence.

It should be noted, however, that the “forty percent” figure is close to that obtained by Kinsey for girls of similar status; 38% of his white grade-school-level girls aged sixteen to twenty reported pre-marital coitus, and 32% of his high-school-level girls. It would thus appear that the extent of actual involvement in sexual intercourse among Midcity corner girls was quite similar to that reported by lower status adolescents in general, despite conceptions of “gang” girls as highly permissive and promiscuous.

It is also of interest to note that Project findings contrast with trends reported by Kinsey and his successors in regard both to the relative incidence of non-marital coitus and non-marital pregnancy among white and Negro females. Kinsey’s “Female Behavior” report indicates that among single females well over twice as many lower status Negro girls as white girls had engaged in intercourse by age twenty, and that over five times as many had been pregnant. Differences of this kind did not appear among Project girls’ groups. In regard to non-marital intercourse, there was evidence of involvement for four out of ten white girls and sixteen out of forty Negro girls—an equal proportion. In regard to non-marital pregnancy, thirty percent of the white girls were so involved compared to twelve percent of the Negro girls. The fact that the Negro girls were about two years older

293 Reference to Ehrmann, Premarital Dating Behavior, p. 42.
295 Kinsey, ibid., p. Gebhard, Pregnancy, Birth, and Abortion, p. 156. (Data weak on lower status groups).
than the whites and thus had had more time to become pregnant makes this latter
defigure even more impressive. Although these figures may not be fully accurate for
several reasons, including the secrecy surrounding reporting of sexual activity, they
would indicate roughly that there was little difference between white and Negro
Project girls in their experience of non-marital intercourse, and that the white girls
were more apt to become pregnant outside of marriage at an earlier age. These
figures, however, do not provide a basis for concluding that white Catholic girls in
Midcity engaged in non-marital intercourse to just about the same degree as Negro
Protestant girls of the same social level. It should be recalled that the Negro girls
were of higher social status than the white girls, and it would thus appear that the
greater propensity towards sexual “freedom” commonly attributed to Negro females
was counterbalanced, in this instance, by the fact that the white girls were lower in
social status. One factor limiting the sexual involvement of the Negro girls was the
highly organized nature of their indigenous sanctioning system, to be described
shortly.

Under most circumstances the sexual and mating activities of Project girls
were conducted in an arena which allowed ample opportunity for illicit behavior.
There was no system of formal chaperonage and associations with male peers most
frequently took place outside the orbit of parental or other adult supervision. Sexual
intimacy with female peers served as an important basis of prestige for boys with
whom the girls were in constant contact. Yet, in the face of the fact that the mating
environment of Project girls afforded ample opportunity for involvement in violative
forms of sexual behavior and provided few formal agencies of restriction, the extent
of their involvement in non-marital intercourse was, as just shown, quite similar to
that of many non-corner girls of similar or even higher social status.

The previous discussion of unwed motherhood focused primarily on factors
supporting such involvement; the present discussion will focus primarily on factors
which inhibited unacceptable sexual activity; it is important to remember, however,
that both supportive and inhibitive influences were related components of the same
subcultural system. A major device for effecting limitation was the concept of “reputation.”

The term “reputation” represented a concept of central importance in both male and female subcultural systems, but signified something quite different in each. Among the boys the term—generally shortened to “rep”—referred to “toughness” or masculine prowess in combat or combat-like activities: among the girls, “reputation” referred essentially to the nature and extent of one’s involvement in sexual or sex-related activities. “Good” reputation denoted condoned sexual behavior; “bad” reputation, disapproved behavior. When used without an evaluation adjective (“She has some reputation.”) the term connoted disapproved rather than approved behavior.

The fact that a girl’s overall “reputation” as a person was measured primarily by one particular kind of behavior—sexual activity—shows that such behavior was central to cultural conceptions of the female role. The fact that the term without modification implied sexual looseness showed both that violative sexual behavior by females was not unexpected, and that some measure of stigma was associated with such activity.

Project girls could be grouped into three general categories in regard to “reputation”: “good” girls, “bad” girls, and “worst” girls. Each of the girls’ groups—the Molls, the Queens and the groups associated with the Outlaws and Bandits—included one “worst” girl, so recognized by both boys and girls. These distinctions were not sharply drawn, and the behavior of “good” and “bad” girls had much in common. The girls themselves did not explicitly distinguish these three types nor did they apply these terms directly to one another. They did, however, rate one another along a gradient of “goodness of reputation.” Most outsiders tended to overlook these intra-group distinctions and tag the group as a whole as “cheap.” In addition, neighborhood adults, especially women, including the girls’ mothers, tended to perceive the girls as far more promiscuous, unrestrained, and sexually “loose” than they actually were.
So well established was the outside expectation that membership in a corner group automatically entailed sexual violation that all kinds of imagined transgressions were ascribed to the girls. Small or relatively innocent incidents would be blown up into shocking, full-scale sex orgies by a rapidly snowballing process of neighborhood gossip. The girls were both amused by the distorted quality of these rumors and disturbed by the adult propensity to exaggerate their “badness.”

Priests were seen as particularly prone to probe for illicit sexual involvement with an eye to magnifying its seriousness; one girl angrily claimed to have told a priest in confession that it was none of his business whether or not she was involved in heterosexual intimacy. The girls were also disturbed by the failure of adults to recognize the sensitive distinctions between greater and lesser “badness” maintained within the group; a girl striving to maintain a “good” reputation would be upset to find herself included in a blanket categorization of “cheap” applied to the whole group. The consistent tendency on the part of adults to exaggerate the “badness” of the girls and to elaborate on the extensiveness of their sexual involvement probably reflected, in part, implicit desires for personal involvement in such imagined activities; forms of sexual involvement the adults themselves secretly envied were attributed to the girls, magnified, and then condemned in a spirit of shock and indignation.

One important way in which the concept “reputation” operated to curb disapproved forms of sexual activity involved the assertion that a girl who acquired a “bad reputation” as the result of adolescent sexual activity would either jeopardize her chances of marriage or doom herself to an inferior type of husband. As shown in subsequent discussion, this assertion was not supported by actual developments. There appeared to be little relation between the kind of “reputation” a girl acquired and the kind of man she got. It is also noteworthy that concern over a girl’s “reputation” was far more active among females than males. This would suggest that the concept of “reputation” and its reputed consequences served largely as a
device used by mothers and other women in an attempt to curb certain forms of
sexual activity—but that the consequences of acquiring a “bad reputation” were in
fact considerably less disadvantageous than represented.

The concept of “reputation” is also current in middle class communities,
where it is similarly used as a device for controlling sexual behavior. There were,
however, differences between Midcity and middle class communities in the kinds of
behavior which went to make up a “bad reputation.” Certain practices which would
be stigmatized in middle class communities were accepted in Midcity. What were
some of these practices, and conversely, what were some practices which were seen
as definitely “bad” in Midcity? Project girls could engage quite freely in open sexual
discussion in mixed-sex situations, use the “obscene” terms for sexual actions or
organs, joke about male sex organs to one another, or openly identify themselves as
unwed mothers without incurring significant stigmatization. Several members of
the Queens were extremely fluent in types of profanity generally associated with
all-male situations, and utilized this fluency in public situations. A Queen watching
a King football game yelled from the stands, “There’s a brown-ass cat!” when one of
the Kings appeared on the field.

Distinctions between what was acceptable and what was not were often quite
subtle. A form of dancing practiced in the Project area and referred to variously as
the “Dirty Boogie,” the “Grind,” the “Fast Grind,” the “Dirty Dig,” and other names,
consisted of an elaborate stylized pantomime of the sex act, performed sometimes by
a boy and a girl, sometimes by two boys, more frequently by two girls. Bodily
postures, movements, and specific techniques of sexual intercourse were executed
vividly and in detail. A member of the Molls evinced considerable indignation upon
witnessing a particularly expressive performance of the “Dirty Boogie” at a public
dance. “I think it’s disgusting! Doin’ that right out in public.” Then she added, “Us
girls do that, too, but always when we’re by ourselves!” Thus, engaging with another
person in a stylized re-enactment of the sex act was not in itself seen as “cheap,” but
a public performance in the presence of middle class adults and others was so seen.
Similarly, knowledge that a girl was engaging in sexual intercourse with her boyfriend was not in itself a sufficient basis for categorizing her as “cheap.” What did produce such categorization were practices such as “boasting” on one’s “steady” boyfriend by having sexual relations with another, going from one sexual involvement to another in rapid succession, and, in particular, the practice of engaging sexually with a boy seen to be the “property” of a girl in the same peer group. Disapproval of practices of this kind reflected standards applied to adult mating practice. Stigmatization occurred in these instances not because non-marital intercourse was illicit, but because the solidarity of the female group was threatened when a girl moved in on the man of a peer, thus showing herself to be essentially untrustworthy.

The girls also censured forms of dress which exceeded condoned limits of bodily exposure. Standards of acceptability depended on circumstances; for example, a degree of exposure which would be condemned during ordinary afternoon activity was permissible at an evening dance. Revealing forms of dress were censured primarily because they were seen as giving the wearer an unfair advantage in the brisk and serious competition for men rather than on grounds of taste or decency. Wearing an unusually tight sweater, a very low neckline, or extremely short shorts in a situation where men were present and other girls were dressed less revealingly was seen as unfair exploitation of available resources.

The practices just cited represent only a few examples of permitted and condemned forms of sexual behavior in the areas of language, dancing, and dress, and are far from an exhaustive list. Even these few examples, however, show that while Midcity permitted sexual practices which would be unacceptable to middle class communities, there were still many forms of sexual behavior in Midcity which were condemned. How did female groups establish standards of acceptability, and how did they secure adherence to these standards?

In common with other intimate face-to-face groups, Project girls utilized systematic mechanisms to achieve these ends. Prominent among these were gossip,
sarcastic references to the behavior of offending girls in or out of their presence, and a prevalent pattern of teasing or humorous castigation. In addition, however, to these more customary methods the Queens also utilized a highly structured, quasi-ritualized device for delineating and enforcing “correct” standards of behavior. This was a practice they called “Topic Night.” Twelve or fifteen girls would seat themselves in a circle, and the behavior of each girl in turn would be subject to critical appraisal by the others. This type of informal female Kangaroo Court was scheduled to be held once a month, but during some phases was staged as often as once a week. During “Topic Night” the behavior of all members was subject to group review. Girls not only criticized practices they did not approve of but also commended those they approved. Group members were censured for not being “loyal” to their current boyfriend, for keeping too many boys on the string, for being “loud” and unladylike, for failure to reciprocate party-giving obligations, for inappropriate dress, for disorderly drinking behavior, for neglecting their health. Girls whose recent behavior had been neither commendable nor condemnable would be passed by with “She’s OK.” A girl whose behavior met with active approval would be granted recognition in terms such as “She’s my babe!”

The existence of “Topic Night”—a highly organized method of defining and enforcing standards—does not accord with conceptions of corner girl sexual behavior as “normless” or unguided by established rules. This device enabled the group to evaluate specific behaviors of every member with a high degree of precision. It allowed for sensitive distinctions between alternative forms of practice, permitted girls to speak in rebuttal if they felt unjustly censured, noted “progress” in reference to prior criticism, and rewarded meritorious behavior. The sanctions it controlled were of the most effective type—censure, disapproval, and the possibility of exclusion by one’s most intimate and meaningful reference group. The standards which the girls imposed upon themselves would, in all probability, have been considered overly rigid if applied by outside adults. The impact of this indigenous sanctioning system was reflected in the relatively low incidence of non-marital
intercourse and unwed motherhood among the Queens and by the fact, to be discussed later, that none of the girls became involved in prostitution.

The existence of Topic Night as a self-initiated system of limitation might have been utilized by the worker as a readymade vehicle for implementing her own task of inhibiting disapproved behavior. This she did not do. The girls themselves several times explicitly requested that she apply her evaluative standards to their behavior, thus adding adult authority to group-initiated sanctions. Feeling that his would put her in a difficult position, the worker refused, suggesting instead that the girls use “Topic Night” as an opportunity to air and receive help with their “problems.” This suggestion was received coolly; the girls conceived “Topic Night” as a limit-setting mechanism rather than a vehicle for achieving subjective insight. The worker had played no part in the establishment of “Topic Night;” in fact, she opposed the whole idea and did what she could to discourage it. She felt that “Topic Night” afforded the girls too unrestricted an opportunity for the venting of personal hostility—failing to recognize the extent to which such hostility actually served to define group norms and establish behavioral limits.

The fact that the Queens utilized so formally structured a device to achieve standard-setting purposes usually effected less formally in other groups probably related to the fact that their group, in common with their brother group, the Kings, included individuals of unusually diverse social backgrounds and aspirations. Although all members of the Queens originated in households clearly identifiable as “lower class” they occupied a range of status levels within that category, which was broader than that of any white group observed in Midcity. Some of the girls later went on to post-high-school training while others assumed the classic role of mother in a female-headed household. Given a group with relatively diverse status origins and a high potential for the development of an even greater status spread, the institution of “Topic Night” afforded an unusual opportunity to formulate precise and explicit standards on an ongoing basis, and to reward conformity and punish
deviation in a situation where definitions of acceptability were necessarily fluid and not readily obtainable from adults or one's family.

The operation of the concept of “reputation,” distinctions between greater and lesser “badness,” and the process of applying group sanctions are illustrated by the case of the “worst” girl of the Queens. She had been raised in a female-based household by a solicitous foster mother (called “grandmother”) who repeatedly cautioned her against becoming “cheap” like her real mother, who was still living in Midcity with her current mate. At the age of sixteen the girl began to engage in forms of sexual behavior which violated the Queens' standards of acceptability. She made advances to virtually every member of the Kings, thus stigmatizing her group-mates with boyfriends in the Kings. She dressed revealingly, and was deliberately provocative in speech and action. Since she was quite attractive and skilled in provocation, she readily found favor with the boys. Among the girls, however, she was consistently censured, both in and out of her presence.

But these actions in themselves, while clearly disapproved, would not alone have provided sufficient grounds for really severe censure. What did arouse the Queens was the girl’s involvement in a practice unequivocally regarded as “cheap.” This practice, known variously as a “gang bang,” “gang slug,” “line-up” (Outlaw area), and “train” (King area), was present but not particularly common in Midcity. It involved a type of sexual activity in which a group of males engaged successively in intercourse with a single female.

The girl made little attempt to conceal from the other girls the fact that she served as the object of collective sexual relations; in fact, she mildly flaunted this rather convincing evidence of her widespread appeal. The other Queens made it clear that such involvement lay beyond the bounds of accepted convention. A particularly severe critic was a girl who later became pregnant by one of the Kings. “We don’t mind so much her going off on ‘deals’ (intimate sexual involvements) with the boys all the time,” she said, “but these aren’t ordinary deals!”
One might suppose that a “reputation” of this kind would have contributed to lowered self-esteem on the part of the girl. Project data furnished no direct evidence of this. However, one clue to the impact of such involvement on the girl’s self-image emerged from an incident where a group of boys were arranging for a “line-up” with the girl. One member of the Kings, angry at the girl because of a recent quarrel, refused to join his companions in this enterprise. The girl was quite upset, and accused the reluctant boy of not liking her. Her response implied, “I’m good enough for all the others, why not you?” It would appear in this instance that the value of being liked and sexually desired by all the boys outweighed the censure of the girls, and that the girl responded to rejection by one in a group of plural sexual partners much as a less adventurous girl would respond to rejection by a single swain.

In light of the fact that the “bad” girl’s behavior closely approached the outer limits of group toleration, it is most significant that she was never totally rejected. As censure mounted, she was pushed further towards the periphery of the group, but was still contained within its effective operating orbit. Just as the “good” and “bad” factions of Project groups needed one another, so the “bad” girl’s continued inclusion in the group served useful functions for both girl and group. For the Queens, the present example of the “bad” girl kept before their eyes a model of what they were to avoid, furnished them an opportunity of indirect self-censure through censure of her, and enabled them to assuage doubts over their own sexual practices by the knowledge that whatever they were doing, she was doing something worse.

For the girl, the fact that she was contained within an orbit of group censure put affective limits on what inclinations she may have had to move still further beyond the bounds of acceptability. For example, movement toward professional prostitution would probably have forced her exclusion. As it was, the girl’s continued movement toward the periphery of acceptance was halted by an event which, as has been shown, had great power to mend strained bonds among women; she became pregnant.
The baby’s father was not one of the Kings; this fact, perhaps, was a source of considerable relief to a fair number of her group-mates. At any rate, the Queens rallied to her side, became involved with her in the exciting issues of childbearing and putting pressures on the father, and made her the object of much concerned attention. Shortly before the baby was born she was given an elaborate baby shower arranged and attended by the Queens—including those who had censured her most severely. Even her real mother, whom she had not seen for years, reappeared with gifts for the girl and her baby. By becoming pregnant she had moved from the low prestige role of “everybody’s girl” to the high prestige role of “mother,” and thus was re-incorporated into the orbit of female acceptance.

It is possible at this point, by way of summary, to cite a number of conditions characteristic of the sexual and mating life of Midcity corner girls. Sex and mating activity was of fundamental concern. Mating and courtship were pursued actively and were conducted almost exclusively outside the orbit of parental supervision. A major raison d’etre of the female corner group was to provide recurrent proximity to a reservoir of corner-boy mates. Girls could engage in forms of sexual behavior which are condemned in middle class communities without incurring significant stigmatization. On the other hand, such behavior was far from unrestricted but was subject to well-defined and effectively enforced rules of limitation. Many forms of behavior which did not accord with middle class standards in fact reflected the actual conditions of adult female sexual and mating life and constituted a form of preparation for effective motherhood. Corner girls were permitted a fair number of different mating relationships during adolescence, but they were expected to become quite invested in each; practices such as moving rapidly from one male to another, keeping several boys on the string, or engaging in mating activity without emotional involvement (“triflin’”) were strongly condemned.

Data on the actual experience of Project girls in their adult mating relationships or carriages were not available. However, the fact that there were differences between the mating conditions just cited and the “dating” pattern of the
middle class community provides the basis for consideration of the degree of “strain” involved in making the transition from adolescent “mating” activity to marriage. In a society where mating partnerships are not arranged by established agencies such as the family and where individuals are allowed considerable freedom in choosing a mate, location and selection of a satisfactory partner entails a fairly active search by individuals of both sexes. For females in the United States, successful mating activity involves the capacity to test out a number of potential partnerships—becoming sufficiently involved with the man so as to furnish a realistic test of potential compatibility, yet not so involved as to commit oneself to a relationship which might prove unsatisfactory.

Achievement of this delicate balance between commitment and detachability is one of the distinctive skills of the “mating” phase, a skill which may be developed to a high degree. Another delicate balance relates to the competitive conditions of the mating situation. Where females in a given group are in competition with one another for the highest status men, there is a constant temptation to employ one’s sexual assets for maximum effectiveness in the competitive struggle. At the same time, a girl who exceeds the limits defined by her peers runs the risk of exclusion by her female companions—a group she needs and will continue to need after marriage. For middle class girls this is perceived as a conflict between the demands of “popularity” with boys and “respectability” among girls.

A middle class girl can become skilled in accommodating these conflicting demands, and even come to relish the demanding but exciting game of involvement, de-involvement, and re-involvement. Once the game terminates in marriage, however, the whole set of complex skills developed in the mating phase becomes abruptly obsolete. Not only is the opportunity for practice gone, but continuation of activities and attitudes appropriate to mate-finding would be directly destructive to the requirements of extended-term monogamous marriage. While affording many opportunities in the areas of motherhood, home care, and community service, the role of middle class wife can be extremely constricting in regard to sexual and
mating activity, and overstepping the limits of condoned practice can evoke serious sanctions. Middle class girls, then, in moving from the role of “date” to “wife” may experience a type of “role transition” which can be quite difficult. Some women never fully succeed in this—especially in a culture where the nubile woman is so consistently glorified.

For many of the corner girls of Midcity, in contrast, the essential conditions of an adult mating system which involved serial monogamy and limited-term alliances were in many respects similar to the conditions of adolescent mating. The basic mating-phase skills of coquetry, allure, capacity to achieve adequate but not excessive involvement, the ability to relinquish a less satisfactory for a more satisfactory mate, and the ability to attract men without alienating women, could also be practiced during the period of motherhood.

Girls assumed the demanding role of “mother” within a network of affiliated females similar to the adolescent corner group, and frequently including the same women. For the new mother, these women provided practical information on child care, the promise of shared responsibility, and a dependable source of psychological support in the likely event that one’s mate proved inadequate in this regard. With so high a degree of similarity between the conditions of adolescent “mating” and those of adult “marriage,” the corner girls of Midcity were not subjected to the degree of psychic strain involved in the abrupt transition between the contrasting roles of middle class “date” and middle class “wife.”

A mate-finding system based on numerous pre-marital trials of successive partners probably reached its apex among the United States middle classes during the “rating and dating” phase of the 1920’s and 1930’s.\textsuperscript{296} It is quite likely that the mating practices of Midcity corner girls during this same period remained relatively unchanged, being less responsive to “jazz age” mating fads. It is also possible that the increasing trend toward earlier assumption of permanent partnerships and the stress on “going steady” at a younger age rather than “playing the field” which

\textsuperscript{296} Reference to Wilson Waller (Rating and Dating article), Margaret Mead (Male and Female).
upsets many contemporary middle class mothers may reflect a reaction against the serious difficulties of role-transition involved in the shift from “popular date” to faithful wife, and a move by contemporary middle class girls to alleviate conditions of psychic strain to which lower class girls were never subject.

**Homosexuality**

Physical intimacy among members of the same sex, a highly charged issue among the boys, received little attention from the girls. Women could manifest a considerable degree of mutual intimacy without risking stigmatization. Use of terms of endearment among females (“dearie,” “honey,” “You’re my babe.”) was quite common. Females, both adolescent and adult, could dance with one another in public without incurring stigma. Nor was there any evidence that the dancing partner who took the man’s part thereby subjected herself to accusations of masculinity. The most extreme instance of this occurred when the “dirty Boogie” type of dance was performed by two females; the girl who took the male part duplicated, in pantomime, the actions of the male in sexual intercourse, but no explicit homosexual connotation was placed on such activity.

Females of all ages could engage without censure in certain forms of behavior generally seen as “masculine” in other social milieu. This point will be expanded in the discussion of male sexual and mating behavior. During the “tomboy” phase of early adolescence, for example, many girls assumed a masculine demeanor, adopted “male” forms of dress and language, and sought personal prestige in terms of “male” criteria of “toughness,” criminal proficiency, and so on. This youthful rehearsal of the male role was related to the fact that it was necessary for adult women in female-based households to perform a range of functions generally performed by males in mother-father households, such as assuming primary responsibility for breadwinning, dealing with potentially hostile outsiders, and imparting to male children essential components of maleness.
It would follow that definitions of what constituted “queer” behavior were somewhat broader than in the middle class community. However, as in the case of heterosexuality, overstepping limits of locally defined acceptability also evoked censure. Although no Project girl was known to have engaged in overtly homosexual activity, it was clear that sanctions to forestall movement in that direction were available. Two members of the Queens who spent a long time giggling and feeling around in a phone booth were sarcastically accused by a third of being lovers.

Overt homosexuality, when actually practiced, was strongly censured. However, in contrast to the boys who used the term “faggot” as a prime epithet, accusation of female homosexuality as a pejorative device was rare. The one recorded instance of this involved adults rather than adolescents; the father of one of the Molls, in a fit of anger, accused his wife of having sexual relations with neighborhood women. Girls with experience in correctional institutions saw homosexual involvement as an inevitable consequence of institutional confinement. A member of the Molls who had made friends with a group of ex-correctional inmates claimed with some indignation that every one was a practicing homosexual, that they had learned this at the correctional institution, and expressed shock at the fact that one of these girls had her female lover’s name carved on her leg. In her eyes, homosexuality was far more reprehensible than prostitution. Of another group of girls, she remarked, “Every one of them girls is pimpin’ off someone, but at least they ain’t Lesbies (Lesbians)!”

Prostitution

The female corner group of Midcity did not serve as a source of recruits for professional prostitution. Membership in a corner group appeared to insulate girls from prostitution rather than provide them an entrée. Prostitution flourished in Midcity. Arrests for “soliciting” were frequent. Most of the girls were personally acquainted with prostitutes, or knew of prostitutes in their neighborhood. They were familiar with the operation of professional prostitution, with the inclusion of
police in the “pay-off” orbit, with the relationship of prostitute and procurer. Despite this familiarity and the easy access to professional prostitution furnished by its local ubiquity, not a single Project girl became involved in prostitution during the study period. One member of the Queens was on particularly friendly terms with a local procurer, but this closeness did not result in a business arrangement between them. Members of the Kings who had ambitions in the direction of procuring were obliged to go out of the Midcity area to recruit a “stable.”

There was no obvious barrier to involvement in prostitution. Many Project girls were attractive and provocative, and at an age when their market value was excellent. Remuneration was quite adequate since fees had kept pace with contemporary increases in general wage scales. The girls were not subject to discriminatory exclusion because of their social class or ethnic status. But in the face of ample opportunity and few evident impediments, every in to prostitution remained an opportunity the Project girls did not avail themselves of. One external reason for this was the stigmatization associated with prostitution. Although prostitution did not entail as much stigma as homosexuality, it evoked considerably more stigma than being “cheap.” The accusation of prostitution served for the girls as a pejorative similar in intensity to the accusation of “homosexuality” among the boys. During a heated argument, a fifteen year old corner girl who had been accused of stupidity by a group-mate (her “best friend”) retorted angrily, “I’d rather be that than a fat whore!” This accusation apparently constituted “fightin’ words” since the impugned girl at once struck out at her friend and a rough male-type slugging match ensued, ending only when male group-mates moved in and separated the battlers.

But the fact that prostitution was stigmatized did not in itself constitute a sufficient curb. As shown in the discussion of unwed motherhood, a practice could be commonly adopted despite some degree of stigmatization. The major inhibitory force derived from the basic cultural configuration of the corner group itself. As already shown, the female corner group served as a major vehicle for preparing girls
for collective motherhood. Here they learned to cooperate with female peers in joint enterprises in the face of friction over men. Here they re-enforced one another in the value of babies and the delights of mothering. Fundamental values of the corner group were geared to the support of present and future motherhood.

Professional prostitution also involves a highly organized cultural system; but “motherhood” is not its prime focus. Of two major roles played by females, “mother” and “lover,” the culture of prostitution is geared to support the values, emphases and behavioral models associated with the role of lover. Despite a well-established pattern of complaint (“ritualized griping”) about the universal worthlessness and depravity of men, the hard conditions of her trade, and the cruelty of her procurer, the self-esteem of the prostitute as a professional is bound up in being a skilled and competent lover. Her professional success depends on developing and maintaining those skills and practices which make her maximally appealing to the men she serves, and fundamental values of prostitution—however implicit they may be—are geared to the support of the “lover” role.

It has already been shown that the culture of the Midcity female corner group contained the practice of overtly provocative sexual behavior within specific limits. One was allowed to be as provocative as necessary to create favorable circumstances for impregnation, but not to focus on sexual provocation to the point where the requirements of female solidarity and subsequent collective mothering would be threatened.

The basic emphasis, then, of female corner-group culture created a general climate that was unsympathetic to prostitution. Both subcultural systems furnished well-organized and sustaining guides to female life patterns, but their basic focuses were in large part mutually incompatible. The classic reason given for “why I became a prostitute,” is that after being impregnated and deserted, one has “no place to go” except into a life of sin. Midcity corner girls, similarly circumstanced, did have someplace to go. They and their out-of-wedlock children were welcomed and nurtured within the collective mothering orbit of Midcity female culture.
Membership in a corner group thus served, in effect, to insulate Midcity corner girls from prostitution during a vulnerable period in their lives.

**Disapproved Forms of Sex and Mating Behavior**

Project workers regarded both sexual and mating behavior as important targets of change. Many customary sexual practices of Project group members were in clear violation of explicit middle class moral standards, and some of these practices violated legal statutes as well. Mating behavior was a particular concern of the female workers. Project staff members came to feel that one of the few really hopeful approaches to effecting long-term changes in Midcity adolescent behavior was through the girls. Workers realized that “gang” values had a deeper hold on the boys, and that the achievement and maintenance of masculine self-esteem was intimately bound up with adherence to forms prescribed by the corner group. The girls, in contrast, were less committed to the “core” practices of the male corner group, and furthermore, were highly sensitive to the negative moral evaluation placed on many of their activities by the workers and other middle class adults. The workers felt that the strong verbal support given by many girls to “approved” forms of sexual and mating behavior indicated a high degree of readiness to assume alternative practices, if these could be cited, explained, and made available to them. Female mating practices were seen as central to the maintenance of the Midcity cultural system, and it was felt that any changes induced in this area would have a significant impact on the behavior of the next generation of adolescents.\(^{297}\) Workers saw two ways in particular for girls to improve their position and prospects through altering their mating practices; first, by seeking as mates boys whose social status was higher than that of their customary corner-boy associates, and second, by adopting sexual and mating practices which were consonant with the extended-duration monogamous household rather than the female-based form.

The degree of success achieved by the workers in effecting change in sexual and mating behavior is thus of special interest because of the importance accorded these areas. The change process in these areas is also of interest because of the unexpected complexity of changes which did occur. Despite the fact that sex and mating are closely related, trends in these two areas showed marked contrasts, both in the overall patterning of change and in particular responses to given procedures and attributes of the workers.

Before presenting the specifics of the change process, however, it is necessary to cite “approved” and “disapproved” behavior maintained by each Project group during the study period. Table 1.8 lists those forms of sexual behavior which were regarded with approval or disapproval by Project workers. It will be recalled that “sexual” and “mating” behavior were distinguished from one another by designating as “sexual” behavior which entails direct physical intimacy or sensual stimulation, and as “mating” behavior that concerned with seeking out, arranging, maintaining, and terminating alliances between male and female partners. The following listing does not maintain this distinction with absolute cleanness; some behaviors designated as “sexual” may also involve aspects of partnership-arranging. However, all behaviors designated as “sexual” do reflect a primary concern with matters more closely related to physical intimacy than to the establishment of partnerships.

There was a high degree of agreement among the workers in evaluating sexual behavior; this reflects the fact that ideal concepts of right and wrong in this area are quite specific and well developed. Even though all adults are well aware that practice seldom conforms to ideal standards, belief in the rightness of the standards remains high. Since there is also a tendency for adults to expect of adolescents a higher degree of conformity to “ideal” standards than is expected of adults, standards applied to adolescents are frequently more clear-cut and less subject to qualification.

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298 Reiss, op. cit.
Table 2.8 indicates the level of disapproved sexual actions and sentiments for all groups during the full study period, and the standing of each of the seven study groups in these respects.

The all-group level of disapproved action in the area of sexual behavior (77.1%) was high, ranking sexual actions third among “high disapproved” forms. The level of disapproved sentiment, in contrast, was medium (49.7%), with sexual sentiments occupying a middle rank among other forms of behavior. The excess of disapproved sexual actions over sentiments (-27.4) was among the highest of all forms of behavior, ranking with theft and drinking in this regard. In all three of these measures—standings in disapproved actions, disapproved sentiments, and discrepancy between actions and sentiments—sexual behavior closely resembled drinking behavior, with these two forms occupying adjacent ranks in each instance.

Examination of the standings of the several groups shows that the white females fell well below the other six groups in disapproved sexual actions, while the Negro females ranked high. It would thus appear that among the girls ethnic status was importantly related to patterns of sexual activity, with the actions of Negro females violating Project evaluative standards to a considerably greater degree than was the case for the white girls. This situation prevailed despite the fact that the Queens were of higher social status than the Molls, so that in this regard the influence of ethnic status apparently outweighed that of class status. Among the male groups, however, this kind of distinction was absent; the position of the Negro group was almost identical with that of two white groups. For males, age differences appeared to be more important than ethnic differences; the two younger groups showed higher levels of disapproved action than the three older.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approved Actions</th>
<th>Disapproved Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Avoiding, reducing frequency of non-marital intercourse</td>
<td>1) Engaging in, encouraging, increasing frequency of non-marital intercourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Avoiding, attempting to avoid venereal disease, non-marital impregnation</td>
<td>2) Acquiring venereal disease; impregnating or becoming pregnant while unmarried</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Avoiding involvement in, censuring specific acts of rape, attempted rape,</td>
<td>3) Engaging in rape, attempted rape, procuring, prostitution, collective intercourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>procuring, prostitution, collective intercourse (&quot;gang bang&quot;), other &quot;obscene&quot;</td>
<td>(&quot;gang bang&quot;), voyeurism, exhibitionism, other &quot;obscene&quot; acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Avoiding association with prostitutes, pimps, homosexuals, those reported to</td>
<td>4) Associating with pimps, prostitutes, homosexuals, those reported to be particularly &quot;loose&quot; or promiscuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be particularly “loose” or promiscuous</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Using non-“obscene” terms in referring to sexual behaviour; &quot;serious&quot;</td>
<td>5) Direct involvement in homosexual intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion of sex and sexual problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Seeking “scientific” sexual information from worker or others</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sentiments Approved by Project</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Expressed censure of, stated intent to avoid non-marital intercourse</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Expressed censure of, stated intention to avoid venereal disease, non-marital</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>impregnation.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Disapproval, censure of rape, prostitution, procuring, other illegal sexual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practices</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Expressed support for sexual “respectability,” “moral” sexual practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Disapproval, censure of “promiscuity”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Disapproval, censure of obscenity, lewdness, “suggestive” bodily postures,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“promiscuity”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Disapproval of homosexuality</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentiments Disapproved by Project</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Stated intention to engage in, approval of non-marital intercourse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Perceiving non-marital impregnation as inevitable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Approval of rape, procuring, prostitution, collective intercourse, voyeurism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhibitionism, other &quot;obscene&quot; acts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Belittlement of sexual &quot;respectability,&quot; “moral” sexual practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Stated intention to engage in, approval of sexual intimacy with numerous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Approval of homosexuality</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sentiments regarding sexual behavior presented a contrasting picture. The all-group level of disapproved sentiment was considerably lower than that of disapproved action, and group standings were spread more uniformly over a narrower range. The major difference between “action” and “sentiment” standings concerned the two female groups. In disapproved actions, the Negro girls ranked high and the white girls low; in sentiments, the two girls’ groups ranked together,
both showing lower levels of disapproved sentiment than any of the boys’ groups.
This meant, as shown in the “discrepancy” standings (Table 2.8) that there was a
good correspondence, for the white girls, between what they professed and how they
acted; for the Negro girls, in contrast, the gap between word and deed was highest
of any group. While indicating considerable verbal support of “approved” forms, the
Negro girls in fact maintained a high level of “disapproved” practice. The small
action-sentiment discrepancy shown by the white girls was in the opposite direction;
their deeds were less “disapproved” than their words.

For all Project groups, with the exception of the Molls, the level of
disapproved action was substantially higher than that of disapproved sentiment.
The all-group excess of disapproved actions over sentiments, 27.4%, ranked sexual
behavior with drinking and theft as “high discrepancy” forms of behavior. Drinking,
sex, and theft have in common the fact that they all engage strong evaluative
responses by virtue of being specifically violative or having a high violative
potential.

Table 2.8 also shows that there was a good correspondence between a group’s
level of disapproved action and the magnitude of discrepancy between action and
sentiment; the more extensively group members engaged in disapproved sexual
actions the less likely it was that their expressed sentiments would accurately
reflect actual practice. Any conclusions as to actual practice based on sentiments
expressed by the youngsters themselves would have been highly inaccurate. This
finding raises serious questions as to the validity of data on sexual practices based
on self-reported information.

Worker evaluations of group mating practices reflected an image of “proper”
mating behavior based on customary middle class courtship and mating patterns.
Seen as desirable were “planned” dates, some measure of parental knowledge and
influence in regard to mating partners and activities, and choice of “respectable”
mating partners. Seen as undesirable were pick-ups, rowdy or disorderly behavior
in mating situations, and profane or abusive behavior toward partners. The workers
were definitely and unanimously opposed to any use of alcohol in connection with mating activity.

Table 3.8 lists approved and disapproved forms of mating. As in the case of sex, there was some overlap between “sex” and “mating” with some forms listed as “mating” behavior inevitably involving some measure of physical intimacy, but a primary focus on the establishment of partnerships is common to all listed forms. The general patterning of disapproved mating behavior in the area of “mating” was quite different from that of sexual behavior. Table 4.8 indicates group standings in this regard.

The all-group level of “disapproved” mating actions (50.9%) was close to the average for all behavior areas (46.9%). No group fell in a notably different range from other groups, and the “spread” of standings was fairly uniform. Among the males, the three older groups ranked higher in “disapproved” actions than the two younger groups. As in the case of sexual actions, the white female Molls showed the lowest level of disapproved behavior. The situation in regard to disapproved sentiments resembled that of actions in a number of respects. The all-group average of 48.9% was close to the average “sentiment” standing for all behavior areas (50.4%). Standings fell within a similar range, and the “spread” was also quite uniform. The major difference between “action” and “sentiment” standings was that the Molls, who ranked lowest in disapproved actions, ranked highest in disapproved sentiments.
### Table 3.8
**Forms of Mating Behavior**  
(Relative to Evaluative Position of Project Workers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Approved by Project</th>
<th>Sentiments Approved by Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Engaging in mating, courtship activities in “appropriate” situations (e.g., dances, “dates,” parties, etc.)</td>
<td>1) Supporting “restrained,” non-“exhibitionistic” behavior in relations with other sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Conducting courtship according to “conventional” dating patterns (viz., advance arrangements, girl called for at home, girl returned to home, etc.)</td>
<td>2) Censuring fighting over mating partner, prospect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Choosing mating partner from group of more “law-abiding” local residents or from residents of higher status non-local neighborhoods</td>
<td>3) Censuring use of profanity, vituperation, violence in relations with, in reference to mating partners, prospects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Seeking advice from adults concerning courtship practice, criteria of mate-choice, etc.</td>
<td>4) Censuring public love-making, illicit sexual intimacy with mating partners; support of concept of “limits” in pre-marital intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Seeking, obtaining parental approval in choice of mating partner</td>
<td>5) Censuring, stated intent to avoid “wild parties,” use of alcohol in connection with mating activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Conducting mating activity so as to exclude illicit sexual involvement</td>
<td>6) Stated desire to avoid being “cheap;” resentment of being characterized as “cheap”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Consolidating “steady” relationships by exchange of rings, other gifts</td>
<td>7) Supporting idea of extended-duration monogamy, faithfulness in marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Entry into marriage with female not pregnant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Fulfilling responsibilities to, remaining faithful to marriage partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Disapproved by Project</th>
<th>Sentiments Disapproved by Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Engaging in mating activity in “inappropriate” circumstances, situations (e.g., bars, taverns, penny arcades, gym practice, area clubrooms)</td>
<td>1) Conceiving mating activity primarily as a means of attaining prestige among one’s group-mates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Being “picked up” by strangers or “picking up,” whistling at, forcing oneself on, accosting strangers</td>
<td>2) Seeing sexual intercourse as an inevitable concomitant of courtship or mating activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Being obscene, violent, insulting, vituperative to mating partner, prospects</td>
<td>3) Advocating, favoring use of alcohol in connection with mating activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Drinking, proposing drinking during mating activity</td>
<td>4) Picturing other sex as evil, malignant, malicious, worthless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Utilizing mating relations as a direct basis for engagement in fighting, gang conflict</td>
<td>5) Describing, conceiving marriage primarily as a means of escaping parental authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Carrying knives, guns, other weapons, illegal objects during mating activities</td>
<td>6) Seeing unhappiness, unfaithfulness, separation, divorce as inevitable aspects of marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Engaging in illegal acts to enhance one’s mating desirability, gain favor with other sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Giving mating activity precedence over school or family obligations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Refusal to accept responsibility for impregnated mating partner and/or offspring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Making choice of mate from among “troublesome,” law-violating community residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8

Group Standings in Project-Disapproved Forms of Mating Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disapproved Actions</th>
<th>Disapproved Sentiments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N = 318</strong></td>
<td><strong>N = 190</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent Actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All</strong></td>
<td><strong>50.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrepancy between Actions and Sentiments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sentiments Relative to Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>-31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>-18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>-3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All</strong></td>
<td><strong>-2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The general similarity between “action” and “sentiment” standings produced a low discrepancy between action and sentiment on the “all-group” level—only 2%. This was in sharp contrast with the high action-sentiment discrepancy in the allied area of sexual behavior. The white female Molls showed the highest excess of disapproved sentiments over actions—26.8%-- while the Senior Outlaws showed a high discrepancy in the opposite direction, with disapproved actions exceeding sentiments by 31.5%. Understanding of these findings, as well as the differences between sex and mating in the general patterning of disapproved behavior, will be facilitated by a limited comparison of disapproved actions and sentiments in these two areas.

On the level of action, there were marked differences between sex and mating. With the exception of the Molls, group standings in these two areas were almost exactly reversed; in sexual actions, Senior Bandits and Senior Outlaws ranked low, and Junior Bandits, Queens, and Junior Outlaws high; in mating actions, Senior Bandits and Senior Outlaws ranked high, and Junior Outlaws, Queens, and Junior Bandits ranked low. In addition, as already noted, the action-sentiment discrepancy in sexual behavior (27.4) was among the highest of all areas, while the discrepancy in the case of mating (2.0) was among the lowest.

On the level of sentiment, in contrast, similarities were more marked than differences. Again with the exception of the Molls, group standings in these two areas were quite similar. The seven groups fell within a very similar range, values and “spread” were similar, and the “all-group” standing in sex differed from mating by less than 1%.

How can one account for these rather striking differences between “action” and “sentiment” in two areas of behavior—sex and mating—which in many respects are so intimately related? The influence of three factors will be considered: sex differences, age differences, and the relation between actions and sentiments.

The most distinctive pattern in regard to sex and mating was shown by the white Molls, girls of thirteen and fourteen. In sex, the Molls ranked lowest in
disapproved actions, and second lowest in sentiments. Sentiments, however, were slightly more “disapproved” than actions. In mating, the Molls were also ranked lowest in disapproved actions, but highest in disapproved sentiments and in excess of sentiments over actions.

A picture emerges of a group of corner girls whose sexual behavior was only moderately “bad” compared to other groups. The Molls neither engaged in nor gave much verbal support to “disapproved” forms of sexual practice. Rather significant, however, was the fact that in both sex and mating their sentiments were more “disapproved” than their actions. The Molls’ effort to appear “badder” than they really were reflects several factors. In attempting to gain prestige in the eyes of the boys, whose standards during this phase they much admired, the girls professed a degree of sexual sophistication and experience which in fact they had not yet achieved. Presenting this picture to the boys also enabled the girls to endow themselves with an aura of sexual availability which was somewhat deceptive, but which served the purposes of provocation, along lines already discussed. It is significant in this respect that actions showed a tendency to catch up with sentiments; within a year of worker termination, three of the Molls became pregnant while unmarried.

In mating actions, as in sexual actions, the Molls ranked lowest in “disapproved” behavior. In mating sentiments, however, they ranked highest. The low level of disapproved action reflects the Molls’ status as younger and white; they were considerably less venturesome or aggressive than either the males or the Negro girls; despite a few forays into downtown “joints” to test their capacity to be “picked up” by sailors, the girls usually confined their mating activities to a restricted “home” locale and a restricted group of known local “boys.” Thus, their actions in the area of mating practice were less likely to violate Project standards of acceptability than actions of other more venturesome groups. In their expressed sentiments, however, the Molls maintained a conception of men, mating, and marriage which did not conform to the Project workers’ picture of a “healthy”
outlook. These sentiments concerned “men” and “marriage” as well as “boys” and “courtship.” While the girls evinced considerable excitement about “boys” as premarital partners, they were most pessimistic about marriage—picturing men as faithless, unhappiness as fated, divorce and desertion as inevitable. As already mentioned, it was not too long before the accuracy of this conception was validated for several of the girls through personal experience.

The Negro Queens, sixteen and seventeen, presented quite a different picture. The Queens’ level of disapproved action in regard to sex was higher than any of the male groups except one, while their level of sentiment was lowest of all groups, resulting in the highest discrepancy between sexual action and sentiment. It is evident that the Negro girls, in contrast to the white girls, engaged in sexual practices which quite clearly violated Project standards, while at the same time indicating considerable verbal support of these standards. The fact that the Queens’ standing in disapproved actions was close to that of the male groups probably reflected the fact that among the Negroes female sexual activity was permitted to resemble “male” behavior to a greater degree than among the whites—both in regard to the quality of sexual participation and to taking the initiative in mating. Unlike the Molls, however, who tried to convey an impression of sexual sophistication while actually remaining quite inexperienced, the Queens had little need to resort to verbal claims in order to establish their sexual sophistication, a factor which contributed to their low level of disapproved sentiment.

In addition, as already mentioned, the Queens were most attentive to sexual and mating standards supported by “ideal” middle class norms. The fact that they ranked lowest of all groups in the expression of “disapproved” sentiment regarding both sex and mating reflects the same process operative in regard to “Topic Night”—a serious attempt to delineate and support standards of “acceptable” behavior, and to censure “disapproved” forms of practice. This pattern of sentiment, however, was not congruent with practice. In both sex and mating, the Queens’ level
of disapproved sentiment was substantially lower than their actions; in “mating” they ranked second in this regard, and in “sex,” first.

Among the male groups, the patterning of disapproved behavior was more closely related to differences in age than to ethnic or social status. Comparing disapproved actions in sex and mating shows that in disapproved sexual actions the two younger groups ranked higher and the three older lower; for mating, the situation was reversed. These clear-cut groupings on the level of action were not paralleled on the level of sentiment; however, the older male-younger male opposition appeared again in regard to the act-sentiment discrepancy for mating, where the older male groups shared in common a higher discrepancy between act and sentiment and the two younger groups a lower discrepancy.

This is a rather surprising finding. Why did the older male groups rank low in disapproved sexual actions but high in disapproved mating actions, while the younger groups showed an opposite trend? Project data do not indicate any obvious reasons for this, but do provide a basis for the following interpretation. A major difference between the younger (14-16) and older (17-19) males was that the sexual and mating activities of the older boys, as they approached marriage, revolved around the “steady” pattern to a greater degree, while the younger boys were still involved primarily in the more wide-ranging and exploratory “conquest” pattern.

Insofar as the younger boys conceived of girls more as objects of sexual conquest and less as prospective spouses, their activities in the “sexual” area involved a higher likelihood of “disapproved” forms of behavior—sexual intimacy with pick-ups, exposure to venereal disease, “obscene” sexual references, and other “disapproved” acts. The older boys, by contrast, perceived and related to girls less as objects of sexual conquest and more as prospective spouses. While this orientation afforded fewer opportunities for explicitly violative sexual behavior (intimacy with one’s “steady” was not in general strongly disapproved), it did, rather unexpectedly, afford greater opportunities for disapproved behavior in the area of “mating.”
One reason was that interaction with mating partners was more frequent, consistent, and open; in this situation, “disapproved” forms of mating practice were more evident. As already noted, the “steady” relationship reflected many features of the marital relationship, so that “disapproved” forms of behavior in mating were often anticipatory of similarly disapproved aspects of marriage. For example, there was much drinking with and in the presence of girlfriends, and considerable argumentation and verbal hostility. It will also be recalled that it was important for the boys to demonstrate to their group-mates that they were the “boss” in the mating partnership, and one way of doing this was to be publicly domineering with or abusive to one’s steady. This pattern was manifested in an extreme form by one of the Senior Bandits who was reported by his group-mates to have spit in his girlfriend’s face, poured beer on her hair, dropped ice cream down her dress, slapped and punched her face, pushed her down a flight of subway stairs, and suggested she engage in sexual activity with other Senior Bandits and with strangers.

A final point of some importance emerges from the comparison of disapproved behavior patterns in sex and mating. Of four sets of standings—sexual actions, sexual sentiments, mating actions, and mating sentiments—the most distinctive and the most differentiated pattern appeared in the area of sexual actions. In mating, action and sentiment patterned similarly; ranges and “spread” were similar; the all-group discrepancy between action and sentiment was negligible. Sexual behavior, in contrast, showed a wider range of variation and the action-sentiment discrepancy was high. Further, as has been noted, distinctive groupings in the patterning of action tended to disappear in the patterning of sentiment.

Although “sex” and “mating” are closely related, violative or “disapproved” behavior in the area of sex more strongly engages emotions such as indignation, shock, guilt, and shame. This means that expressed sentiments regarding sexual behavior are much more likely to reflect widely held and widely familiar “normative” concepts of sexual morality. The sentiments of Project group members regarding sexual behavior were far less “disapproved” than their actual actions. Age
and social status differences which appeared in the patterning of actions tended to “wash out” on the level of sentiment. The range of variation in expressed sentiment was also narrower, as if such expression was affected by the centripetal pull of an “official” norm, and was compelled by the force of that norm to cluster in around a narrower normative center. These processes were less pronounced in the area of mating where “moral” norms are less explicitly delineated and the range of permissible practice is wider. This conclusion—that status-connected differences which appear on the level of “action” tend to be reduced or to “wash out” on the level of “sentiment” in those behavioral areas which engage strong evaluative responses—emerges clearly from the broader comparative analysis of all forms of behavior, and has important implications for methods of obtaining accurate information relating to “high charge” forms of behavior.
Male Sexual and Mating Behavior

Man, all the kids from the corner are getting’ married!
Sure. They forgot to buy safes.

--Senior Bandits

The role of sex, mating, and parenthood in the lives of Midcity males differed both in quality and significance from the role of these same activities in the lives of females. For females, the mating-childrearing couple “was of central concern; attracting mates, handling relationships with the other sex, bearing, raising, and supporting children were fundamental objectives of existence. These pursuits were also, of course, of concern to men, but they neither commanded the same intensity of concern nor assumed the same meanings in the overall sphere of life. Differences between the sexes in the relative weightings of these concerns and in the meanings attached to them derived not only from obvious differences in the nature of physiological involvement in the various stages of the childbearing process, but also from the differential perspectives furnished by the respective subcultural systems of male and female. What was central to the system of one was often peripheral to the other.

Within the context of the female subculture, a major basis of achieving eminence as a “woman” was through effective participation in the mating and childrearing complex. Midcity males, in contrast, actualized themselves as “men” by
demonstration of competence, prowess, and knowledgability in several major life arenas: engagement with other men in competition or co-operative activity; producing, obtaining, and distributing economic goods; fabrication, maintenance, and repair of material objects and structures, ordering authority relationships among non-kin collectivities; formulating and enforcing regulatory codes governing collective endeavor. Male participation and concern was not confined to these areas, nor did all of them involve males only—but most men conducted their basic life activities within these major spheres, and the conditions and preoccupations of these spheres engendered the essential character of the male cultural system.

Male involvement in the sex, mating, and parenthood complex derived much of its quality and coloration from concerns granted primary within the context of male subcultures. Sexual involvement in particular, as will be shown, was frequently oriented far more to “prowess” or “honor” concerns of male culture than to “relationship” concerns of female subcultures. The issues of dependency and autonomy, intimately involved in male-female relations, were also of high concern to the male corner group. Group definitions of appropriate and inappropriate behavior in these areas thus affected even the most fundamental aspects of sex and mating relationships.

The nature and intensity of male involvement in sex and mating varied during different phases of the life cycle, and under different circumstances during any given phase. In important respects these activities figured more directly in male life during the twelve to twenty age period than during any subsequent period. Two high priority concerns of male adolescence were achieving identity as a man and establishing initial mating relationships. Females served as one means to the first end, and were, of course, indispensable to the second. Since this was also the age of maximum “gang” solidarity, membership in a corner group created both opportunity and conflict of interest; opportunity in that the corner group provided an effective arena for establishing and testing out mating relations; conflict in that the demands of the “gang” and “girls” were often directly at variance.
Females as Agents of Actualization and Contamination

Sexual intercourse, for men and women alike, serves both as an end in itself and as a means to other ends. For Midcity females, the “ends” for which intercourse was a “means” were generally more important than the act as such. The occasion of impregnation was one event in a larger sequence which included childbearing and childrearing—events whose significance was equal to or greater than that of physical intimacy. In addition, the frequency, quality, and circumstances of intercourse often served for females as an important barometer of the current state of relations between oneself and one’s mating partner.

For Midcity corner boys, in contrast, sexual intercourse had more of the quality of an end in itself. Under most circumstances, intercourse was not explicitly conceived as an avenue to fatherhood, or a component of a larger procreative sequence. Males were better able to focus directly on the sensual pleasure and tension-release involved in sexual intimacy, and to approach intercourse as an objective in its own right. This is not to say, however, that male participation in sexual intimacy served exclusively the purposes of physical gratification. In fact, within the context of corner-group culture, the symbolic significance of the sex act was of great importance.

As already shown, achievement of the status of “man” was a prime concern of Project boys. Involvement with women, whatever physical and psychic functions this fulfilled, was employed as one means to the high priority end of actualizing masculinity. Femininity could be actualized both by sexual involvement and by parenthood; masculinity, in contrast, was little enhanced by parenthood. This contrasts with some other societies; in Latin countries, for example, the capacity to “make many babies” is a sign of potency and virility. It may be that the relatively low prestige-conferring power of fatherhood in the Midcity community put commensurately more stress on sexual intimacy as a symbol of manliness.
One type of “intimate” involvement was the “conquest” pattern. For Project males, in common with males in other sectors of the society, an integral component of “masculinity” was the ability to locate, overcome, and “conquer” non-kin females. The tangible badge of victory was sexual intercourse; this furnished indisputable evidence of the capacity to out-scheme, outwit, cajole, and seduce female quarry. Demonstration of skill and competence as a “lover”—overcoming female defenses by superior exercise of manly skills and appeal—was a major avenue to masculine prestige.

The corner boy, engaged in this sort of “conquest” activity, was frequently more concerned with the impact of his efforts on his reputation among his peers than with his “relationship” with the girl. This attitude is graphically described by Phil Foster in his account of male-female relations in Brooklyn corner groups:

...After a while it was time to take the girls home. That’s why we fellas useta go to dances, to take girls home...Useta be one girl, she’d say goodnight to a fella in the street. In the street she’d say goodnight to a fella! Ah—ha, ha! I’ll kill ‘er. Here the guy’d been schemin’ all night, and she’d say, “Goodnight!” and the guy says, “Wha-a? Wha’ you kiddin’? It’s early! It’s only foura clock! Talk ta me for about an hour!...I may not see ya tamorra. And besides, what’m I gonna tella fellas ona corner?!?”

The “conquest” pattern and its relation to other forms of mating will be discussed further in subsequent sections on the “pick-up” and “going steady.”

For males, no single enterprise or activity had the capacity to establish masculinity in the way that “motherhood” could establish femininity. Masculinity was actualized by effective control of a variety of skills and behaviors conceived of as “masculine.” Relations with females served this end in complex ways. Paradoxically, one’s masculinity could be enhanced by two sharply contrasting forms of involvement—extreme intimacy and strict avoidance. The “conquest” pattern just cited was one way of enhancing masculinity through achieving close

physical intimacy with a female; in other situations the demands of masculinity called for stringent avoidance. The term “mama’s boy,” as used by gang members, reflected this latter emphasis. This phrase, of high controlling potency as an epithet, implied that a male was unable to disengage himself from the orbit of female concerns and activities.

How was it possible that both intimacy and avoidance had the power to enhance masculinity? This apparent contradiction can be resolved by dividing the range of male activities into two separable spheres: one in which masculinity was enhanced by association with females, and another in which it was subverted. There were also, of course, other activities in which female presence had relatively little relation to masculinity concerns.

Activity spheres in which masculinity was enhanced by female association included the “pick-up” expedition, public dances, “mixed” private parties, “mixed” public affairs such as dinners or ceremonial banquets, and certain phases of nightly “hanging out” activity. Spheres of activity in which female presence was taboo included the poolroom, athletic practice, “stag” parties, congregation at the local bar, and most “club” meetings. The operation of the sex segregation and integration principle in several customary spheres of activity will be discussed briefly. The poolroom represented the “purest” example of the “male-only” milieu. Female presence in the poolroom was seen as contaminating, and even the proximity of women aroused considerable discomfort. In one instance, girls tapping at the front window of a poolroom in an attempt to entice away some of the players were referred to angrily as “rotten bitches.”

Under most circumstances, the “clubroom” of male groups was a “male-only” preserve, and the “club meeting” a male-only activity. The clubroom was maintained as an exclusively male domain most stringently by the moderately delinquent white Outlaws, less stringently by the black Kings, and least by the lowest status, most delinquent, Senior Bandits. Influential members of the Senior Bandits were able to overcome initial opposition to “letting girls in the clubroom,”
and this group adopted the policy of admitting girls at certain times. In contrast to the Outlaw groups, which defined the clubroom as exclusively male and a refuge from females, the Senior Bandits attempted to recreate in their clubroom certain conditions of the two-sex household; selected girls were permitted to frequent the clubroom at certain times and engage in domestic tasks such as housecleaning and mending the boys’ clothes. During the study period, the policy of admitting girls was one factor which led to a police raid on the Senior Bandit clubroom and its subsequent closing. Following this event, other male groups became even more stringent in prohibiting female presence. Aside from the practical factor that girls in the clubroom provided a basis for possible police action on grounds of illicit sexual activity, there was a feeling that the closing of the Senior Bandit clubroom represented fated retribution for the violation of the “no-women” taboo.

The rule governing female presence in the case of the poolroom and clubrooms was quite simple; females were prohibited. But the sex-segregation principle was also operative in situations where female presence was customary. Three such situations were the public dance, “hanging out,” and organized athletics. The public dance provided males a direct opportunity for demonstrating prowess in approaching, securing, and spurring females. Adeptness in persuading girls to be one’s dancing partner—especially non-local or unusually attractive girls—paid off handsomely in intra-group prestige, since the boy could base his claim to irresistibility on events observed by all rather than on possibly exaggerated reporting of private conquests. Dancing skill as such was not explicitly commended (One boy remarked, “Only punks and sissies dance.”), but competent dancing was recognized as something that pleased girls, and thus was a valuable asset in “making out” with a girl.

However, despite the fact that association with females was an integral feature of the public dance, the amount of genuine “mixing” was limited. During most of the dance, the boys positioned themselves in tightly packed clusters located at different parts of the dance floor. These all-male islands served as staging areas,
from which an individual would detach himself from time to time to engage a selected girl, and after having danced with her or having been refused, would return again to the cluster. Boys seldom came to a dance with “dates,” and seldom maintained a “couple” pattern for any extended period during the dance. For the older boys, especially among the blacks, there was a greater tendency to operate somewhat more independently of the male group.

This pattern of initial congregation in a one-sex group, sporadic detachment for cross-sex association, and subsequent return to the group was also observed in the “hanging out” situation. One recurrent “hanging” pattern was as follows: five to ten boys would assemble at their part of the “corner” and spend up to an hour in all-male conversation, cardplaying, “ranking,” sports discussion, etc. Meanwhile, a group of girls would assemble at another part of the “corner” area. At some point in time, the girls’ group would move to join the boys, and for a half an hour or so cross-sex interaction would occur. Then the groups would separate, the boys would go off together in a group, and the girls would reassemble as a group or return home. It is interesting to note the parallelism between these associational patterns of the “gang” and the mating pattern subsequently described wherein the male, during late adolescence, relinquishes the corner group as his primary associational locus, spends some period of time as a member of a husband-wife household, gradually shifts his associations back to the all-male group, re-tries the husband-wife type of unit—contrasts quite sharply with the image of extensive male-female intra-household interaction (“togetherness”) sometimes presented as an ideal by middle class women’s magazines. It contrasts less sharply, however, with actual middle class practice.

Rules governing the presence of women were especially important in the case of collective athletic activity. Different rules were maintained for the athletic “practice” and “contest.” “Practice” involved either rehearsal of specific techniques or competitive engagement between teams chosen from within the same group. The
“contest” involved formal competitive engagement with groups from other areas (“enemy turf”), generally with outside officials and non-group spectators.

In the case of the contest, females were not only permitted but desired. This situation provided an opportunity for males to win female admiration through public demonstration of physical skill and prowess. Girls affiliated with the boys’ group frequently served as a “rooting section.” This was especially important when athletic contests were held in “enemy” territory, where most of the audience would be rooting for the “home” team. However, the place of females in such engagements was in the stands, not on the playing field. The “battleground” as such was maintained as male-only terrain.

The presence of females on the playing field conveyed to Midcity corner boys a rather different connotation from that conveyed by the usual female “cheer leader” squad of high school athletic contests. A Junior Bandit, during a meeting of the football team, suggested that the team employ their female affiliates as cheerleaders, on the model of the high school pattern. This proposal was firmly and unanimously rejected on the grounds that this would lay the group open to charges of homosexuality. The proponent of this measure, however, continued to argue for his proposal—not on the grounds that having girl cheer leaders was not necessarily homosexual, but rather that this in fact would universally be seen as homosexual, and if their opponents thereby concluded that the Bandits were “faggots,” they would mistakenly consider them pushovers, and be thrown into confusion by the discovery that they were actually real men.

In the case of athletic “practice,” the “no-women” taboo was maintained with some stringency. The presence of females during “practice” was clearly felt to be out of place. One reason for this was that athletic practice entailed the expression of tough and aggressive “masculine” behavior in a form not ordinarily permitted in a public situation. Particularly important was free rein for active and vigorous profanity. Since this was defined as language not to be employed in the presence of females, proximity of girls would have been seriously inhibiting.
The girls, for their part, did not appreciate the boys’ insistence on maintaining one “male-only” nature of these activities. Boys were annoyed and provoked by repeated efforts of girls to gain admittance to practice sessions. Adult coaches or team managers were frequently importuned to use their authority to “keep those _____ girls away” from practice sessions in basketball and other sports. The black girls were somewhat more successful than whites in gaining entry to all-male activities—perhaps because the black boys were somewhat less reluctant to admit them—and relished the opportunity to observe the boys’ intense involvement in athletic activity and to comment and gossip to one another about the behavior of various boys. Such male concessions, however, were rare, and the “no-girls-allowed” rule generally remained in force.

Dividing collective endeavors into sex-segregated activity spheres reflects long-established cultural practice. This device probably derives from an ancient social invention to accommodate the fact that human males do not have a period of rut, nor females a period of heat; in the absence of such basic physiological incentives to sexual involvement, male sexual appetite is aroused primarily by visual and tactical stimuli associated with the direct proximity of females. Given this arousal mechanism, the direct involvement of females in a range of collective activities customarily executed by males would constitute a source of serious distraction. Such activities have generally involved “male” arenas of warfare, economic production, religious ritual, and others.

The exclusion of women from certain competitive athletic activities of Midcity boys reflects stringent taboos found in many primitive societies which prohibit female involvement in warfare and related activities. In Bantu Africa and Algonquian America, for example, warriors were strictly forbidden any contact with women during periods of combat activity, as such contact was believed to doom battle enterprises to failure. Since all stringent prohibitions in “primitive” societies are buttressed by magical or religious sanctions, the belief in the capacity of women to magically debilitate males was undergirded by a set of beliefs as to the specific
ways in which male enterprises were vitiated by female presence. Menstrual blood, for example, was felt to have magical powers of contamination, and the capacity to kill crops or predestine military defeat.

The traditional Hebrew practice of banning female participation in major religious ceremonies finds current parallels in other social institutions which incorporate Judeo-Christian conceptions. Up to quite recently, major universities in the United States have continued to apply the sex-segregation principle to educational activity. This is not surprising since the Hebrew notion that scholarship and theology are intimately related played an important part in the initial establishment of numerous United States universities. The Midcity poolroom or clubroom as an all-male sanctum reflects the British all-male “club” for the higher classes and the all-male “pub” for the lower. The practice of permitting females in the stands or on the sidelines during athletic contests reflects the traditional European practice of having women as camp followers or nurses in times of war but excluding them from the battlefield itself.

In light of the great antiquity of sex-segregated activity spheres and taboos on female presence, the existence of these devices in so well developed a form in contemporary Midcity is noteworthy. It is not hard to recognize the utility of the sex-segregation principle in societies whose economies were based on hunting or where limited-scale warfare was frequent. However, the presence of female-tabooed spheres of activity in a highly urbanized community in a modern industrialized society testifies both to the persistence of these ancient inventions and to their continuing utility in modern life.

The sex-segregation principle, however, does not apply with equal force in all sectors of our society. Since the delineation of separate “male” and “female” spheres of activity is found in every cultural system, it of course occurs in other social sectors of the United States. But on a relative scale, this device appears to be better developed within the lower class—or, conversely, more poorly developed within the middle class. This would appear to relate to class-connected differences in
occupational conditions. A substantially greater proportion of lower class male occupational enterprises involve all-male work groups. Occupational groups such as firemen, loggers, construction gangs, miners, stevedores, machinists, and beat crews are predominantly or exclusively male. In many middle class occupational spheres, in contrast, direct female participation is increasingly prevalent. Contemporary middle class emphases on harmonious male-female interaction in the home parallels the increasing inclusion of females in the orbit of “male” work—particularly in the “office;” much American humor, for example, centers around the parallelism of the boss-secretary and husband-wife relationships.

As the capacity to concentrate on occupational demands despite female proximity becomes more important, the pre-adult training of middle class males has come to provide increasing opportunities for the practice of this ability. “Coeducational” college level institutions provide one such opportunity. In lower class Midcity, however, with its “Men’s Bars,” pool halls, all-male “Social and Athletic Clubs,” corner gangs, and female-based households, the principle of sex segregation remains strong. As in many non-Western societies, there is fairly good acceptance by both sexes of the idea that there are separate spheres of endeavor appropriate to males and females and that such separation accords with the conditions of lower class life, just as the emphasis on cross-sex interaction accords with the conditions of middle class life.

Corner Girls, Sisters, Lovers, Wives, and Mothers

The Midcity corner boy moved into the “gang” phase from the orbit of one woman—his mother—and left that phase to enter the orbit of another—his wife. During his life in the “gang,” his male companions provided for him a large measure of the nurturance, affection, support, and control provided by females during prior and subsequent periods. But despite the fact that the boy’s basic emotional allegiance was commanded by males, opportunities for physical and emotional affiliation with females were always available. Some authors have represented “gang” life as stringently and exclusively male—a picture which is inconsistent with
another picture of gang life—sometimes presented by the same authors—as a continued sex spree. As already shown, neither of these conceptions was supported by data. While the dominant preoccupations of street-corner life were those of the “masculine” world, and a dominant concern of corner boys was the actualization of masculinity, association with females under appropriate circumstances did not vitiate these objectives. In fact, as has been shown, demonstrated skill in the ability to “handle” females was a most effective way of proving masculinity. The subcultures available to the corner group provided an ingenious system whereby masculinity could be enhanced both by association with and avoidance of females. This was arranged by defining certain spheres of activity as appropriate to female presence and others as inappropriate.

The nature and circumstances of the corner boy’s association with females was markedly influenced by these definitions. His relations with females were also influenced significantly by a set of conceptions as to the essential nature of “women”—a term used to refer to all non-child females. These conceptions, delineated within the subcultural systems shared by gang members and supported by the general tenets of lower class male culture, provided for the adolescent boy a fairly simple and clear-cut set of devices for coping with the difficult problem of establishing and maintaining relations with females during adolescence as well as later life. At least five differentiated images of “women” were current.

One prevalent conception pictured “women” as essentially evil—as contaminating, misanthropic, greedy, self-seeking, untrustworthy, and harmful to fundamental male interests. This was reflected in remarks such as “they’re all a buncha hags and bitches”; “Get married? I wouldn’t do a dirty thing like that!”; “You think your broad is any different from the others? She’ll shack up with anyone, just like all the rest”; “Ah, they’re a buncha pigs”; “They keep ya broke, always wantin’ you to buy somethin’ for ‘em”; “No matter how much ya give ‘em, they ain’t never satisfied.” This hostile perception of the opposite sex was, as has been noted,
paralleled by a similar female definition of men as worthless, deceptive, philandering, undependable, etc.

A second conception pictured females as objects of great value, highly desirable, and worth much effort to “get” for oneself. For purposes of group consumption, the desirability of “women” was phrased most frequently in terms of physical-sexual appeal (“What a babe! Would I like to bang her!”). The conceptualization of “women” purely as sexual outlets was reflected in a prevalent reference term which utilized a single female anatomical feature to refer to the person as a whole. It was also seen in the idea that masturbation could substitute directly for female association. When asked what girl he was taking on an outing, a Junior Outlaw replied by making a gesture of masturbation. This evoked laughter, not scorn; being “married to one’s hand” was not seen as particularly stigmatizing. In addition, however, to such exclusively sexual references, definitions of women as desirable could also denote appreciation of more generalized female qualities (“They are really a fine bunch a broads.”).

A third conception defined females as agents of limitation and control. Women were pictured as firmly opposing a range of customary male behaviors such as the use of “profane” language; drinking; hanging out on the corner, in bars, or in poolrooms; fighting; and not “working.” While often complaining of these female attitudes, men in fact expected women to take firm and direct action to forestall male participation in such activities. Thus, while the explicit content of the male complaint pattern indicated persistent dissatisfaction with the obstinacy or intransigence of female opposition to “masculine” activities, on a more implicit level it was the failure of females to act effectively in the “controlling” role which produced discontent. In order to facilitate female performance in this role, males often attributed to them a degree of physical and psychological power which they did not command.

A fourth definition pictured females as agents of nurturance. They cooked a man’s meals, mended his clothes, arranged and maintained his physical environs,
doctored him when injured, nursed him when sick, and comforted him when troubled. Despite the importance of this conception, the image of females as nurturing agents was seldom articulated explicitly. The functions of females acting in this capacity resembled those performed by mothers for their dependent infants. Since the achievement of manly autonomy and independence was a major concern of the adolescent corner boy, it was particularly difficult during this phase to openly admit one’s desires for dependency on females.\textsuperscript{300}

A general reason for this emerges clearly from data. The practice of allocating women to distinct categories or types, reported as common in other areas, was poorly developed in Midcity. Clear-cut distinctions on the basis of “reputation”—such as “good girls-lays,” “respectable girls-cheap girls”\textsuperscript{301}—while familiar as concepts, exerted little real influence on male sexual and mating behavior, and even as concepts, as already noted, were maintained more explicitly by women than by men.

Similarly, sharp conceptual differentiations based on age differences or kinship status were not nearly as well developed in Midcity as in most other reported situations; the boundaries between the roles of sister, lover, wife, mother tended to blur into one another to form a kind of diffuse image of a generalized female. By comparison with societies in which roles based on age and kinship status determine much of the quality of relations between male and female, males in Midcity appeared to respond to females less in terms of well-defined roles such as “sister” or “mate” or “bad girl,” and more in terms of their conception of things that “women” in general did for “men” in general. The various qualities or role-functions associated with females—nurturance, affection, sexual intimacy, control, allegiance, 

\textsuperscript{300} Adult lower class males can be considerably more open in admitting desires for dependency and control. A 1959 popular song composed and performed by rock and roll singer Lloyd Price includes these lines: “I need someone to own me/ I need someone to control me…/ I need love… I need someone to understand me/ I need someone to demand me/ I need a shoulder to cry on…/ I need love…” (Lloyd Price, “You Need Love,” ABC-Paramount Record, 45-9972).

\textsuperscript{301} For example, W. F. Whyte, “A Slum Sex Code,” \textit{American Journal of Sociology} July, 1943.
support—could be provided by varying categories of females at different times and under different circumstances.

A major factor in determining what “role” or group of functions would be performed by females for corner boys was the age period they were passing through. During the course of their lives as corner boys, the role played by their female peers evolved through a series of definite stages. The shifting nature of these role relationships can be illustrated by tracing the evolution of the boys’ female peers from “affiliates” to “steady girls” to “spouses.” Up to the age of eleven or twelve, a major portion of the boys’ lives were passed within an orbit of female nurturance and control. As discussed in more detail in the treatment of kinship behavior, fathers were present—sometimes consistently, more often sporadically—in the homes of many of the boys, but male parents were not nearly as concerned with or influential in the rearing of children as were female parents or parent surrogates. In the few instances where fathers did appear as relatively influential figures, it is significant that they tended to be Italian rather than Irish, Negro, or French.

During the pre-“gang” phase, mothers communicated to their sons two apparently conflicting messages; one message urged the boy to remain within the orbit of maternal nurturance and control; the other signaled him to leave that orbit and enter another where he could learn to become an autonomous “man,” so that he could become a source of dependency and support. Although mothers attempted to the best of their ability to acquaint their sons with an image of estimable manhood, their capacity to present a consistent model of customary male behavior or to teach specific masculine skills and behaviors was necessarily limited. Thus, while on one level mothers deplored the tendency of their pubescent sons to spend an increasing amount of time out on the corner with “them bums,” on another level they recognized that the gang was able to provide for their sons superior training in the difficult task of becoming a “real man.”

The boy’s life as an active member of a functioning street-corner group spanned about seven years—from the ages of twelve to nineteen. These seven years
can be divided into three phases with respect to relations with female peers. The first, from age twelve to fourteen or fifteen, involved primarily a collective relationship with the girls affiliated with the male group; the second, fourteen or fifteen to about eighteen, involved “going steady” with one or more girls; the third, eighteen to nineteen or twenty, was the period of “first wave” marriages. The age boundaries of these phases were not fixed or clear-cut, and phases could overlap as given individuals moved more slowly or rapidly in taking on the new pattern. At any one time, most members maintained a relationship to females appropriate to that phase.

The boys’ relationship with their female “affiliates” was important and highly meaningful. The girls started to “hang out” on the corner at almost the same time as the boys; they were about the same age or slightly younger; girls’ groups averaged about nine “steady” members, with about three or four being consistent “hangers.” Both groups maintained a clear sense of mutual affiliation; the boys referred to the girls as “our girls,” and the girls spoke of “our boys.”

There was, during this phase, a degree of closeness between male and female which would never re-occur in the lives of either. Boys and girls shared a clear sense of being age mates, united by a set of peculiarly adolescent concerns relating to problems of achieving independence from parents and finding suitable mates. During these years, an age-based community of interest constituted a strong bond between male and female—a bond which would progressively weaken as childbearing and rearing became dominant concerns for women. This closeness also derived from the fact that a single set of sex-based prestige standards was clearly dominant for both sexes. The subculture of the male adolescent was vivid, well defined, highly visible, colorful, rich, and persuasive, and the superior power and prestige of the boys’ group was recognized and accepted by the girls. The desire to associate themselves with this locus of evident power and prestige was an important reason for the girls’ affiliation with the male group. Another reason, of course, was the desire for proximity to a reservoir of potential mates.
During this phase, the girls tended to measure much of their own behavior against male standards of eminence and to adopt similar patterns of behavior in areas such as fighting, theft, language, dress and drinking. A sixteen year old member of the Molls, discussing how they used to behave when they were fifteen, used these words:

Ya know something? Now this is the truth now. Some of the things that the boys did, we went out and did the same things. Remember when they started hoppin’ trucks? We started right after they did. And when they hooked pickles, we went and hooked pickles...You understand, like when somebody does somethin,’ you wanna do the same as they do...If one kid does somethin’ and if the other kid don’t do it, they’re gonna think you’re chicken and all that and then they start callin’ ya chicken, and nobody likes that. Nobody likes that!

This reveals that fear of being accused of cowardice—a major spur to action for boys—was also cogent for the girls. Members of the Queens were ranked, both by the boys and by one another, on the basis of their prowess and technique as fighters:

Suzy is a mean fighter; watch out for her. Betty Lou is a bad scratcher. Pearlie has a strong punch. Ellie is yellow; she’ll cut and run when a fight starts.

Since the boy’s groups had greater cohesion and stability, they formed the associational canter around which the girls’ groups revolved. The cohesion of the girls’ groups depended to a greater degree on the relationship of individual girls to individual boys and of the girls as a whole to the boys than on centripetal forces in the girls’ group. The prestige of the girls’ group depended primarily on that attained by their affiliates, thus giving the girls a direct interest in the boys’ achievements in athletics, fighting, and other activities which formed the basis of male prestige. Both boys and girls were aware of this. At one point, the female affiliates of the Junior Bandits became angry at them for flirting with girls from another neighborhood, and talked of abandoning a plan to hold a supper to raise money for the football team. On hearing of this, a Junior Bandit remarked, “Let ‘em do it!
They ain’t nuthin’ without us and they know it!” However, at a subsequent group meeting, the boys decided that the girls had been extremely loyal, and that a greater attempt should be made to consider their feelings.

The loyalty of girls to boys was clearly evident. The same girls, after they had secretly raised money for their affiliates, slid the money under the door of the boys’ meeting place accompanied by a note which read, “To the Junior Bandits, the handsomest and sexiest boys in all of Midcity.” A Moll used these words in an attempt to justify to the worker her participation in violative activity with the boys—“Ya know what I mean, like, if you were in hangin’ with them kids as long as we have—every night—you wouldn’t wanna be outcast or anything; you don’t wanna be outcast!”

What role did the girls play for the boys during this phase? Did they not act essentially as sisters? As “pals?” As mothers? As lovers? In line with the “generalized –female-role” principle already cited, the role actually assumed by the girls does not fall readily under any of these customary role categories, but incorporates some aspects of each. During this period of the boys’ lives, it was their female affiliates who, in large part, acted for them in the capacity of “generalized female”—performing for the boys a wide range of “female” role functions. Under different circumstances and in different degrees, the girls served, among other things, as sexual objects, hostility targets, controlling agents, and loyal supporters.

The “collective affiliation” phase was the phase of initial sexual exploration for both boys and girls. An important mode of expressing affection during this period was externally aggressive interaction—both physical and verbal. Particularly prevalent was a pattern of boy-girl physical aggression—manhandling and roughhousing were used as affectionate expression, and sometimes workers were even shocked at the degree of violence involved, but it was seen as perfectly appropriate by both boys and girls. During the time the Junior Bandits’ affiliates were angry at them for flirting with outside girls, one of the girls complained to a social worker that the boys were too rough with them. The worker took seriously
this displaced expression of dissatisfaction, warned the boys against such behavior, and reported his warning to the girls. Instead of being grateful, they were angry, and one remarked, “If we didn’t like it, we wouldn’t let ‘em do it!”

The practice of expressing affection in the form of physical assault was one device for coping with the problem of learning how to engage in heterosexual intimacy. Contrary to conceptions of corner youngsters as sexually bold, uninhibited, and aggressive at an early age, both boys and girls experienced considerable trepidation at the prospect of establishing intimate physical contact with the other sex. An otherwise dauntless member of the Junior Outlaws confided to the worker, “I’m afraid of dancing up close to a girl! I just can’t make myself do it!” One way of accommodating this anxiety was to utilize a mode of expressing affection already prevalent within the male group. Although relations among male group-mates were intimate and emotionally meaningful, direct expression of tenderness was ordinarily tabooed. It was permissible, however, to express affectionate feelings in the form of mild physical assault—punching, slapping, poking. Since these actions were aggressive in form, they did not violate group prescriptions against overt affection.302

The corner-group definition of physical aggression as signifying affection appears as a specific case of a more general relation between “aggression” and “affection” in the culture of Midcity. In general terms, ostensibly “aggressive” behavior, either physical or verbal, did not signify the same degree of anger or hostility as similar forms of behavior in a middle class community would denote. For example, Midcity residents could engage in verbal arguments of apparently great heat and intensity with little subsequent residue of hostility. Acts of physical assault—beating children, fights between males, husband-wife violence—conveyed neither to assaulter or assaulted the degree of “real” anger which would accompany such actions among middle class people. Another aspect of this phenomenon, related

to the process whereby small children frequently prefer angry attention to no attention at all, was the direct equation of physical assault with positive affection. This concept was articulated quite explicitly in the sentiment “when he beats me, it means he loves me,” sometimes expressed by Midcity women.

Girls frequently took the initiative in helping boys overcome their timidity in making sexual approaches. In each group there were one or two girls in particular who played the role of provocateur. Provocation was often quite direct. A Moll remarked to a member of the boys’ group, “If you buy me a soda, you can have me tonight.” Another girl, teased by a boy about wearing too much lipstick, retorted, “Why doncha come and wipe it off then?” A Queen teased a King by saying, “Don’t you look up under my skirt now!” Girls sometimes employed quite deliberately the knowledge that boys felt more comfortable in making physical contact with a punch or bear hug by semi-explicitly inviting playful assault as the next best thing to and a probable precursor of more intimate forms of interaction. It is not likely, as already mentioned, that such overt provocation actually resulted in any considerable degree of sexual intimacy during this phase. However, these signals of readiness or availability given to one another by both girls and boys helped to overcome the anxiety attendant on assuming a pattern of intimate contact, and laid the groundwork for subsequent mating phases.

The role of the girls as “agents of limitation” during this phase is of special interest. As already noted, the boys perceived females in general as opposing a range of distinctively “masculine” behaviors such as drinking, fighting, gambling, and the use of obscene language, and even the proximity of a female could serve to inhibit such behavior (“Watch your language! There’s a lady present!”). In the case of the girls who “hung out” with the boys, however, a different set of definitions came into play. Since these girls themselves adopted many of the very behavior patterns females were expected to inhibit, their utility as agents of restriction was seriously limited. In each girls’ group there were three or four girls who were especially active in adopting “male” patterns of language, dress, drinking, and so on,
and these girls tended to spur rather than inhibit male involvement in these activities. Thus, during this phase, the girls' desire to act as male allies and supporters, and to seek personal prestige in terms of “masculine” criteria, seriously diluted their effectiveness in inhibiting certain forms of male behavior which, when they later assumed the roles of wives and mothers, would be against their own interests.

Were there any “logical” reasons behind the phenomenon of young girls identifying so strongly with masculine concerns, assuming masculine patterns of behavior, and adopting masculine perspectives and bases of prestige? As already noted, in a household where the mother is the dominant parent, it is she who must perform major parental functions for children of both sexes. This means that she must be able to provide for her male children an adequate basis for establishing masculine identity. During adolescence, it is the “gang” which assumes major responsibility in this area, but during childhood, it is the mother whose job it is to convey to her sons what it means to be a “man.” In communities where girls stand a good chance of becoming mothers in female-based households, it would appear to be extremely useful for girls in their early teens to pass through a phase of strong identification with masculinity and experiencing life from a male point of view as preparation for their future task of acquainting their sons with essential masculine attributes. This period of “practice in masculinity” also relates to the fact that adult females in female-based households must assume functions generally assumed by males in the mother-father household—acting, for example, as breadwinner, protector, and primary disciplinarian.

During this same phase, however, the boys’ female affiliates performed for them a set of functions more traditionally associated with the female role. They mended their clothes, sewed buttons, helped, where permitted, to clean the local clubhouse, brought flowers and furnishings for the clubhouse, prepared meals and arranged decorations for club banquets, and frequently appeared with sandwiches and drinks following athletic practice and other collective events. In the event of
injuries resulting from athletic contests or gang fights, the girls assumed responsibility for nursing the injured.

The boys, for their part, assumed the role of protector for “their girls”—especially in regard to any attention, either hostile or amorous, by other male groups. Improper behavior by outside groups to one or several of “our girls” was one of the most prevalent and legitimate reasons for undertaking a gang fight. In the context of their relations with outside males, the girls were pictured as fragile and vulnerable blossoms, extremely sensitive to the slightest suggestion of insult. The boys were thus honor-bound to shield these delicate creatures from any exposure to harshness or vulgarity. The statement “He used bad language in front of one of the girls,” provided ample justification for retaliatory attack by boys who used identical language with the same girls.

Both girls’ and boys’ groups were extremely jealous of one another. When either group paid attention to opposite-sex groups from other areas, their affiliates manifested patterns of collective sexual jealousy similar to those of individual lovers. Girls in several of the groups expressed feelings similar to those of one of the Molls—“We didn’t fool around with no other boys until they went out and played around with them other girls. Then we went out and found other boys.” The girls made no attempt to conceal their hostility to “outside” girls who were approached by or made overtures to “their” boys. They scorned and derided their rivals with intensity and passion. When a group of “outside” girls were attentive to the Junior Bandits, their affiliates, the Bandettes, went into great detail as to the physical unattractiveness and lax moral stature of the outsiders. One of the “outside” girls, seeing the words “Bandit Hearts” on the Bandette’s sweaters, remarked bitterly, “Bandit Hearts, huh!?? Too bad they ain’t got no hearts!” Such hostility occasionally erupted into direct physical conflict between girls’ groups. A member of the Queens had her elbow dislocated in a fight with some “in-town girls” who moved in on the Kings at a dance. Occasionally hostility between girls’ groups reached sufficient
intensity as to result in a planned and organized fight, on the model of the male type of gang fight.

The “female affiliate” phase, during which boys related to girls collectively in a public, partly sexual, partly comradely fashion, lasted for three or four years. Most of the boys then moved, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, into a second phase—the phase of pairing off, or the “steady” relationship. “Steadies” could be chosen either from within the corner group, or from the ranks of non-“hanging” girls. Almost all, however, were local residents. There was little relationship between a girl’s “reputation” and her chances of being asked to go steady, or the kind of “steady” she got. One might have expected that those girls who had been most provocative or most outspokenly available or most unreserved in adopting “masculine” behavior during the “affiliate” phase would have made out badly in the pairing-off process—perhaps being overlooked or having to settle for a “steady” of low status. Careful examination of “steady” relationships of Project group members showed no such trend. In fact, some of the girls whose reputation had been “worst” from the female point of view became the “steadies” of the highest status members of the male groups.

The relatively direct transition from “collective” to “steady” relationships meant that, for most Midcity gang members, there was no period devoted predominantly to “playing the field”—in the tradition of the “rating-and-dating” system described for middle class adolescents during the 1920’s and 1930’s. This system, in which prestige for both male and female depended on the sheer quantity of acceptable “dates” one could tally up, and where going out two nights in a row with the same “date” was degrading, represented a passive phase among middle class youngsters. It is unlikely, as already noted, that this particular form of “dating” ever flourished to any great extent in communities like Midcity.

At the same time as Project boys were establishing “steady” relationships, they also engaged in another form of mating which in some respects did resemble

303 Reference to Willard Waller, Margaret Mead.
the “rating-and-dating” pattern. This was the practice, already cited, called the “pick-up.” It involved the establishment of multiple, short-term relationships with female peers who were not part of the groups’ interactional orbit. The basic objective of the “pick-up” was to establish contact with an unknown girl in such a way as to achieve a maximum degree of intimacy in the shortest period of time. Efficient performance in this area demanded a high degree of skill, and it was during this phase that the boys acquired training in the required techniques.

The capacity to “pick up” and “make out” with a strange girl engaged qualities of daring, initiative, craft, and resourcefulness which were also useful in other forms of male endeavor. The sequence of events and general strategy involved in effecting a successful “pick-up” resembled those of two traditional forms of male activity—hunting and warfare. As hunter, the male locates his prey, pursues it, circumvents its attempts to escape, and moves in for the capture or kill. As warrior, he locates the enemy, develops a plan of attack, foils countermeasures by superior strategy, overwhelms defenses by strength or cunning, and affects the capture or kill. Although a successful campaign finds culmination in quite different sorts of things in the two instances—killing or capture in the case of war and hunting; sexual intimacy in the case of the “pick-up”—prior operations are quite analogous and represent a generalized set of skills highly useful to males in a variety of situations.

Sexual engagement with prostitutes does not achieve these “implicit” purposes of the “pick-up” since simple payment of the requisite fee eliminates the necessity of executing the pre-“conquest” maneuvers. Many lower class “bar girls” recognize this and rather than approaching men directly with an offer of love for money, enhance their desirability by leading them to feel that they must be “sweet-talked” and overwhelmed by irresistible male force before being seduced. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that Midcity gang members made very little use of prostitutes—either as sexual outlets, or as a means of learning sexual skills under the aegis of older experienced women—despite the fact that streetwalkers in a
reasonable price range were quite common in Midcity. Sexual intercourse with a prostitute contributed little to one's stature as a “man;” intercourse with a “pick-up” contributed much.

The development of skill in the rapid establishment of short-term intimate relationships with women, in addition to conferring prestige and providing practice in a set of generalized male skills, also had a practical use more immediately related to the occupational circumstances of lower class males. A range of occupations actually or potentially available to lower class men involve fairly extended periods of absence from one’s “home” locale—and one’s wife or lover. The most obvious such situation is military service, which most lower class males experience as young men, whatever their later occupational involvement may be. The young soldier or sailor frequently finds himself in the position of being in a strange locale, having been away from women for varying periods of time, and being in the company of numerous other males in a similar situation and with similar desires.

Under such circumstances, the capacity to establish intimate relations rapidly and efficiently is evidently of high direct utility. In the case of foreign service, the ability to move from the role of “stranger” and “outsider” to that of “lover” must even be able to transcend language and cultural barriers. The male occupational pattern of spending long periods of time in isolation from women with intermittent excursions into “town” for drinking, gambling, and sex is also found in non-military occupations such as cowboy, logger, mariner, and fisherman.

In Midcity the automobile played an important part in the execution of the “pick-up,” serving several useful purposes in this regard. It provided a mode of transportation to non-local areas where unknown girls could be found. Boys would “cruise” these areas in search of “pick-ups.” Once girls were located, the car could be used for purposes of relationship-facilitating conversation. The car could also be used to transport girls to various activity locales—movies, hamburger stands, drive-in restaurants—serving both to involve the pair in pleasurable activities, and to
enhance the boy’s stature as a “spender” or as being knowledgeable about where to
go. Finally, the automobile served as a mobile love-making chamber—both in the
case of the “muggin’ up” (necking, petting) which almost invariably occurred, and in
the case of sexual intercourse which frequently resulted.

The “pick-up”—while learned and practiced during this phase—was neither
as meaningful nor as intrinsic to gang culture as the practice of “going steady.” The
“steady” relationship in many ways resembled a marital relationship, and a boy’s
“steady” was frequently referred to, semi-jokingly, as his “wife.” The relationship
entailed at least two features generally associated with marriage—the expectation
of faithfulness, and sexual intimacy. The establishment of a “steady” relationship
entailed an explicit agreement that the “steady” not “go out with” or pay special
attention to another person during the period of the agreement.

The duration of “steady” relationships varied, but those which lasted for
years were at least as common as those which lasted for months. During the three
or four years between the commencement of the “steady” pattern and the first wave
of marriages, many of the boys had only one steady; others had two or possibly
three; more than three was rare. In each male group, however, there was one boy
(but usually not more than one), known as the “lover,” who did not restrict himself
to a limited number of “steadies” but who sought instead to establish intimate
relations with a large number of girls, often simultaneously. This was not the same
as the “pick-up” pattern where relations were transient and girls were not part of
the local social orbit; girls engaged by the “lover” were generally known to the
group, and the relationship could be one of considerable intensity. The “lover” was
regarded with a mixture of admiration and disapproval by most of the other boys.
Their disapproval, expressed rather frequently, was based both on jealousy and on
the fact of the “lover’s” violation of an important standard of the “steady” phase—
that enjoining “faithfulness.”

An agreement to “go steady” was usually accompanied by an exchange of
rings, bracelets, or other gifts. Although no ritual analogous to the public “pinning”
ceremony of the college fraternity was observed, the fact that a boy and girl had
decided to “go steady” quickly became known to the group. Group members then
undertook to enforce “faithfulness” by both partners. Although girls assumed major
responsibility in this, pressures were also exerted by boys. In a cross-sex situation
where opportunities to “cheat” on one’s steady could easily be found, the group-
supported expectation of “faithfulness” helped buttress one’s ability to resist
temptation.

It is significant to note that the group exerted more active pressure on
partners to remain mutually faithful during the “steady” phase than during the
later phase of “marriage.” One reason for this was a desire by group members to
maintain the essential outlines of a mating network with which they had become
familiar; rapid shifting of partners forced overly frequent re-mapping of the “who-is-
going-with-whom” terrain. A more important reason, however, related to the
solidarity of the adolescent peer group. As will be discussed in further detail, group
members were beginning at this point to put their support behind a set of practices
which were antithetical to group cohesion and which ultimately would lead to the
complete or partial disintegration of the gang. Strengthening pair-bonds by
enforcing “faithfulness” concomitantly weakened the solidarity of the one-sex group.
Following marriage, an opposite set of pressures came into prominence—pressures
operating to reconstitute the solidarity of the group and weaken ties between mates.

Boys were subjected to a good deal of teasing about their “steadies”—with
particular reference to unfortunate defects in the girl’s looks and personal qualities,
and the completeness of the boy’s subjugation to his girl’s will. This teasing,
however, was benign, and of a type frequently employed in the corner group which
conveyed approval of a practice in the guise of condemning it. Having a “steady,” in
fact, was a major basis of prestige, as will be discussed.

Boys were also teased about the frequency and intensity of intercourse with
their “steadies.” How well grounded were these allegations? As in the case of the
girls, accurate evidence was difficult to obtain. Boys also surrounded this area with
some secrecy—although not to as great a degree as the girls, and for different reasons. It was generally assumed by one’s group-mates that a boy with a “steady” was “shackin’ up with her every night,” and there was little reason for doubting that this assumption was based on actuality. The fact that a high proportion of “steady” relationships moved into marriage via the route of non-marital pregnancy was one convincing form of corroboration. While the boy himself seldom offered any direct denial of such allegations, neither did he offer any public confirmation. One explicit reason for keeping secret the occurrence of sexual intimacy was a practical one: “if I let ‘em know I was getting’ it from her, they’d all start comin’ around for some, too...

One might suppose that a less explicit reason for vagueness as to the intimacy of one’s relation with a “steady” arose from a desire to protect the “reputation” of a girl who might become one’s wife. This reason was never explicitly forwarded, and there is little reason to believe it had much force. As already shown, common knowledge that a girl was sexually intimate with a boy did not particularly jeopardize her chances for marriage—either to him or someone else. In fact, knowledge that intercourse was occurring could serve to enhance the legitimacy of the relationship in the eyes of the group. In one case, a high-status member of the Junior Bandits was committed to a correctional institution, and the issue of the disposition of his club jacket arose. Two girls entered a claim—one had been his “steady” for some time, but had broken off with him just prior to his commitment; the second had become his girl quite recently. The Junior Bandits met as a quasi-juridical body to discuss the rival claims and decided to award the jacket to the second girl—on the explicit grounds that she had been engaging in sexual intercourse with the boy and that this gave her claim greater legitimacy than the fact that the prior relationship was of long duration. In this instance, public recognition of the fact of intercourse served as a de facto basis for granting validity to the relationship. Further evidence that public knowledge of intercourse with one’s steady was not considered as damaging to her “reputation” was contained in a
remark by a Junior Bandit to a social worker. He had recently undertaken a “steady” relationship with a girl whom he planned to marry. This prospect did not prevent his serious assertion, “I ain’t made out with her yet, but I’m sure workin’ on it. And as soon as I make it—I’ll tell ya!”

The attitudes and activities of the “steady” pattern were quite different from those of the “lover” or “pick-up” patterns. However, effective performance in any of these could provide a basis of prestige; getting and remaining “faithful” to a “steady,” prowess and scope as a “lover,” or skill as a “fast pick-up man” could all win admiration from one’s group-mates. Determining which of these patterns provided greater prestige and under what circumstances depended on a complex of factors, including the season of the year, the phase of the mating cycle being experienced, and the special emphases of the particular group. For example, during the latter part of the “steady” phase, remaining faithful to one’s girl generally commanded greater prestige than skill as a lover or pick-up artist, and as already mentioned, overly active involvement in these latter forms could provoke considerably censure.

There were, however, differences between whites and blacks in this regard. For example, success as a “lover” was granted relatively greater prestige by blacks. In addition, the practice of exploring other neighborhoods in quest of short-term mating relationships was both more prevalent and better developed. Among the Kings, in fact, the existence of two distinctive forms of mating practice was granted explicit recognition by the division of the year into a two-phase mating system. One boy explained, “During the winter we stick with our steadies and don’t play around. Then when the summer comes, we drop them and go off to other places and find other girls. Then after the summer is over we go back to our regular girls again.”

There appeared to be several reasons for the greater prevalence among the blacks of this “exploring” pattern. One related to the distribution of “gang” neighborhoods in Port City. White lower class communities were located in relatively separate neighborhoods scattered throughout the central urban area; the
corner groups which frequented these neighborhoods maintained a strong sense of locality affiliation and consequent antagonism to groups from other neighborhoods, so that any venture outside of one’s “home” locality was seen as dangerous. The bulk of the black community, by contrast, was located in three roughly contiguous geographic areas. Although free movement out of these areas by youngsters was limited, within the three-area “community,” movement was quite free and frequent. This gave the black boys a much larger “ranging area” than the whites, and while each local neighborhood within the Negro community was guarded by its own corner group, most black groups were known to one another, and there was relatively less risk of inadvertently approaching girls who were explicitly affiliated with a hostile local group.

Another reason related to a successful “pick up” involved unusual enterprise and daring. Very high prestige was accorded the group member who could report that he had “made out” with a white girl. This meant leaving the relatively familiar confines of the black community and crossing not only locality but ethnic boundaries as well. Although the risks were great, the rewards were high enough to support rather frequent “pick-up” excursions into “white” territory. The relatively greater stress on the “lover” and “pick-up” patterns also related to the fact that the female-based household, and its concomitant pattern of shorter-term marital alliances, was somewhat more prevalent among the Negroes.

For both white and black, however, the existence of two major forms of adolescent mating practice—the “steady” relationship, with its stress on constancy, and the “pick-up” pattern, with its opportunity to practice facile establishment of new relationships—paralleled the two major forms of childrearing unit of the adult community: the extended-duration husband-wife household and the female-based unit. Both male and female cultural systems provided opportunities for adolescent training and practice in the conditions and requisite behaviors of these two adult forms.
Many of the boys moved directly into marriage from the “steady” phase. Of 114 male group members for whom information was available, 50 boys, or 43.8% were married or living with a female conjugal partner within three years of the termination of the intensive contact period. Proportions of “married” group members ranged from 25% for the Junior Bandits to 62.5% for the Senior Bandits. Among groups at the same age level, there was a higher proportion of marriage in those of lower social status. One-tenth of the married couples were separated or divorced within the same three-year period. Average age at marriage was 19.7 years. The lower the social status of the group, the earlier the marriage age. Lower-status group members, then, married earlier and in greater numbers. Most of the married couples produced a child within a year of marriage. At least five of the couples married for three years produced one child a year.

As in the case of many other forms of corner-boy behavior, the motives and circumstances surrounding marriage were closely related to the conditions and concerns of corner-group life. During the “steady” phase, marriages were rare. Then, as the boys approached the age of twenty, a substantial proportion of the group suddenly “took the plunge”—as if in response to a signal which said, “Now is the time for group members to take a wife.” In the case of the Senior Outlaws, the signal appears to have been tripped off by a social worker himself. Shortly after he had announced his own marriage plans to the group, the first of a flock of prospective bridegrooms rushed excitedly into the area clubroom shouting, “Man! I’m gonna do it!” The boy’s wedding, in fact, occurred within two days of the worker’s. A large proportion of these “first wave” marriages took place within a few months of one another.

Furthermore, in many of these marriages a baby was born within nine months of the wedding. This was not seen as unusual, and deviations from the pattern were remarked upon. The marriage of one of the Kings was reported in these terms—“He got married and the baby didn’t come for eleven months! Nobody (in the King neighborhood) could believe it!” A member of the Senior Bandits who
had just married his pregnant girlfriend boasted of the fact that by so doing he was
obeying the group-issued signal for “first wave” marriages—“They’re all gettin’
mARRIED!” A not-Yet-married companion added quickly, “Sure. they forgot to buy
safes.” The comment “They forgot to buy safes,” indicates that the idea of the “forced
marriage” was used by group members as an acceptable explanation of “first wave”
marriages. one “forgot” to use contraception, one’s girl became pregnant, and one
was then obliged to marry.

But was this “forgetting” accidental? And how binding was the obligation?
The simple “forced-marriage” explanation has a number of flaws. In the first place,
the boys were familiar with contraception and had been employing it for some
years. Despite the fact that most gang members were Catholic, they customarily
used rubber condoms which they called “safes.” Having a package of “safes” on one’s
person at all times was a badge of manhood. A fourteen year old about to leave for
an overnight outing where girls would be present was teased by his group-mates for
not including “safes” in his suitcase, and teased still more when he displayed some
uncertainty as to their nature and use. He was later told very firmly by several
group-mates, “Always carry safes on you!” since group members were thus familiar
with the use of condoms, it would seem unlikely that about half of them would
“forget” such use at just about the same time.

A second flaw concerns the assumption that impregnation “forced” marriage.
As already shown, girls controlled few really effective devices to compel the fathers
of their babies to marry them. it will be recalled that none of the fathers of the
babies of the seven girls who became pregnant felt sufficiently obliged to do so. The
argument “My reputation will be ruined,” had limited force, since, as has been
shown, a reputation for sexual “looseness” had little real influence on one’s future
chances. Nor would an argument based on providing a home for the baby be
particularly persuasive, since males know that babies could be and were
accommodated quite readily within the female-based household. In particular, the
paternally forced “shotgun wedding” type of pressure was infrequently applied since
for many of the girls there was no one playing an active “father” role, and fathers who were in the picture generally did not see their daughters’ non-marital impregnation as a sufficient cause for taking active measures.

It would thus appear that the first wave marriages, rather than being “forced,” in fact represented an essentially voluntary act on the part of the males. In the face of the weakness of coercive sanctions, the limited prestige conferred by fatherhood, and the powerful gratifications of corner-group life—why this collective self-arranged rush into marriage? Males, in common with other young men in their own and other societies, were motivated to marry on the basis of a variety of factors: the desire to establish a non-parental residence, the desire to actualize an existing heterosexual attachment through a legalized and/or extended-duration alliance, pressures by one’s girl, and other reasons. For Midcity corner boys, however, there was an additional set of highly influential factors—factors related to the special conditions and circumstances of “gang” membership.

As the boys approached the age of twenty, they were subject to a variety of pressures to leave the physical, psychic, and social status of “adolescence” and assume the status of “young adult.” The boys’ corner gang and its particular way of life was defined, both by adults and the boys themselves, as appropriate to adolescence but inappropriate to adulthood. However, making the transition from “gang” life to “young adult” life presented serious and difficult problems. Membership in the “gang” demanded a high order of allegiance; “making the grade” according to gang standards and bases of prestige required the development of a particular set of demanding skills and qualities; involvement in gang life entailed a powerful emotional investment. Since many of the concerns and emphases of gang culture were directly geared to maintaining the cohesiveness of the group itself, it was necessary for the boys to seek out external levers to help them to break away from the gang. But the hold of gang values was such that these levers themselves had to accord with these same values and enable a boy to make the break without incurring group censure. Marriage was one such lever.
Marriage alone, however, could neither provide a fully satisfactory substitute for “gang” life nor a completely acceptable reason for leaving the corner group. Other events such as entry into the armed forces, leaving school for a “job,” or, in rare cases, entering a post-high-school educational institution, often accompanied or served in lieu of marriage as devices for effecting separation. But marriage had certain special advantages as a method for arranging the break from the group, and was supported on at least two levels: a less explicit “psychic” level and a more explicit “social” level.

As already noted, a major function of the corner group was to provide for its members a vehicle of restriction and limitation as well as a climate of nurturance. With the weakening of the solidarity of the gang in prospect, its members were impelled to seek out new environments which provided similar elements of nurturance and control. While these elements could be and were found in institutions such as the armed forces, the correctional institution, and the factory, the device most generally available, and most frequently utilized in conjunction with others, was marriage.

The post-adolescent pro-tem dissolution of the corner gang was thus the product of a complex of related factors—pressures to move out of the cultural phase of “adolescence;” the military draft and other forms of recruitment into armed services; involvement in the world of “jobs;” college entrance for a few. Within this complex, marriage was neither cause nor effect; the simple explanation, “those wedding bells are breaking up that old gang of mine,” could just as well be phrased, “the breakup of that old gang of mine is bringing on those wedding bells.” As already noted, females were conceived as agents of restriction and nurturance; the boys attributed to their steadies or wives a consistent propensity to exert strong controls over their actions; while openly complaining about the “ball and chain,” the boys in fact demanded of their wives that they assume many of the nurturant-restrictive functions furnished first by their mothers and then by their gang.
The concept of the “forced marriage” provided a particularly useful public rationale for lessening one’s loyalty to and affiliation with the gang. Explaining one’s marriage in terms of a desire for alternative sources of nurturance and control would have been inadmissible. It was, however, quite admissible to represent one’s marriage as the product of forces over which one had no control. “Knocking up” a girl was understood and sympathetically regarded by all; picturing one’s entry into marriage as an inevitable consequence of this event, and independent of any personal volition, made it possible to reduce the risk of being branded a willful traitor or deserter while in the process of shifting one’s allegiance. Boys who followed the route of the “forced marriage” as a method of weakening corner-group ties were often those who had been most deeply committed to the gang and its values.

Once married, the image of the “old lady” as an inflexible agent of control could be utilized as a device for limiting participation in corner-group activities. One recently married Senior Bandit said, “Sure, I’d like to go out drinkin’, but the old lady would kill me! She’d drug me out by my ear if I went into the barroom!” The legitimacy of the “old lady’s” demand power was recognized by the group. Shortly after the marriage of the Outlaw worker a member of the Juniors asked him why he had failed to appear on the corner the night before. Another Junior very solemnly explained the worker’s changed status in these terms: “He’s a married man now! He don’t haveta account to us no more. The only one he has to answer to is his wife!”

Since the boys implicitly demanded of the girls that they function as agents of limitation and control, they attributed to their wives and girlfriends a degree of coercive potency which they did not in fact possess. The wife of the Senior Bandit who used wifely displeasure as a reason for turning down the drinking invitation was not, of course, strong enough to “drag him out by his ear.” On the other hand, the degree to which these women did in fact play limiting roles reflected considerably more than male projection.
Concomitant with changes in what the boys expected of the girls, the girls themselves, as they moved away from the role of “affiliate” toward the role of “mother,” changed their expectations of the boys. Around the age of fourteen the girls began to show less interest in the earlier type of collective-affiliate roughhousing relationship and more interest in pairing off. With the growth of this interest, the boys’ group, formerly seen largely as a source of reflected status, now began to appear as a formidable competitor for the loyalty and energy investment of actual or prospective mating partners. The age of “steady” relationships roughly paralleled the age of maximum solidarity of male groups. It was thus necessary for the girls to exert progressively increasing pressure on individual boys if they were to loosen their ties with the gang. The “girlfriend-versus-corner-gang” opposition thus set up created a precedent for the “wife-and-family-versus-the-boys” conflict which would continue to play a major role in the lives of both—a conflict resolved sometimes in favor of the wife and sometimes in favor of “the gang.”

The essence of this oppositional dynamic was epitomized in a small drama which took place one evening as the Senior Outlaws sat in their area clubroom playing cards. The “steady” girlfriend of the club vice-president had been waiting for him outside in his car. Becoming increasingly impatient as he failed to appear, she approached the door of the clubroom and beckoned to him. When he continued to play cards, she boldly entered the “sacred” confines of the clubroom and pulled him by the arm. This unusual and demanding move at once engaged the attention of the boys. While urging him to “forget that broad” and continue the game, they watched closely to see what he would do. Pulled between the demands of the girl and gang, the boy responded primarily to the threat to his reputation in the eyes of his group-mates. He angrily berated the girl, took her firmly by the arm and led her back to the car saying, “Now just you wait there until I’m through.” He returned to the card game and told the boys, “that’s how you gotta treat ‘em”, thus saving his reputation as a man.
Although in this particular skirmish the demands of the “gang” triumphed, the war was ultimately won by the girl. When the two were married shortly afterwards, the boy, who was extremely loyal to the group, continued to participate regularly in group activities. The girl persisted in her battle to wean her husband from the gang; the campaign was slow and difficult, but finally terminated in victory when, three years following the card game incident, she persuaded him to move away from Midcity and out of the orbit of gang influence.

The inception of one’s first conjugal affiliation was, for most of the boys, accompanied by a legal-religious ceremony. The fact that in many cases it was generally known that a baby was due to arrive within nine months did not appear to indicate the propriety of small or private weddings. On the contrary, wedding ceremonies were generally large public affairs, with relatives, local residents, and, of course, all one’s corner-group mates in attendance. During the early period of marriage, most group members made a serious attempt to act responsibly in the role of the husband. In many cases, however, the conditions of marriage became increasingly difficult to tolerate, and after periods ranging from several months to a few years, pressures to reconstitute the conditions of corner-group life began to assert themselves. Corner-group members who participated in “first-wave” marriages tended to follow one of two different paths.

One group remained largely within the orbit of the husband-wife household, got “steady” work, assumed responsibility for the support and rearing of children, and pursued a way of life which was essentially “family” oriented, monogamous, and law-abiding. The fact, however, of sharing these attributes in common with most middle class men did not therefore make this way of life “middle class.” Patterns of speech, dress, recreation, and occupational involvement of most ex-corner boys remained “lower class,” albeit patterns of lower class adults rather than adolescents. In particular, many of these men continued to maintain a strong affiliation with all-male groups—in the context of the “job,” the local neighborhood, or both. Some small percentage of the “stable married” group did move away from
Midcity into higher status communities, and effected some changes in customary lower class modes of behavior.

A second group of married men, after varying periods of time, began to move back into the orbit of the all-male group. These young adult groups—having lost membership to the husband-wife household—encompassed a wider age-range than the adolescent version and frequently recruited members from a wider geographical area. The locale of congregation was generally a corner bar or local adult “club” rather than a street corner, and there was appreciably less involvement in specifically illegal activities. Despite these differences between the adolescent and young adult version of the “gang,” the two types of group shared many common characteristics.

Determining which of these paths a particular ex-corner boy would follow involved a complex set of inter-related factors, both psychic and cultural. One of many such factors was the amount and kinds of behavioral restrictions imposed by the boy’s wife. As has been shown, during the period when gang ties were weakening, the boys communicated to their girls an implicit command to impose upon them a set of controls over drinking, gambling, or hanging with the group. This implicit male demand was, of course, complemented by concerns arising from female self-interest. For wives the task of rearing children and maintaining a household was considerably facilitated by having a husband who brought money into the household rather than gambling it away, who kept jobs rather than losing them because of gang demands, who spent off-hours aiding in household maintenance rather than “hanging out,” and who stayed reasonably sober rather than engaging recurrently in heavy drinking with the “boys.”

The imposition of female controls on male behavior was thus supported both by explicit female interests and implicit male demands. It required, however, a very delicate balance between restrictiveness and permissiveness to accommodate the life needs of the ex-gang member. Too little control could produce a restless desire for a firmer restrictive milieu; too much could induce angry feelings of resentment.
at the “ball and chain” and impel the man to seek a return to the “freedom” of the gang milieu and its permitted “male” behaviors. Some of the wives were able to effect this delicate balance, others were not. Some were successful in persuading their husbands to move to another community, thus removing them from the direct temptations of gang life. Many ex-gang members assumed a pattern that was neither predominantly “family” oriented nor “gang” oriented. Involvement in both types of unit continued to play an important part in their lives, and during different life periods—or within the same life period - they would alternate allegiance and affiliance between the two associational orbits.

Figures cited above showed that almost fifty percent of the males in Project groups were involved in “first wave” marriages. What of the other half? The unmarried appeared to comprise at least two groups with contrasting reasons for not marrying. One group included those who were, in effect, unable to enter into marriage, since their degree of commitment to the corner-boy way of life and/or criminal patterns made it extremely difficult for them to tolerate, even for a relatively short period, the conditions of the husband-wife relational system. A second group included those who aspired to elevate their social status. Among the black Kings, the group which contained the highest proportion of upwardly aspiring “college” boys, only 37.5% of the group participated in “first wave” marriages, in contrast to 58.6% for the white groups of the same age. An important reason for the later marriages of the “college” boys—in addition to obvious practical considerations relating to educational financing, time and energy demands of scholarship, etc.—was that these boys were not as yet in a position to assume a definite occupational commitment and the style of life appropriate to that commitment.

Most of the boys who remained within the lower class community assumed occupational roles which were relatively “unspecialized.” The conditions of their adult occupational life did not depart too radically from the conditions of adolescent corner life. As part of a pool of relatively low-skilled laborers whose periods of employment and unemployment would be determined by fluctuating rates of
industrial production, these men chose as wives girls whom they knew were already adapted to these generalized life conditions, conditions familiar to them as daughters of laborers and girlfriends of corner boys. The future occupations of the “aspiring” boys, in contrast, were bound to be more “specialized,” and to entail a set of life conditions quite different from those for which local corner girls had been prepared. It was thus expedient for the “aspiring” boy to defer marriage until such time as his occupational prospects were more clearly established, so that he could choose a wife whose background adapted her more directly to the life conditions of his actual occupational role.

In concluding this discussion of the role of females in the lives of Midcity corner boys, two major points should be reiterated. First, it was found that the boys did not turn to different “categories” of women for different purposes—“hanging out” with one type, having sexual relations with another type, and marrying still a third. On the contrary, all of these “female” roles—“buddy,” lover, wife, and others—were played by the same “category” of female, and very often by the same females. Nor was there any particular tendency for boys to avoid as marriage partners those girls known to have been sexually active, or to marry “nice” local girls or girls from other areas. The deep impact of street-corner life on both male and female, and the strong emotional involvement it entailed, may indeed have made it difficult for either corner boys or girls to marry a person who had not participated in this way of life or was unacquainted with its flavor and quality.

Secondly, the description of factors attending the dissolution of the adolescent corner gangs has provided the basis for an initial delineation of several possible life patterns for ex-gang boys. Early post-gang experience of Project group members indicated tendencies to assume at least six differing patterns, as follows:

- Low-abiding lower class; primary allegiance to “family”
- Law-abiding lower class; primary allegiance to “gang”
- Non-law abiding lower class; involvement in petty crime
- Non-law-abiding lower class; involvement in organized crime
- Higher social class position; “advanced” education as major avenue
- Higher social class position; avenue other than “advanced” education
These different life paths will be discussed more fully in future sections. At the time of writing it was not possible to know what proportion of Project group members had chosen each of these; some had not yet “settled on” one or another. Such information would require “follow-up” investigation.

**Incest**

Project data yielded little direct information on incest as such. This is not surprising since, in contrast with practices such as non-marital impregnation which is deferentially stigmatized in different societies and in different sectors of the same society, incest, with very rare exceptions, is in all societies considered to be seriously violative. However, several features of Midcity corner life had some bearing, direct or indirect, on incest, and indicated its relevance, on a deeper level, to sexual and mating practices more explicitly in evidence.

There are three major forms of incest with the male as actor. These are father-daughter, brother-sister, and son-mother incest. Project males were not yet old enough to have developed attitudes to father-daughter incest through personal involvement, nor was there direct evidence of explicit concern with this issue. Indirect evidence, however, would appear to support the speculation that this form of incestuous relationship, while granted little explicit attention, was actually the most frequently practiced of the three. Stories were told of drunken fathers who had accosted their teenage daughters. This was quite definitely regarded as wrong by both males and females. However, the nature of husband-wife relationships in Midcity would appear to lend credence to these reports. In those households where women had a series of male partners, the distinction between a girl’s “real” father and her “stepfather” could be rather tenuous. Since the incest taboo applies most unequivocally when the parent is the actual progenitor and remains in continuous proximity to his offspring, one would expect some ambiguity of definition, for
example, in the case of a man recently married to a woman with a fourteen year old daughter.

Certain other characteristics of Midcity kinship relations were relatively conducive to father-daughter incest. As already noted, many men did not perform actively in the role of “father,” so that their relatively weak sense of identity as “father” diluted the strength of the injunction against sexual intimacy with one’s daughter. Also, as has been cited, the sense of generational difference between mother and daughter was relatively weak, so that adolescent girls often acted like sisters to their mothers, and mothers like sisters to their daughters, especially in regard to competition for men. Given this tendency toward conceptual fusion of the roles of “wife” and “daughter,” one would expect some tendency by fathers, real or “step,” to exhibit toward their daughters, real or “step,” some degree of the type of sexual response considered appropriate toward one’s wife.

The role of the female “affiliates” of the male groups is also of some significance in regard to incest. In a familial brother-sister relationship, the incest taboo strictly forbids sexual intimacy in a situation where the opportunity to so engage is ample. That such intimacy so seldom occurs attests to the potency of this taboo. The role played by the female “affiliates” of the male groups in many ways resembled that of “sister.” This fact, however, did not constitute a barrier to sexual intimacy. Since the role of corner-group “sister” did not disqualify a girl as a sexual partner, it would follow that this role did not carry with it the incest injunction. It was thus possible for corner boys both to relate to the girls in a brotherly fashion and to be sexually intimate with them—a situation forbidden in the case of genuine sisters. This could mean that male-female relations in the corner group provided an acceptable outlet for sexual temptations generated by the familial brother-sister relationship, or that the brother-sister incest taboo was not as strong in Midcity as elsewhere, or both.

While father-daughter and brother-sister incest were seldom discussed openly, mother-son incest was an explicit and recurrent concern of the male corner
group. Sexual intimacy with one’s mother was a major theme of verbal interaction within the group—appearing primarily in the context of a form of patterned mutual deprecation practiced by group members. Although prevalent among both whites and blacks, this practice, and the persistent concern with mother-son incest it reflected, was better developed among the blacks, and better developed among lower status groups. Blacks referred to this practice as “The Dozens,” “Doin’ the Dozens,” or “The Dirty Dozens;” whites generally spoke of “Playing House,” a term also employed by blacks.304

“Playing House” was generally practiced by two male antagonists who sought to best one another in insulting accusations, largely with respect to one antagonist’s math. Participation in this pattern was observed among children as young as five years. Among the younger groups, interchanges were based predominantly on traditional formulae resembling the standardized doggerel verses of children’s play culture (“Sticks and stones may break my bones...” etc.). The inception of a session of “Playing House” was generally signaled by a mildly derogatory reference to the moral stature of a group-mate’s mother. A six year old started a session with the established signal “Your mother plays house” (i.e., engages in non-marital sexual intimacy).

At older age levels, use of the more traditional epithets and formulae was scorned; here there was a high premium on inventiveness, rapid response, and originality in devising variations on the central theme of maternal sexual behavior. In the context of such interchanges, the allegation of simple genital intercourse between mother and son came to appear as unremarkable and commonplace; participants created endless variations on the theme of mother-son intimacy, postulating every conceivable form of sexual interaction and juxtaposition of every male and female erogenous zone in a wide variety of forms and combinations.

304 References to “Dozens” citations—Berdie, Dollard, etc.; also to Miller, “Milieu” paper, “Family Section”
Although older males when playing “The Dozens” sometimes attempted to propose an involvement so shocking and so outlandish as to cause one’s opponent to lose his temper, under most circumstances “Playing House” was conducted as a fairly routine form of aggressive interchange involving little real anger. For example, the ploys and counter-ploys of “Playing House” could be executed concurrently with involvement in athletic activity. One such dialogue among nine and ten year old baseball players involved these sentiments:

Boy 1: Cover first base, you m____.f____!  
Boy 2: I hear you b___ your mother last night!  
Boy 1: Your mother’s a Greyhound Bus! (Viz., everybody get on.)  
Boy 2: Your mother came to me and asked me to s____ her c____!  
Boy 1: (To boy who has missed ball.) Get hip!  
Boy 2: Get hip, shit! I got the infield!  
Boy 3: Get hip, shit! I got the infield!  
Boy 2: Your mother’s a____ got caught in a swingin’ door!

Among the middle class boys the sexual behavior of one’s mother ordinarily receives little public attention. Why, then, did mother-son intimacy play so prominent a role in the customary interaction patterns of Midcity corner boys? As in the case of other forms of incest, data provides suggestive rather than conclusive evidence.

The prohibition of mother-son intimacy is the central incest taboo. It has been accorded considerable attention by psychoanalytic practitioners as well as Greek playwrights. The persistent concern with mother incest evinced by Midcity corner groups was in all probability related to the conditions of the female-based household system. In classic Freudian theory, the son’s amorous tendencies toward his mother are inhibited by the presence in the household of a stern and concerned father who is unsympathetic to the idea of sexual intimacy between mother and son. In many Midcity households, it will be recalled, fathers were absent, or when present, relatively unconcerned with matters relating to offspring. To the degree to which paternal sexual jealousy does serve to forestall sexual intimacy between son and mother, to that degree the conditions of the female-based household fail to impede such involvement.
Furthermore, as noted elsewhere, the emotional bond between mother and son was very strong; mothers frequently looked to their growing sons to become the man of the house as soon as they were old enough. Relevant to this expectation was the tendency toward conceptual fusion of generationally differentiated kin roles cited in the discussion of father-daughter incest; as there was a tendency for men to equate the roles of “wife” and “daughter,” so was there a tendency for females to equate the roles of “husband” and “son,” and in some measure to adopt similar sexual expectations of both. Given the conditions of the serial polyandry system, many females continued to practice the skills of mate attraction well into their childrearing years; it would be surprising if some of this “seductive” behavior was not also directed toward one’s son—especially in cases where adolescent motherhood meant that women were still quite young as their sons approached manhood. In some cases women were quite explicit about seeing their sons as “their” men. The mother of one of the Junior Bandits made this statement, “This is my boy. I’m going to see that he becomes a priest. That way the girls won’t be able to get at him.”

These conditions, among others, created a climate favorable to the development of intimacy between son and mother; actual submission to these pressures, however, would violate the central moral injunction of Western culture. It would follow that cultural devices to forestall this dangerous possibility were needed. As in other instances, such devices were provided, in part, by the cultural system of the male peer group.

The group-supported pattern of reference to sexual intimacy between mother and son served several functions. For one thing, it provided a vehicle for open discussion of a topic of widespread private concern, thus to some extent mitigating the aura of deep and secret stigma surrounding this issue. A more basic function of “Playing House,” however, probably involved the psychological processes of “substitution” or “displacement.” Assuming that the Midcity “family” system developed intense emotional bonds between mother and son but did not develop
adequate structural barriers for preventing the conversion of this emotional closeness into sexual intimacy, the opportunity to engage in collective public fantasies about mother-son intimacy could serve as a mechanism for dissipating the force of pressures towards incest.

The fact that these fantasies were not only permitted but were encouraged to be elaborate, ramified, imaginative, and wide-ranging provided ample opportunity to experience a vicarious but extensive immersion in incestuous experience. That this practice served functions of catharsis is supported by the fact that the expression of these public incest fantasies was carried out within the context of externally aggressive interchange. On the assumption that sexual and aggressive tendencies have common libidinal origins and are mutually related, it would follow that the expression of incestuous desires which could not realistically be acted upon simultaneously with aggressive tendencies which were being acted upon could serve to discharge the socially prohibited desire along with the socially permitted. The psychological mechanism of “projection” also suggests the possibility that the participant in “Playing House” was in fact expressing his own secret desire in the process of accusing his antagonist of extensive sexual intimacy with his mother. In this area, as in many others, the subculture of each corner group provided that cultural framework through which tendencies generated on the physical and emotional level could be played out in a regularized fashion.

A comparison of the three forms of male incest—father-daughter, brother-sister, and son-mother—would appear to support the idea that there was an inverse relation between actual practice and expressed concern. There was virtually no mention of father-daughter incest, but a good possibility of some practice. Brother-sister incest very occasionally became the subject of teasing, but was probably rare. Mother-son incest was a constant topic of explicit concern, but the likelihood of actual involvement was virtually non-existent.
Homosexuality

Just as sexual intimacy with members of one’s own immediate family was proscribed by the operative norms of Midcity, so was sexual intimacy with members of the same sex. But homosexuality was not stigmatized as severely as incest, a weighting which parallels that of other known cultural systems. With very rare exceptions,\textsuperscript{305} incest has been unequivocally condemned in all societies throughout human history; homosexuality, on the other hand, has been viewed more permissively. Many societies made formal provision for the role of “man-woman,” in one well-known instance (pre-Homeric Greece), homosexuality came to compete strongly with heterosexuality as a favored form of sexual intimacy among the warrior aristocracy.\textsuperscript{306} The lesser degree of stigmatization accorded homosexuality in Midcity reflected a similar tolerance in the larger society. This was evidenced by the fact that there existed in Port City, as in other major urban centers, an established “gay world” with numerous participants and a highly developed subcultural system which offered strong support to homosexual intimacy.

The role of homosexuality in lower class in general, and in the gang in particular, has been discussed by several authors.\textsuperscript{307} Such treatments frequently analyze certain “gang” practices (e.g., “colorful” forms of dress, relatively elaborate hair styles, careful attention to personal grooming, “grab-assing,” “line-ups,” “baiting” of “queers,” etc.) as manifestations of actual or “latent” homosexuality. The fact that male corner groups are solidary groupings of peers which play a major role in the lives of members means that gang life involves both close physical proximity and highly meaningful mutual emotional attachments. Given these two conditions, it is evident that many features of gang life could be interpreted as manifestations of “homosexuality”—if this term is given a very broad, non-specific connotation.

More pointed analysis of gang “homosexuality,” however, requires at least four important distinctions: first, a distinction between “homosexuality” (taking a

\textsuperscript{305} Ref. to Dynastic Egypt, Hawaii, others cited in Slotkin paper.
\textsuperscript{306} Reference to Homer Smith, Man and His Gods, page 425.
\textsuperscript{307} References to Bloch and Miederhoffer, Whiting, Miller Reiss (“Milieu”), others.
member of the same sex as a sexual and/or love object) and “effeminacy” (male assumption of behavioral practices ordinarily associated with the female role); second, a distinction between “indirect” or “symbolic” or “latent” homosexuality and direct physical intimacy; third, a distinction between verbal attention to homosexual intimacy and actual engagement therein; and fourth, a distinction between assuming a “penetrating” role in homosexual intimacy and assuming a “receiving” role. The latter two distinctions can form the basis of a simple typology which makes it possible to compare the particular pattern of homosexual involvement of Project corner groups with that of other groups.

Four Patterns of Orientation to Homosexuality in Male Groups

- Little or no actual practice, little or no explicit attention
- Little or no actual practice, considerable explicit attention
- Actual practice; individual assumes “penetrating” role only
- Actual practice; individual assumes either “receiving” or “penetrating” role, or both

The predominant mode of involvement among Project group members was the second pattern—considerable verbal attention to homosexuality but little actual practice. This contrasts with most middle class male peer groups, which generally devote little explicit attention to homosexuality. The apparent absence of actual engagement in homosexual intimacy within corner groups does not accord with Kinsey’s finding that lower status males make more active use of “homosexual outlets” than those of higher status. Kinsey’s data indicate, for example, that adolescent boys in higher occupational status groups reported less “homosexual contact” than those of lower status groups, with about 15% of the boys in his two highest “occupational status” categories reporting such contact between the ages of sixteen and twenty, compared to about 30% of boys in his two lowest categories.308

Kinsey’s figures, however, are only very roughly relevant to actual patterns of homosexual practice in lower and middle class groups. These data omit the lowest

308 Reference to Kinsey, op. cit., Table 114, page 438.
“occupational” stratum—persons with criminal involvements—due to small sample size; this means that those whose occupational status most resembled that of Project males were excluded from consideration. The fact that Project males talked openly about homosexuality while limiting practice may also be relevant to the higher incidence of reported involvement among lower status groups. Kinsey notes that higher status males were more reticent (“considerable cover up”) in discussing homosexuality, and that reported incidence figures would have to be “increased by some unknown quantity if they are to represent reality.” Kinsey’s incidence figures also lump together those whose homosexual “experience” may have involved only a single “experiment” or very infrequent involvement with those whose experience was more frequent and consistent.

In addition, Kinsey’s figures completely exclude blacks—a group comprising an important segment of lower status males, both nationally and in the adolescent “gang” population. Nor do his data specify the sexual “role” played by his respondents—whether the individual played a “penetrating” role, that is, interjected his penis into an anal or oral aperture, or a “receiving” role, that is, received a penis into an anal or oral aperture. As will be shown, this distinction is of great importance in considering homosexual activity in gangs.

Males exhibited one pattern of response to “homosexuality” among group-mates, another toward non-group peers, and a third toward adult males. Within the corner group, concern with homosexuality appeared in three primary forms: as a major theme of teasing or aggressive interchange; in the assumption by males, under certain circumstances, of behaviors generally associated with the female role; and as a device for indicating marked hostility to non-group-members.

Patterned teasing on the theme of same-sex intimacy was by far the most prevalent intra-group manifestation of concern with homosexuality. The form of these exchanges resembled those described for incest; they were ingenious, imaginative, and colorful, but, in general, did not evoke real anger, with a

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309 Kinsey, ibid., page 359.
particularly effective phrasing serving more as a “score” for the author than as a basis of umbrage for the target. These exchanges sometimes combined the themes of incest and homosexuality; the following occurred among the Junior Outlaws:

Outlaw 1: Where’d you get them red boots, man? They make you look like a girl!
Outlaw 2: Some people don’t think I am. Your mother knows I ain’t a girl!

When reference to sexual intimacy figured in these exchanges, the object of attack was always accused of acting in the “receiving” rather than the “penetrating” role. The standard form of accusation was “___ sucks!” or “You suck!” or “I’m gonna f___ you up the a___!” not “You [penetrate].” However, in the face of repeated mutual accusations of homosexual intercourse and recurrent threats by various boys to penetrate others, not a single incident of actual physical intimacy was reported for any of the 150 Project males during the entire study period. Not only was there no evidence of “contact resulting in orgasm” to use Kinsey’s terms, but neither was there evidence of quasi-homosexual intra-group practices such as collective masturbation (“circle jerk”), reported elsewhere as prevalent. Masturbation, in fact, was granted very little explicit attention either as practice or as an issue. Similarly, the practice of making playful grabs at one another’s genitals, while reported for one group, appeared as a relatively casual preoccupation and occurred rather infrequently. For homosexual intimacy, then, the relation between explicit attention and actual practice resembled that noted for incest; much smoke but little or no fire.

The second form of “homosexual” involvement—the practice of assuming behaviors generally associated with the female role—occurred primarily in connection with dancing. In general, especially in the younger groups, the boys displayed little hesitation about dancing with one another during “practice” sessions or in private, although “practice” dancing with a same-sex peer was not nearly as prevalent among boys as among girls. The partner who took the “female” part—viz., who was “led” rather than leading—was not ordinarily subject to teasing so long as
his behavior remained restrained. If, however, the “led” partner became overly
zealous in assuming “female” mannerisms, even in a mocking fashion, he was
subjected to angry rather than humorous censure. No Project group member was
observed to participate in the (“Dirty Boogie”) type of dance, where one of two male
partners explicitly assumes the female role of sexual intercourse. This phenomenon
was observed, however, in a Midcity corner group—a Negro group of lower social
status than any of the Project groups.

A third form of orientation to “homosexuality” concerned non-group members.
While intra-group accusations of homosexual involvement were generally benign,
similar accusations toward those outside the group carried a different tone. Actual
or alleged homosexuality among non-group peers was regarded with great anger
and distaste. The Senior Outlaws gave the name “Thelma” to a peer with effeminate
mannerisms, and once he entered the poolhall (the male sanctuary), they teased
and goaded him so relentlessly that he fled in tears. The Junior Outlaws justified a
proposed gang attack on another corner group on the sole and explicit grounds that
“One of them guys is a faggot!”

In the case of adult males, actual or alleged homosexuality was regarded with
even greater bitterness than in the case of peers. In fact, the imputation of
homosexual behavior was the most potent device customarily utilized by the group
for indicating hostility to “outside” males of whatever age. Sometimes these
allegations were fairly well grounded; more often they were not. Classing a person
as a “homosexual” was a standardized device for indicating hostility, and use of this
epithet could be quite independent of the individual’s actual sexual behavior. For
example, in the eyes of many Project males, any boy who read “deep” books, aspired
to college, or attended college was automatically a “faggot,” punk, or queer.

Adult “boys’ workers” were particularly apt to be categorized as
“homosexual.” Virtually every adult male engaged in youth work as a career
commitment—church workers, Priests, Recreational Department Workers, YMCA
Workers, Parole and Probation Officers, correctional institution staff members—
was at some time tagged as “queer.” There was an a priori assumption that all such workers were practicing homosexuals; proof to the contrary had to develop through the workers’ own actions. The case of the Senior Bandit worker provides a good example of this process.

When the Senior Bandit worker first contacted his group, the message was circulated throughout the area that a “gay boy with a red Studied” had started to come down to the corner, and that he was a lush (easy mark) who could be conned into providing free transportation. About eight months following contact, he was told by group members of this initial definition, with the implication that now, of course, it was evident that they had been wrong. As detailed elsewhere, the group’s good will toward the worker dissipated rapidly during terminal phases of contact, and worker and group parted in an atmosphere of mutual bitterness. Four months after his departure the rumor was circulated throughout the Bandit area that the worker had been arrested in another section of the city for accosting two young boys. The rumor was completely unfounded; the worker in fact had been working in another state for several months. It did indicate, however, that the group had revoked their provisional exclusion of the worker from the category of homosexual and restored him to the status assigned to strangers and objects of hostility.

Reiss reports for Memphis and other cities a type of practice wherein gang boys offer themselves as homosexual partners to adult males primarily as a financial matter, assuming the role of “male prostitute” as a means of earning money during times when other means are less available.\textsuperscript{310} This practice, in this form, was not engaged in by Project males. There was some discussion of exploiting male homosexuals (a King reminisced about the times when they used to “roll them queers”), but such activity did not represent systematic practice. The type of involvement with adult homosexuals which did occur in Midcity will be discussed in a later section. There were at least two aspects of the orientation of Project males to

homosexuality which were inimical to participation in a “male prostitute” pattern. First, feelings toward non-group adult male homosexuals were sufficiently bitter as to make most unlikely the ready assumption of a relatively impersonal business-arrangement type of relationship. Secondly, while Reiss does not specify whether the boys assumed a “penetrating” or “receiving” role in these transactions (presumably they offered the penis for reception), the implication of “passive” reception involved in the concept of a “male prostitute” would clash directly with the severe stigma attached by Project males to the assumption of the “female” role in sexual interaction—a topic to be discussed more fully.

There was in fact little contact of any kind with practicing homosexuals or with members of the well-established “gay” culture which flourished in Port City. The primary locus of participation in actual homosexual intimacy was the correctional institution. Group members with correctional experience were unanimous in describing the correctional institutions as places where homosexual activity was rampant; this was generally reported in a tone of disgust and revulsion. The story was told of a core member of the Senior Bandits who gained a reputation as a “bad actor” at an adult prison (among other things, he acted as ringleader in one particularly violent prison riot) that he had been accosted as “pogue bait” by older prisoners when he first arrived at the institution as a new and youthful inmate, and that he had assumed the role of tough troublemaker in an attempt to purge the taint of receptive homosexuality.

The patterning of “homosexual” behavior in Project groups may be summarized briefly as follows. Group members evinced considerable concern with homosexuality, a concern manifested primarily through a prevalent pattern of verbal reference—appearing most frequently as joking and teasing, sometimes as angry accusation. However, there was no evidence whatever of actual sexual intimacy with males in the local community—group-mates, peers, or adults. Homosexual relations with “outside” adult males were infrequent, and conducted according to special rules, which will be discussed. Boys who had “done time” in
correctional institutions probably engaged in some homosexual intimacy within the context of this special institutional milieu. This was more likely to be penis-anus intercourse rather than the penis-mouth form favored by “gay” culture. The practicing homosexual was regarded with scorn and contempt, and the accusation of homosexuality was utilized by group members as a particularly pungent method of indicating antipathy to a wide range of disapproved personality characteristics.

How is this particular patterning of behavior in regard to “homosexuality” to be explained? Psychodynamically oriented explanations which attribute “homosexual” tendencies primarily to inappropriate object fixation at immature developmental stages, or see the adoption of “effeminate” behavior primarily in terms of the male child identifying with a female parent in the absence of a satisfactory male object of identification, are of limited utility in accounting for homosexual patterns in Project groups. While such explanations illuminate important mechanisms which generate certain personality tendencies when the developmental history of individuals is taken as the primary analytic field, such mechanisms constitute only one dimension of a large and complex system which forms the experiential matrix in which individual development occurs. Fuller understanding of “homosexual” behavior requires, among other things, careful consideration of what behaviors and occupational involvements are defined as appropriately “male” and appropriately “female” in the society as a whole, and how definitions of acceptably “masculine” and “feminine” behavior differ in different sectors of the society.

In order to understand why certain behaviors associated with sex roles were culturally permitted in Midcity while others were prescribed, it will be useful to elaborate a distinction, suggested above, concerning the nature of “feminine” behavior. Three major criteria of “femininity” can be distinguished. The first criterion involves a set of activities traditionally associated with the role of housewife and mother, and which may be designated “household task” activities. These include the tasks and subtasks involved in the production, preparation,
and/or maintenance of food, clothing, and household objects, and in the nurturing of dependent children. Among the many included subtasks are those involving food (obtaining, preserving, preparing, cooking, serving), fabrics (weaving, knitting, sewing, mending, laundering, ironing), household objects and utensils (dusting, mopping, sweeping, washing, scrubbing, waxing, polishing), and children (feeding, dressing, washing, protecting, nursing, teaching). There is nothing intrinsic to these activities which makes it possible for women to perform them more or less easily than men, or for their performance to be more “fitting” for women than for men; these tasks have been assumed by women under a system wherein a sex-based division of labor assigns to them those tasks more immediately concerned with homemaking and childrearing, and to men those tasks involved in wider economic, political, and military spheres. Nor does customary female performance of these tasks in any necessary way involve “sexual” activity. A woman who had no sex life whatsoever could perform all such “female” tasks. In fact, every single one of the tasks and subtasks cited here could and frequently does form the basis of a “male” occupational role, with the “household task” activity constituting the primary basis of the male occupation rather than, as in the case of women, being one of many component tasks of the role of “mother” and “housewife.” Such male occupational roles include those of cook, baker, dishwasher, tailor, launderer, furrier, weaver, male nurse, ward attendant, and others. This fact relates importantly to gang “homosexuality,” as will be shown.

A second criterion of “feminine” status involves a set of behaviors or practices which are related, sometimes closely and sometimes indirectly, to female participation in sexual activity, but do not in themselves entail sexual intimacy as such. These have to do largely with matters of bodily adornment and physical movement. In matters of dress and adornment, adult females in the United States wear their hair longer than men, and are permitted and/or expected to perform various operations which will alter the natural texture, color, and conformation of hair. Women may and do apply coloring matter to the face—lips, eyes, lashes,
brows, and cheeks. Clothing appears in a wider range of color than for men, with certain colors seen as particularly “feminine.” Skirts rather than trousers are ordinarily prescribed for public daytime wear, and various types of lace, ruffles, and frills often adorn clothing. Certain kinds of fabric are seen as more appropriate for female than male clothing, especially in regard to under clothes. Women may and do apply perfume, so defined, directly to the body.

In the “partner” pattern of ballroom dancing, females customarily assume the role of being “led”—irrespective of which partner is more skilled in dancing—and a set of bodily movements, associated particularly with walking and upper body postures, are seen as “feminine.” Women may kiss or embrace one another in public to a greater degree than is permitted for men. Certain inflections or tone patterns in speech are considered appropriate to women and not men, and certain vocabulary items, particularly adjectives, are used more frequently by women (e.g., divine, gorgeous, scrumptious, cutest, sweetest little, adorable, darling, dear, precious).

While all of these behavioral practices are associated with femininity in our present society, none are intrinsic to women either as a physiological entity or sexual object. This is shown by the fact that all of them may be assumed by males—either in humor or play (comedians, party entertainers, dramatic roles) or seriously (transvestites, homosexual “Queens”). As attributes of “femininity,” therefore, these practices are to a large extent culturally arbitrary in that they are regarded, in our time and under specified conditions, as “feminine,” but in other cultures at present and in our own in the past all have been seen as appropriately “masculine.” The ruffles, powdered wigs, silk pantaloons and stockings, long waved and perfumed hair of the 18th century French “gentleman” represent a particularly well-known example. These forms of behavior can be called “feminine practices.” When manifested by women, they are designated “feminine,” with a favorable connotation; when manifested by men, except under specified circumstances, they are designated “effeminate,” with an unfavorable connotation.
A third criterion of “feminine” status is more directly associated with biological femininity; this is the practice of assuming the “receiving” role in sexual intimacy. Physical structure is relevant here, since a penis-vagina orgasm can occur only if one partner is biologically female. On the other hand, cultural definitions also figure importantly even in regard to this most distinctly “female” aspect of the female role. The male body also provides apertures which can receive the penis, although the female body provides three in contrast to two for the male. Female anatomy, in turn, provides projections which can penetrate bodily apertures. Thus, the physiological structure of male and female does not in itself determine that partners in sexual intimacy be of different sexes, as the prevalence of homosexual intimacy testifies. This aspect of “female” behavior can be referred to as assuming the “receiving” role in sexual intimacy. The terms “active” and “passive” used in this connection are misleading and will not be used; male homosexuals, for example, may seek “actively” to “receive,” while their partners may “passively” assume the “penetrating” role.

The patterning of “homosexual” behavior in Project groups involves all three criteria of “female” behavior: “household task” activities; “feminine” practices; and assuming the “receiving” role in sexual intimacy. In Western culture, a traditional division of labor has developed wherein males customarily assume occupational roles involving the fabrication, maintenance, and repair of stone, wood, and metal objects, administration of collectivities, and other occupations as arenas of male endeavor, while females traditionally assume roles involving “household task” activities. Cultural conditions where “the home” as a childrearing unit involves active participation by both male and female, males are in a position to participate regularly in activity spheres which include biological females who customarily perform activities of the “household task” type. This is the situation which generally obtains in “middle class” sectors of our society, where the primary such sphere is, of

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311 Modern stenographic and clerical roles as possible exceptions.
course, “the home,” but where, as has been noted, the “office” is increasingly becoming a both-sex activity sphere.

In lower class communities, as already noted, one-sex activity spheres are considerably more common. The “home” units tend to be more exclusively female, and the “work” units more exclusively male. Under cultural conditions where important associational units are composed primarily of members of one sex, and where members of such units may spend fairly long periods in isolation from the other sex, the allocation of occupational roles cannot be derived from a division of labor based on sex-role differentiation. In all-male groups, males assume task roles traditionally associated with “female” status (e.g., cooks, bakers, clothiers), and in all-female groups, females assume “male” task roles (e.g., driver, armed guard, administrative executive). Good examples of this process may be found in all-male units such as military or naval units, the prison, the logging camp, the hunting expedition.

Army units, for example, include in their “Table of Organization” a set of occupational roles whose incumbents perform primarily “household task” activities (cooks, bakers, tailors, “medics” [male nurses]). Also common is the practice of assigning those in lower echelons to “household task” duties—making beds, sweeping floors, waiting on tables, cleaning bathrooms and kitchens, and so on, both for one another and for officers. But it is not only in the army or prison or submarine service where males engage widely in “household task” occupations. The whole occupational structure of the contemporary United States incorporates this same sort of role division. In the total male labor force in 1970, between ten and fifteen percent of all workers in the six lower status occupational categories held jobs of the “household task” variety, as compared with fewer than one percent of those in the five higher status categories. This means that about three million males in our current labor force are engaged in tasks associated with the traditional “female” household role—almost all of them in the lower status occupational
The greater involvement of lower class males in “household task” occupations is, of course, related to the fact that effective performance in roles such as sweeper or dishwasher does not require as high a degree of specialized training as “middle class” roles such as engineer or doctor.

A major function of the lower class adolescent street-corner group is to help prepare its members to assume those occupational positions which are available within the lower class labor force, and to help them accommodate to the nature and conditions of these positions. One aspect of this accommodation—which will be treated in further detail in the discussion of the world of work and jobs—relates to the degree of stigma attached to various manifestations of “feminine” behavior. From a “masculine” perspective, involvement in any of the three types of “feminine” behavior—“household task” activity, “feminine” practices, and playing a “receptive” sexual role—can provide a basis for stigmatization as “effeminate.” Group members, however, in common with other lower class males, did not regard extra-household involvement in “household task” activity as particularly stigmatizing. Since between ten and fifteen percent of the occupations customarily followed by lower class males are of this type, there was a fair probability that any given group member might himself assume such a role as an adult occupation; there was, furthermore, a much higher probability that he would have to execute these “female” tasks during his armed forces career—or, if he were excluded from service because of criminality, in the prison, correctional institution, or forestry camp. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the assumption of “household task” roles was subject to little stigma. Correctional officials are sometimes surprised at how readily lower class boys volunteer for and engage in activities such as cooking and sewing.

Middle class males, in general, can assume such roles without stigmatization only under carefully defined circumstances—as, for example, when acting as cook on a camping trip or during a backyard barbecue. Even in such instances, however,

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the “male as cook” often receives a certain amount of teasing along “You’d-make-some-man-a-good-wife” lines. In the upper middle classes, current definitions permit greater involvement in cooking and some other “household task” activities without stigmatization; for example, most professional men are expected to be proficient in at least one culinary specialty which they can prepare for social affairs. However, middle class males who assume adult occupational roles which incorporate “household task” or “feminine practice” elements (e.g., ballet dancer, couturier, interior decorator, milliner) are generally regarded as effeminate. A similar aura of effeminacy does not apply to the lower class male roles of short-order cook, press man, or dishwasher.

The life milieu of Project males thus incorporated a set of conditions conducive to the assumption, by males, of certain behaviors traditionally associated, in Western society, with the female role. One of these was the occupational system just described. Another related to the circumstances of adolescent “gang” life, which entailed both physical proximity and mutual emotional attachments of high intensity. A third condition related to socialization in the female-based household; males raised in childrearing units in which females assumed or were perceived to assume the dominant parental role were subject to pressures to “identify” with the female parent.313

A major function of the corner group was to acquaint its young members with the requirements of adult “masculinity,” and to inculcate those habits and practices which were perceived as unequivocally masculine. Since the “gang” operated within a cultural milieu which generated certain pressures to assume “feminine” behaviors, it was necessary for the culture of the corner group to accommodate apparently conflicting forces. What was the nature of this accommodation?

First, on the assumption that the three above-cited criteria of “female” status—“household task” activity, “feminine” practice, and sexual receptiveness—

are, in the order given, progressively more “feminine,” it is of interest to note the
degree of stigmatization assigned to each. Performing “household task” activities
was subject to little stigmatization, and involvement in tasks of this type was
condoned under a considerably wider range of circumstances than is the case in
middle class culture. Behavior associated with “feminine” practices and
mannerisms was also given wider latitude than in most middle class situations. For
example, males could wear their hair quite long, assume more elaborate hairstyles,
utilize a wider range of color and style in shoes, jackets, and other forms of clothing
when “dressed up,” or be “led” in dancing with another male without being
stigmatized as “effeminate.”

However, as behaviors moved toward the “more feminine” pole of the
“femininity” scale, inhibitive sanctions of increasing severity were brought into
play. In the area of “feminine” practice, careful and sensitive distinctions were
made. For example, as already mentioned, a boy was permitted to be “led” in
dancing but not to assume overtly “feminine” bodily movements. The “red boots”
example from the Junior Outlaws shows that the greater latitude for “color” in male
clothing might permit suede shoes to be blue, but would not allow rubber boots to be
red. But the full force of corner-group sanctions was not brought to bear until
movement along the scale of femininity reached a critical point. This point,
significantly enough, was not simply involvement in homosexual intimacy as such.
The major stigma of “effeminacy” was applied and the most persuasive inhibitive
sanctions of the group were mobilized at the point where, by receiving a penis into
his body, the male actually assumed the receptive “female” role in homosexual
intimacy.

Gang definitions were relatively silent as to the permissibility of assuming
the “penetrating” role—allowing one’s penis to be received by an older male “Queen”
or outside peer. Actual instances were rare, but corner-group culture made it
possible to represent one’s involvement in this practice so as to reduce the risk of
stigmatization as homosexual or effeminate. Several such reputation safeguards
were available. First, since the corner boy was approached by the “queer” rather than soliciting him, he could picture himself as sought after rather than seeking. Second, even though he was the object of solicitation, he played the “masculine” part in intimacy by assuming the “penetrating” rather than the “receiving” role. Third, he could remain overtly “uninvolved” in the interaction itself, with the “Queen” taking the “active” part. Fourth, he was able to represent himself as “exploiting” the homosexual, picking up an “easy buck” with little or no effort—“I let some queer blow me for ten bucks.” Fifth, since money changed hands, such an involvement would be represented as a financial transaction—one of a group of “hustles” utilized by gang members as auxiliary sources of income, akin to pocketbook snatching or taking a lush (sucker, mark) in cards or pool.314

If it were especially important for the boy to establish the “exploitive” and “commercial” aspects of the transaction, he might beat up and/or rob the “queer” following sexual intimacy. This would further reduce the risk of “effeminacy” stigmatization by incorporating the act of sexual intimacy within a behavior sequence which also included assault and theft—both unequivocal indications of masculinity. Even with the availability of these safeguards, however, engagement in homosexual intimacy with non-group members was infrequent. In no group did this practice serve as a customary method of obtaining money. There was some evidence that boys who engaged more frequently in baiting “queers” were beyond the immediate orbit of “gang” sanctioning mechanisms—being either marginal to a corner group or not members at all. There was also some evidence that lower status, more criminally inclined Negro boys were more likely to involve themselves with “Queens.”

Standards of the corner group, then, provided considerable leeway in defining behavior as “homosexual,” up to a point. But that point was delineated with unmistakable clarity. The intensity of scorn, bitterness and derision attending the accusation “You suck!” left no doubt as to where along the scale of “femininity” the

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314 Reference to Reiss paper, op. cit, Theft chapter.
corner group drew its line. Why was the line drawn so clearly and emphatically at this point? One reason relates to the strictures placed on homosexual activity throughout Western culture. If indeed the world of the corner group generated a set of pressures which impelled males toward the “extreme” manifestation of femininity—taking the “receiving” role in sexual intimacy—then that same culture would have to provide a set of counter pressures if it were to forestall a situation where males would look to other males as important objects of sexual intimacy. Any extensive use of homosexual outlets by so large a sector of the male population as that represented by urban corner groups would be dysfunctional in the long run, since such practice would have adverse effects on the fertility of this group.

It is quite possible that the classical Hebrew horror of homosexuality, from which our current legal and moral position on homosexuality derives, was based on the Hebrew obsession with fertility. The prevalence of this practice among their Greek neighbors may well have appeared to the biblical Jews as a terribly dangerous example which, if imitated, would seriously weaken their national ambition to become “as numerous as the sand which is upon the seashore,” thus influencing them to institute stringent moral prescriptions of homosexual practice.315

As in many other instances, the subculture of the corner group played an important role in furnishing and maintaining the requisite set of counter-pressures. In severely stigmatizing the practice of receptive homosexuality, the corner group brought to bear its most stringent and compelling sanctions precisely at the point where the danger of dysfunctional violation was greatest. As in the case of incest, the mechanisms incorporated by corner-group culture to limit homosexual involvement were effective and ingenious. The most important of these—the pattern of mutual accusation of receptive homosexuality—served three purposes at once. It defined the exact nature of the prescribed behavior, it indicated the severity of the

315 Reference to Homer Smith, Man and His Gods, op. cit., pp. 100, 425.
associated stigma, and it provided an opportunity for vicarious experiencing of the forbidden act through public and collective imaginative fantasy.
Drinking Behavior in City Gangs

“Can’t you guys lay off the booze for one night? It won’t kill you.”

“You kiddin’? You can’t have a good time without a couple of drinks!”

--Junior Outlaws

_Drinking as Ritual_

Drinking was a central concern of all Midcity gangs. Gang members were active drinkers. Forms, circumstances, and meaning of drinking were frequent topics of discussion. Individuals maintained firm personal opinions as to the rightness or wrongness of alternative drinking practices. The one issue not swept up in the arena of concern was whether or not to drink. All group members drank—some rarely, some moderately, some seriously, some with deliberate intensity. But the alternative of not drinking at all was seldom seriously entertained. The periodic consumption of alcoholic beverages was a demand behavior for the Midcity corner-group adolescent.

Drinking was anything but a random or fortuitous activity, undertaken as an occasional response to some emergent emotional need. It was, on the contrary, deeply entrenched within the system of community mores and intimately related to many other behavioral forms. Drinking was buttressed by a variety of supportive sentiments and perceptions, and girded about by a readily accessible set of directives which apprised the drinker when to drink, where to drink, with whom
and how much to drink, what to drink, how to behave when drinking or drunk, and what reasons to forward for drinking or having drunk more or less intensively.

State law made it a crime for minors to purchase liquor, but not for them to drink it. This law, however, constituted a negligible impediment to consistent drinking since each group had developed and maintained a set of adult intermediaries or “connections” who made the actual purchase. Drinking was carried on according to well-established and predictable routines; one frequent pattern proceeded as follows: activity was initiated when a group of youngsters decided to “take up a collection” or pool their resources to establish a “booze kitty.” Obtaining enough money to buy liquor seldom posed a major problem; one reason for this was that the purchase of liquor was perceived as a major reason for obtaining money, so that the allocation of available funds to this end held high priority. Occasionally a group member with enough money would offer to “treat” the group; this was a very high-prestige act. The money was given to one of the group’s customary adult liquor intermediaries, who generally received a can of beer or pint of wine in return for his service. Group members would then embark on collective drinking. In many instances this occurred in public, and in a locale of high visibility such as a playground, a public park, the inner court of a housing project, in front of a settlement house, or on a well-traveled street corner. Drinking was open, conspicuous, and ostentatious.

As drinking progressed, behavior became increasingly boisterous and flamboyant. Sometimes the disorder was sufficiently intense as to produce a complaint to the police, who then would direct the boys to disperse and cease the disturbance. The group might then move to another public locale such as a movie theater or public sports event where their drinking was even more likely to be noticed and to evoke repressive action. Frequently a group engaged in extended drinking would seek out some form of “trouble” beyond the more readily achieved offense of being “drunk and disorderly” such as the theft of a car, burglary from a store, robbery of an individual, fighting with another corner group, damaging
property, or trespassing on forbidden areas. Following the drinking episode group members would assemble and rehash the events of their “spree.” Discussion revolved around predictable and recurrent themes—the boys boasting of how drunk they had been (“Man, was I stoned! I was out of my skull!”), what hangovers they had (“My head is as big as a basketball.”), and how much trouble they had gotten into (“…and when them cops come after me, I cut out and…”). They would tease each other about the same topics, describing to others events they had not mentioned or claimed not to have remembered (“You were so out of it you went up to this broad, see, and said to her…”). Equally frequent was a ritualized vow of abstention (“That’s it…the last time! Never again. What a head! It just ain’t worth it.”).

Although this pattern was repeated with many variations, and some of its stages could be omitted or telescoped on different occasions or by different groups, in its essential outline it provided a well-defined, sequentially developed guide to customary drinking behavior. The maintenance of this pattern was supported by many components of the community milieu and paid high returns in personal gain for its participants. The obvious fact that alcohol induces desired psychological states, while patently constituting one component of the motivation for drinking, appeared clearly secondary to the motivating power of certain symbolic meanings of drinking. Two states ardently aspired to by the boys were manliness and adulthood, and participation in culturally patterned drinking paid off handsomely in both respects.

It was clear to the boys that persistent and consistent drinking was an indispensable component of manliness. Virtually every adult male within the boys’ immediate purview drank; there was no dearth of direct models. In addition, high prestige was accorded the capacity to “drink like a man”—to consume considerable quantities of alcohol without loss of “control”—and since the significant males in the boys’ lives were sensitively ranked along this scale, it was essential that they too determine and develop their respective positions in this regard. Virtually all of the
boys’ fathers drank, and it is significant that when the boys did condemn such drinking, it was not the father’s drinking that was decried, but rather that he did not drink like a man. One boy, terribly embarrassed when his father staggered up to his group mates and drunkenly challenged them to fight, remarked in disgust, “Ah, him! I bet he ain’t had but one shot!” Moreover, virtually every boy who evinced disapproval of his father’s drinking habits was himself known to the group as a committed drinker. So well established was the belief that all adult males drank that the boys frequently made an automatic assumption that adults were drinking when in fact they were not; assuming, for example, that “cokes” drunk by adults in their presence had secretly been “spiked.”

Drinking not only symbolized maleness, but was seen as an essential attribute of adulthood. The press to achieve this badge of adult status was great. Patterned drinking was definitely established in the youngest of Project groups whose members were twelve or thirteen. Concomitant with early adolescent drinking was a pattern of anti-drinking admonition by older adolescents, young adults, and older adults—most of whom drank themselves. Particularly prevalent were injunctions by older corner-group members to their juniors—“You little kids crazy, doin’ all that drinkin’? You ain’t big enough for that.” It would appear that these injunctions were interpreted by the younger groups as an arbitrary and unjust effort to deny them the privileges and symbolic appurtenances of adulthood, and served to spur rather than inhibit drinking. In any event, it was clear that the ubiquity of adult drinking provided models for emulation whose force was insignificantly diluted by the seniors’ injunctions; the general group attitude was “If you do it, why shouldn’t we?”

Insofar as drinking symbolized manliness and adulthood it also served to denote membership in those cultural groups in which these attributes were prized. In the perceptual world of Midcity corner-group members, individuals fell into two distinct and mutually exclusive classes—drinkers and non-drinkers. Being a “drinker” was a precondition of membership in the cultural orbit of greatest
importance to group members—that of the estimable adult male—and thus was also
a necessary requirement of membership in good standing in the street-corner group.

Acceptance within this milieu depended on evidence that one was a drinker;
non-drinkers were regarded with considerable suspicion and not a little hostility;
they were seen as essentially untrustworthy, unless they could produce an
acceptable justification for not drinking—such as medical injunctions. There was a
sense of ritual contamination about a non-drinker. This was demonstrated
dramatically in the case of a fifteen year old Junior Outlaw who had tentatively
defined himself as a non-drinker. He had developed sufficient skill in basketball to
attract the attention of the Senior Outlaws and appeared to possess all
qualifications except one for acceptance by the older boys, one of whom remarked,
“He’s a good kid, except he don’t drink enough.” Since he would make a valuable
member of their team, the older group set about deliberately to remedy the boy’s
one serious defect. He was taken into a vacant lot with a pint of whiskey and urged
to drink. The honor of acceptance by the older boys was a strong incentive, so the
younger boy, despite his resolve, tried to drink as much as he could. He could
manage only a small amount of the strong liquor so the older boys poured the rest of
the bottle over his body in a ritual induction ceremony with obvious parallels to
baptism. The boys used the term “baptism,” in fact, to characterize their attempt to
purge the impure state of “non-drinker” and induct the boy into the company of
“real” men. Following this incident, the boy began to adopt the practices and
attitudes appropriate to patterned drinking, although his heart was not really in it.

**Reasons for Drinking**

Why did the boys drink and why did drinking symbolize valued objectives?
Two orders of explanation emerge from the data: the set of reasons explicitly
advanced by the youngsters themselves, and the more implicit principles underlying
actual practice. Sometimes these two levels corresponded to one another, sometimes
they were in opposition, and sometimes had little direct relation to one another. Reasons for drinking most frequently forwarded by the boys fell roughly into five categories. Drinking was undertaken 1) as a “demanded” response to certain recurrent events or situations; 2) as a facilitative device for a range of undertakings or activities; 3) as an antidote to boredom; 4) for psychological or emotional reasons; and 5) for physical health purposes.

Drinking was considered a necessary concomitant of major life cycle events (birth, marriage, death); major holidays, secular and religious (New Year’s, Easter, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas); and events meriting “parties” or “celebrations” (graduation, departure for armed service duty, return from armed service duty, engagement, athletic victories, athletic defeats, commitment to correctional institutions, return from correctional commitment, and others). The most frequent of the regularly recurrent drinking triggers was the weekend. Saturday night drinking was demand behavior for all, but others defined both Friday and Saturday as “drinking” nights; a group of more dedicated drinkers firmly maintained the importance of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday drinking. Reasonably faithful adherence to only one of these rules—the rule enjoining Saturday drinking—would have been sufficient to insure consistent drinking.

Alcohol consumption appeared almost required as ritual sanctification of major life cycle events; one drank when a man was born, when he married, when he died. The pattern of heavy drinking in connection with death was especially prevalent among the Catholic boys, as institutionalized in the rite of the wake. Whether a holiday was secular or religious (Independence Day vs. Christmas) had little relation to the amount of drinking seen as appropriate; there was some suggestion that the more “important” the holiday, the more drinking was called for—for example, the issue of “Christmas Drinking” commanded much attention, and, in fact, drinking was particularly heavy before, during, and after Christmas.

Drinking was conceived as a facilitating agent for a wide range of important activities and a variety of contrasting circumstances. Alcohol was used to enhance
masculine camaraderie and warmth in all-male gatherings such as a stag party or a
night of “hanging out” with the boys, but it was also used to enhance hatred and
belligerence in hostile encounters with other groups of men. Drinking on dates or at
parties was used to ease the strain of association with girls. It was utilized to help
one face “showdowns” with one’s parents, or “serious” discussions with priests,
judges, teachers, social workers. It helped to lessen tension preceding an important
athletic contest. It frequently accompanied violative behavior. The role of liquor in
connection with the public dance and violative behavior merits special mention.

Going to or putting on a public dance was a major and recurrent collective
enterprise, and the issue of “drinking at the dance” inevitably arose. Two sets of
factors, in clear mutual opposition, were involved. The “no-drinking” position was
supported by important practical considerations. Drinking by adolescents was
expressly forbidden at all locales available for dancing—public dance halls,
settlement houses, church halls, etc. A group involved in a serious disturbance at
such a dance would thenceforth be denied the use of that particular facility. One
Project group, the Senior Bandits, having established a community-wide reputation
as drunken brawlers, had exhausted every potential facility in or near the district
and had to utilize various subterfuges in order hold a dance—such as persuading a
“front” group to be the official dance sponsors. In addition, permitting drinking at
dances posed a real danger of “outside” gangs coming to the dance, getting “liquored
up,” and utilizing the dance floor as an arena for combat with the sponsoring group
or its friends.

But pressures toward drinking were of considerable weight. The dance
elicted two explicit definitions regarding drinking: one attended a dance to have a
good time and it was definitely maintained that “You can’t have a good time without
drinking!” One also encountered girls at a dance and the idea that “babes and
booze” were desirably paired was well established. An equally compelling, although
less explicit, reason derived from the equation of liquor use with adult status. It was
important that the dance be seen as an adult rather than a “kid” affair, and one of
the best ways to forestall this possibility was the use of liquor. Dance-planning sessions included intense and extended debates around this issue; in one such debate by the Junior Outlaws a prime protagonist of the “drinking” position repeated with great insistence, “You gotta have booze at a dance! You just gotta!”

Actual practice reflected various types of compromise between opposing positions. Drinking almost always occurred, but in varying degrees of openness. Dance patrons would bring a “jug,” but retire to the men’s room for drinking or for spiking legally sold carbonated beverages. Frequently girls were used as jug bearers since policemen or other male adults had restricted access to the girls’ room. For a club to stage a dance with a minimum of drinking was considered a major triumph for the advocates of “control;” on the other hand, “getting away with” drinking at a dance also was seen as a major accomplishment.

Liquor was a frequent concomitant of many forms of violative behavior. The question of whether youngsters committed crimes because they drank or drank so as to commit crimes will be discussed subsequently. In some instances, drinking itself constituted a violation (e.g., drinking on school premises or in movie theaters); in others violative behavior was a likely consequence of collective drinking (e.g., trespassing, creating a public disturbance); and in others drinking served to facilitate planned delinquencies. Auto theft, one of the most frequent forms of delinquency, almost always occurred in conjunction with drinking.

Drinking figured in assaultive behavior in several ways. Fights between two people—sometimes members of the same group—frequently occurred in connection with drinking. Pool hall or bowling alley managers were sometimes attacked when they attempted to curb the disorderly behavior of drunken patrons. However, the type of incident where a group of drunk and aggressive youngsters decides to go out and “beat up on” an “innocent bystander”—an adult or peer not part of the group’s social network—was not recorded once for any Project group.

In the case of the “gang fight,” liquor played a different role in small scale and large scale engagements. Small scale forays sometimes grew out of drinking
sessions when a group of drinkers might suggest, “Let's go and beat up on some of them street guys.” In the case of the full scale gang war engagement, however, a different situation occurred. In contrast to the person-to-person fight or the drinking-spurred foray, the full scale engagement required deliberate planning, recruitment of allies, formulation of strategy, and careful execution of a plan of attack or defense. Effective execution of these processes would have been impeded by uncontrolled drinking. Pre-combat consumption of alcohol served two major purposes—the psychological purpose of bolstering courage and allaying anxiety, and a ritual purpose, analogous to the use of alcohol in the group induction rite. This practice finds analogies in many primitive tribes where a war party or combat venture is preceded by pre-combat rites (e.g., War Dance of North American Indians) designed to ensure the support of supernatural forces, reaffirm group solidarity, and instill courage. In one pre-gang-fight situation the “war counselor” of the Senior Bandits, who was coordinating combat activities for the Junior Bandits, directed each member of the younger group to kneel in line, with higher status group members in front. Each boy then took one drink from a common bottle of beer held by the war leader before rising to join the battle. The amount of liquor consumed was enough to give ritual sanction to the intended action, but not enough to impair fighting effectiveness.

Drinking was seen as an appropriate facilitating agent for cross-sex interaction in general and mating activity in particular. For the younger boys especially, liquor helped to allay the anxiety and embarrassment attendant on making contact with girls, and this practical use was augmented by the cultural concept that when “babes and booze” were mixed, something special would happen. The girls were aware of the male conception that girls became more sexually accessible when drinking, and frequently drank liquor at dances or on dates. However, few of the girls drank as heavily or as consistently as the boys, and it is likely that at least some of the girls drank in cross-sex situations because they felt that such drinking would enhance their desirability in the eyes of the boys.
One reason for drinking frequently forwarded by the boys was the avoidance of boredom. “Nothin’ ever happens around here. Let’s get a jug and find a little excitement.” This particular reason was welcomed by recreation workers, settlement house workers, and others with “programs” to offer. If the boys drank because they had nothing better to do, an obvious solution would be to provide opportunities for involvement in organized recreational activities. On one level, the “boredom antidote” rationale had some validity. Past experience had shown that some sort of “exciting” involvement was indeed a likely consequence of drinking. But on another level, the rationale was spurious. It has been shown that drinking was a consistent concomitant of a whole range of events and activities—holiday observance, parties, special celebrations, athletic contests, dances, dating, and others. If one drank because of “nothing to do,” he drank even more readily when there was something to do—a dance to attend, a holiday to observe, a special event to commemorate, a game to play, a wedding or birthday to celebrate. One result of Project efforts was to fill the lives of the boys with a great variety of activities—dances, games, club meetings, and so on. However, the introduction of these planned activities into the claimed vacuum of street life had negligible impact on the frequency of drinking. As will be shown, the amount of involvement in organized activities arranged by the workers had little relationship to a reduction in drinking. For example, the Senior Bandits engaged in fewer organized activities than any other male group, while their younger brother group, the Juniors, became involved in an extensive activity program. Yet for both groups change in drinking behavior was negligible, and, in fact, the much-programmed Juniors showed a slight increase in Project-disapproved forms of drinking.

Although the effect of drinking on emotional states was evidently important, the alleviation of depression, anxiety, or subjective tension was rarely cited as an explicit reason for drinking. Using alcohol for curing the “blues” or coping with fatigue apparently was not considered “manly” or tough. Drinking to alley sorrow or disappointment was a reason more likely to be given by girls. The medicinal efficacy
of alcohol was occasionally cited as a reason for drinking, on the “good-for-what-ails-you” theory, but this reason was not given frequently, nor did the boys identify the physical ailments for which alcohol was a specific.

Reasons for not drinking were also adduced, frequently during hangovers, sometimes during intra-group debates over drinking in specific situations. During one of these debates, a Junior Outlaw claimed that drinking “keeps you broke, and you feel bad when it’s over.” It was also felt that a habitual drinker could not be trusted with group funds since he would be under repeated temptation to spend them on liquor. However, condemnation of drinking as a general practice was expressed rarely and with little conviction. The major explicit reason for limiting drinking—the conflict between liquor and physical fitness—will be treated in the discussion of controls over drinking.

Reasons for drinking explicitly acknowledged by group members—whether publicly asserted or privately admitted—were only part of the picture. Deeper influences—of which individuals were unaware or only dimly aware—played an implicit but nonetheless compelling role. The symbolic significance of drinking in contrast to its more obvious psychological functions has already been mentioned. The use of liquor symbolized manliness and adulthood—both positively by indicating directly that one was a man and an adult, and negatively by dissolving the taint of being a child. Alcohol also symbolized the identity and solidarity of the group. The boundaries of the group itself were set, in part, by whom one drank with. Within the group, drinking helped to solidify friendship bonds by establishing a camaraderie with fellow drinkers and to strengthen the network of reciprocal relations by setting up a system of mutual drinking obligations revolving around who owed whom a drink, who “treated” whom last time, and so on.

Psychologically, drinking played a role on both conscious and unconscious levels. Some explicit reasons given by the boys have already been cited; drinking to alley anxiety with girls, to facilitate a “good time,” to mitigate tension before an important athletic contest or gang fight. But drinking also affected emotions in
ways of which the boys were far less aware. Two emotional areas more covertly influenced by drinking were those of aggression and dependency.

Drinking was related to aggression in several ways. The act of drinking itself could denote direct defiance. As already mentioned, the adult injunction against juvenile drinking—enforced both by law and local practice—was interpreted by many youngsters as an unjustified attempt to deny them rightful privileges, so that the pattern of drinking in public—ostentatiously, flamboyantly, defiantly—served to convey their resentment at this perceived injustice. Drinking also served to facilitate the direct expression of aggression since overt aggression was normally inhibited by fear of counter-aggression, and drinking reduced such fear. A few drinks, and a boy was ready to take on almost any adversary. But beyond this commonly recognized relation of drinking to aggression was one less obvious; drinking served not only to facilitate aggression but to legitimatize it as well.

Since fighting was recognized as a customary response to drinking, a drinker could engage in fighting or other forms of hostile behavior with a reduced feeling of individual responsibility for his actions. Forms of hostile behavior for which a sober person would be readily condemned were tolerated or even partially condoned for the drinker. He was to some extent absolved from responsibility for his acts. “He don’t really mean it; it’s just the liquor talking.” Drinking thus provided a mechanism by which personal hostility could be vented without serious disruption of one’s important social relationships since the hostile behavior could be attributed not to the personal feelings of the individual but to forces beyond his control. In the extreme situation, an individual could totally disclaim any responsibility for his actions by claiming he did not know what he was doing, thus providing a legitimate basis for acceptance of his post-drinking apologies for hostile behavior.

The role of alcohol in facilitating personal desires to be dependent was more subtle and covert than its role in facilitating aggression—since dependency was so much less admissible. While extreme expressions of aggression were generally condemned, many forms of aggressive behavior were supported and even rewarded
by the corner group; open admission of a desire to be taken care of by others, in contrast, was essentially tabooed. The consistent stress in the corner group on personal competence, the ability to stand on one’s own two feet, and adult autonomy inhibited group members from expressing openly any desire to be cared for by others. Inwardly, however, such a desire was strong in many of the youngsters, and drinking provided them a vehicle for expressing dependency cravings without sacrificing prestige in the group.

Drinking—whatever its explicit rationale—frequently engendered a situation wherein the drinker found himself in the position of being protected and nurtured. Such nurturance might come about in several ways. The most direct of these was the pattern of mutual protection. An established rule of collective drinking was that the less drunk take care of the more drunk. A heavily intoxicated youngster ran serious risks of physical harm through falling down, passing out in cold weather or on the street where he could be hit by a car, and so on. To forestall such eventualities, his less intoxicated companions would “take care of him,” see that he was not hurt, revive him if he passed out, and make sure that he was returned home. Foreknowledge of this potential nurturance made it possible for a boy to let himself get much drunker with much less risk than if he were on his own. The less intoxicated were most conscientious about their responsibility for nurturing the more intoxicated, and frequently went to considerable lengths to fulfill this obligation. In one instance, members of the Senior Bandits, protecting a Junior Bandit who was severely drunk, stole a car in order to get their ward out of the cold and safely home, and when this car was smashed up, stole a second to complete their mission.

But nurturance also resulted from drinking in a way even less explicitly recognized. The discussion of correctional behavior shows that commitment to a correctional institution was frequently desired as a means of securing care, and that many of the boys equated firm restrictiveness with nurturance. Those who set out to get drunk were at least partially aware that this course of action might lead to

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trouble, that trouble might lead to arrest, and that arrest might lead to incarceration—with this eventuality an implicitly held reason for undertaking the drinking spree in the first place.

Securing nurturance either through direct or indirect routes constituted an effective method of obtaining care without running the risk of having one’s autonomy or manhood called into question. Drinking was manly; getting drunk was manly; committing ostentatious crimes was more manly; being sentenced to a correctional institution as a consequence of crimes was even more manly; thus, a series of events which paid off handsomely in conferring “masculine” prestige had as a final consequence a situation of virtually complete dependency—with one’s basic subsistence needs and major day-to-day decisions taken care of by an established institutional structure.

This kind of situation elicits an issue previously raised: to what extent was violative behavior an unintended consequence of drinking and to what extent did one drink so as to facilitate the commission of delinquent acts? The case for the first alternative is simple and coincides with the rationale frequently used by the boys themselves. One starts to drink to “have a good time.” The more one drinks the less he is able to control criminal impulses, and finally, with his inner controls weakened, commits violative acts against his better judgment or due to pressures beyond his control. The basic premise of this rationale—that people are “bad” inside, or that the individual possesses an inner core of “anti-social” impulses, or that humans have a basically “sinful” or animal nature which is normally held in check by conscious control but which can slip out or escape when such control is weakened by liquor—is shared by many theological positions and some schools of psychoanalytic thought. In lower class adolescent culture this position is stated as—“I can’t figure out why I got in trouble. I guess I just got so drunk I couldn’t help it.”

Although alcohol-induced relaxation of conscious controls undoubtedly played a part in some violations by some youngsters in some instances, the weight of evidence would indicate that this process seldom operated so simply or in isolation,
and that less overtly recognized processes were of equal or greater influence. Subsequent discussion will show that the amount one drank was subject to well-established cultural controls, and that very few Project group members appeared unable to govern their actions by these rules of limitation. It would follow that drinking to the point where one knew that violative behavior would almost certainly result represented a fairly deliberate intention on the part of the individual, and that such drinking served as a means of implementing positively conceived objectives rather than producing an inadvertent immersion in a set of unsought consequences.

Since the commission of certain forms of crime served to confer prestige and could thus function as an end in its own right, and since correctional commitment as a consequence of crimes could also be a desired objective, then drinking which eventuated in these objectives could be seen as a means to an end, or a means to a means to an end rather than as an end in itself which engendered unwanted consequences. Although Project groups differed from one another and individuals within these groups also differed in this regard, the phenomenon of drinking as a culturally prescribed avenue to secondary and tertiary goals was clearly in evidence.

**Ways of Drinking**

With culturally prescribed drinking so prevalent in Project groups, one would expect to find different patterns of drinking and types of drinkers. The distinction between the “drinker” and “non-drinker” has already been mentioned; a declared “non-drinker” was acceptable to the group only under the most unusual circumstances.

Although the boys recognized several different types of patterned drinking, there was no set of categories used to refer to these types. Distinctions were based on types of drinkers rather than patterns of drinking. People would be termed “off-and-on” drinkers, “weekend drinkers,” “dead” or “far gone winos,” “winebenders,” or
“whiskeyheads.” These types were distinguished on the basis of a complex of factors, including the frequency and regularity of drinking, the amount drunk, circumstances of drinking, type of beverage (beer, wine, whiskey), characteristic behavioral responses, and others. Although various combinations of these factors could logically produce an almost continuous scale of drinking types from “very light” to “extremely serious,” it will be necessary to distinguish only four major types. These refer to “patterns of drinking” rather than “types of drinkers” since the same individual or group could and did utilize different patterns at different times or shift from one pattern to another. General designations and some characteristics of these four patterns follow:

Four Patterns of Drinking Behavior

- **Light Drinking:** Occasional, not regularly recurrent, amount small. Beverage generally beer, drinking as “expected” requirement of collective situation. Intoxication infrequent, “normal” functioning essentially unimpaired.
- **Moderate Drinking:** On regular schedule, every Saturday, sometimes Friday or Sunday as well; also on all “demand” occasions (parties, celebrations, holidays, etc.). Beverage beer or whiskey, amount moderate. Overt reason to “have a good time.” Intoxication or hangover infrequent. Other demands may take precedence over drinking. Seldom during day, in “private” and/or “appropriate” situations, not ostentatious. Slight impairment of “normal” functioning.
- **Heavy Drinking:** On regular schedule, other times as well. Weekend and demand-occasion drinking, also on weekdays, during day. Whiskey, wine, beer, considerable amounts. Overt reason to “raise hell.” Intoxication or hangover frequent; considerable impairment of “normal” functioning, few other demands supersede drinking. Frequently in public and/or “inappropriate” situations, ostentatious.
- **Serious Drinking:** Irregular or sporadic. Wine, whiskey, beer, frequently during day, large amounts, extended periods without sobering up (“bender” pattern), smaller groups of drinking companions, sometimes alone, few other demands allowed to interrupt or take precedence over drinking. Greater stress on “psychological” reasons (job loss, love loss, etc.). Intoxication frequent, substantial impairment of functioning.
These four “patterns” do not correspond directly to invariable types of behavior, nor was each cited feature characteristic of that pattern alone; rather, the four patterns represent “ideal” types which were seldom duplicated in actual behavior.

Project groups differed from one another in the number of individuals adhering to a given pattern; some groups such as the Molls and Junior Outlaws contained mostly “light” and “moderate” drinkers; most of the Senior Bandits followed the “heavy” pattern. In addition, although individual group members tended to maintain a given pattern quite consistently, individuals did move back and forth between different patterns depending on a range of life circumstances; for example, some moved from a “moderate” to a “heavy” position during the summer or other vacations. Further, various factions within groups tended to espouse different patterns; there was almost always a “more” and “less” heavy drinking faction in each group, although the opposing positions could be maintained by proponents of the “light” versus “moderate” pattern in one group, and “moderate” versus “heavy” in another.

The majority of male group members followed patterns two and three; the number following pattern four—a consistent pattern of heavy drinking—was low. Of 125 youngsters whose drinking habits were known, only three could be considered “serious” drinkers. This scarcity of “serious” drinkers calls for an explanation. As already shown, many forces pressed in the direction of heavy drinking; drinking had a high prestige pay-off—most adult “models” drank; liquor was readily available, and allocation of funds for liquor held high priority; drinking was “demand” behavior in many recurrent situations; important psychological needs of the boys were met directly or indirectly through drinking. Furthermore, it has been claimed that “moderate” drinking is particularly difficult for adolescents, who have not yet established a reliable set of internal “controls” in this regard. But counterpoised to these pressures toward “serious” drinking was an effective “control” mechanism—the definitions of proper “limits” of drinking maintained and sanctioned by the group itself.
Controls Over Drinking

Drinking behavior—in common with other behavioral forms—involves at least four separable facets. One is what people actually do; a second concerns the reasons they give in public for what they do; a third involves their deeper more private reasons or motives; a fourth facet is their conception of what they should do—their image of “correct” or “proper” behavior.

These four facets, or any set of them, may correspond or may differ one from the other. For example, people may give others different reasons for their actions than they privately admit. Discrepancies very frequently exist between what people do and what they think they should do. Previous sections have discussed actual patterns of practice—the first facet—and reasons for drinking, both explicit and implicit—the second and third facets. What was the groups’ conception of “correct” drinking behavior?

For all male groups, with the possible exception of the Senior Bandits, the pattern of “moderate” drinking represented the “ideal” norm. This pattern provided a clear conception of how one “should” drink and behave while drinking. One should drink to “have a good time”—to grease the wheels of social interaction. One should recognize his “limits” and not drink to the point of intoxication. Active and intense argument with one’s group mates was appropriate, but should not move over into undue bellicosity. When members of other peer groups were involved, a higher degree of belligerence was condoned. However, as in the in-group situation, belligerence should not reach the point of provoking counter-aggression—unless such provocations were deliberately intended. The most “appropriate” times for usual non-holiday drinking were nights and weekends; drinking during the day or on weekdays was looked on with some suspicion. One should drink enough to “show” he had been drinking, but not enough to seriously impair physical functioning, either while drinking or for forthcoming athletic activities. There were
“appropriate” and “inappropriate” locales and circumstances for drinking; one should not drink in church, during confession, during athletic contests, in the presence of most adult women of higher social status, in the presence of some adult men of higher social status. One should not drink, limit drinking, or drink surreptitiously in many public situations—in school, at most sports events, on public transport vehicles, and elsewhere.

Group definitions of more and less “appropriate” circumstances for drinking served as “natural” or culturally inherent devices for limiting drinking. These definitions were reviewed, modified, and reinforced by recurrent discussion where the major issues were whether to drink and how much to drink under what circumstances. The most highly charged of these issues concerned drinking and physical fitness. The inherent conflict between alcohol and good physical condition was a dominant concern not only of corner-group members but of the entire male population of Midcity. Two major bases of masculine prestige were physical prowess—as manifested by athletic skill, muscular strength and physical endurance—and drinking prowess—as manifested by the amount one could drink without loss of control and how frequently he drank. It is evident that these two bases of prestige were mutually inconsistent. Recurrent forms of behavior reflected various attempts to reconcile the conflicting demands of drinking and physical fitness.

Group members would drink heavily the night before an athletic contest and appear for the event in limited numbers, late, and with “big heads.” Although the boys were generally able to put a team on the field, their performance would be characterized by faulty coordination, limited stamina, and varying degrees of physical impairment. If defeated there would be fervent vows of abstention—“Never again! You just can’t mix booze and baseball (or football, or basketball, or boxing).” However, a creditable performance under these circumstances conferred higher prestige than victory without the handicap of a hangover; it was doubly the sign of a man to perform ably in the aftermath of heavy drinking. The nation’s major
example of the capacity to drink heavily and maintain the ability to perform prodigious physical feats, John L. Sullivan, learned his drinking habits on the street corners of Midcity.

For the average group member, however, too frequent resort to this double-pay-off route to prestige was not feasible; the boys were well aware that continued heavy drinking would inevitably result in physical deterioration. Stories were told of boxers or baseball players who had fallen from the heights or ruined their chances to rise by hitting the bottle too much. Since few gang members were so “tough” as to disdain athletic prowess as a badge of manliness, the prevalent concern over the deleterious effects of drinking on physical fitness served as one of the most effective cultural curbs to excessive drinking.

Another issue of considerably less concern involved drinking and church attendance. The consensus of one group was that drinking was appropriate both immediately preceding and immediately following confession or mass, but not during. The “before-and-after-but-not-during” rule was also applied in other situations such as club meetings and athletic contests. Although the boys were quite familiar with the code governing “correct” drinking behavior, each of its strictures, as might be expected, was violated at some time by all group members, and fairly often by a few. Drinking undertaken with the expressed intention of “having a good time” would often become heavier and move in the direction of “trouble.” This is not surprising. Violation of one of the many circumscribing rules could easily result when one’s “limits” were even slightly exceeded.

Often a stated resolve to limit drinking did not reflect actual intention. The frequently expressed sentiment “I’m gonna cut down on my drinking” sometimes indicated real dissatisfaction with one’s drinking behavior, but at other times it was primarily an attempt by a neophyte drinker to earn prestige by assuming the customary attitudinal stance of the mature and experienced drinker. Even when the resolve was quite genuine, however, implicit motives could outweigh intentions to adhere to the ideal. For example—although the “correct” pattern called for a curb on
highly aggressive behavior while drinking, drinking also served, on a more implicit level, to legitimate aggression, as has been shown. When these two definitions came into conflict, the more implicit pressure often superseded the conscious resolve. Thus deep cultural influences both limited and sustained drinking; just as cultural proscriptions served as vehicles of control, so did prescriptions undergird customary drinking with more than enough force to sweep away the repeated vows to “lay off for good this time.”

Despite infractions, however, the conception of “correct” drinking behavior made its influence felt. A boy who supported the correctness of “moderate” drinking but occasionally drank heavily was aware of the discrepancy between action and ideal, and this awareness served as an implicit inhibiting force. Considerably more explicit were the sanctions brought to bear by one’s group mates. These were roughly of three kinds, each of increasing severity. A boy who manifested “inappropriate” drinking behavior, if not too severe or frequent, was subject to persistent but kindly teasing. His indiscretions were pointed out, mocked, sometimes mimicked in a mixture of gentle reprove and restrained admiration. More frequent or severe transgressions evoked serious accusations, angry imputation of blame, and direct injunctions to “straighten out” or else. The “or else” could mean exclusion—the group’s ultimate sanction—or the categorization of a group member as “crazy” or abnormal—“What’s the matter with him—he’s drinking like a crazy man...” This was almost equivalent to exclusion since the group had low tolerance for “craziness.” This was one reason why groups included so few “serious” drinkers.

The failure of the group to apply limiting sanctions and the resultant assumption of “heavier” drinking patterns frequently meant that drinking was being used as a semi-explicit instrumentality of demand or symbol of discontent. For example, a group who resented exclusion from a recreational facility or program would quite deliberately adopt a pattern of conspicuous and “trouble”-oriented drinking as one means of signaling their dissatisfaction.
Despite the fact that the set of prescriptions and proscriptions governing drinking behavior was well defined and quite effectively enforced, group members had limited confidence in these group-originated control mechanisms. One reason was that they were not explicitly aware of the existence of their own code. In consequence, group members under certain circumstances sought out curbing influences which originated outside the group. Such external curbs were especially important during periods when pressures to exceed condoned limits were high (e.g., holidays, periods of intra-gang “tension,” times of police “crackdowns”) and under circumstances where excessive drinking could readily produce unwanted “trouble” (staging public dances, using public athletic facilities, attending public sports events). A major device for bringing external curbs to bear was introducing into the group milieu categories of persons who were seen as negatively judgmental toward drinking, in the hope that their presence would buttress group-originated limiting sanctions.

One such category of individuals was women, although the perceived curbing potential of different categories of women was by no means uniform. Adult women in general were seen as a reasonably effective curb. Drinking heavily in the presence of one’s mother was for the most part disapproved, although this stricture was weakened if the mother herself was a heavy “drinker,” and also by the notion that drinking was more permissible in the presence of relatives. One boy, chastised for drinking in the presence of his mother and aunt, countered with, “What the hell, they’re only my family...” Another boy justified his heavy drinking on the grounds that he was trying to teach his heavy-drinking mother a lesson.

Female peers also served as drinking curbs, but as in the case of adults, the curbing potential of different categories of girl varied. Bringing a girl to a dance was one way to limit drinking since boys with “dates” were permitted to drink less heavily without losing face. On the other hand, the presence of girls who themselves drank or evinced little censure of drinking had little inhibitory force, and in fact could spur drinking on the assumption, already cited, that a mixture of “babes and
“booze” could have pleasant consequences. As shown in the discussion of sex and mating, the distinction between “nice” and “bad” girls reportedly prevalent elsewhere had limited force in Midcity. This kind of distinction, however, was reflected in the fact that unknown girls from other areas were often assumed to be of higher status or more judgmental than familiar local girls, and thus had a somewhat greater limiting influence than neighborhood girls. On the other hand, the position on drinking attributed to those in the category “wife” was definite and unambiguous. Wives were seen as dedicated partisans of a consistently uncompromising “anti-drinking” position, and fear of violent physical retribution by one’s wife was occasionally given as a reason for limiting drinking.

Priests and other clergymen were seldom cast in the role of drinking curbs. The general position of the church, and of the priest as its representative, was perceived as unrealistically extreme and thus of little use. To be effective, an agency of limitation had to recognize the inevitability of some measure of drinking, and within this basic premise press for the maintenance of reasonable limits. Suggestions to have priests or other clergymen serve as adult sponsors of dances or parties were rejected on the grounds that their expectations with regard to appropriate patterns of drinking were unrealistic. Similarly, a social worker or recreation worker known to maintain a rigid stand in regard to drinking would be avoided.

**Differences Among Groups in**

**Disapproved Forms of Drinking Behavior**

Midcity gang members, as has been shown, maintained definite conceptions of what constituted “acceptable” and “unacceptable” forms of drinking behavior. These conceptions derived from the cultural system of the corner group, and reflected general standards of lower class adolescent culture. Project workers, for their part, were obligated by virtue of their job mandate to secure adherence to
drinking standards derived from the cultural system of middle class adults. In theory, therefore, the effectiveness of the workers’ efforts would have to be judged according to their success in inhibiting those forms of behavior which failed to accord with adult middle class standards. In actual practice, however, workers developed a set of criteria of “acceptable” behavior which fell somewhere between the standards of the middle class adult and those of the lower class adolescent. In regard to adolescent drinking, for example, the general attitude of most middle class adults could be summed up quite simply; adolescents, especially younger ones, should drink minimally or not at all.

Project workers, through their experience in the community, soon came to realize that the pattern of adolescent drinking was far too well entrenched to make its abolition a feasible objective. For one thing, they realized that this would be difficult or impossible; nor were they, as individuals, particularly adverse to “controlled” adult drinking. In fact, given the community definition that non-drinkers were “strange” or essentially untrustworthy, a militant anti-drinking stance would have seriously jeopardized their chances for community acceptance, especially during early phases of contact. The workers thus put their support behind those alternative drinking practices least likely to produce detrimental consequences—supporting, for example, private rather than public or “moderate” rather than “heavy” drinking.

It is necessary, therefore, to measure the effectiveness of the workers’ efforts against a set of “normative” standards which represented a compromise between adult middle class standards and those of the adolescent lower class. On this basis, behaviors which the workers supported or condoned will be called “approved;” those they opposed will be called “disapproved.” Forms of “approved” and “disapproved” behavior in the area of drinking are cited in Table 1.10. These forms, as in the case of other listings, were derived through consideration both of evaluative statements
made by workers and of their actual practices in supporting or opposing given forms of behavior.\textsuperscript{316}

In addition to the distinction between “approved” and “disapproved” forms of behavior, Table 1.10 incorporates a distinction between “action” and “sentiment.” Previous sections have stressed the importance of considering both what people claim to favor and what they actually do as a basis of analysis. In this study, the term “action” will refer to behavior actually observed to occur (refusal to join drinking party), and the term “sentiment” to statements of intention (“I'm gonna lay off booze from now on.”) or attitude (“Boozin' just don’t pay off!”). The “action-sentiment” distinction, as will be seen, is of critical importance since these two levels of behavior frequently showed differing or even directly contrasting trends.

It is important to examine the general “standing” of each of the Project’s seven analysis groups in regard to disapproved behavior. Were the groups which showed higher levels of disapproved behavior male or female, white or Negro, older or younger? Table 2.10 ranks the seven groups according to the amount of disapproved behavior engaged in by each during the entire study period, ignoring, for the time being, changes through time. While such changes did occur, standings in drinking behavior remained relatively stable, with appreciable change occurring in only one instance. These data provide an additional dimension to the foregoing description of drinking behavior by showing how factors related to age, sex, ethnic and social status influenced the patterning of “disapproved” behavior, and also provide one kind of baseline against which to measure change trends.

\textsuperscript{316} Appendix reference to rationale, derivation, method, and use of “disapproved” index.
Table 1.10

Forms of Drinking Behavior
(Relative to Project Evaluative Position)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Approved by Project</th>
<th>Sentiments Approved by Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Avoidance of drinking, “drinkers,” drinking places</td>
<td>1) Stated intention to limit or curtail future drinking, avoid association with “drinkers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Private in preference to public drinking</td>
<td>2) Disapproval of serious or uncontrolled drinking; support of limited or controlled drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Refusal to buy or accept liquor</td>
<td>3) Stated intention to drink privately rather than publicly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Discouraging, prohibiting, attempting to limit drinking</td>
<td>Sentiments Disapproved by Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Reducing frequency of drinking</td>
<td>1) Stated intention to increase or continue drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Encouraging, engaging in moderate rather than heavy drinking</td>
<td>2) Approval of continual or heavy drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Refraining from public display of purchased liquor</td>
<td>3) Stated intention to drink openly or to behave drunkenly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Control of, attempts to control disorderly drunken behavior</td>
<td>4) Bragging of one’s drinking prowess or capacity; belittling drinking prowess, capacity of another</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Disapproved by Project</th>
<th>Sentiments Disapproved by Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Getting drunk, going on drinking sprees</td>
<td>5) Defining drinking as inevitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Public in preference to private drinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Association with “drinkers,” frequenting of drinking places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Purchasing, arranging for purchase of liquor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Encouraging, supporting, arguing in favor of drinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Increasing frequency of drinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Public display of purchased liquor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Resisting efforts to control disorderly drunken behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.10

Group Standings in Project-Disapproved Drinking Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Disapproved</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Disapproved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrepancy Between Actions and Sentiments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sentiments Relative to Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>-68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>-48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>-41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>-32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>-10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>-28.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the drinking behavior of all group members during the full study period, “disapproved” actions, as shown in Table 2.10, were about four times as numerous as “approved” actions. Comparing the all-group figure of 78.4% “disapproved” actions to other forms of behavior shows that drinking was second
only to theft in relative frequency of disapproved actions. On the level of sentiment, however, approved sentiments were expressed just as frequently as disapproved sentiments, so that drinking sentiments ranked just about midway in comparison to other areas of behavior. It is thus evident that sentiments expressed by group members regarding drinking did not correspond to their actual actions. The discrepancy between word and deed in this area was among the highest of all behavior areas, with disapproved actions exceeding disapproved sentiments by almost 30%. This finding accords with the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual in drinking practice already discussed; if what group members said about their drinking behavior rather than what they did had been taken as the basis of analysis, a misleading picture would have emerged.

What were the characteristics of those Project groups which manifested higher levels of disapproved action? First, it is of interest to note how similar the groups were in their disapproved-action standings. Five of the seven fell within six percentage points of one another—an unusual degree of closeness in the face of differences in age, sex, and ethnic status. However, an examination of group standings in regard to these latter factors reveals quite a clear pattern.

The three older male groups ranked at the top; the Negro female group at the bottom; the two younger male groups and the white girls occupied an intermediate position. These standings furnish some evidence as to the relative influence of sex, age, class status and ethnic status on drinking patterns. The association of these factors with disapproved drinking actions was as follows:
Table 3.10

Association of Factors with Disapproved Drinking Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Characteristic</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Social Status</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Age</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Age; Male Sex; Lower Social Status</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This suggests that there was a fair relation between being of lower social status and engaging in disapproved drinking actions, and the best relation with a combination of being older, male, and of lower social status. These findings can be clarified by considering the forces previously discussed which served to inhibit or impel drinking. Established drinking was the badge of a man—denoting both adulthood and manliness. The older boys, whether Negro or white, more or less socially aspiring, did more disapproved drinking than either the younger boys or the girls. This would indicate that patterns of drinking became more entrenched as the boys grew older. Thus age and sex would appear to have been the major factors related to the amount and seriousness of drinking. What was the role of ethnic and social status?

Within each of three groups—older boys, younger boys, and girls—groups of lower social status ranked higher in disapproved actions. The position of the Negro groups is of note. The Negro Kings engaged in fewer disapproved actions than the other older male groups, and the Negro Queens manifested fewer disapproved actions than the white girls. It should be recalled that the Negro groups had higher social aspirations than the other groups. Both boys and girls in the Negro groups were well aware of the notion that entrenched drinking was associated with lower social status.
class status and was thus detrimental to upward movement. For the girls, the strength of this definition, along with the fact that “femininity” as such was not enhanced by drinking, operated to keep their disapproved drinking behavior at a low level; for the Negro boys, however, the inhibitory influence of the conception that “drinking is lower class” was counterbalanced by the “drinking-is-adult-and-manly” idea, so that they stood at an intermediate level.

Disapproved sentiments showed quite a contrasting picture. The all-group level of disapproved sentiment was considerably lower than that of actions. The positions of the older and younger boys were reversed, with the older ranking lower than the younger. The older boys also contrasted with the younger in showing a considerably higher discrepancy between act and sentiment. The older boys engaged in more serious drinking but did less talking about it, while the younger boys drank less but talked more about how much they drank or were going to drink.

There were several reasons for this. Intensive discussion of drinking by the younger boys served to delineate and muster collective support for a pattern of behavior they were in the process of adopting; once the pattern was established, such verbal reinforcement became less necessary. Second, as has been shown, the younger boys did a great deal of boasting about what big drinkers they were to show how grown up they were; it became less necessary to flaunt drinking as a badge of adulthood as they became more adult in actuality. Third, as the boys moved into later adolescence and their social horizons widened, they became both more aware of and more concerned about negative reactions of outsiders to their drinking behavior. In an effort, therefore, to avoid outside censure, they became more secretive about their drinking so that the verbal picture they presented bore progressively less relation to actual practice. This is reflected in the high discrepancy between the acts and sentiments of the older boys, as shown in Table 2.10. For the younger boys, the act-sentiment discrepancy was quite low.

Sensitivity to outside opinion also figured in the gap between act and sentiment noted for the girls. The two girls’ groups, the white Molls and the Negro
Queens, stood at opposite extremes in regard to the discrepancy between actions and sentiments. In disapproved actions, the Molls were close to the “high disapproved” position of the boys, while the Queens ranked lowest of all groups. In sentiments, however, the Molls ranked lowest, while the Queens were close to the “high disapproved” groups. The Molls evidenced the greatest discrepancy between act and sentiment of all groups—with disapproved actions far more prevalent than disapproved sentiments, while for the Queens, disapproved sentiments outnumbered disapproved acts.

Differences in the drinking behavior of the white and Negro girls were related to the identity of their respective “reference groups”—who the people were whose reactions mattered most to them. The girls’ groups resembled each other in being more sensitive than the boys to outside reactions to their drinking behavior; they differed as to the group whose opinions concerned them most. The white girls were in fairly close contact with a number of adult women from middle class communities who maintained negatively judgmental attitudes towards female drinking. These women included staff members of a local settlement house, visiting welfare workers, and the girls’ own Project worker. Contacts with these women activated in the girls a sense of stigma over the drinking customs of the local community. The more meaningful were the Molls’ relationship to these women and the more affection they felt for them, the greater their desire to please them by expressing sentiments in line with known middle class values.

Their own drinking practices, however, continued to conform to the “high disapproved” pattern of the local neighborhood, resulting in a discrepancy between word and deed. For example, the girls defined a “nice” boy as one who did not drink; however, most of the boys they did associate with were “drinkers.” The girls also expressed disapproval of “little kids seeing drunken women all over the place;” however, most of their own mothers frequently became “drunken women.” The fact that most of the girls’ mothers, in common with many local women, were “drinkers” meant that they were not in a good position to censure the drinking behavior of
their daughters. The “do-as-I-say-and-not-as-I-do” stand taken by the mothers had limited force; maternal example rather than maternal precept operated to establish and reinforce the girls’ drinking patterns. Some of the girls’ heaviest drinking, in fact, occurred in connection with their mothers’ drinking sprees. The Molls’ unusually high expression of “approved” sentiments in regard to drinking, then, served not only to convey an impression of support for a course of action they themselves did not follow, but also to protect their own mothers from anticipated censure by the “outside” women. Although the girls could do little to alter the entrenched drinking customs of the neighborhood, they could inform the worker that they knew of an alternative set of values, and indicate their approval of these values.

The Negro girls, in contrast, had less direct contact with “outside” women and seemed to care less about the opinions of those they did contact. Their major object of concern in this regard was the Kings, their brother group. The Queens were eager to find favor in the eyes of the Kings, whose esteem they valued highly. The Kings maintained the “entrenched” pattern of drinking practice characteristic of the older male groups; the Queens, on the other hand, whose femininity was not enhanced by drinking, and whose social aspirations made them particularly sensitive to the notion that “drinking” indicated lower class status, engaged in less “disapproved” drinking than any Project group. However, in order to appear to the boys to share with them those values which supported a heavier pattern of drinking, they expressed sentiments to drinking which were more in conformity with the heavier drinking practices of the boys than with their own. Table 2.10 shows that the Queens ranked next to the Kings in level of drinking sentiment; many of these sentiments, expressed in the presence of the boys, were designed to create an impression of support for male drinking behavior.
Theft Behavior in City Gangs

I know why these boys steal. I grew up right in this neighborhood myself. Ya steal because ya wanta be tough. Otherwise you’re on the outside, and what is it we’re all struggling for anyway but to be on the inside...

Victim of Theft by Junior Bandits

Social Workers and people like that might be different. But the people around here are like us. If we get a chance to steal a buck, we’re gonna take it!

Junior Bandit

Is there anything you can think of that I coulda done to keep you guys from breaking into the store and stealing those guns?

Nothin. There was nothing you coulda done. We hadda do it.

Senior Bandit to Worker

The Importance of Theft

Theft was the dominant form of criminal behavior in Midcity gangs. During the age period from 15 to 18, 37% of all known illegal actions recorded for the Project groups, and 54% of “major” offenses, involved theft in one of its varied forms.
Acts of theft were two to three times as common as acts of assault, the next most frequent type of offense. But the dominance of theft among crimes was not confined to Project groups, or to unofficially recorded offenses, nor to the period of the Midcity study. The proportion of theft to other forms of crime--37%--which was derived from an examination of all offenses recorded for Project group members was identical with the proportion of court-appeared thefts to other court-appeared crimes during the same period. During the 14 year age period from 7 to 21, court appearances for theft comprised 40% of all appearances, and were three times as frequent as appearances for drinking, the next most frequent type, and five and a half times as frequent as appearances for assaultive offenses, including gang fighting. The 14 male groups studied by the Midcity Project showed similar rates. Court appearances for theft during adolescence comprised about 40% of all appearances, outnumbering appearances for drinking by three to four times, and for assault by four to five times.\textsuperscript{317}

The predominance of theft among forms of youth crime was not confined to the gangs of the Midcity study. During the decade of the 1950's theft was the dominant form of youth crime in all of Midcity, in all of Port City, in all of the state, and in all of the nation. The bulk of arrested crimes committed by youth were thefts, and the great bulk of thefts were committed by youths. In Port City, 65% of all arrests of male juveniles in the years 1959-61 were for theft; arrests for theft were eight times as frequent as arrests for vandalism, the next most frequent offense, and twelve times as frequent as arrests for assaultive offenses. During the years 1952-61, 55% of all Port City males committed to correctional schools were sentenced for theft, with theft-based commitments six times as frequent as those for assault, the next most frequent offense. In United States cities in the year 1961 45% of all arrests of persons under 15, and 39% of arrests of those under 18, male and female, were for some form of theft. This contrasted with the frequency of theft as

\textsuperscript{317} Reference to Bowditch, 1912. Similar proportions 50 years ago.
an arrest basis among older persons; for example, for ages 20-24, theft arrests comprised 13% of all arrests, and only 30% of arrests at ages 40-44.\textsuperscript{318}

These figures show an unusual degree of consistency among a variety of indexes—official and unofficial counts, collective and individual participation, arrest, court and commitment figures, and populations ranging from very small to very large. The general picture which emerges from a variety of indexes indicates that the peak age for theft among urban United States males in the 1950's was 16; that during the 14-18 age period thefts accounted for 35% to 65% of all actionable offenses by males; that thefts comprised about half of all officially processed crimes committed by males during the period of adolescence, and outnumbered the next most frequent forms of offense by three to five times.

The fact that theft is clearly the predominant form of juvenile crime in the United States is not, curiously enough, reflected in the amount of attention it is accorded in contemporary writing—either popular or scholarly. “Gang violence” is frequently cited; “gang theft” seldom. The “fighting gang” or “conflict group” is a prime object of both public and professional concern; the “stealing gang” is seldom mentioned. Some even claim that corner groups whose central preoccupation is not fighting should not even be considered “gangs,” and that this term should be reserved only for those groups specifically organized around the conduct of collective combat.

Why this preoccupation with relatively uncommon forms of youth crime at the expense of its most common form? The disproportionate degree of concern with non-theft crime derives to a greater extent from characteristic emotional reactions to certain forms of crime than from documented knowledge of the actual prevalence of various forms of crime. Four reasons for this may be cited; the high emotional shock potential of violence, the low shock potential of non-violent theft, the focus on

individuals rather than behavior, and the confusion of appropriative and aggressive aspects of crime.

The exaggerated perception of the prevalence of violent or aggressive crime and the corresponding underestimation of the prevalence of appropriative crime reflect a fundamental human concern with violence and aggression as general forms of behavior. Throughout history as well as at present the actual frequency of human involvement in behavior which is specifically violent or assaultive, when compared with the frequency of such society-maintaining activities as food production, goods production, trading and marketing, worship, mating, child-rearing, and many others, is and has been low. But the relatively small volume of violent activity has commanded attention far out of proportion to its actual prevalence. Episodes of warfare, massacre, assassination, insurrection, revolt, and mob violence comprise a disproportionate bulk of historical accounts, while the routine and unspectacular forms of behavior which comprise the vast bulk of human activity receive relatively little attention. An observer with only published historical materials at hand might conclude, most erroneously, that the bulk of human occupation throughout history had involved battle, conquest, and violence. The urgency of human concern with violence strongly influences perceptions of crime prevalence. The principle governing the general perception of crime frequency might be phrased—“intensity of concern converts to exaggerated perception of prevalence.”

The reasons for this are not hard to understand. Violent or assaultive crimes pose a clear threat to the internal order of a societal unit and to the safety of its members. These are acts which, in the words of Emile Durkheim, “offend very pervasive and intense sentiments” and “shock the common conscience,” and which are subject to the most severe punitive sanctions. Violent crimes by youth-gang fights, gang assaults on individuals, sexual attacks—have particular power to evoke feelings of fear, threat and danger among adults.\footnote{See Assault chapter.} The intensity of public concern with violence reflects and is reflected in the crime coverage of newspapers—a major
source of public information on crime. The newspapers report virtually all crimes of violence which come to their attention, while reporting only a small proportion of crimes of appropriation. This kind of selective reporting greatly magnifies the apparent prevalence of violent crime, further accelerating the process of perceptual exaggeration.\textsuperscript{320}

The fact is that genuine gang fights, collective assaults on adults and similar types of gang crime are sufficiently rare in any given city in any given year as to be a novelty; for example, of more than 1,000 crimes committed by the 205 members of Midcity project gangs during the Project contact period, not a single gang attack on an adult was recorded. One instance of this type of crime, which occurred prior to the study period, was sufficiently unique and sufficiently shocking as to furnish the major reason for the establishment of the Project. In this instance the arousal potency of a single act of violence outweighed the potency of thousands of acts of theft.\textsuperscript{321}

This suggests the second reason for the dearth of focused concern with theft. Although the cumulative effects of continued theft are occasionally brought to public attention, the constant daily flow of petty pilfering, minor shoplifting, and breaking in to neighborhood stores which in fact comprise the great bulk of youth crime has little news value, and even less capacity to evoke passionate reactions. Public complacency about theft will be explored further as part of a discussion, in the next chapter, of motives for theft. This discussion will cite the relatively high degree of tolerance for theft in the United States; few thefts, even major ones, have the capacity to “shock the common conscience;” it might even appear that the grander and more spectacular an act of theft, the greater its capacity to evoke admiration rather than condemnation. The principle that perception of prevalence is influenced by emotional arousal potential also applies here; insofar as routine, non-violent

\textsuperscript{320} Newspaper statistics. Comparison of reported theft, assault, frequencies and arrest frequencies, same years.
\textsuperscript{321} Possible statistics on N.Y.C. situation; relative % of violent to other crimes. See data in Cloward letter.
theft fails to arouse feelings of shock, indignation and threat, to that degree it is under-perceived, under-reported, and under-attended.

A third reason for vagueness as to the relative prevalence of different forms of crime relates to a particular mode of viewing criminality common among both the public and professionals. A dominant approach to crime, rooted essentially in traditional religious concerns with sin and the salvation of individuals, revolves around the question—“Why do some individuals become criminals?” or, as applied to youth crime—“Why does one boy rather than another become a juvenile delinquent?” Underlying this approach is a basic conception of human nature which conceives criminality as an attribute of the individual organism; one “has” or “gets” a criminal nature or criminal characteristics as a consequence of factors which are inherent in the organism or are implanted therein during early childhood. A basic concern of this approach is to allocate individuals to one of two basic categories—“delinquent” or “nondelinquent”—on the basis of whether or not they are seen to possess the essential attributes of criminality. Within this framework the particular kinds of criminal acts engaged in by individuals become a subordinate concern; it is not particularly important whether these crimes are acts of theft, or of assault, or of vandalism, or of truancy; what is important is that a given individual has engaged in any form or forms of crime with sufficient frequency and persistence so that he can be allocated to the category “delinquent.”322 The distinctions between such sharply contrasting forms of behavior as failure to attend school regularly and engagement in armed robbery become blurred and hazy as they merge into a generalized agglomerate of “criminality,” conceived as an intrinsic attribute of individuals. The fact that theft generally comprises about half of all officially-processed youth crimes, while assault or sexual offenses comprise less than ten percent, is not unknown to most of those who utilize this approach; it is simply regarded as relatively unimportant.

322 This may produces odd categories such as “pseudo-delinquent,” “true” delinquent, “true” nondelinquent, “pre-delinquent,” etc.
If rather than asking, “why do some individuals become criminals?” one asks “how can one account for criminal behavior?” the focus of concern shifts from individuals to behavior, and distinctions among widely varying forms of criminal activity become critical. Within this framework it is not necessary to decide whether particular youngsters are “true” or only “pseudo” delinquents or whether they are “true” pre-delinquents or only engaging in childish misadventures. Instead, crimes of varying types are seen as forms of behavior which can be engaged in by larger or smaller numbers of persons, with greater or lesser frequency at different ages and among different subcultural groups, and so on. The relative prevalence of different forms of crime is, of course, quite well known to most students of crime; but the practice of taking the individual rather than the form of behavior as a central focus of study has kept investigators from exploiting the rich implications of the fact that different kinds of crimes are committed with different frequencies by different kinds of people.

A fourth reason for the inadequate recognition of the significance of theft derives from a widespread failure to distinguish with sufficient clarity between “appropriative” and “aggressive” aspects of theft. The question—“What is theft?” will be addressed in some detail in the next section; theft will be described as one mode of property-transfer which can occur under a wide variety of circumstances. Some of these circumstances involve violence, force, or the threat of force; many do not. There is nothing in the act of theft, so defined, which involves or requires violence or aggression. And yet, within the western cultural tradition, “aggressive” and “appropriative” aspects of theft are widely perceived as organically related, along with a prevalent tendency to regard an act of theft in and of itself as aggressive, malicious, and hostile. This is probably related to the particular nature of the concepts of “property” and “ownership” in Western culture, to be discussed later. It is most remarkable that in many legal codifications acts of theft are categorized as “crimes against property,” as if “property” were some sort of animate
entity which could be hurt or offended by being appropriated. The set of legal statutes which governed the definitions of criminal behavior in Midcity did indeed classify theft under “crimes against property”—thus placing as the possession of burglar’s tools in the same legal category as patently hostile crimes such as malicious mischief and defacing the flag.

Within this perceptual framework elements of aggression and hostility are built into the concept of theft, so that it is not surprising that theft is so often explained as a consequence of hostility. This approach is prevalent in both psychological and sociological treatments. Thrasher in his classic work on gangs classifies theft as a “predatory” activity, and his discussion links “robbing” quite directly with clearly hostile activities such as vandalism and malicious mischief. Cohen, using Thrasher’s merged consideration of theft and malicious behavior as a point of departure, analyses theft primarily in terms of hostility. Many psychiatric treatments of stealing assume without question that any act of theft is an act of aggression. The complex relationship between theft and aggression will be discussed in later sections; for the present it is important to stress that it is both possible and profitable to consider as conceptually separate the “aggressive” and “appropriative” aspects of theft. Just as there is violence without theft, and theft without violence, so there may be anger without theft and theft without anger. To the degree to which aggressive and appropriative aspects of crime are not clearly distinguished, and theftive and assaultive behavior merged into an agglomerate of generalized criminality, to that degree is the relative prevalence of theft and assault obscured, and the centrality of theft in youth crime overlooked.

Since the factors which underlie these misperceptions derive largely from modes of thought deeply rooted in cultural traditions of the pre-scientific era, one might suspect that scholars oriented to a more scientific approach would be less susceptible to these influences, and that their investigations, guided to a greater

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323 See for example Model Penal Code of the American Law Institute: leads to illogical things like “theft of services” included under “crimes against property.”
324 Thrasher, 92-95; Cohen, 27-28.
degree by empirical evidence than by unexamined emotional reactions, would focus more explicitly on theft. This does not appear to be the case. An examination of the indexes of ten important works published during the past twenty-five years which deal with gangs, delinquency, or with crime more generally, shows that out of a total of approximately 3,000 book pages, only 12 pages contain discussion sufficiently focused on theft as to be indicated in the index under the headings “theft,” “larceny,” “robbery,” or “burglary.” It is significant that works in the scientifically-oriented tradition which devote the most explicit attention to theft are those written before 1930. The index to Thrasher’s “The Gang” (1927) indicates 60 pages which cite or discuss theft—a considerably more extensive treatment than any subsequent major sociological work on crime or gangs. Sutherland’s well-known text on criminology (1924) indicates about 40 pages concerned with theft. This might suggest that recent sociological thought in the area of crime is moving further away from the direct examination of criminal behavior as such and is focusing instead on individual, populations, or social systems. Even including the earlier works, however, it is significant that not a single one of the cited books contains a full chapter devoted to a direct consideration of theft, robbery, burglary, or larceny.

It is thus evident that the amount of attention accorded theft both by the public and by scholars is disproportionately low relative to its prevalence. But perhaps this neglect of theft both by scholars and non-scholars is justified. The fact that theft is the statistically dominant form of youth crime might not necessarily mean that it is also the most important. It could be argued that those forms of crime which have the greatest power to evoke strong emotional responses are in fact the most “serious,” regardless of their prevalence, and thus merit the most attention. Thus consideration engages the issue of what constitutes “seriousness” in criminal behavior.

325 Cite to 10 books: Cohen, Ohlin-Cloward, Block and Flynn, Tannenbaum, Barron, McCords, Whyte, Gluecks ’50, Gluecks ’62, Fine.
326 Reference to Bordua.
Viewed in terms of its capacity to arouse fear, threat, and shock, theft is evidently less “serious” than rape, gang fighting, or murder. But another measure of “seriousness” may be found in the actual cost to society of crime. Looking at crime as a form of behavior which commands the allocation of social resources—money, services of skilled personnel, maintenance of extensive physical structures for confinement of criminals—it would appear that those forms of crime which most extensively engage this expensive processing apparatus must be considered the most serious. Even setting aside the loss to property owners of goods stolen from houses, stores, factories and persons—a not inconsiderable amount—and setting aside as well the “human” cost of youthful involvement in crime—the major social cost of youth crime is incurred through the legal processing of young thieves. The great majority of young people who become subject to the costly procedures of the legal-corrective apparatus are boys who have stolen, and the great bulk of crimes for which they are arrested, tried, sentenced, and confined are acts of theft. It is this process which incurs the highest social cost, and from this perspective theft is by far the most serious form of youth crimes.327

The predominance of theft among youth crimes—not only in Midcity gangs but throughout the country—requires that the explanation of theft occupy a central position in any attempt to understand city gangs and their patterns of delinquency. An adequate theory of gang delinquency must be able not only to accommodate theft within its explanatory framework but it must also bring to bear on the fact of theft its highest degree of explanatory efficiency. Thus, for example, any theory of gang delinquency which centers on conflict or aggression must come to terms with the fact that the dominant form of crime by gang members is not assault but theft, and that one does not account for the prevalence of theft by accounting for the existence of conflict.

If, rather than asking “What crimes are most shocking?” one asks “What crimes are most prevalent?” and instead of asking “Why do boys go bad?” one asks

327 Refer to L. Wilkins’ “social cost” argument.
“Why do boys commit crimes?” then the explanation of theft becomes a central task. Valid answers to these questions must derive from as detailed as possible a picture of the actual nature of theft behavior in city gangs. Who stole, what did they steal, who did they steal from, under what circumstances did they steal? The patterning of theft behavior in Midcity gangs will be examined in some detail, but first it will be necessary to specify just what kinds of behavior will here be considered as “theft.”

What is Theft?

Theft is an ancient and widespread form of crime. It takes a great variety of forms, appears in many contexts, and is of concern, in some way, to everyone. The terms used to refer to this practice have thus acquired a host of diverse meanings and diffuse overtones. Popular usage of these terms is characterized by vagueness, imprecision, and inconsistency. One reason for this derives from the utility of the term “theft” as an epithet. There is considerably higher public tolerance for most forms of theft than for, say, murder or rape. The accusation of thievery thus makes a most useful kind of pejorative, since it is quite insulting but not dangerously insulting. The term is thus applied quite indiscriminately to a wide and disparate range of behaviors—for example, to “sharp” bargaining (You are stealing the food from my children’s mouths!), to disapproved corporation practices (robber baronry), to achieving intimacy without explicit permission (stealing a kiss), and to effecting shifts in emotional attitudes (stealing the “affections” of a spouse or lover). Many behaviors which common parlance includes under the concept of “theft” are only peripherally related to one another or to clearly violative behavior.

Legal terminology in this area, while more precise than popular usage, is generally disorganized, inconsistent, and unreliable. The law uncritically employs terms which incorporate ancient and untenable assumptions as to motivation and culpability; major distinctions as to value, object, and actor are made inconsistently and unsystematically, and usage of the major reference terms and their subtypes in
legal codes varies widely from locale to locale. Because the concept of theft and its major synonyms and types—larceny, burglary, robbery, and stealing, are subject to so wide a variety of meaning and interpretations in both legal and popular usage, it is essential to specify as clearly as possible just what kinds of behavior are to be considered “theft” for the purpose of the present analysis.\textsuperscript{328}

The concept of theft requires a concept of property, and the concept of property requires a concept of ownership.\textsuperscript{329} There are no entities extrinsic to the human organism which “belongs” to any individual, group, or corporate body in any intrinsic way. The concept of “ownership” implies that a person or group has special rights concerning the possession and use of extrinsic entities—rights which do not pass to others except under specified conditions. Ownership is thus a conceptualized relationship between men and designated extrinsic entities. Different societies vary greatly in the extent to which the concept of ownership implies exclusivity of possession and use, and in regard to the range of objects, commodities, or resources to which the concept may apply. For example, in certain aboriginal American tribes, the only material objects considered “ownable” by an adult male were the breech cloth and spear. All other material resources—crafted goods, dwellings, animals, agricultural tools, land—were seen as community property. Under these circumstances, intra-tribal theft was rare, since there were few instances where assigned exclusivity of use was considered part of the relationship between man and object.

\textsuperscript{328} It is important to stress at this point that the definitions used here do not correspond to those in common legal usage. As pointed out in the discussion of assault and elsewhere, the delineation of a semantic domain which may quite effectively serve the purposes of the legal system may quite poorly serve the purposes of behavioral analysis. The law has good although often devious reasons for wishing to consider behaviors such as owning “burglars’ tools” and sneaking into movies as “theft;” these reasons can be considerably at variance with analytic purposes of defining a form of behavior with sufficient precision as to make it readily isolatable, operationally determinable, and directly comparable for measurement purposes with other forms of behavior. These considerations are similar to those underlying the policy of ignoring the legal distinction between “delinquency” and “crime” for purposes of the present analysis.

\textsuperscript{329} Refer to Durkheim, \textit{Division of Labor}.
In Western society, in contrast, the concepts of ownership and its corollary, property, lie close to the foundations of our entire cultural system. The concept of ownership is applied to an incredibly extensive and diverse range of objects, commodities and resources—even to highly intangible entities such as intellectual notions. Exclusivity of ownership is so central a concept in western society that the imaginary bond between man and object is often conceived as sacred. It would follow in a society where the concept of ownership extends to encompass virtually every possible commodity (“only the air is free”), that the likelihood of theft would be commensurately extensive.

It would also follow, in a society where the concept of ownership applies so widely, that there would be a variety of ways in which ownership could be transferred from one party to another. The more common modes of ownership transfer generally incorporate two major conditions. 1) Transfer is affected with the knowledge and/or consent of the assigned or prior owner. 2) The prior owner receives in return for the transferred entity some other entity felt to be of equivalent value. These two elements of culturally-approved ownership transfer may be used to define the boundaries of the concept of theft. For present purposes, this concept will be applied to situations where the first cited condition does not obtain. “Theft” will thus be defined as a mode of ownership transfer which is effected without the knowledge and/or explicit consent of the assigned owner, or under circumstances involving the use or threat of force or injury.

Three features of this definition should be noted. First, theft is defined as one mode of ownership transfer—a mode which violates the legal statutes of many political units—but which is nonetheless a form of economic behavior which may be examined within a framework similar to that used for the analysis of non-violative forms of transfer such as purchase, barter and exchange. There is nothing in

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330 Sutherland; precedents for viewing theft as economic behavior; professional theft, pictured as type of economic activity; “thief” analyzed as “legitimate” occupational role. Fact of difficulty, in legal code, of disentangling legitimate from illegitimate forms of economic transaction. Cite Am. Anthropologist article on economics, January 1963, similar definition.
theft, so defined, which involves hostility or aggression in any intrinsic way. The definition indicates that force or threat of injury may, under some circumstances, be the mechanism by which property transfer is affected, but this is only one of a variety of methods of achieving this end, and by no means the most common one.

A second feature of this definition concerns forms of behavior which are frequently conceptualized as theft, but are not included under the present definition. These involve types of ownership transfer which take the external form of “legitimate” economic transactions, but which involve features considered to be “fraudulent.” These involve principally two kinds of situations—value-inequality situations, and breach of trust situations.

Situations of value inequality occur where the second cited condition of “legitimate” ownership transfer does not obtain—where the prior owner does not receive, or the subsequent owner does not return, a consideration felt to be equivalent in value to the transferred commodity or resources. Such transactions are generally designated under the headings of swindling, embezzlement, fraud, confidence games, and the like. Breach of trust situations occur when goods or services are rendered, or a resource transferred, on the basis of an explicit or implied promise of remuneration of equivalent value return which then is not fulfilled. Both of these kinds of situations, defined as “theft” in the Model Penal Code of the American Law Institute, are excluded here primarily because of the problem of setting sufficiently precise boundaries.

“Unequal-value” transactions differ from legitimate transactions mainly in that the exchanged commodities are felt to be of unequal value. The difficulty here is how to decide at what point in a theoretically continuous scale of value-inequality the condition “theft” should be considered to obtain. Of three possible points in an exchange-value continuum—purchase of a watch at twice its “market” value, purchase of a cut glass jewel represented as a diamond, and purchase of stock in an unproductive oil well, the first would seldom be considered theft, the second might

331 Model Penal Code, op. cit.
sometimes be, and the third might often be. But the generalized imputation of “theft” to any transaction of this sort would require setting up some arbitrary point at which the value inequality was considered to be sufficiently great as to justify the designation “theft.” Where would this be? Where the buyer or seller received 3/5 value? 1/2 value? 1/100 value? Zero value? Much economic exchange behavior which falls toward the upper end of this continuum—“sharp” bargaining, Yankee horse trading—receives substantial cultural support, and could not be legally designated as “theft” without many complications.

Breach of trust situations, where promised goods or services are not rendered, or promised remuneration is not made, present similar boundary problems. Both value-inequality and breach of trust situations represent important forms of violative behavior in our society, but will not be included in the present analysis both because of definitional difficulties and because crimes of this type were seldom practiced by Midcity adolescents. Such forms of behavior, which might be designated “fraudulent economic transactions” in distinction to “theft,” become relevant in the analysis of “white collar crime” and similar forms of violative or unethical commercial behavior and generally involve adult populations quite different from those of the present study.

A third feature of the definition concerns the concept of “ownership.” This is the least precise term of the definition, and requires further specification. As already mentioned, the concept of ownership can be applied, in our society, to an incredibly diverse range of entities, so that the issue of what can be “owned,” and what comprises “ownership” is extremely complex. Nevertheless, an analysis of theft cannot ignore this issue, since what can be owned can be stolen. Because of the absence of a concise set of general principles governing definitions and concepts, legal codes are obliged to go into great and complicated detail in this area and must specify an extremely wide and diverse variety of particular circumstances concerning the conditions, nature and forms of property and ownership. The present definition, based on a small number of general statements, will permit a
considerable gain in economy, but some measure of imprecision will nevertheless rema

The meaning of the term “ownership” in the present definition may be clarified by citing five relevant dimensions—concreteness, movability, duration, proximity, and collectivity. “Owned” entities may vary as to how concrete or tangible they are. On the one extreme there are solid and tangible objects such as houses, tools, and automobiles. Less concrete are entities such as specific plans, blue prints, designs, and chemical formulae whose ownership may be assigned to designated parties through devices such as patent laws. Least tangible are intellectual notions, artistic creations, and the like, toward which proprietary rights may be claimed, but for which the establishment of a legal title or exclusivity of possession or use is difficult or impossible. An example would be a dance routine developed by one performer and “taken over” by another. For present purposes, only concrete objects will be considered as “ownable.” Media of exchange (coins, bills, checks) present a special case, since they generally represent value not evidently related to direct utility or other bases of determining value. Money must, of course, be considered an entity subject to ownership and thus to theft.

Ownable objects may vary as to movability. At one extreme are entities difficult or impossible to move such as tracts of land or skyscrapers. At the other are small items such as rings or coins. In between are objects movable with varying degrees of difficulty (difficult, outhouse; somewhat difficult, locked and braked auto; easy, unlocked auto, engine running). For present purposes, only “movable” objects will be considered as subject to theft. Instances where ownership of fixed entities is transferred through fraudulent or coercive means (forged lease, armed seizure of Indian lands) will be considered as contractual transactions. Entities which are concrete and movable will here be designated as “objects.”

A third dimension of “ownership” is duration of possession or use. In most legal codes, it must be demonstrated, for the condition of “theft” to obtain, that ownership transfer occurs under circumstances where there is an intention to
“permanently deprive” owners of their ownership rights. For example, instances where an automobile is taken without the owner’s knowledge, driven around, and then abandoned, cannot legally be designated “theft” since it cannot be shown that there was an intention of keeping or selling the car. For present purposes, the actual act of unauthorized assumption of ownership, for however brief a period, will be considered as theft.

A fourth dimension concerns the physical proximity of owned entities and owners. Owned entities may be generally near their owners (shoes, watches) or infrequently near (slot machines, rental units). Ownership will here be considered to be independent of proximity. Similarly, situations where rights of ownership are exercised by “agents” or persons other than the assigned owner will be considered susceptible of theft.

A fifth dimension concerns the collectivity of ownership. An assigned “owner” may be a single individual, two individuals, or more—and may involve extremely large collectivities such as legal corporations, states, municipalities, or branches of the armed forces. Despite some popular sentiment that ownership of property assigned to large collectivities may be transferred freely without knowledge of the owner, “ownership” and thus theft potential will be considered to exist regardless of whether owners are singular or plural, designated individuals or corporate entities.

The term “ownership,” therefore, will, as used here, be applied to concrete and movable entities, including media of exchange, assigned to individual or collective owners, irrespective of proximity between owner and object, and “transfer” will refer to the act of terminating such ownership for whatever period of time.

Types of Theft

Even after having substantially limited the range of behaviors to be considered as “theft” by confining the use of this concept to the unauthorized

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332 Refer to Hall, Theft, Law and Society
ownership transfer of movable objects, a great variety of different types of behavior still remains subsumed under this term. Categories used in legal codes to delineate subtypes of theft are unsystematic and inconsistent. It is possible to distinguish at least nine relevant dimensions in regard to theft; the identity of actors (age, sex, relation to owner, etc.), the number of actors (one, several, many, etc.), the mode of effecting property transfer (snatching, lifting, use of force, etc.), the time of theft (night, day, summer, winter, etc.), the nature of stolen objects (monetary, non-monetary, small, large, etc.), the value of stolen objects (low, medium, high, etc.), the nature of theft target (male, female, store, house, car, etc.), and the degree of completion of the act (initiated, partly completed, etc.).

Common legal terminology selects some of the dimensions on which to base distinctions and ignores others. The terms “burglary” and “robbery” are often used to make two of a range of possible distinctions according to target, with “burglary” referring to crime involving places, and “robbery” involving persons. The term “larceny” is often used to imply distinctions on the basis of value, with “grand” or “felonious” larceny referring to thefts of objects of greater value, and “petty” or “petit” or “misdemeanor” larceny to objects of lesser value. Value distinctions are frequently based on a simple two-category scale whose cutting-point varies from locale to locale, with thefts of objects above a certain value being defined as “grand” and those below as “petty.” Sometimes, however, theft is designated as “felonious” not on the basis of assigned value, but on the basis of the nature of the stolen object, or even of the mode of transfer.333 The other six cited dimensions are not incorporated into terminology in any systematic way. Degree of completion is sometimes attended by distinguishing among “breaking,” “entering,” and “larceny” as three possible stages of a completed act of theft. Time of occurrence is sometimes specified by use of the terms “in the daytime” or “in the nighttime;” other possible time distinctions (e.g., morning, afternoon, evening; summer, winter, etc.) are generally ignored.

333 Model Penal Code, op. cit.
Given the complexity of possible types of theft, and the consequent complexity of a truly precise nomenclature system based on systematically made distinctions, descriptive terminology for present purposes will be simple and general. The single term “theft” will be used to refer to all analyzed types of unlawful property transfer. Terms such as “burglary,” “robbery,” “larceny,” “felony,” “misdemeanor” and so on will not be used. When it is necessary to make the kinds of distinctions implied by these terms, direct description using more general denotative terms will be employed. For example, where it is important to distinguish target, reference will be made to “theft from” person, place, or object. For example, shoplifting or house burglary, will be designated “theft from place;” pick-pocketing, purse snatching, armed holdup, “theft from person;” taking hubcaps from car, theft from object. “Object” of theft will be designated by use of the preposition “of” and specification of the object; for example, theft “of” money, food, clothing. In general, the dimensions of value, time, mode, and degree of completion, will not be incorporated into a systematic reference system, but will be employed as general analytic categories where appropriate.

The Character of Theft in Midcity Gangs

Central to the understanding of youth crime is an understanding of theft. The critical question at issue—“Why theft?” becomes, in the context of this study, the question—“Why was theft included among customary forms of behavior of Midcity gang members?” The present analysis, rather than approaching this question through an examination of individuals, and asking what features of personality, predilection, or personal circumstances impel people to steal, takes as its point of departure a large number of specific acts of theft committed by members of Midcity gangs during the 1950’s. Events, not individuals, form the basis of analysis.

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334 There is a precedent for this in the usage of the Model Penal Code of the American Law Institute, op. cit. However, Penal Code usage applies the domain to this term to a much wider area than that specified here—designating as theft, for example, instances of value inequality and trust violation, as well as many other forms of ownership transfer therein regarded as violative.
The specific sector of gang behavior to be considered as “theft” has already been designated; all behaviors by gang members falling within this definition will be examined in detail. Major areas of inquiry will include these questions: How often did theft occur? What was the nature of participation in theft? What was the relation between sentiment and practice? What was stolen? Who or what was stolen from? What was the relation between theft as committed and as acted on by official agencies? Attempts to derive an adequate explanation of theft in Midcity gangs must proceed from a detailed examination of theft as it was actually practiced; only through the discovery of regularities in the patterning of theft behavior can such behavior be meaningfully related to systems of motive and intent.

The patterning of theft was too complex to yield to a simple method of analysis; it was necessary, rather, to effect the analysis through the use of three different populations of theft events—each with its own characteristics, and each serving to illuminate a different facet of the total phenomenon. The first population of events comprised some 650 recorded behaviors oriented to theft in any way—as actions, as sentiments, as intentions—engaged in by members of the seven intensive-contact groups during the contact period. The second population comprised 184 arrestable acts of theft committed by members of the same study group during the same period. The third was 380 instances in which members of 14 male study groups, including the intensive contact groups, appeared in court in connection with acts of theft during the age period from 17 to 21 years.

Each of these populations had certain advantages and certain limitations. The population of theft-oriented behaviors—since it included both actions and sentiments—made possible an examination of the complex relationship of theft practices and theft sentiments, and the comparison of this act-sentiment patterning with that of other forms of behavior. In addition, the availability of both acts and sentiments categorized as “approved” and “disapproved” made possible the examination of “approved” theft actions—for example, attempts to inhibit theft by others, or acts of refraining from stealing in instances where opportunities for theft
were offered. Such “non-theft” or “anti-theft” behaviors, important to the later analysis of the balance of theft incentives and inhibitives, do not appear in the populations of theft incidents and court-appeared thefts, selected because they met the definition of arrestable theft as such.

This population also made possible an examination of female theft. As will be shown, only 9 instances of “hard” theft were observed for the girls, and there was not a single female court appearance for theft. There were, however, 46 behavioral orientations toward theft by the girls, an indication that there was considerably more female involvement in theft as behavior than would be indicated on the basis of arrestable thefts alone. At the same time, this points to a disadvantage of using theft-oriented behavior as an exclusive basis of analysis; much of the behavior “oriented” to theft was not, in fact, “arrestable” theft; there were about 3 ½ theft-oriented behaviors for every instance of “hard” theft.

This paper is incomplete. The remainder of the chapter, comprising approximately 80 pages of double-spaced manuscript, is in rough draft form, and has not as yet been edited for purposes of duplication. Remaining sections comprise data and analysis under three main topics: A. The Patterning of Theft-oriented Behavior (app. 5 pp.); B. The Patterning of Theft Incidents (app. 45 pp.); C. The Patterning of Court-Appeared Theft (app. 30 pp.). The major subtopics of these three sections, along with the statistical tables included in each section, are as follows:

Topics of Remainder of Theft-Patterning Chapter

The Patterning of Theft Oriented Behavior (5 pp.)
I. Frequency of Theft, Three Event Populations
II. Theft-event Ratios
III. Forms of Theft Behavior Relative to Project Evaluative Position
IV. Group Standings in Project-Disapproved Theft Behavior

The Patterning of Theft Incidents (45 pp.)
V. Frequency of Theft
VI. Distribution of Theft
VII. Collectivity of Theft
VIII. Participation in Theft
IX. Theft Frequency by Subcultural Characteristics
X. Theft Frequency by Subcultural Characteristics: Selected Combinations of Sex, Social Status, Age, and Ethnic Status
XI. Theft Distribution, Participation, and Collectivity by Subcultural Characteristics
XII. Targets of Theft
XIII. Targets of Theft: Locality and Identity
XIV. Twelve Targets, in Rank Order
XV. “Localism” of Targets, by Group
Summary of Statistical Analysis of Theft

The second population of events—all instances of arrestable theft recorded for intensive-contact group members during the contact period—provides the basis of an analysis in considerable depth of the actual character of theft in Midcity gangs—its frequency, its context, its targets, its objects. Available records of thefts maintained by official sources were generally bare of detail, consisting primarily of simple citations of the fact that theft had occurred, and generally failing to indicate details such as the number of participants or the articles stolen, and in fact, in some instances merely indicating by the term “larceny” that theft of some kind had occurred. This second population comprises 184 thefts involving the 205 members of the seven Project intensive study-service groups during the period of worker contact, during which time information was ascertained as to thefts involving these group members, through all sources of information, including court records.

The third population was those thefts for which all male members of both project and control group members appeared in court—359 for members of 14 male groups—during the age period for 7 to 21. Thus, these thefts are only those for which court recorded court action was taken, and obviously they represent a selection from the total range of extant thefts. If we may assume that similar ratios of recorded to court appeared thefts obtained during the whole of adolescence, as during the 14-18 age span of “intensive service” recording, we can assume that

XVI. “Identity” of Targets, by Group
XVII. Targets of Theft: Place Theft
XVIII. Targets of Theft: Person Theft
XIX. 18 Object Categories, in Rank Order
XX. Objects of Purchase

The Patterning of Court-Appeared Theft
XXI. Court Appeared Theft: Frequency: 14 Male Groups, Ranked
XXII. Frequency of Theft by Social and Ethnic Status: Incidents and Court-Appearances
XXIII. Court Appeared Theft: Participation 14 Male Groups Ranked
XXIV. Participation in Theft by Social and Ethnic Status: Incidents and Court Appearances
XXV. Participation and Frequency by Social and Ethnic Status
XXVI. Court Appeared Theft: 14 Male Groups by Year of Age 7-19
XXVII. Theft by Age, Social Status, and Ethnic Status
XXVIII. Three Forms of Theft: Percent of all Forms, by Three Indexes
XXX. Three Forms of Theft, by Social and Ethnic Status
these 428 court appeared thefts were selected from an (empirical) population which indeed comprised somewhat under 2,000 acts of theft. Of course, we can't really assume this, because it is reasonable that there were different “conversion” ratios at different times. Using observed acts population data is good because it includes more than court appeared acts. This gives a much better idea of, and is closer to, the reality pattern of theft behavior unscreened through the selective mechanism of the legal processing system. It is also unscreened through memory and recall of different individuals. But confining data only to the 14-18 age period; one cannot see development in patterns of theftive behavior through the total adolescence period. This is vital to know because there were quite characteristic patterns of theft at different ages; different types are popular.

The population that is selected from official records only is thus subjected to selective screening. However, there are some advantages: 1) the records encompass all of adolescence; 2) time passage is a, if not the, major determinant of patterning, so analysis without the ability to see all of adolescence is a very weak, and gives a badly distorted picture. The big advantage of SYP data is its ability to spread across time rather than take data at one point in time. As a result, we can extend consideration to a larger number of individuals, because control groups do not have to have detailed data. Thus, data is derived from a larger sample, and enables us to increase the number of individuals at each important dimension of influence—mainly age, ethnicity, and class. Also, because there is equivalent, parallel data during same age period, there is a linking device for estimating relations of court appeared to occurrences.

But first, before seeing relations of each set, consider the presented simple frequency data of three event populations; without reference to time, etc. Then data will be analyzed one event at a time. Following will be analysis of 647 theft oriented behaviors, as well as 184 acts of theft involving members of intensive service groups. These will be described mainly according to target, and object; and will of
necessity be a statistical analysis. Finally, the collectivity of actors, and relation between group membership and type of involvement will be discussed.

Table 1.11 is presented at this point primarily to show the relationship among each of these “indexes” to theft behavior; the nature and meaning of these relationships will be analyzed after the patterning of each of the indexes has been examined in greater detail. “Theft-oriented behaviors” include all known behaviors involving theft engaged in by the 205 members of the intensive-contact groups during the contact period. Only some of these events involved actual acts of theft, and each “behavior” may have involved one or several individuals. “Theft incidents” refer to actual acts of theft, defined according to criteria cited above, known to have occurred during the contact period. These incidents may have been individual or collective.

“Court-appearances” refer to each time a group member or members appeared in court on a new charge or charges of theft. A court appearance is counted as “one” even if several group members appeared at the same time in a given court, and whether one or several charges were involved. For all seven groups, as shown in Table 2.11, there was one “hard” incident of theft for every three and a half theft-oriented behaviors—and one court appearance for every 17 ½ behaviors. The figure of five theft incidents for each theft-related court appearance gives an idea of the relation of known to officially-acted-on thefts.

While the seven groups occupied generally similar ranks in each of the three indexes, it will be noted that the different groups showed different rates of “conversion” of behaviors to incidents, and incidents to appearances. For example, the older Negro Kings ranked 5th in frequency of theft-oriented behaviors, third in incidents, and second in court appearances, while the younger white Junior Bandits, whose top-ranking rate of “behaviors” was almost double that of the second ranking Senior Bandits, ranked third in court appearances. These and other features of these tables will be analyzed in greater detail in later sections.
The Patterning of Theft-Oriented Behavior

The 647 “theft-oriented” behaviors recorded for the 205 members of the seven intensive-contact study groups included all instances where group members oriented to theft. These behaviors comprised both actions and sentiments, and approved, disapproved, and evaluative neutral behaviors. How frequent was theft-oriented behavior in comparison with other behavioral forms? In contrast with its dominant position among forms of specifically criminal behavior, theft, when viewed against the full range of “customary” behavior, did not rank high. Of 60 forms of analyzed behavior, theft ranked twenty-eighth in frequency, or about at the median. About 1.4% of a total of 701 behavioral orientations concerned theft, as compared with about five percent for high-frequency forms such as family and work-oriented behavior. This supports the frequently reported finding that even the most prevalent forms of delinquency comprise a relatively small portion of the total activity range of city gangs. It is important to remember the extensive analysis of theft behavior which follows, that even this ramified and extensive area of behavior was of limited scope when viewed within the context of the total range of customary gang behavior.

Of the three principal forms of criminal behavior of Midcity gangs—theft, assault, and drinking—theft ranked third as an object of behavioral orientation, reversing its first ranking position as a form of crime. This was because a greater proportion of behavior oriented to theft consisted of “hard” acts of stealing; a considerable amount of assault- and drinking-oriented behavior involved (penumbral behaviors) other than direct involvement in legally violative forms. In particular, there was a good deal more talk relative to action in the area of fighting, and, to a lesser extent, in the area of drinking.

Table 3.11 lists approved and disapproved actions and sentiments in the area of theft, and Table 4.11 ranks the seven Project groups according to the percentage of disapproved theft actions and sentiments for each group, and the discrepancy between action and sentiments.
### Table 1.11

Frequency of Theft for the Seven Intensive Contact Groups During-Contact Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gang</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Rate per Month</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Rate per Month</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Rate per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sen. Bandits</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sen. Outlaws</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males &amp; Females</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.11

Theft Event Ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Behaviors per Incident</th>
<th>Behaviors per Court Appearance</th>
<th>Incidents per Court Appearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males &amp; Females</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Approved by Project</td>
<td>Sentiments Approved by Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Decision not to steal; refraining from exploiting perceived theft opportunity</td>
<td>1) Condemnation, disapproval of theft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Advising, persuading others not to steal; Attempting to inhibit planned theft</td>
<td>2) Defining theft as wrong, unethical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Penalizing, exercising sanctions against, those who steal</td>
<td>3) Stated intention not to steal or repeat theft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Making amends for past thefts; providing restitution for stolen goods, commodities</td>
<td>4) Seeing punishment for theft as warranted, merited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Refusal to accept, use stolen goods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Disapproved by Project</th>
<th>Sentiments Disapproved by Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Stealing, making plans to steal, attempting to steal</td>
<td>1) Approval, support of theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Accepting, using, displaying stolen goods; “fencing;” attempting to get others to accept, use, stolen goods</td>
<td>2) Justifying, admiring, praising theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Boasting of past or planned thefts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Impeding, obstructing attempts to detect theft, apprehend thieves</td>
<td>4) Seeing theft as inevitable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What was the relation of expressed sentiment about theft to actual theft performance? The action-sentiment patterning in this area showed some resemblance to patterns in other high-violative-potential areas such as drinking, assault, and sex, but also some important differences.

In the area of theft, the index “number of thefts per month” presented in Table 5.11 is a better measure of the actual extent of group involvement in theft.
than the actional measure in Table 1.11, so that the former index was taken as the “actional” standard base for most purposes. Among the male groups, rankings in these two “performance” indexes were close; only the white female Molls ranked high in disapproved theft-oriented actions but low in actual commission of theft acts. This is in line with a consistent tendency by the Molls to show wide discrepancies between outward appearance and performance; in some areas they pretended to be considerably “badder” than they were, and in others they were considerably badder than they pretended. Much of the disapproved sentiment expressed by the Molls involved their practice of expressing admiration for the theft behavior of their brother group, which was very active in theft. Thus, while engaged in little theft themselves, they gave considerable verbal support to thefts committed by their male peers. The overall level of disapproved action in the area of theft was the highest of all analyzed behavior areas; this was because most of the actions youngsters regarding theft were by definition violative, and also because there was little group support for action specifically aimed to inhibit theft. “Approved” actions such as attempting to restrain intended theft were rare among all groups.

The relation between action and sentiment in the area of theft showed some interesting patterning. Five basic trends emerge out of the data of Table 4.11, along with data as to “evaluatively neutral” behavior not shown here. 1) The all-group level of action-sentiment discrepancy (-26.9) was high, ranking theft fourth in regard to magnitude of discrepancy, and second among terms in which acts were more disapproved than sentiments. 2) There was a very good correspondence between group standings in disapproved sentiments and actual theft performance. Those who stole most also expressed fewest anti-theft sentiments. (Table 4.11 shows that even in this most violative of behavior areas, 15% of actions and 40% of sentiments were “approved” from the point of view of theft as violative practice. 3) High-theft groups showed greater discrepancies between actions and sentiments. 4) A higher proportion of theft-oriented behavior by high theft groups was “non-
committal” or “evaluatively neutral” in regard to theft. 5) High theft groups had higher proportions of actions relative to sentiments.

These five trends combine to form a characteristic pattern of action-sentiment relation. Theft emerges as a behavior area with considerable consistency between action and sentiment in some regards, and some apparent inconsistency in others. The high discrepancy between all-group levels of violative actions and disapproved sentiment was also found among other high-violative potential areas such as drinking and sex. The level of sentiment expressed by group members was sharply at variance with their actions; while expressing sentiments only moderately supportive of violative behavior; their actual practice was much more seriously violative. Theft, however, contrasted sharply with drinking in showing a good relationship between group standings in disapproved actions and disapproved sentiments; the groups which stole the most in fact expressed the least disapproval of theft. In drinking behavior (see chapter Ten) those who drank least gave strongest support to drinking. This difference between drinking and theft was related, in part, to the general pattern of orientation of high theft groups.

Those who stole the most did the least talking about theft; when they did talk about it their sentiments tended to be more non-committal or less evaluative; what evaluative sentiments they did express were less likely to be condemnatory to theft. This represents a consistent stance. In contrast to relative freedom in boasting about one’s drinking prowess or intentions, overly free discussion of one’s theft experience could be quite dangerous; it is not surprising that those who stole more seriously tended to be more reserved in discussing theft. Since engagement in theft was prestige-conferring in those groups where it was most prevalent, it was necessary that other group members be informed of one’s theft exploits. However, considerable theft in these groups was collective, (70% for two Bandit groups) so that knowledge that one had “scored” was generally disseminated with a minimum of overt discussion.
An apparently small but ultimately quite significant difference relates to the older and younger high theft groups. The two older high-theft groups—the Kings and Senior Bandits—also show the highest act-sentiment discrepancy among the male groups. The younger high-theft group, the Junior Bandits, shows considerably less discrepancy. Future sections will show that theft reached its peak frequency between the ages of 15 and 18, and declined rather sharply thereafter. It will also be shown that, in general, sentiments tended to “lead” actions—that is, that youngsters began to express sentiments in line with behavioral practices they were going to adopt in the future some time in advance of the time they actually began to practice the new behavior. This was often reflected in the extent of the discrepancy between current practice and expressed sentiment. The fact that the older high-theft groups were moving away from their high frequency peak is reflected in the larger discrepancy between theft action and sentiment; for the younger group, while sentiments were still considerably more approved than actions, there was a greater degree of concordance between action and sentiment.

The Patterning of Theft Incidents

The second population of events to be examined comprises all instances in which members of project groups engaged in specific acts of theft (as previously defined). Analysis of this population of “hard” theft incidents makes it possible to address questions such as—How often did theft occur? How widely was it practiced? Was stealing confined to a relatively small group of habitual thieves, or was it practiced more widely? What was the relation between frequency of theft and extensiveness of involvement? What were the attributes of “high” and “low” theft groups, and what factors were associated with greater and lesser theft propensity? How extensive was theft compared to other forms of crime such as drinking and assault? What was stolen, and whom or what was it stolen from?

Footnote to Ackerman analysis: This type of trend analyzed in considerable detail in re all 14 behavioral areas.
**Frequency and Distribution**

Although these questions are quite straight-forward and simple to ask, answering them entails an unexpected degree of complexity, because the occurrence of theft behavior followed a most devious and complicated pattern, and required the use of a number of fine distinctions in order to achieve a reasonable degree of clarity and consistency. For example, it is of central importance to the understanding of criminal behavior to know what factors contribute to greater and lesser propensity for involvement in theft. In seeking to answer this question, the problem arises as to what should form the basis of designating groups as “high-theft” or “low-theft” groups. On the assumption that the factors of frequency and extensiveness of participation would comprise a major basis it becomes evident that four logical combinations are possible -- groups in which many members steal and steal frequently; groups in which many members steal, but infrequently; groups in which few members steal, but frequently; and groups in which few members steal, and infrequently. The first type could readily be designated as a “high-theft” group, and the last a “low,” but how about the “mixed” types? Further, if one admitted the possibility of “moderate” frequency of participation, nine situations would obtain. Also, could it be possible that one set of factors might affect the frequency of theft, and another the extensiveness of involvement? Considerations of this type required the use of several sets of distinctions.

One major set of distinctions involved the use of three indexes of theft— frequency, distribution, and participation. Measures of frequency and distribution were based on counts of events, with the degree of individual involvement a secondary factor. Frequency was defined as the rate of theft events per month, without regard to the number of individuals involved (e.g., Junior Outlaws, 27 theft incidents in 30 months, or .9 incidents per month). Distribution was derived by dividing the number of theft incidents recorded during the study period by the size of the participating group,
without regard to frequency of events (e.g., Junior Outlaws, 27 theft incidents among 24 individuals, or 1.1 incidents per individual). The index to participation was obtained by recording the number of times each group member had been involved in theft during the study period (viz., once, twice, three times, etc).

Measurement of frequency and distribution also involved making a distinction between incidents and involvements. An “incident” of theft was defined as any behavioral event categorizable as “theft” according to the cited definition, without regard to the number of participants. The “involvement” was defined on the basis of individual participation. Since 60% of known theft incidents involved more than one participant, there were more “involvements” in theft than incidents. The total number of involvements was obtained by multiplying the number of incidents by the number of participants. For example, one incident of store theft with five participants was considered five involvements, and an involvement was assigned to each participant.

Table 5.1 shows the frequency of theft events for the seven intensive-contact groups as monthly rates during the contact period. During this period 184 incidents of theft were known to have occurred—175 involving males and 9 involving females. All-group frequency of theft incidents was about one per month—about 1 ½ per month for the boys and .15 for the girls. Theft involvements numbered 371. There were 355 involvements for the boys, 16 for the girls. The all-group rate of involvements was about two per month (boys, 3 per month, girls, 3/10 per month). Frequency ranged from about 3 incidents and 7 ½ involvements per month for the high ranking Bandits to less than 2/19 of an incident for the low ranking Queens.337

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337 The measure “incidents” (involvements) per month per 10 group members which appears in the incident and involvement tables has less meaning as an index than the frequency or distribution measures, but provides for maximum inter-group standardization by correcting both for group size and event rate. Comparing rankings on an incident-per-10-group-members basis shows that this correction had negligible effect on the rankings—the only difference being that the Molls rank with the Senior Outlaws in the size-corrected ranking rather than below them as in the incident frequency ranking—and shows that differences in group size do not impair the utility of the incident-per-month figure as a basic measure of incident frequency. In the “involvement” rankings, the group size correction results in two sets of adjacent rank trades, with the Kings trading ranks with the Junior Outlaws, and the Senior Outlaws with the Molls. The two sets of rankings, however, remain closely comparable. Comparing the incident-per-month with the involvement-per-month rankings...
Table 5.1 provides initial evidence as to a most important pattern regarding the relationship of age, sex, social status, and ethnic status to the frequency of theft—a pattern which will be examined in greater detail in subsequent sections. The theft frequency rankings show an extremely regular pattern. Well in the lead are the two lowest status white male groups; next comes the higher status Negro males, then the two higher status white male groups, and lastly the two girls’ groups.

These rankings would suggest that the frequency of theft by Midcity gangs was regularly and systematically related to four general group characteristics—age, sex, social status, and ethnic status. All male groups ranked higher than female; among the male groups, the highest frequency was found in the lowest status white group.

Table 5.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Incidents per Month</th>
<th>Incidents/Months / 10 Individuals</th>
<th>Involvements per Months</th>
<th>Involvements/ Months/ 10 Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 provides initial evidence as to a most important pattern regarding the relationship of age, sex, social status, and ethnic status to the frequency of theft—a pattern which will be examined in greater detail in subsequent sections. The theft frequency rankings show an extremely regular pattern. Well in the lead are the two lowest status white male groups; next comes the higher status Negro males, then the two higher status white male groups, and lastly the two girls’ groups.

These rankings would suggest that the frequency of theft by Midcity gangs was regularly and systematically related to four general group characteristics—age, sex, social status, and ethnic status. All male groups ranked higher than female; among the male groups, the highest frequency was found in the lowest status white group.

shows identical ranks, except that the Junior Bandits, top-ranking in “incidents,” rank slightly below the Senior Bandits in “involvements.” The involvements-per-month measure, as will be noted, produces maximum discrimination distance among the groups. For this reason, as will be shown, it provides the most sensitive index to correlates of theft frequency.

Recall that “lowest status” is lower class III, and “higher” is lower class II; no lower class I and no middle class.
groups; the next among the higher status Negroes, and the lowest among the higher status whites. Among the girls, frequency of theft was greater among the lower status whites than among the higher status Negroes. These standings would suggest first that maleness was the primary concomitant of theft frequency among Midcity gangs (for both incidents and involvements, male rates were ten times as high as female); second—that among groups of the same sex, lower social status was associated with greater frequency, and third, that male Negroes at these status levels may have shown a greater propensity for theft than whites of similar status.

These tentative propositions—with their implication that some combination of the cited socio-cultural variables could “account for “most of the theft-frequency pattern among Midcity gangs without reference to personality differences or the nature of intra-group relations—will be explored further and amplified in connection with other indexes of theft—including participation density, collectivity, court appearances, and census tract statistics. The measure of “distribution” of theft (Table 6.11) was obtained by dividing the number of theft events recorded during the total contact period of each group by the number of group members. Distributing all thefts equally among all group members gives a figure of a little less than one theft per individual during the contact period. For boys the figure was somewhat over one per person, and for girls under 2/10 per person. Distributing involvements among all group members gives each person somewhat under two involvements, about 2 ¼ per person for the boys and about 1/3 per person for the girls. Group figures ranged from 4 1/3 per Senior Bandit to 1/10 per Queen.

Despite the fact that the “distribution” measure, unlike the rate per month measure, does not explicitly incorporate a time factor, this measure was in fact much more sensitive to duration than the frequency measure, since groups with shorter contact periods had less time to accumulate theft events. The major difference between rankings in incident frequency and incident distribution is that the Junior Bandits ranked first in monthly frequency, but fourth in distribution. A good part, although not all, of this difference owes to the fact that the contact period
of the Junior Bandits was about nine months, compared to the two year all-group average, so that this group had proportionately less time to “accumulate” wider distribution. Other factors relating to age and social status differences will be cited in subsequent sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Incidents per Group Member</th>
<th>Involvements per Group Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All groups</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Collectivity of Theft**

Was theft a solitary or collective activity? At least two images are prevalent. One pictures theft as secret and solitary, with the thief proceeding furtively and fearfully to pursue his shameful deed. A contrasting image sees theft as joint and joyful, as one among a set of sportive enterprises of gang members, pursued openly and casually with little compunction and less shame. Information on known theft by Project gangs gives full support to neither of these images, and some to both.

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E.g., see Thrasher (1927).
Table 7.11 shows the number of theft incidents (for each group) with one, two, three, or more participants. About 3/5 of the 184 incidents were executed jointly. Thus, while there was more solitary theft than might have been expected from the “gang members always steal together” position, theft in general appeared as a collective rather than an individual enterprise. There was, however, considerable variability among the groups in this respect. Among the males, collectivity of theft involvement ranged from 70% for the Senior Bandits to 30% for the Senior Outlaws, while none of the three Queen thefts were collective.

Standings of the groups in degree of theft collectivity were very close to standings in theft frequency; (rank order correlation of .97) groups which stole most often also stole most collectively. This means that those factors associated with frequency of theft were also associated with propensity for collective stealing; male groups of lower social status both stole more often and more collectively. Table 7.11 shows most joint theft among the two lower-status white male groups; the higher status white males and the two girls groups were below average in theft collectivity. Table 7.11 also suggests a regular relationship between stealing in pairs and stealing in larger groups. The “pair” was the least prevalent stealing arrangement; roughly 50% of theft incidents involved three or more individuals, 40% involved one only, and only about 10% were two-person thefts. However, with the exception of the Queens, there was a perfect opposite relationship between standings in pair thefts and standings in three-or-more thefts; groups most likely to engage in theft by two were least likely to conduct three-or-more thefts. A similar opposition appears in comparing the rankings of “one-only” with “three or more;” groups showing the high percentage of one person thefts showed the lowest percentage of three-or-more. When one considers the relatively slight social status differences among the several groups—with the more solitary theft groups being of “higher” status only by virtue of the difference between lower class II and lower class III, the sensitivity with which the small status differences differentiated between patterns of solitary and collective theft is quite remarkable. This would suggest that a major
consideration necessary to reconcile the two apparently conflicting images of theft cited earlier is social status; the higher the social status of the group, the more likely is the image of solitary theft to be accurate; the lower, the greater the possibility of joint theft.

Table 7.11 Collectivity of Theft

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>One</th>
<th></th>
<th>Two</th>
<th></th>
<th>Three or More</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
<th>Percent Collective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Participation in Theft*

Measures of the frequency, distribution and collectivity of theft were based on counts of events. The measure of “participation” was based on the more common procedure of counting individuals. The “participation” measure was obtained by assigning to each individual the number of times he or she was known to have engaged in theft. Measures of distribution, collectivity, and participation thus involved different ways of combining individuals and events. “Distribution” was the averaged number of group members per theft event; “collectivity” the number of events with varying numbers of participants. There is thus a degree of overlap among these several measures, particularly collectivity and participation. But the results derived from applying the different measures differed in certain important respects, as will be seen.
The “participation” measure makes it possible to address questions such as, how many of the 205 group members engaged in acts of theft? Was most theft accounted for by a small group of active and habitual thieves, or was there wider participation? In which groups was there more widespread involvement, and what were their characteristics? Table 8.11 shows that 44.4% of the 205 group members (53.5% of the boys; 16% of the girls) participated in at least one act of theft during the contact period. Thus, even for the most prevalent form of Midcity gang crime, fewer than one half of all gang members were known to have committed an act of theft during the contact period. Court appearance data show that about 75% of male group members had appeared in court for some form of crime by age 21, and that about one third had appeared on theft charges. This would indicate that while theft comprised the single most common form of crime, a fair proportion of group members were not known to have stolen. Since, however, more secrecy surrounded theft than assault and drinking, the other major types of offenses, one would expect that some additional proportion of group members did engage in undetected theft during the contact period. Adding in these persons would lead to a rough estimate that about 75% of the study group did some stealing during the ages of 14 to 18.

Males participated in theft much more extensively than females. Table 8.11 shows that more than ten times as many boys as girls were known to have stolen. The lower degree of female theft participation was paralleled by a lower likelihood of repeated participation. Of the 53.3% of boys who stole at least twice, about half stole four or more times. Of the 16% of girls who stole at least once, about a third stole at least twice, and a third of these stole at least four times. Of the total group, therefore, 34.8% of the boys and 6% of the girls engaged in repeated theft, and 18.1% of the boys and 2.0% of the girls stole heavily. In actual numbers, no theft involvement was reported for 109 of the 205 group members; 47 were involved in a single theft; 30 in two to four thefts, 17 in 5 to 11 thefts, and 2 in 11 or more.

The total volume of theft observed during the contact period could conceivably have resulted from two alternative patterns of participation; heavy or
repeated theft distributed widely among all group members. The observed pattern in fact fell somewhere in between these two possible types. About half of all individuals participated in stealing, so that stealing was neither broadly nor narrowly distributed among the group. About one fifth of the groups were “heavy” stealers for the other half. The pattern of theft participation among males in Midcity gangs might thus be characterized as “balanced,” rather than as particularly concentrated or particularly diffused.

Table 8.11 Participation in Incidents of Theft During Contact Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of Group Members</th>
<th>Theft Participants</th>
<th>Repeaters (More than One)</th>
<th>Heavy Stealers (Four or More)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of group members who had stolen ranged from 80% for the Senior Bandits to 5% for the Queens. The standings of the groups in extensiveness of theft participation corresponded well with their standings in frequency of theft incidents. All male groups occupied the same or adjacent ranks in both series. The one exception was the white female Molls, who ranked second to last in frequency of incidents, but second in extensiveness of participation. Over half of the 11 member Molls did some stealing during the observation period, but those who stole did so
infrequently. As in the case of theft frequency, theft participation was closely related to social status; 63.6% of lower status group members, as compared with 32.8% of higher status, were known to have engaged in theft.

However, in contrast to “frequency,” where male groups of both higher and lower status ranked higher than both female groups, in “participation” lower status groups of both sexes ranked higher than higher status groups. This might suggest that being male had more influence on the frequency of theft than being of lower status, while being of lower status had more influence on the degree of participation than being male or female. This would be in line with earlier-reported findings that sex and social status appeared to pattern differently in respect to frequency and distribution.

**Subcultural Characteristics and the Patterning of Theft Incidents**

Information as to theft frequency, distribution, collectivity, and participation among the various groups, in addition to providing a descriptive picture of theft patterning in Project gangs, also provides a basis for deriving somewhat more general statements as to the socio-cultural “location” of theft. What group characteristics were associated with greater and lesser propensity for theft involvement among Midcity gang members? One approach to this problem is to take the major subcultural characteristics of Project groups—age, sex, social status, and ethnic status—and ask which of these characteristics or combination of characteristics were associated with greater and lesser propensity for theft. Analysis along these lines affords the possibility of a somewhat higher order of generalizability than is possible by use of the ranked standings. It has been seen that the different measures of theft—frequency, participation, etc., showed different kinds of patterning so that it becomes necessary to examine separately the relationship of the various subcultural characteristics to measures of theft based on different indexes.
Table 9.11 shows the relation of theft frequency as measured by involvements per month (see Table 5.11) to the four major types of subcultural characteristics, arranged as paired sets. Rates for males were approximately 10 times as high as for females; the lower status groups approximately three times as high as for higher status groups; for older groups, rates were just slightly higher than for younger age groups. These figures would support the conclusion that being male was the single most influential (determinant) of theft frequency; being of lower social status next most influential; with age failing to differentiate groups as to frequency. Table 10.11 shows the relation of selected sets of two attributes in combination to theft frequency. From Table 9.11 one might expect that the highest frequencies would be associated with lower status males and the lowest with higher status females. Table 10.11 shows that these combinations did indeed show the greatest differences with theft being 45 times more frequent among lower status males than among higher status females. The smallest difference appears between male whites and male Negroes, which suggests, contrary to the tendency reported, that for male groups, being white or Negro had little relation to theft frequency. The theft frequency rate associated with being older and of lower social status was about the same as that associated with being male and of lower social status, but the difference between the former pair and other combinations of age and class was far less than that between male lower class and female higher class, lending support to the conclusion that maleness and lower social status constituted the most “powerful” combination in regard to theft frequency.

Various other relations are indicated by Table 9.11; for example, among older groups there was a greater difference between males and females than among younger groups. This might indicate that theft stayed at a higher level for males longer than for females. It would also appear that lower status groups showed higher rates for older group members while higher status groups showed higher
rates for younger members. This would suggest that being older or younger had a different impact on theft frequency at different status levels.\textsuperscript{340}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rate of Theft Involvement per Month</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rate of Theft Involvement per Month</th>
<th>Rate of Theft per Month Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Status</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>Female Status</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>Male=Female x 10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Social Status</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>Higher Social Status</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>Lower = Higher x 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Ethnic Status</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>Negro Ethnic Status</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>White = Negro x 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Age Status</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>Younger Age Status</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>Older = Younger x 1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures of theft distribution, collectivity, and participation represent different ways to indicate how group members were involved in theft. As will be recalled, “distribution” was the total number of theft involvements distributed equally among all group members; “collectivity” the percentage of incidents with plural actors; “participation” the number of thefts engaged in by each individual. Table 1.11 shows the relation of each of these measures to the four subcultural characteristics. In general, all three “involvement” measures pattern similarly, but show some minor variations. In each case males show substantially greater theft

\textsuperscript{340} Because of the fact that in some instances a single group represented the category under consideration, and the fact that some of the logical combinations of the four characteristics were not represented in the study sample, (e.g., lower status Negro female), these associations must be considered as descriptive attributes of the population being described rather than as principles generalizable to equivalent populations. Associations presented here which involve age, social status, and ethnic status will also be presented for the 14 male gang population to be analyzed in connection with court appeared thefts. Those conclusions which correspond with those of the smaller sample can be considered more generalizable. A more systematic analysis of all combinations of the cited variables to see which ones or combinations would “load” most heavily would require an operation along the lines of factor analysis which would be inappropriate to these data. These tables use a simple statistic, ratios of rates, to give some idea of which of the variables appeared to exert greater influence on theft frequency, participation, etc., and are based on combinations selected according to apparent saliency rather than representing an exhaustive examination of all possible combinations.
involvement than females. However, the magnitude of male preponderance is greatest for distributions, next for participation, and least for collectivity. Similarly, in each case lower status groups show greater theft involvement than those of higher status, but the difference gradient follows the same as in the case of sex. In regard to ethnic status, whites showed higher degrees of involvement than Negroes in distribution and participation, but whites and Negroes were just about the same in regard to collectivity. As to age, there was little difference between older and younger groups in any of these three measures.

The relations of participation and collectivity to subcultural conditions cannot be examined in the same manner as in the case of frequency, since the former measures are based on percentages rather than rates. However, this type of analysis is possible in the case of the distribution measure, and is presented in Table 12.11. The general degree of similarity among the three “involvement” measures would indicate that relations obtained in reference to this index would not differ greatly from those of the other indexes. Relations between distribution and selected pairs of subcultural characteristics closely resemble relations between frequency and subcultural characteristics. The combination of being male and lower status was not quite as “powerful” in the case of distribution, and the combination of being older and male was somewhat less powerful. In contrast to frequency, the combination of being of lower status and older was associated with higher rates of distribution than being of lower status and male.
Table 10.11

Theft Frequency by Subcultural Characteristics
Selected Combinations of Sex, Social Status, Ethnic Status, and Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Characteristics</th>
<th>Theft Frequency (inv't./mo.)</th>
<th>Paired Characteristics</th>
<th>Theft Frequency (inv't./mo.)</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Lower</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>Female Higher</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female Lower</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male Higher</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Older</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>Female Older</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female Younger</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male Younger</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male White</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>Female Negro</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female White</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male Negro</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Lower</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>Older Higher</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Younger Lower</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Younger Higher</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of the Frequency and Extent of Theft

This section has addressed a number of direct questions: How frequent was theft among Midcity gang members? How widespread? Was it more of a solitary or group enterprise? What were the characteristics of those showing greater and lesser propensity for theft? It proved surprisingly difficult to give simple answers to these questions. A major reason for this was the unexpected complexity of the patterning of theft incidents among the 205 members of Project gangs, and the fact that the kinds of answers which were obtained often depended on which of a wide variety of...
possible indexes to theft were used. It is possible, however, to summarize findings in a relatively simple form by presenting conclusions on a generalized level, omitting various qualifications (exceptions, range of variation) and specific details.

Members of boys’ groups, during the study period, were involved in theft on an average of three times a month—just about 10 times as frequently as the girls. This meant that by the end of the study period group members had accumulated 371 theft involvements, in the course of engaging in 184 specific incidents of theft. Members of boys groups, on an overall average, were involved in about one theft per year per group member. The girls’ average was about one-seventh that of the boys. It is difficult to state, on the basis of these figures, whether theft should be considered a “frequent” form of behavior in Midcity gangs. Comparison with the theft frequency of other gangs is difficult, since little equivalent data exists. Within the study group itself, theft could be considered “frequent” when considered within the context of specifically criminal behavior, since it occurred more often than other forms of crime. Gauged against non-criminal forms of customary behavior, however, a figure of one involvement per person per year is very low when compared, for example, with the frequency of involvement in television watching, hanging out on the corner, baseball playing, partaking of meals, or automobile riding.

Theft in Project gangs conformed neither to an image of theft as solitary and furtive, nor to another image of theft as invariably a collective enterprise. Instead, project groups maintained a “balanced” pattern in regard to plural participation. About two-thirds of all thefts were executed in the company of others, and one-third by single individuals. Solitary theft ranged from a high of 70% in one male group to a low of 30% in another.

In regard to the extent of theft participation, despite the fact that theft was the most common form of criminal behavior, about one half of Project gang members were not known to have stolen during the study period. Here again, the pattern of participation was “balanced.” About half of all observed thefts were committed by about one-third of the group who were “heavy” stealers, and the other half by the
remaining two-thirds. An answer to the important question—“what category of gang members showed the greatest theft propensity?”—emerged with some clarity out of the complex picture of theft involvement. This question was examined in regard to four subcultural characteristics: Was theft propensity related more closely to being male or female? To higher or lower social status? To being younger or older? To being white or Negro? Or to some particular combination of these?

The single characteristic which differentiated most decisively among groups was sex. Males stole more often, more widely, more collectively. Theft occurred 10 times as often in male groups, and males ranked higher than females in virtually every aspect of theft. After maleness, being of lower class status had the strongest influence on theft propensity. Theft was clearly more frequent and more widespread among lower status groups. Although one index, collectivity, did not show as marked a difference between higher and lower status groups, in all other respects the tendency for more extensive involvement in theft by lower status groups in the same age and sex categories emerged with clarity and consistency.

Age differences, within the age span during which the 184 theft incidents were recorded, showed virtually no relationship to theft propensity. This was quite surprising; in the examination of court-appeared theft, age differences constituted a most powerful set of influences on the form and frequency of theft. There are several reason for this; one related to the differential arrestability of individuals of different ages, to be discussed later. More germane at this point is the fact that the age span represented by study-period groups was not wide enough to permit the full effect of age differences to emerge. It was possible to utilize only two age divisions—“younger,” representing youngsters from 14 to 16—and “older,” 17 to 19. Court data will show that the younger groups were just approaching the apex of a theft frequency curve which peaked at 16, and the older groups just moving away from it. In the “incident” analysis, the method of averaging theft rates without reference to finer age differences or the direction of frequency trends served essentially to level out the influence of age differences.
Ethnic status showed an interesting and somewhat unexpected relation to theft propensity. No differences appeared between white and Negro groups of the same age and social status in regard to frequency and collectivity of theft. In regard to participation and distribution, however, white groups showed considerably higher rates than Negro. These data are not conclusive, and cannot be used to support the statement that white groups in Midcity showed greater propensity for theft than Negro groups—in large part because no “lower status” Negro groups were represented in the “incident” they do show that there is no simple relationship between theft and being white or Negro. The nature of this relationship will be explored further for the 14 gang “court-appearance;” this did contain lower status Negroes, and this provides a basis for more systematic conclusions.

A final point concerns the effect of using different kinds of units as the basis for deriving conclusions as to the patterning of behavior in general, and criminal behavior in particular. In the examination of the complex pattern of theft involvement in Midcity gangs, consistent differences emerged between conclusions derived from counts of individuals, and those derived from counts of events. In particular, it appeared that information based on counts of events made possible the discovery of distinctions of a degree of refinement and subtlety which emerged much less sensitivity or not at all on the basis of counts of individuals. This would suggest that conclusions based on the method of counting crimes according to the number of persons known to have engaged in them, without consideration of frequency of involvement, might serve to mask some of the most significant and critical factors associated with the patterns and causes of criminal behavior.

Targets of Theft

Analysis of theft to this point has proceeded by conceiving of acts of theft essentially as countable events distributed through time and among groups of individuals. Nothing has as yet been said as to the actual character of these acts of theft—what was stolen, who or what was stolen from, how was theft effected? The
present sections will analyze the character of theft under the topics “targets” and “objects” of theft. “Targets” will denote the person or place from which objects were taken and “object” will refer to what was taken.

Different theories as to the causes of delinquency in general and theft in particular make certain assumptions as to the nature of theft targets. For example, theories which postulate angry or rebellious feelings to adults as a major generating force of youth crime would suggest that a good proportion of theft targets would be adults; theories which picture gang members as inhuman exploiters of the weak and innocent would suggest that younger peers would be a common target of theft. It is evident that documented evidence as to the actual targets of gang theft would help greatly to clarify these theoretical issues. The present section will therefore address questions such as—was theft from place or person more common? What categories of persons were favored as theft targets—adults, children, males, females? Did group members steal more frequently in the local neighborhood, or did they range beyond its confines? What kinds of places did they steal from? Was theft by force or by craft more common? Did older groups differ from younger groups in the nature of their theft targets, or were differences in social or ethnic status more clearly related to different choice of targets?

Much theorization as to the causes of theft has derived less from systematic answers to questions of this kind than from a set of images supplied by our cultural tradition as to the nature of juvenile theft. Some of these images are quite benign, others quite sinister. One image revolves around petty juvenile “snitching” in the local neighborhood—swiping fruit from pushcarts or open stands, grabbing pop bottles from delivery trucks or wagons. This type of theft is hardly seen as menacing—rather, it is regarded with some amusement—as a kind of boyish prank with appealing or even laudable aspects, and as such forms one of the more cherished components of traditional American folklore. Few tears are shed for the harassed pushcart owner; ones’ sympathy lies more with the adventurous youngsters. Somewhat less sympathetically regarded, but still rather cherished is
the image of the littlest boy in the gang being lifted over the grocery store transom
to effect a youthful version of what appears in a more serious light as “breaking and
entering in the nighttime,” when performed by adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution (Involvement/Group Member)</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Participation (Percent of Group Members Who Stole)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>Older</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11.11
Theft Distribution, Participation and Collectivity by Subcultural Characteristics

Less benign overtones attach to another set of images. One pictures the
juvenile gang as a roving band of predators—prowling the dark streets or lying in
wait in dimly lit alleys for hapless robbery victims and prepared without hesitation
to apply violence at the least show of resistance—even by, or perhaps especially
by—female victims. This image resonates the picture of the classic English robber
band—highwaymen, cut-throats and marauders preying on the innocent and
terrorizing the country-side. Another image invested with anger rather than
amusement is that of tough, heartless and sadistic “big” boys waylaying “little” boys
and relieving them of their few precious pennies. Another image rooted in English
culture is the Oliver Twist gang—operating under the tutelage of a skilled and
malign adult to fleece the unwary. A more recent image sees the bulk of youthful theft centered on the automobile—with an elaborate explanatory rationale based on the automobile as a symbol of manhood which calls for the bulk of theft targets to be cars. The actual character of theft as practiced by Midcity gang members both reflected these images—if sometimes obliquely—and denied them. Which of these images, or which of their aspects, were supported, and which were not, by the facts of observed theft behavior?

The population of events used in the analysis of theft targets was the same population used in the analysis of theft frequency and distribution. Of the 184 recorded instances of theft, at least some information on the nature of targets was available in 161 instances. Table 13.11 shows the distribution of these 161 targets according to the locale and identity of targets.341

Table 14.11 shows the relation of local to non-local, and person to place theft for thefts for which both locality and identity information was available. Counting auto thefts as “person” thefts, about two-thirds of thefts were from place rather than from person, and two-thirds local rather than non-local. “Local place” theft was most common (41.9%), local person (26.6%) and non-local place (21.8%) next, and non-local person least common (9.7%). If autos are excluded from consideration the predominance of place over person theft becomes considerably more marked, while the ratio of local to non-local thefts stays about the same. Table 14.11 shows that 82.3% of non-auto thefts were from places—making place theft more than four and one half times as common as person theft. These findings would indicate that one of the images of gang theft—that it is predominantly “predatory”—consisting primarily of direct confrontations of persons or of violent robberies—does not

341 The population of 161 theft targets includes instances where information was available for one or more target characteristics but lacking for others; for example, it may have been known that a group member had stolen from a local adult, but it was not known whether the adult was a man or woman. Because of this some of the totals in these breakdown tables which include only cases where all information on specified characteristics was available do not correspond to totals in the major table, Table 13.11. Further, due to the small number of female thefts and limited information on these, female groups are not included in the inter-group analyses of targets.
conform to the situation in Midcity gangs. The fact that fewer than one-fifth of non-auto theft targets were persons shows that thefts from persons were relatively rare. It would also appear that theft, in common with many other occupations of Midcity gang members, was a predominantly local activity. The degree of localism, however, varied by age as will be shown.

Table 12.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Characteristics</th>
<th>Theft Distribution (Involvement/Group Member)</th>
<th>Paired Characteristics</th>
<th>Theft Distribution (Involvement/Group Member)</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Lower</td>
<td>3.12 Female Higher</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>31.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Lower</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Higher</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Older</td>
<td>2.42 Female Older</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>24.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female Younger</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Younger</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male White</td>
<td>2.38 Female Negro</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>23.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female White</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Negro</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Lower</td>
<td>4.53 Oldier Higher</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Younger Lower</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Younger Higher</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Target</td>
<td>Local Neighborhood</td>
<td>Non-Local</td>
<td>Locale Unknown</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLACE</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Open&quot; Commercial Facility (store, stand, restaurant)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Closed&quot; Facility (store, house, factory)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public, Semi-public Facility (school, playground, settlement house)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stationary Vehicle (parked car, truck, wagon)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSON*</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Peer, Own Group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Peer, Own Group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Peer, Not Own Group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Peer, Not Own Group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Adult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Adult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult, Sex Unknown</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSON AND PLACE:</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*including auto owners
Table 15.11 lists in rank order 12 theft target categories. “Open” commercial facilities such as department stores, drug stores, newsstands and restaurants were the favorite theft targets of Midcity gang members. Most of the “targets” of the second ranking category were the unknown owners of stolen autos. The third most frequent category was, like the first, an “open” place facility—public or semi-public facilities such as settlement houses and schools. Thus about two-thirds of all theft targets were open facilities and auto owners. Thefts from closed facilities and from persons, as already noted, were quite rare.

The all-group figure of 68.5% for “place” thefts (Table 14.11) masks the fact that there was considerable variation among the five male groups in regard to “localism” of theft. Table 16.11 shows that the proportion of “local” theft ranged from almost 90% for the Junior Outlaws to 50% for the Kings. Age was closely related to localism of theft targets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>52 (41.9)</td>
<td>33 (26.6)</td>
<td>85 (68.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Local</td>
<td>27 (21.8)</td>
<td>12 (9.7)</td>
<td>39 (31.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>79 (63.7)</td>
<td>45 (36.3)</td>
<td>124 (100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Known Locales Only
Table 15.11

Targets of Theft

12 Targets, in Rank Order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Target</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Open” Commercial Facility (store, stand, restaurant)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Adult, Identity Unknown</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public, Semi-public Facility (School, Playground, Settlement House)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Adult Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stationary Vehicle (Parked Car, Truck, Wagon)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Adult Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Closed” Facility (Store, House, Factory)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Place, Nature Unknown</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Male Peer, Not Own Group</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Female Peer, Not Own Group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Male Peer, Own Group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Female Peer, Own Group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

161 100.0
The two younger groups clearly favored the local community as an arena for theft, while the older boys divided their stealing rather evenly between local and non-local targets; for the younger groups, local theft was 7.2 times as common as non-local, in contrast to 1.3 times for the older boys. Within both younger and older age categories, lower status groups ranged more widely to steal. The finding that the boys did most of their earlier stealing fairly close to home, and became more wide-ranging and venturesome as they got older parallels a similar tendency in other forms of behavior, including non-criminal forms such as mating, and conforms to a common sense idea that the activity arena of adolescents expands as they get older.

As shown in Tables 15.11, 16.11, and 17.11, targets were categorized according to “locality”—whether the theft occurred in or near the Midcity area, or in another area—and “identity”—whether the target was a place or person. Table 18.11 distinguishes four categories of “place,” seven categories of “person,” and three
categories of “locality.” Table 18.11 shows that place theft was more common than person theft, and that no category of target was predominantly favored. More detailed analyses based on these figures will be presented in a series of breakdown tables.

Table 17.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets of Theft</th>
<th>&quot;Identity&quot; by Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Including Auto</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excluding Auto</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Ratio, &quot;Place&quot;</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Ratio, &quot;Place&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regard to the “identity” of theft targets, however, no such clear relation between age and target choice is indicated. Table 17.11 shows the ratio of place to person theft for each of the male groups, both including and excluding auto theft. Despite the fact that the range of variation among groups was about the same as in the case of localism, there was no evident relationship between age or other subcultural characteristics and the tendency to favor “place” over person targets;

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342 In most instances, assignments of targets to these categories was relatively unambiguous. A theft was considered to be from a person when direct confrontation of thief and victim occurred, and from a “place” where a structure or facility could be designated as the pre-theft locus of the stolen object. A major ambiguity obtained in the case of auto theft. Most auto thefts consisted essentially of temporary unauthorized borrowing of a car. Since cars were generally stolen from the street, they were not considered “place” thefts, but in most instances car owners were not confronted or even known, so that a “person” was the target of theft only in an indirect sense. For this reason some of the data are presented both including and excluding auto theft.
the two younger groups, in fact, stood at the two extremes in that regard. For the Junior Bandits, “place” theft was 10 times as common as person theft, while the Junior Outlaws, alone of the male groups, showed a preponderance of person thefts. Data on court appeared thefts, to be presented, do show a clear connection between age and frequency of person theft with older groups showing less reluctance to undertake direct confrontation theft, so that one possible reason for the “deviant” position of the Junior Outlaws might relate to the relative short time span involved, as in the case of the frequency findings previously presented. It is also possible however, that factors related to other characteristics of the Junior Bandits were behind their atypical tendency to do more “person” stealing than would be expected for a group of this age; this will be discussed in later sections.

**Place Theft**

Most Midcity gang theft, as has been shown, was place theft. Most place theft, as shown in Table 18.11, involved facilities to which access was quite easy. A distinction was made between “open” and “closed” facilities—a distinction which bears on the ease with which theft can be effected. An “open” facility—public or private—is one for which access to movable objects is relatively direct (department stores, open shelf or counter stores, restaurants). A “closed” facility requires some sort of forced entry, thus entailing a greater degree of specific intent and deliberate planning in order to gain access to theft objects.

Of four target categories shown in Table 18.11—open commercial, closed commercial, public and semi-public, and stationary vehicle—the favorite place target was clearly the open commercial facility; this category comprised 53.3% of all known place targets. Public and semi-public facilities (schools, playgrounds, settlement houses, etc.), the second most frequent type of target, were also “open.” Thefts from these two kinds of open facilities accounted for 84.0% of all place thefts, and 42.6% of all thefts from targets for which full information was available.
Table 18.11 also shows a tendency for thefts from open commercial facilities to occur outside the local area; most of these, however, were committed by the older, high-theft Senior Bandits, who engaged in store theft outside the local area six times as frequently as within the area. This was not due to a scarcity of open commercial facilities in the neighborhood, since Midcity’s shopping center—the second largest in Port City—was convenient to all groups. Most theft from public and semi-public facilities, however, was local.

Virtually all of the thefts from closed commercial facilities, comprising less than 10% of all thefts, were committed by the high-theft Senior Outlaws. Thus the “breaking and entering” type of theft, a major arrestable form, of crime was prevalent only among high-theft groups. The relative rarity of theft from open facilities bespeaks a reluctance to utilize force to effect theft. The amount of force necessary to break into an auto is quite small; gang members showed little reluctance in using such force when they stole cars for “joyriding” purposes. Thefts of articles from parked vehicles were more common in other districts of Port City, and in other urban areas. The reason for the scarcity of recorded thefts from cars in Midcity is not clear. One possible reason is that most cars parked in low income
areas do not generally contain articles of sufficient value as to make the risk of theft worthwhile so that the parked car is not usually perceived as an appropriate place to steal from. It is clear, however, that different city areas vary in the degree of which different kinds of place are seen as appropriate targets of theft.

**Person Theft**

Although the number of person thefts recorded during the study period (45) was not large enough to permit extensive analyses, these data do give some idea of the kinds of persons the gang members stole from. As shown in Table 19.11, more than three-quarters of person thefts were from adults rather than peers. This is logical on the grounds that adults were more likely than peers to have articles of value in their possession. Many of the adult targets, as already stated, were car owners. When adults were stolen from, males were slightly favored as target. Some of the adult male targets were taxi-drivers; some were auto owners; a few were mugging victims. Most of the adult females were victims of “pocketbook snatch” theft where the thief quickly grabs the handbag of woman waiting for a trolley or bus and runs.

Most of these were committed by a single member of the Kings. Peer theft, in general, was not common. Theft from male peers who were not members of Project gangs were mostly “challenge” thefts—athletic equipment of a rival team or personal belongings of members of other groups would be stolen quite overtly, as a kind of gauntlet-throwing act. All thefts from female peers were “teasing” thefts—serving primarily as a part of the courtship pattern (see Sex and Mating Chapter) wherein a boy would steal a girl’s wallet or kerchief in order to provoke a chase and consequent mating involvement.
The general principle that one did not steal (the rarity of theft) from members of one's own group is supported (was attested, shown) by the fact that no thefts from own-group female peers, even of a teasing nature, were recorded, and that the two thefts designated as thefts from fellow group members were not, in fact, direct person thefts, but rather the use of club funds for personal purposes by those entrusted with these funds. The “misappropriation” pattern will be discussed in later sections.

A few of the adult theft targets were members of the boys’ own families; one boy stole liquor from his father; another took items from his home for the gang clubroom. Thefts from parents or relatives, however, while comprising only a small proportion of known male thefts (3 out of 161) played a somewhat larger part in female theft. Of the 10 recorded thefts by Molls and Queens, two were thefts from adult female relatives. This would suggest that when girls did steal they were somewhat more likely to steal from those related to them, and it is of interest that the only male group known to engage in any kin theft was the younger, higher status Junior Outlaws. The significance of this type of theft will be discussed later.
Although some of the groups deviated from the general pattern in particular respects, it is possible to characterize in general terms the pattern of targets of theft by Midcity gang members. Group members preferred to steal what was easily available from places which were readily accessible. There was evident reluctance to use force in connection with theft—either in the form of direct confrontation of individuals or of forcing physical facilities to gain entrée. A gun was used in connection with person theft in only two instances—both by the same boy; theft accompanied by the use of threat of injury was rare. What force there was was employed mostly by the older, more theft-oriented group members. If the term “force” theft is applied to instances where force of any kind is employed against either person or place (threatening victim breaking into a store) and the term “craft” theft to cases where theft is effected by slyness, underhandedness or craftiness, the target data show that fewer than one quarter of recorded thefts were “force” thefts.

The fact that the dominant type of theft among Midcity gang members was sneak thievery from local places is to some degree concordant with one of the images of gang theft—the “petty snitching” image. It is less concordant with several of the others—the gang as violent and prowling predators, as inhumane exploiters of the weak, as nighttime building breakers. When gang members did choose to confront persons, they generally chose adult males—that category of victims whose retaliatory potential was greatest. Only one example of a theft from a younger peer was recorded, and most thefts from women were sneak thefts committed by one boy.

In only one instance was a woman threatened with force, and in no instance was such force actually applied. The fact that Midcity gang members defined males as the most appropriate kind of “person” target, and that this target category entailed the greatest danger, may help to explain the relative rarity of direct confrontation theft as such. In any event, the overall patterning of target choice makes it clear that craft, not force, was the favored theft technique of Midcity gang members.
Objects of Theft

What did gang members steal? Empirical data as to the actual nature of stolen objects bears directly on a number of issues central to the understanding of youth crime in general and theft in particular. Five such issues are: Do youngsters steal primarily because they are actually in need of items necessary to sustain life, or are other reasons of equal or greater importance? Is adolescent theft “utilitarian”—with youngsters stealing things which are useful in the conduct of their life activities, or “non-utilitarian”—with theft objects showing little evident relation to the conduct of daily life? Is theft rather directly related to the external characteristics of stolen objects, or do these objects or the act of theft itself, serve primarily to symbolize other valued entities or to represent deeper meanings? Does the patterning of stolen objects indicate that theft objects represent a special class of goods, or does it resemble the patterning of goods obtained through non-violative means? Do the values underlying the choice of theft objects appear to reflect general and widely-held values of the society as a whole, or do they derive from a special and distinctive set of interests and concerns of lower class adolescent gang members? The relatively limited amount of available data on theft objects will not support unequivocal resolutions of these fundamental issues, but will throw support to some of the alternatives and weaken the tenability of others.

The kinds of objects stolen by Midcity gang members, classified under 19 categories, are listed in rank order in Table 20.11. One immediately obvious feature of this table is its range; items are distributed among 17 major categories whose subcategories include about 35 distinctions, with the possibility of still further distinctions (e.g., types of clothing—sweaters, shoes, etc.). It is evident that gang members did not clearly favor any particular type of theft object; even money, the top-ranking object, figured in fewer than one fifth of recorded instances of theft. There is thus little evidence for “specialized” theft among project gangs; group members directed their stealing to a wide variety of objects rather than to a limited number of favored objects such as automobiles, hubcaps or pocketbooks.
The issue of “utilitarian” youthful theft is central to various explanations of youth crime. The use of the term “utilitarian” in this context implies a distinction between stealing because the stolen objects have some direct or practical use, and stealing either because the act of theft itself or what is stolen symbolizes something else of greater or more compelling value. The assumption that most juvenile theft is primarily “symbolic” rather than “utilitarian” is a central premise in several approaches to youth crime. One widely-held psychological position sees the act of theft primarily as representing a desire to “get” something which bears only the most oblique relationship to what is actually stolen. Thus, stealing cars is seen as an attempt to accommodate fears of being insufficiently masculine by appropriating objects perceived as symbolizing masculinity. Shoplifting by women is seen as a response to a sense of love deprivation. Certain extreme manifestations of this position may even see all acts of theft primarily as attempts to regain in symbolic form lost love objects. A major sociological approach to delinquency utilizes the characterization of juvenile theft as “non-utilitarian” as a basic premise of a theory of criminal motivation.

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343 See for example: “Often, a delinquent boy who steals will say in his own way that after a theft he felt whole again. He is...expressing a sense of emptiness and loss of a parent...stealing for him has a brief restitutorial meaning and in his fantasy it fills the emptiness within him, as if the feelings themselves are the return of the lost parent”. Stone, Edw., and Zilbach, Joan, “Chronic Problem Families,” Action for Boston Community Development, June 1962. Sometimes speculation as to the psychologically symbolic significance of stealing becomes rather fanciful. For example, “The stealing...represents an attempt to retrieve from the mother those objects—breast, feces, penis—and the satisfaction which they represent which he feared she had the power to deprive him of and which he wants back.” Menaker, “The Neurotic Stealing Symptom,” American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. IX, April 1939, p. 371.

344 The non-utilitarian character of theft is a keystone of Cohen’s “status deprivation” argument. One of the “facts” that a theory of delinquency must fit, writes Cohen, is that “much gang stealing has no such (rational and utilitarian) motive at all...There is no accounting in rational and utilitarian terms for the effort expended and the danger run in stealing things which are often discarded, destroyed, or casually given away”...”stealing is not merely an alternative means to the acquisition of objects otherwise difficult of attainment.” Cohen, op. cit., p. 26. During the early period of the Midcity Project, an incident of theft was taken as corroboration of this position. A member of the Senior Bandits, arrested for theft from a downtown department store, was found in possession of a single shoe. The irrational nature of such a theft appeared evident. What would be the possible use of one shoe? However, when fuller details were later learned, it developed that this incident in fact reflected a particular modus operandi: since two shoes are considerably more bulky than one, pairs of shoes were stolen by pairs of Bandits to lessen chances of detection, and following the theft each boy would
If theft were primarily symbolic, it would follow that most of the things stolen by Project gang members would bear little direct relationship to what they needed or would be useful to them in their daily lives. An examination of the items of Table 20.11 conveys quite an opposite impression. With few exceptions, group members stole things which were quite directly and evidently useful to their activities as urban adolescents—with activities such as courtship, athletics, recreation, and “hanging out” playing a large part. Items most frequently stolen were money, automobile rides, and athletic and recreational equipment and supplies.

There can be little question as to the utility of money—probably the single most utilitarian commodity in our society. One might conclude that the theft of money were non-utilitarian only if the youngsters proceeded to spend their stolen money for non-utilitarian purposes. There was no evidence for this; an examination of items purchased by group members showed a good correspondence with the items they stole.

As already mentioned, stolen autos were not kept, or resold, but “borrowed” for temporary periods. Theft of autos was thus in effect theft of a service—transportation. Transportation played an important part in the lives of group members—being quite necessary for activities such as picking up girls, going to the beach, outings, and other events which required leaving the neighborhood for other parts of the city. Another kind of situation in which stolen transportation was most useful was (during) escapes from correctional institutions—most of which were located in rural areas, at some distance, from the boy’s home community.

Another “utilitarian” purpose of car theft appeared to be that of learning to drive. Court appearance data shows a peak of auto thefts at age 15—one year prior to the time Midcity boys were legally permitted to apply for driver’s licenses. In addition to the understandable desire to “rush” the assumption of the envied role of

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go his own way to lessen chances that both would be caught. Similarly, theft of an apron by a Senior Bandit was interpreted in terms of sex-role conflicts and various other kinds of psychic symbolism: it later developed that the apron was stolen as a Christmas gift for the boy’s sister. As frequently happened, behavior which appeared on the basis of limited evidence to be inconsistent or irrational emerged, once additional information was obtained, as quite practical and effectively goal-directed.
automobile driver—an evident badge of adult status—it is reasonable to assume that the boys “borrowed” cars during this period in order to practice for their forthcoming driver’s tests.

Since much of the lives of group members was taken up by various kinds of recreational activities, motives for stealing items such as football shoes and jerseys, baseball gloves, phonograph records, and beach equipment do not require particularly abstruse or penetrating explanations. Nor is the role of items such as candy and sweets, cigarettes, comic books and magazines, pens and pencils in the lives of urban adolescents difficult to explain. For example—en route to a picnic at the beach, Senior Bandits stopped and stole luncheon meat and a kitchen knife from a store; once at the beach, one boy stole a bathing suit. While visiting a tourist attraction, some Molls stole picture post cards of the attraction to send to friends. A boy whose rear-view mirror broke stole another from Sears Roebuck. Such thefts do not demand the imputation of deep psychological motives. Table 20.11 also illuminates another issue as to the “utilitarian” quality of theft. It is possible to distinguish three major ways in which one may derive utility by theft. The first is taking items of direct utility either for immediate use or consumption, such as foods or soda pop for a picnic, or for repeated or longer term use—such as fountain pens or sweaters. The second is stealing money which can be converted into either immediate consumption items or extended use items; the third is stealing objects which are then sold, so that the obtained money can then be used for general purchase purposes.

There was no direct evidence that group members “fenced” articles they stole—that is, converted them to money by sale to an intermediary. There was some discussion among the high-theft Senior Bandits as to whether a local storekeeper was a fence, and some observed attempts by members of the same group to sell stolen items to local adults. There was, however, no evidence that an established apparatus for routinely converting stolen objects into cash was available to group members. Indirect evidence of the fact that the Senior Bandits may have sold some
of their stolen goods provides the basis of an estimate that about 80% of Project
gang thefts were of the “direct utility” type—either immediate or extended; about
15% were money thefts, and about 5% were thefts of items to be converted into cash.

This distribution may serve further to explicate the character of theft among
Midcity gangs. The distribution of these three types of theft reflects the relative
importance of various orders of theft in the lives of group members. Theft as a
rational, organized, and planned way of obtaining money requires an organized
apparatus for disposing of stolen goods, and thus must involve several persons or
sets of person who are complicit in the illegality of the transaction. Involvement in
this sort of network is a characteristic of organized crime; the relative rarity of
“fencing” among Project groups reflected the character of a distinctively adolescent
form of theft, differentiated from the patterning of professional adult theft. Stealing
money generally entails a rather different orientation to theft than stealing objects;
a person who might rather routinely take pencils from an office would never
consider rifling the coffee kitty; thefts of money by project group members entailed a
greater degree of forethought and planning than did most object theft. The
dominant type of theft was the taking of objects which themselves had direct utility
in the conduct of some activity or enterprise—often in the context of the activity
itself. In this respect it resembled a mode of goods obtainance with direct analogies
to legitimate purchase.

The assertion that most gang or adolescent theft is primarily non-utilitarian
is not, it would thus appear, supported by the data reported here. This is not to say,
however, that there was no “symbolic” component to thefts by Midcity gang
members.345 On the contrary, as will be shown, obtaining goods by theft rather than

345 The terms “utilitarian” and “symbolic” are both subject to considerable semantic/ambiguity. Almost anything can be interpreted as having “utility” in some sense, if the domain of the concept is extended widely enough. Similarly, anything at all can symbolize something else; money in particular, since it can be converted into almost anything else can readily serve to symbolize a vast number of nonmonetary things. However, these terms must be interpreted within the context of the present issue; the distinction between “utilitarian” and non-utilitarian,” as already mentioned, is used to convey the idea that some things are more readily and obviously related to immediate practical usage than others; thus theft of an antique carpet by boys about to leave for a camping trip
purchase or other means had most significant meanings in many instances. These
data on theft objects—showing that most of the things group members stole were
rather obviously related to immediate and practical requirements of their lives,
serve rather to indicate that is just as unwise to deny the utilitarian component of
adolescent gang theft as to overlook its symbolic significance.

What support do these data give to the theory that a major reason for theft
among lower class adolescents is need? It has been shown that most of the objects
stolen by Project gang members were highly useful to them, but were they
necessary? The question arises as to the meaning of “necessary” in this connection.
The idea of theft through necessity generally (involves) basic subsistence items such
as staple foods, clothing, fuel, and medicine—which are needed to sustain life or
provide necessary protection or health requirements. Images come to mind of an
unemployed father stealing milk or bread for his hungry children; a son stealing
money for his mothers’ operation; a boy stealing fuel to heat a freezing apartment.
Reasons for theft of this type are not infrequently forwarded by thieves themselves,
and are sometimes considered as justifying theft.

would be less “utilitarian” than theft of a flashlight. The opposition of utilitarian and “symbolic” does
not deny that any act can have a multitude of “symbolic” connotations; it rather concerns the
adequacy of utility of various levels of causal explanation for particular purposes. If, for example,
boys with very limited funds steal a car to go to an amusement park rather than paying two dollars
each for train transportation, it is hardly necessary to view the automobile as a symbol of manhood
in order to gain a reasonably good understanding of the act; some rather substantial portion of the
motivation for the theft rests in the quite practical matter of the rational allocation of scarce
resources; if we spend all our money on a train ride, which cannot be readily stolen, we won’t have
any left over for rides and refreshments; if we “borrow” a car, the venture becomes feasible.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Number of Times Stolen</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobiles</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic, Recreational Equipment, Supplies</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy, Soda, Gum, etc.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry, Watches, Ornaments</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools, Implements, Weapons</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing, Daily Wear</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, Staple Variety</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures, Photographs, Post Cards</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purses, Wallets</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes, Cigars</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic Beverages</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Furniture, Appliances</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records, Musical Instruments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books, Magazines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Implements</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Equipment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto Parts, Accessories</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>156</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The character of stolen objects listed in Table 20.11 gives little evidence that necessity played any significant part in theft by Midcity gang members. It is true that group members “needed” most of the things they stole in order to sustain a given style of life, but they were not needed to sustain life itself. Table 20.11 makes a distinction between “staple” foods such as bread, meat, etc., and non-staple foods such as candy, chewing gum, and soda pop. A distinction was also made between wearing apparel ordinarily used for daily wear, and special-purpose clothing such as athletic uniforms and Halloween costumes—which were included under “recreational equipment.” Assuming that daily-wear clothing and staple foods were the primary “life-necessity” items on this list, it can be seen that fewer than 10% of stolen items fell into this category. Money, of course, can be seen as a “necessity” item, but Table 20.11 shows that there is no reason for supposing that the distribution of purchased items differed materially from that of stolen items. On the assumption that items purchased with stolen money showed a distribution similar to that of non-monetary stolen items, “necessity” items would still comprise less than 15% of items stolen. Actual physical need, it would thus appear, played a small part in thefts by Midcity gang members.

Was there anything about the character or distribution of items stolen by group members which would identify them as a special class of objects—“stolen goods?” If, for example, the list included a disproportionate number of hub caps, fur coats, wallets or jewelry, one might suspect that it represented the swag of thieves rather than items of ordinary utility to gang adolescents. This is not the case. If one eliminates the top two items—money and cars, Table 20.11 rather resembles a general shopping list. The category “jewelry, watches, ornaments” does rank fairly high, but about half of these were in actuality inexpensive items such as tie clips and costume jewelry. The distribution of stolen objects, is, in fact, quite similar to that of objects obtained through legitimate purchase. Table 20.11 lists all known items stolen by group members during the same period for which thefts were recorded. Although there are some differences between the two lists, due in part to
the fact that it is difficult or impossible to steal some items which may be purchased (e.g., medical care, haircuts), the lists are surprisingly similar.

These data, then, would support the conclusion that theft as practiced by Midcity gang members to a significant degree represented one alternative mode of obtaining goods and services of direct utility, with legitimate purchase representing another mode. Further evidence that purchase and theft were often conceived as alternative but similar modes of obtaining goods arises from the fact that both modes sometimes figured in the same transaction. For example, the Junior Outlaws once obtained a dozen golf balls by buying 9, “conning” the store clerk out of another one, and stealing the remaining two. This single transaction thus incorporated three modes of obtaining goods; legitimate purchase, fraudulent transaction and theft. The conceptual equivalence of theft and purchase and the reasons for viewing Midcity gang theft more as “economic” than “predatory” behavior will be discussed further in the section on incentives for theft.

A final issue of relevance to the data on theft objects concerns the “values” of group members. Since, as has been shown, necessity played a relatively small part in the selection of theft objects, it may be assumed that elements of choice played a commensurately important part. What kinds of considerations influenced group members’ choices of objects to steal? Direct practical utility, as shown, was

346 The term “value” as used in this connection and, in general as used in sociological and anthropological writings, is imprecise and ambiguous and the extended discussion which would be necessary to reduce this ambiguity by any appreciable degree cannot be undertaken at this point. The term “focal concern” refers to practices issues, and areas of life involvement which command high attention and emotional involvement. In any area of focal concern, various forms of practice or alternative modes of acting can be regarded as having greater or lesser “value” by persons of different social categories. Thus the practice “gambling,” a focal concern in most lower class communities, is actively disvalued by most middle class protestant clergymen, mildly disvalued by Catholic clergymen, actively valued by racetrack interests. The dimension of “value” can thus vary on a scale of high positive to high negative, on another scale of highly explicit to highly implicit, as well as other scales. The present section cites some 18 “entities” of diverse types whose “value” in the eyes of different groups is subject to variation. Some are tangible material objects (automobiles), some general life practices (courtship and mating) some states of being (economic solvency). When the term “value” appears as a noun in this section it will refer to those aspects of life activity and concern to which it is possible to ascribe differential value and unless otherwise indicated will refer to a “high” or “positive” order of evaluation.
one major consideration, but the “utility” of stolen objects itself derived from the nature of group members’ activities, and decisions to participate in these particular activities were, in turn, influenced by conceptions of what was valued.

It could be said in a more general sense as well that what group members chose to steal reflected what it was they valued. Did these “values” as manifested through choice of theft objects, reflect special or peculiar concerns of a “deviant” subgroup, or did they reflect broader concerns of the society as a whole? Table 20.11 clearly supports the latter alternative. The three types of object most frequently stolen, comprising 44.8% of all theft objects, were money, cars, and recreational equipment. Each of these material entities is actively valued throughout contemporary America. Money, cars, and recreational equipment are valued by male and female old and young, rich and poor, urban and rural, white and Negro, Protestant, Catholic and Jew. By choosing to steal objects which so clearly reflect dominant material concerns of most Americans, Midcity gang members showed that their conceptions of what is of value corresponded in some respects with those of most other Americans.

Does this mean, then, that the motivations underlying the behavioral practices of Midcity gang members were a product of a set of value conceptions held in common by all Americans? It does not. The fact of sharing with most other Americans a high explicit evaluation of certain material entities does not mean that their conceptions of value were essentially coterminous with those of all Americans. The issue of similarities and differences in what is valued in a large society is most complex, but one facet of this issue will be raised here in order to point out an important distinction between overlap in values and commonality of values. Most

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347 The terms “America” and “American,” as used in this context will refer to the national society of the United States of North America, with its capital in Washington D.C., unless otherwise specified. The ambiguity of this term derives from the fact that many other western hemisphere nations are also “American” and some other are also “United States” of America.

348 The issue of value commonality is important to several theories of criminal behavior. One major sociological approach, forwarded by Robert Merton and amplified by Lloyd Ohlin and Richard Cloward, takes as a major postulate that most Americans subscribe to a common set of basic values. On the basis of this postulate it is argued that those in lower status positions, by virtue of certain
students of American society would agree with the neutral statement that Americans in various social subsectors differ in some respects from those in other sectors, and resemble them in other respects. Different schools of thought, however, differ substantially in choosing to emphasize differences or commonalities. If the question is phrased in either-or terms—“Do all Americans subscribe equally to the same set of values, or do various subgroups espouse separate and distinctive values?”—it is obvious that neither alternative is tenable. Americans at the same time value similar and different things. By virtue of common membership in an identifiable national society, most Americans entertain similar notions as to what is moral, what is correct, what is of value. But at the same time, given a society characterized by an awesomely complex system of subgroups and sub-subgroups, it is hardly conceivable that there would not exist definite and substantial subcultural differences in overall conceptions of value, in the patterning of values, and in the cogency and impact of commonly-held values. The issue then centers on a concern with the extent to which extensive commonalities in conceptions of value are conducive to similarities in underlying motives for behavior, and the extent to which extensive value differences are conducive to differences in motives and behavior.

The difficulty of deriving clear or concise formulations of this complicated question can be illustrated by presenting in simplified form an enumeration of major life concerns of two of the many types of subgroup in American society—white male adults in professional and managerial occupations, and Negro adolescent females of low skilled laboring class status. Both groups are numerous, and both form integral components of the total society. Both value cars, money, and

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[349] Ohlin and Cloward, for example, admit differences but choose to stress commonalities. For example, “Although middle- and lower-class value systems are not identical, they nevertheless are part of the same society and thus have much in common.” O-C, p. 69.
recreational equipment. This is one indication that they are fellow members of American society. It does not follow, however, that members of these two subgroups share equal power prerogatives or the same “success-goals,” or that there is an effective degree of commonality in their respective sets of life concerns. White male adults of the professional and managerial classes have a customary set of dominant life concerns. These include matters such as effective administration of large corporate entities; the achievement of national reputation for occupational competence; direct or ready access to the highest loci of power in various institutional systems; international relations; achievement and maintenance of economic solvency. Negro female adolescents of low skilled laboring class status also have characteristic areas of high concern. These include belonging to and acceptance within relatively small social networks organized around courtship and mating activity; performers, products, and currency of popular music and dance forms; personal adornment of many kinds, involving clothing, hair styles, make-up; mechanisms for defining and controlling the appropriate circumstances of sexual access—especially as these relate to conceptions of differences between white and Negroes; occupational pursuits involving a minimum of specialized training; achievement and practice of motherhood prior to termination of social adolescence.

It is most unlikely that differences of this degree in major life concerns of these two groups would not also reflect substantial differences in their conceptions of the appropriate direction for the expenditure of life energy, and that differences in conceptions of the significant directions of life effort would not also reflect substantial differences in conceptions of what is to be valued. Similar comparisons of the myriad subgroups of American society would reveal similarly complex patterns of overlap and divergence in focal concerns and associated conceptions of value. The fact that most Americans place high value on money, automobiles, and recreational equipment does not thereby establish that all place equally high value on advanced education, saving for the future, regular church attendance, and the past and future fate of a cohesive family unit. Articles stolen by Midcity gang
members reflected areas of concern which were shared in common with many others in their society, but this does not vitiate the fact that their lives were conducted within the context of a subcultural system whose definitions and perspectives were substantially different from those of other major societal subgroups.
Incentives for

Adolescent Theft Behavior

The bulk of subsequent analysis centers on the citation and discussion of 21 incentives for theft. The concept of “incentive” serves both at the basis for the theoretical treatment of motivation for theft and as the basis of the measurement unit used to provide quantitative information as to the relative weight and prevalence of various incentives. The chapter will include: 1) Citation of 21 theft-incentives grouped under four major orders of incentive; 2) Presentation of the frequency of each of four major orders of incentive; 3) Separate discussion of each major incentive category, and its included incentives. The presentation will involve a general discussion of the nature of each incentive (e.g., “general utility” as motive for theft), and illustrations of operation of this kind of incentive in the present study data; 4) Data on the relation of theft-incentive patterning to subcultural characteristics of age, sex, social status and ethnic status (e.g., is “courage-demonstration” a more cogent incentive for lower than higher status gang members?); 5) General discussion, based on empirical findings, of the role of various incentives in “normal lower status male adolescent” theft, of the nature and role of inhibitives, and the dynamics of the incentive-inhibitive balance.

The basic population of events used for the quantitative incentive analysis is the same as the “incident” population used for analysis of frequency, participation,
target distribution, etc., in “Theft Behavior in City Gangs,” Klein, Juvenile Gangs in Context, 1967. This population comprises, for present purposes, 182 acts of theft engaged in by intensive-contact study-group members. Each incident was coded according to which incentive or group of incentives figured in the act of theft under consideration. Coding was based on as much knowledge as was available of larger context of each theft incident.

Chart 1.12 lists 21 incentives, grouped under four major orders of incentive. The four major orders are: 1) Acquisitional; 2) Demonstrational; 3) Experiential; 4) Justificational. Brief definitions follow.
“Acquisitional” incentives figure into acts when acquiring object for useful purpose is involved. “Demonstrational” incentive applies when engagement in an act is intended to demonstrate possession of, control over, some personal state, quality, or condition (e.g., competence, anger, allegiance). “Experiential” incentives occur when engagement in an act results in the experiencing of some emotional reaction or state (e.g., excitement). “Justificational” incentives result when the act is intended to achieve or correct some condition seen by actor as “deserved.” Citation of these four major orders of incentive provides a preliminary, generalized answer to
the question “Why do they steal?” The answer is—to get something, to show something, to experience something, to correct something—in a variety of combinations.

Table 1.12 shows the frequency of four major orders of incentive for 182 theft incidents. Demonstrational incentives are clearly most common, figuring in almost all thefts, comprising almost 2/3 of all incentives. Experiential, Acquisitional incentives are next, and Justificational incentives least common. The following section includes a detailed discussion of six Acquisitional incentives, their nature, relative frequency within the category, distribution according to subcultural characteristics, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Incentive Category</th>
<th>Number of Incentives</th>
<th>Percent All Incentives</th>
<th>Number of Thefts with this Category of Incentive</th>
<th>Percent Thefts with this Category of Incentive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrational</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisitional</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justificational</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>864</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Acquisitional Incentives for Theft**

The most obvious answer to the question of why people steal is that they want or need something, are unable or unwilling to obtain it through legitimate means, and so proceed to take it without authorization. It is this rather straightforward kind of explanation which underlies the notion that it is the poor who do the most stealing. In recent years, however, the adequacy of this order of
explanation has been challenged quite vigorously by several schools of thought—
principally those of psychology, psychodynamic psychiatry, and psychologically-
oriented sociology. A major tenet of these positions, already discussed in connection
with the analysis of theft objects, is that an adequate understanding of theft must
go far beyond considerations of the direct or obvious utility of stolen objects, and
focus instead on more intangible and symbolic reasons for theft.

Cars, from this point of view, are primarily status symbols or symbols of
masculinity, and only incidentally modes of transportation; food is stolen primarily
because it represents maternal nurturance and only incidentally because one wants
to eat; a baseball bat is stolen because it represents manhood and only incidentally
because a bat is needed in order to play baseball. One result of these emphases has
been virtually to reverse the thrust of the direct utility explanation; the idea that
people usually steal to get what they need or can use has been transformed, in some
quarters, to the idea that people seldom steal to get what they need or can use.

The cogency of non-“utilitarian” motives for theft is in no way denied in the
present approach; in fact, as shown in Chart 1.12, the majority of postulated theft
incentives are designated as “demonstrational”—conveying the idea that a major
reason for Midcity gangs theft was to “show” something. Table 1.12 shows that
about 15% of analyzed thefts were considered not to involve “acquisitional”
incentives to any significant degree. However, the fact that 85% of analyzed thefts
did involve acquisitional incentives strengthens evidence already presented that
utilitarian purposes did figure most importantly in Midcity gang theft.

The term “acquisitional” is used here to characterize acts in which the
acquisition of an object or objects to serve some necessary or useful purpose was at
least one reason for stealing. Examples of such thefts by Midcity gang members—
some of which have already been cited—were stealing luncheon meat for picnic
sandwiches, bathing suits for bathing, gifts for Christmas presents, and money for
train tickets for a group outing.
Table 2.12 cites six types of “acquisitional” incentive ranked by frequency. Distinctions among types are based on a kind of “utility” served by the involved articles. Objects may be immediately necessary (plasma for a dying person), necessary for extended periods (warm clothing in winter), useful or convenient over extended periods (a camera), of general or non-specific utility (money), or of value by virtue of representing a loved or admired person or other entity (a widow’s photograph of her deceased husband).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentive</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent of Acquisitional Incentives</th>
<th>Rank All Incentives</th>
<th>Percent of All Incentives</th>
<th>Percent of All Thefts with This Incentive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Facilitative Utility</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Utility</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Facilitative Utility</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representational Utility</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Necessity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Necessity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As implied in prior discussion, those aspects of motivation for theft which involve the acquisition of articles or other resources for particular uses are essentially the same kind of incentives which underlie the acquisition of material resources in general, and do not, therefore, require special consideration under the rubric of theft. Why people seek and acquire material resources which are useful or

350 The nature and function of acquisitional incentives for theft have already been considered, in part, in connection with the discussion of the utility of theft objects. The present discussion will recapitulate briefly those parts of the discussion of “utility” which are relevant to the consideration of theft incentives.
necessary to them is essentially a problem of economic analysis, and beyond the province of this work. What calls for explanation here is not why group members had need of or use for material resources, but why they chose as often as they did to acquire them through violative means.\textsuperscript{351} For present purposes it is taken as a given that when one is hungry there is an incentive to acquire food; when one wants to travel there is an incentive to obtain transportation; when one wishes to appear well-dressed there is an incentive to acquire attractive clothes; when one wishes to play baseball there is an incentive to acquire bats, balls, and gloves. Group members did in fact wish to eat, travel, and play baseball. As shown in the analysis of theft objects, most of the articles stolen by group members were needed for, or served to facilitate, the conduct of their major life activities—courtship, recreational activity, athletics, dances, parties, and so on.

Table 2.12 shows that acquisitional incentives figured in 86.4\% of all thefts, with three of the six incentives (immediate facilitative utility, general utility, extended facilitative utility) accounting for 87.3\% of all acquisitional incentives and figuring in 70\% of all thefts. The following sections will present brief discussions of each of the 6 acquisitional incentives, in general terms and as exemplified in study-group thefts.

\textit{Immediate Necessity}

Immediate necessity may constitute an incentive for theft in cases where there is an acute or urgent need for an object or resource, and where the means for legitimate acquisition is not available. Writers of fiction tend to devote disproportionate attention to this incentive and, as already mentioned, immediate necessity may be claimed as justifying theft either by those who steal or by those in sympathy with them. Examples would be theft of food for a starving child, of medicine for a dying person, of warm clothing for a freezing person. Each of these

\textsuperscript{351} On frequency of “purchase” acquisitions: Cite fact of underreporting of purchase acquisition; most known thefts recorded, only selected purchases. Even so, a lot more purchase than theft; minimum of 277 purchase events.
examples involves necessity of a life-or-death variety. A theft undertaken on the basis of this type of incentive is fairly well “explained” on these grounds alone, and does not require the positing of multiple incentives. No theft involving this incentive was recorded for Midcity gang members.

There is, however, a second type of necessity which might be described as “conditional” or “contingent.” Here necessity does not arise directly from life or death considerations, but from involvement in a situation which requires the acquisition of particular resources as a necessary condition of its execution. An example would be theft of civilian clothing by an escaping war prisoner. The act of escape itself is not dictated by vital necessity, but once undertaken, replacing the prison uniform by less conspicuous attire becomes necessary to effectuate the undertaking.

Four Midcity gang thefts were adjudged to involve “immediate necessity”—(0.5% of all thefts) all of the “conditional” type. Two instances paralleled the prisoner escape example. Members of the Senior Bandits escaped from rural correctional institutions, and stole cars in nearby towns in order to effect their return to Midcity. Another “immediate necessity” auto theft also involved the Senior Bandits. Two of the boys were out drinking with a member of the Junior Bandits who became so drunk that he passed out. With police active in the area, the older boys decided they had to get their companion home so as to avoid arrest, and stole not one but two cars in order to affect this end. In neither of these instances was the undertaking vitally necessary, but once the course of action had been decided upon, it became almost impossible of attainment without immediate transportation, and automobile theft resulted.

*Extended Necessity*

A second kind of necessity which may serve as an incentive for theft is “extended necessity.” The direct utility of immediate necessity items is generally, although not always, of relatively short duration. The necessary medicine is
consumed, the necessary food eaten. The utility of necessary resources may also extend over longer periods of time; such resources are also, evidently, not immediately consumable. Examples would be winter clothing, shoes, blankets. Extended necessity may also be of the “contingent” variety; for example, having accepted a job beyond walking distance from his home, a person might steal a bicycle in order to get to and from work, in the absence of other available modes of transportation. No theft committed by Project group members was adjudged to involve extended necessity as an incentive. This may have been due to the absence of sufficiently detailed evidence on the intended utility of certain theft objects. In one instance several members of the Senior Bandits combined forces to equip a fellow group member with a winter outfit, including an overcoat and shoes. However, in discussing this theft, group members stressed the fact that their new aim was to provide their companion with a total ensemble which was new and stylish, and to this end they selected high quality clothing from expensive stores. Although the utility of the stolen items was quite evidently extended, the degree of necessity involved was questionable; if necessity alone had been the dominant incentive, considerations of quality and stylishness would have played a less prominent part.

**Immediate Facilitative Utility**

“Facilitative” utility may be an incentive for theft when the material object or other resource is used to make possible or facilitate the conduct of a particular activity (cards; card game) or general enterprise (camera; photography). The term “facilitative” is used here to make the distinction between utility of the “vital necessity” type just described and utility which derives from involvement in activities and enterprises which are not directly “necessary.” The demarcation between “necessity” and “non-necessity” is not always easy to make; this engages the kinds of considerations cited in the discussion of “contingent” necessity; an enterprise may not in itself serve vitally necessary purposes, but once undertaken
demands certain adjuncts as necessary conditions of its execution. Items or resources may be stolen to facilitate or make possible a particular activity and may be consumed in the course of the activity (fruit for a picnic); may be stolen to facilitate a particular activity and be useful beyond that activity (phonograph records for record hop), and may be stolen not in the context of a particular activity but for more general purposes of extended utility (camera for photography). The first two types are considered here as involving “immediate” facilitative utility; the third as involving extended “utility.”

Theft was utilized or considered as a mode of obtaining useful objects for virtually every customary activity engaged in by Midcity gang members. Group members stole or proposed for theft football shoes for football, baseball gloves for baseball, basketballs for basketball, bathing suits for swimming, cigarettes and refreshments for recreation and consumption, autos for amusement park excursions, household furnishings for gang clubrooms, liquor and phonograph records for parties, wood and gasoline for celebration bonfires, comic books and magazines for recreational reading. Most thefts in this category occurred within the context of a particular enterprise and stolen items were used directly for immediate purposes. Since group members were actively involved in a wide range of recreational and other activities whose conduct required the use of particular material objects, it is not surprising that immediate facilitative utility was the most common type of acquisitional theft incentive, figuring in 38.3% of all thefts, and ranking 7.5th (6.8%) among the 21 incentives.

**Extended Facilitative Utility**

The utility of some of the objects stolen for immediate facilitative purposes extended beyond the event in connection with which they were initially stolen. Records stolen for a particular party could also be played following the party; a baseball glove stolen specifically for participation in the first game of the season could be used throughout the baseball season; sparkplugs stolen to make possible a
particular excursion would remain in the car throughout their useful life. Objects which were “consumed” in the course of an activity, such as refreshments or cigarettes, could obviously serve purposes of “immediate” utility only; other “durable” objects which served purposes of immediate utility could maintain their usefulness over extended time periods. An additional number of extended utility items were stolen not in the context of particular activities, but more specifically for purposes of extended utility. Wrist watches, cigarette lighters, and fountain pens are examples of such items. Since most “facilitative utility” items were consumed in the course of the activity, extended facilitative utility figured in a relatively smaller proportion of thefts; extended facilitative utility ranked 4th among the 6 incentives (15.5% of acquisitional incentives), 11th among all incentives (3.12%), and figured in 17.5% of all thefts.

**General Utility**

In the earliest human societies men acquired through fairly direct acquisitional methods those economic commodities necessary to the maintenance of life and life activities. Food was hunted and gathered; shelter was found or constructed from naturally available materials; tools and implements were fabricated from available materials by tribal craftsmen. In modern European society modes of acquiring needed economic resources are far less direct. Given an incredible variety of useful or necessary products and a vast and ramified division of labor, most of the objects needed to maintain life are obtained by their consumers through a process of exchange whose principal instrument is a universal and general exchange medium—money.

Project-group members, as has been shown, were able to acquire many of the goods and some of the services needed to maintain their life pattern through fairly direct acquisitional means. However, despite the rather impressive range and variety of material resources which group members were able to acquire by direct methods, the conduct of life in modern urban society is manifestly impossible
without money. As shown in the analysis of theft objects, money was in fact the item most frequently stolen by Project group members.

As will be discussed shortly, there are a range of modes of resource acquisition available to adolescent residents of lower class communities. One mode, favored by most adult residents of middle class communities, involves seeking, gaining, and maintaining employment, performing specified services, receiving monetary compensation for such services, and using earned money to acquire needed economic resources. Project group members—both employed and non-employed—frequently utilized alternative methods for obtaining money. The most direct of these was to ascertain the location of a sum of money, gain access to it, and take it. A less direct method—closely resembling the approved “get job, get paid, spend pay” mode, but managing to bypass the “job” part of the sequence, was to steal objects intended for conversion into money. While this particular method was rather infrequently employed by Project gang members, certain kinds of objects, such as watches, accessories, and small appliances, were stolen not for purposes of direct facilitative utility but for conversion into money for general use. Both of these practices—the direct theft of money and the theft of objects to be sold for money—are here considered a “general utility” incentive for theft. The term “general” is used because it is possible, when identifiable objects were stolen, to ascertain the uses to which they were put—but where money or objects tend to be converted into money were stolen, such determination was difficult.

General utility as an incentive for theft ranked 9th of 21 theft incentives, comprising 5.2% of all theft incentives and figuring in 29.2% of all thefts. Groups ranged from 10% to 33% in the proportion of their thefts which involved general utility. At least four general patterns regarding theft for general utility purposes may be distinguished. The first is the “big-haul” pattern with extensive planning preceding a large scale operation which may net a substantial sum. Banks and other large commercial enterprises are usual targets. The Brinks robbery is a classic example. Second, general utility theft may be conducted on a fairly regular
basis, as one relatively dependent source of income, involving moderate sums, and usually centering around one particular genre of theft or _modus operandi_. Third, general utility theft may involve occasional irregular stealing from small local facilities, such as filling stations, grocery stores, and taverns. Fourth, general utility theft of a variety of types may be undertaken on _ad hoc_ basis, to obtain small sums for particular immediate purposes. Most of the general utility theft engaged in by Midcity gang members was of the second type—the “routine income” type. No good example of the first type was recorded, although it was practiced by adults in Midcity. Thefts of the third type were not uncommon, and a few instances of the fourth type were noted.

The best type of theft for “pure” routine income purposes (with “pure” one-incentive thefts, as already cited, being very rare among Midcity gangs) is one which provides the maximum possibility of dependable income along with the minimum of risk—either of being caught by the police or suffering retaliation by the victim. Five principal types of routine income theft—listed roughly in order of increasing risk—were practiced by Midcity gang members. These were the church poor-box theft, the purse snatch or pocketbook grab, the open stand money theft, theft of articles from parked cars, and cab driver thefts.352

Routine rifling of church poor-boxes was recorded only among white Catholic boys. A Junior Outlaw who observed that one of his fellow group members always seemed to have plenty of ready cash, although he had no job, remarked “He’s got some kind of racket going, and I want to get out of it.” Shortly thereafter both boys were in fact engaged in weekly poor-box theft as a joint enterprise. Church poor-box theft was close to an ideal form of routine-income theft, since it could be practiced quite regularly (the Junior Outlaw poor-box thieves visited the churches every Sunday) and entailed little real risk. Even if caught by a priest, there was little

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352 As “routine” thefts, each of these types was carried on for extended periods of time, as a “series” of thefts. For the event-tabulation purposes of the previous chapter, most of these “serious” thefts were counted as a single theft. This means first that the number of all types was undercounted, and second that the actual number of thefts was acquisitional utility as an incentive was somewhat underrepresented.
likelihood that responsibility for handling the culprits would be handed over to the police; it would be more likely seen as a church responsibility. One possible drawback to this type of theft lay in the possibility of adverse reactions by other gang members; since earning prestige from one’s fellows was a major incentive for theft, the evident merit of poor-box theft from the viewpoint of acquisitional utility could be substantially weakened if gang members defined participation in such theft as lessening one’s prestige. There was in fact some expressed disapproval of this practice by members of the more lawfully-oriented faction of the Junior Outlaws, but no one went so far as to translate this disapproval into a report to the church or other authorities. On the other hand, members of the less lawfully-oriented faction saw this form of theft primarily as a “good hustle,” and did not engage the issue of its moral acceptability.

The purse-snatch was the most common type of routine-income theft, in that it was utilized by more youngsters and with greater frequency than any of the other types. This was a relatively dependable income source, since there were always women with purses walking through parks and on relatively isolated streets. Risk was relatively low, since a boy could grab a purse and dash away almost before the victim could realize what had happened, let alone being in a position to identify the thief. Although practiced by both white and Negro groups, the purse-snatch was clearly more common among the Negroes. As mentioned in the discussion of theft targets, there was a slight undercurrent of sentiment that females were not as appropriate as males as targets of theft, since the demonstration of courage was not as effectively achieved through robbery of lone females; however, the evident advantage of pocketbook theft as a routine income source outweighed this rather weakly-developed current of potentially inhibitive sentiment.

A specialty of the Senior Bandits was the newsstand theft. During one period the boys engaged in a fairly extended and regular series of thefts from attended newsstands in subway stations. One boy would distract the stand attendant while several others grabbed the money, which was generally in an open box near the
counter, and dash off to mix with the subway crowds. Risk of apprehension for these thefts was low, since the vendor could not easily leave his booth to pursue the thieves, and escape into the subway crowds was easy. Although several of the Senior Bandit newsstand thefts were reported in the newspapers, none of the boys were ever arrested for these thefts.

Theft of articles from parked cars has the advantage of being fairly dependable as a routine income source, since people frequently left parked cars with briefcases, clothing, and other items in them, but entailed a greater degree of risk than previously mentioned routine-income thefts. As cited in the discussion of theft targets, few cars parked in Midcity contained items of value; the car-item thieves thus had to go to other sections of the city—generally the downtown commercial districts—to find the objects of theft. Once outside of Midcity the risk of detention and apprehension increased—Midcity residents in other Port City districts were more visible than at home; police coverage was likely to be fairly intensive; the likelihood of being caught by a local and relatively broad-minded policeman was lower. Systematic parked-car theft thus required a considerable degree of foresight, planning, and the utilization of precautionary measures. A three-person car-theft ring directed by one of the Kings was responsible for most of the routine car-item theft engaged in by the study-group members; the ring’s modus operandi will be described as part of the discussion of the demonstrational incentive “collective task-execution competence.”

The riskiest form of routine income theft was the cab driver hold-up. This type also was generally executed by a three-person group. The boys would enter a cab as customers, ask to be driven to a relatively isolated place, threaten the driver with a knife, and take his money, watch, and jewelry. The risk in this operation derived from the fact that the cab drivers, who were often vigorous males not unaccustomed to coping with demanding situations, could resist and possibly injure the thieves, as well as from the possibility that the angry driver would go at once to the police station, describe the boys, and set in motion a police search which could
have a fair chance of success. In fact, for both of the last two types of “organized” theft—car-item and cab driver theft—arrests were not made once but several times.

Two additional types of routine income theft engaged in by Midcity adolescents were drunk-rolling and pick-pocketing. Both of these types, however, were sufficiently rare as to fall outside the category of “conventional” Midcity gang theft. Rolling of drunks (called “Jackrolling” in some other locations) involves the relatively low-risk act of taking the belongings of unconscious or semi-conscious intoxicates. There was some reference to this practice in a kind of “what we used to do in the old days” vein, but no actual instances were recorded during the study period. There was some sentiment to the effect that this type of theft was not considered particularly appropriate. One of the Kings was arrested on a pickpocketing charge shortly after the close of the study period, but no other instance was recorded. The rarity of certain types of “logical” routine-income thefts among Midcity gangs, along with the conventional patterning of those types which were practiced, shows that this conflict of theft for purposes of general utility was not random or fortuitous, but was governed by a well-developed set of rules which delineated the procedures of common types of theft, graded as more or less appropriate a variety of possible types, and assigned greater and lesser prestige to the successful execution of various types.

An additional feature of general utility theft should be noted. The acquisition of merchandise to be sold on the market is one activity in a legitimate commercial sequence which includes manufacturing, distributing, wholesaling, and retailing. The process of marketing saleable goods, however obtained, involves certain necessary commercial procedures. As already mentioned, Midcity gang members did not have ready access to an apparatus for marketing stolen goods and thus had to utilize whatever means were available for converting theft objects into money. For example, every Project worker was approached at least once, and some several times, as a customer for stolen goods. The experience of one of the Senior Bandits
illustrates the role of general utility theft as one component of a sequence of economic behavior which combines illegitimate and legitimate elements.

The youngster had acquired, by theft, about half a dozen television sets. With no access to a “fencing” system, he decided to sell them himself. He first approached a number of neighborhood adults on a rather casual basis, but was unable to move any of the sets at the prices he was asking. He took stock of his sales picture and decided on three new policies; he would lower prices, offer credit terms, and engage in door-to-door selling. In this way the boy succeeded in selling all of his sets. His customers, however, proved less than conscientious in meeting their credit obligations, and he found himself involved in a collection operation. The series of events consequent of the theft of the television sets occupied a good part of the boy’s time for most of one summer.

The process of marketing the stolen merchandise engaged qualities of initiative, enterprise, and ingenuity similar to those required for success in legitimate commercial practice. The boy’s experience in sales, pricing, delivery and credit, as well as the risks of business enterprise, provided him with a kind of training for commercial activity similar to that offered to middle class youngsters through organizations such as “Junior Achievement.”

**Representational Utility**

The term “representational” is used here to refer to objects whose value does not derive in any direct way from necessity or practical utility, but because they are perceived to represent a person or class of persons who are regarded with some special emotion or set of emotions. The emotions may be love, admiration, respect, fear, or some combination of these. Examples of such “representational” objects are the baby curls kept by the mother after her son’s first haircut; the glove or handkerchief obtained from a young lady by her suitor; the buttons ripped from the clothing of a teenage singing star by his fans; the enemy helmet taken as a war trophy.
The representational object figures in many forms of magic and magical belief. Locks of hair or articles of clothing of a desired lover are used in love charms; pictures or statuettes are used in attempts to injure or otherwise bewitch an intended victim; possession of the weapon of an esteemed warrior is felt to impart his courage to the new owner. The common feature of these diverse forms of magic is the conception that the representational object is the person or group it represents, and that what happens to it will happen to them. If the object is possessed, the represented person is or will be possessed; if it is harmed, they will be harmed; the powers or qualities of the represented person will pass to the one who possesses his belongings.353

The acquisition of an object with representational utility was at least one incentive for theft in about one-tenth of all thefts. About a quarter of these thefts involved photographs with “sentimental” value. Another theft involved the autographed photograph of an entertainment celebrity, and several others were of athletic equipment belonging to admired athletes. A few were of the love-token variety, with girls’ scarves or kerchiefs stolen by actual or potential admirers. One boy about to depart for the Navy arranged to have a friend steal a batch of phonograph records from the local settlement house so that he could have some fond memento of home to take away with him.

What was perhaps the most dramatic example of representational utility theft involved the theft of a worker’s car. During a farewell party given the Outlaw worker the night before he was to depart for another city, his car was stolen and slightly damaged by a member of the Marauders, the Senior Outlaws’ older brother.

353 It should be noted that the term “representational” as defined here refers to an area of meaning considerably more restricted than that usually implied by the term “symbolic.” It is quite evident that the “representational” utility of an object derives from what it symbolizes rather than what it may be used for. However, by restricting the things which objects may represent to a designated and specific class of persons, this type of definition does not open the door to the unrestrained and speculative use of “symbolic” analysis which permits almost anything to symbolize almost anything else. The concept of “representational utility” as defined here does not, for example, permit the kind of symbolism analysis which posits that baseball bats represent penises, cars represent wombs, and soda pop represents mother’s milk.
group. The meaning of this act was quite clear to the boys themselves, who told the worker—“It means, don’t leave Midcity.” By stealing the worker’s car, the boys were attempting to keep him for themselves in both a realistic and symbolic way; realistic in that without his car he could not travel to the new city; symbolic in that taking possession of and slightly harming the worker’s car had the symbolic force of taking and harming him. This theft thus involved at least two incentives—the acquisitional incentive of representational utility, and the demonstrational incentive of anger demonstration. This latter incentive will be discussed under demonstrational incentives.

Theft as an Alternative Mode of Income Acquisition

Despite the prevalence of theft in Midcity gangs, there were no fulltime thieves among the adolescents who comprised them. No one in Midcity, adolescent or adult, depended on theft as an exclusive source of income. In common with those adults in Midcity who did engage in theft, members of Midcity gangs availed themselves of a variety of means for obtaining economic resources. The attitude of Midcity residents—especially those in the lower status levels—toward the acquisition of those economic resources which were necessary to the maintenance of their lives and ways of life might be characterized as opportunistic, flexible, adaptive, inventive and versatile.354

Modes of income acquisition which were available to the adult population included the following: “Legitimate” employment—full-time or part-time; “steady” or sporadic; as employee, employer, or “self-employed” worker; receipt of public welfare funds—consistently or intermittently; from one source or several sources; as major or minor income source; gambling—full-time or part-time; consistently or sporadically; as major or minor income source; pimping—full-time or part-time;

354 The set of social and economic conditions which formed the context of this particular orientation to economic resources as well as differences among social classes in patterns of resource acquisition and related attitudes, will be discussed in later chapters.
large-scale (15-30 girls) or small scale (1-3); consistently or sporadically; bookmaking—full-time or part-time; numbers running or taking; peddling of information on illegal activities to legal authorities; selling of narcotics; payment for failure to perform official duties (pay-off to policemen for overlooking bookmaking; to health inspector for overlooking sanitary code violations); appropriation of money or commodities from one’s place of employment.

Most of these income sources were quite conventional, in that they were employed with some frequency by substantial portions of the population. Other modes were somewhat less conventional, in that they were either employed quite rarely in Midcity (although not necessarily in other parts of Port City or other cities) or were utilized by relatively few community residents. These included various small-scale “hustles” or “rackets” such as various confidence schemes, payment in money or kind for purchasing liquor for minors, junking\(^{355}\) (selling collected scrap or other discarded items), seeking legal compensation as an accident victim, payment for not inflicting threatened physical violence or property damage\(^{356}\), lending money at illegal rates, posing for obscene pictures (rare but occasional), payment for sexual interaction with homosexuals—possibly accompanied by minor extortion\(^{357}\), begging and panhandling.\(^{358}\) There was no evidence of either moonshining or bootlegging.

Most income from gambling-connected occupations (bookmaking, numbers taking) was of the wage-earning rather than the entrepreneurial type; incumbents of higher echelon positions in the gambling syndicates resided in other districts.

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355 This type of resource acquisition, cited by Thrasher as a major source of revenue in Chicago corner gangs of the 1920’s, was virtually unknown in Midcity. Thrasher, op. cit., 149-53, passim.
356 The “protection” racket, a favorite activity of police and detective story writers, was rare in Midcity. A few instances of attempts to extort money from 7 to 10 year olds by 10 to 12 year olds were recorded, but this income mode was not practiced by adolescent gang members, and was practiced rarely and on a small scale by adults.
357 See chapter on male sex and mating.
358 Begging, either as a full-time income source or part time occupation was not practiced in Midcity, outside of occasional solicitations of the “give me a nickel mister” variety by five to ten year olds. Panhandling was also rare; Port City’s skid row inhabitants seldom entered Midcity. The classic tramp, railroad bum, or bindle stiff was not in evidence.
The above citations do not represent an exhaustive enumeration of all possible types of resource-acquisition modes in Midcity, but are cited to give some idea of a range and variety of income sources available to community residents. Two characteristics of these modes should be noted; they varied as to their “steadiness” or regularity, and they varied in their degree of legitimacy. A particular income resource could be utilized on a regular basis and for extended periods (full-time, “regular” job); on a part-time regular basis, or intermittently, depending on a variety of considerations related to need and opportunity. This meant that people could utilize varying combinations of income-modes to form a variety of resource-acquisition patterns. Holding two nominally full-time jobs (“moonlighting”) was one such pattern;\footnote{359} engaging in one full-time and one irregular part-time pursuit another; engaging in several sporadic part-time pursuits a third. For young mothers, especially those without dependable in residence male breadwinners, a common pattern was the three-way combination of public welfare, part-time employment, and contributions from the fathers of the children.\footnote{360}

These several modes of income-acquisition also varied in the extent to which their conduct violated legal statutes. Some of the above-cited modes were entirely legitimate, others entirely illegitimate, others partly illegitimate. Here again a variety of combinations was possible. One could pursue “legitimate” occupations only; one could at the same time or sequentially be involved in legitimate and illegitimate occupations (gas station attendant and numbers runner), one could engage in an occupation which was largely legitimate but with illegitimate features (pawnbrokers engaged in “fencing” of stolen articles), or one with mostly illegitimate but some legitimate features (key-making shop as a front for a booking operation).

Given, then, an economic-resource acquisition system with the characteristics of versatility, adaptivity, and flexibility—allowing for a wide range of patterns in

\footnote{359}{See corrections chapter for an example. This type was not particularly common.}
\footnote{360}{See female sex and mating chapter.}
regard to consistency and intermittency, with a well-established role for the part-time hustle or the use-as-needed supplementary income-source, and allowing for a variety of combinations of legitimate and illegitimate pursuits—it is not difficult to see how theft could be conceived of, and utilized as, one alternative mode of obtaining economic resources. The practice of theft for purposes of acquisitional utility, then, while employed more extensively by adolescents than by adults, was not at all discordant with the spirit or practice of the system of income acquisition prevalent in the adult community. Thus, by practicing theft as one mode of resource-acquisition during adolescence along with various non-violative modes, members of Midcity gangs were in fact gaining valuable training for a mode of adult economic behavior which they had a high likelihood of assuming.

Sentiments expressed by Project group members concerning theft as a practice, as well as their actual pattern of theft practice, made it clear that members of all groups conceived of theft as one definitely appropriate method of obtaining economic resources. For example, during a discussion of the ethics of theft a member of the Junior Bandits made the statement—“Maybe college people and social workers and people like that are different, but the people around here, when they get a chance to steal a buck...they’re gonna take it!”

However, given the shared definition of the general appropriateness of theft, (“for the people around here”), the several groups differed in their conception of how appropriate theft was under different circumstances. Particularly instructive were differences between higher status (lower class II) and lower status (lower class III) in regard to conceptions—the appropriateness of theft relative to other alternative resource-acquisition modes, and the kinds of circumstances under which theft was perceived to be appropriate as a resource-acquisition mode. For the lower-status “Bandit” groups, the appropriateness of “theft” relative to “legitimate work” among alternative modes of resource-acquisition was clearly greater than for the higher status “Outlaw” and “King” groups. The Senior Bandits in particular maintained

361 59% of all expressed sentiments reflected some order of support for theft as a practice.
that theft and legitimate work were at least of equal validity; when this definition was challenged, however, they sometimes responded by insisting that theft was in fact a superior method.

A social worker who periodically put pressure on the boys to obtain legitimate employment encountered several group members “hanging out” on their corner at 10 a.m. on a weekday morning. When he asked them “What are you guys doing loafing around here in the middle of the morning? Why aren’t you working?”—one of the boys replied—“We are workin’. We work all the time. We’re workin’ as thieves!” To demonstrate that they were not merely paying lip-service to their professional ideals, the Senior Bandits did in fact increase their participation in theft when the validity of their conception was challenged. During one period when they were being subjected to pressure to go out and find legitimate jobs—accompanied by a challenge, both direct and implied, to the “legitimacy” of theft as an appropriate mode of behavior—the group responded by increasing its theft frequency to the rate of one theft per day for an entire month (July, 1954)—a record unequalled by themselves or any other study group previously or afterwards.

The Junior Bandits, the Senior Bandit’s younger brother group (lower class III), also engaged in heated debates with their worker as to the appropriateness of theft as a general acquisitional mode. Active in athletics and in need of football, baseball, and basketball equipment, group members maintained that the proper and sensible method of obtaining these goods was to steal them. The Junior Bandits’ worker disapproval of this plan, did not, however, produce the kind of response exhibited by the Senior Bandits, and the worker had some success in persuading group members to consider alternative resource-acquisition methods. With his help and supervision the group put on a number of cake sales and spaghetti dinners to raise money with which to purchase most of their athletic equipment, and stole only a relatively small part of what was needed. This reluctant use of legitimate acquisitional means for this particular purpose, had, however, little effect on the group’s overall theft frequency. As already shown, their monthly
theft rate was higher than that of any other groups—even that of those arch theft enthusiasts, the Senior Bandits. For the higher status groups, the relative merit of theft and legitimate work was not raised as an explicit issue—each mode being conceived as appropriate to its time and place rather than being seen as directly competing modes.

There were also differences among the groups in conceptions of the range of circumstances under which theft was appropriate, and the appropriate uses to which stolen goods should be put. Higher status groups saw theft as appropriate to a more limited range of circumstances, and the range of appropriate usage of stolen goods as more constricted. An illustrative issue concerns the use of stolen goods as gifts. Members of lower status groups saw theft as a perfectly appropriate method of obtaining articles to be given as gifts, and in fact, engaged in increased stealing during those holidays for which gift-giving was customary. The practice of “Christmas shoplifting,” so named was prevalent and referred to openly. Mother’s Day was another occasion for increased theft, especially since most of the boys felt that it was most important to furnish direct evidence of affection to one’s mother. It was quite obvious to mothers, grandparents, aunts and uncles who received such gifts for Christmas, birthdays, or weddings that they had been stolen. There could be little doubt as to the origin of an expensive kitchen appliance given by an unemployed 17 year old boy. Those adults who might have felt some inclination to censure the practice of theft by their children were, however, more pleased to be remembered by gifts than displeased by the knowledge that theft had occurred, and no instance of parental censure of such theft was recorded. It would appear, then, that the prevailing conception among the lower status boys was that illegitimately obtained items could be used for all purposes to which legitimately obtained items could be put.

Among the higher status boys, in contrast, definitions as to the proper uses of stolen goods were considerably less unequivocal. At one point the Junior Outlaws were planning to give a dinner in honor of the well-loved motherly woman who ran...
the corner store on “their” corner. It was most important that the value of the gifts be commensurate with the love and respect in which they held the storekeeper, and the pooled financial resources of the group produced a woefully inadequate sum. Theft was at once proposed as an appropriate method of obtaining either the money for the gift or the gift itself. Members of the more lawfully-oriented faction of the group, however, challenged the fitness of the proposal. After an extended debate, the group decided, quite reluctantly, that it was not appropriate to steal a gift which was to be presented to the guest of honor at a public banquet.

Acquisitional Theft and Subcultural Characteristics

Were there differences among groups of different subcultural characteristics in the patterning of acquisitional incentives for theft? As already shown in Table 2.12, acquisitional incentives figured in 86.4% of all thefts, with six incentives appearing in the following order: 1. Immediate facilitative utility, 38.3% of all thefts; 2. General utility, 29.2%; 3. Extended facilitative utility, 17.5%; 4. Symbolic value, 9.7%; 5. Immediate necessity, 2.6%; 6. Extended necessity, 0.0%. The relative frequency of acquisitional incentives for each of the seven groups was similar to the all-group rankings, except that for the older white male groups, general utility rather than immediate facilitative utility was the top ranking incentive. Thus, in respect to the relative frequency of the six acquisitional incentives, groups of different ages, sex, and social statuses were quite similar. However, if the question is asked—“What proportion of all thefts committed by each of the Project groups involved each of the six acquisitional incentives?” clear differences appear among groups of different subcultural characteristics. Table 3.12 shows the percentage of each of four acquisitional incentives (those figuring in 10% or more of all thefts) for the seven Project groups.
Each of the four incentives showed a somewhat different relationship to the various subcultural characteristics of the groups. The prevalence of immediate facilitative utility as an incentive for theft bore no regular relation to group subcultural characteristics. It would appear instead that engagement in theft for purposes of obtaining immediate useful resources was more closely related to the particular patterns of activity pursued by different groups. Groups more heavily involved in outings and picnics, for example, would be likely to steal more food and refreshments. If the groups are ranked according to the volume of their recreational activity, a fair correspondence emerges between the frequency with which groups engaged in athletic and recreational activity and their involvement in immediate facilitative theft.  

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362 Rho of monthly frequency of athletic and recreational activity and prevalence of immediate facilitative theft incentives = .68, N=7. This finding is consonant with the principle of “participational
General utility, extended facilitation, and symbolic utility as incentives for theft slowed regular relationships to subcultural characteristics. Extended facilitation and symbolic utility were related to social status. The proportion of thefts with extended facilitative utility as an incentive was higher for each of the 3 lower status groups (Molls, Junior Bandits, Senior Bandits) than for any of the higher status groups. Items with extended facilitative utility such as shoes or clothes are evidently of greater monetary value than short-term consumption items such as snacks and refreshments. This is the first available evidence that items stolen by lower status groups tended to be of higher economic value. Since for the lower status youngsters theft was more of a serious business and figured more importantly as a mode of economic acquisition, it would follow that their thefts would be directed to more “serious” economic ends. In addition, there was less likelihood that extended utility items would be furnished by parents in the case of lower status groups, a factor conducive to greater reliance on theft as one mode of obtaining such items. The distribution of representational utility as a theft incentive similarly relates to social status as well as ethnic factors. The five white groups ranked above the two Negro; among the white groups about twice as many thefts by higher status youngsters involved “representational” components (Lower Class II, 16.7%; Lower Class III, 8.9%). This would support the evidence based on the distribution of extended utility thefts that theft served more serious economic purposes for the lower status groups and that “representational” incentives for theft—while still considerably less prevalent than “utility” incentives—were relatively more common among the higher status groups.

The frequency of general utility thefts, on the other hand, was more closely related to age differences than to social status. All older groups showed higher proportions of general utility thefts than youngsters. This would indicate that as group members of both social status levels approached the age when monetary density”. This principle posits that opportunities for violative behavior increase as frequency of participation in a given activity sphere increases.
income became an increasingly important concern, the proportion of their life effort
devoted to income acquisition of all types, including theft, increased. Older groups
thus did more stealing for income-producing purposes. Within the two age groups,
however, the lower status group members in each instance showed greater use of
utility theft than did the higher.⁶⁶³

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³⁶³ Editor’s Note: This chapter is incomplete. Subsequent sections, comprising about 75 pages in
rough draft form, deal with the following topics:
Topic: Approximate Number of Pages
1. Demonstrational Incentives 25
2. Experiential Incentives 5
3. Justificational Incentives 5
4. Theft Inhibitives 10
5. Dynamics of Theft Motive 15
6. A Climate of Theft-Readiness: Incentive-Inhibitive Balance and Cultural Milieu 75

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Violent Crimes in City Gangs

The 1960's have witnessed a remarkable upsurge of public concern over violence in the United States. The mass media flash before the public a vivid and multi-varied kaleidoscope of images of violence: hate-filled hordes of city Negroes restlessly waiting to explode into uncontrolled orgies of looting and murder; brazen rapists despoiling their victims before the passive eyes of indifferent onlookers; students in unreasoning revolt against the established order on bottle-strewn beaches, in wrecked mansions, in rebellious street protests; brutal Klansmen aprowl with cocked shotguns and sinister cells of Black Muslims armed for imminent conflict; city streets and parks, once safe and secure, now terrifying arenas for robbery and assault; entrapped subway travelers at the mercy of menacing youth gangs; television screens ablaze with war and gunfights and gangland murders; the President himself the helpless victim of a demented killer.

Little attention is paid to those who question the assumption that the United States is experiencing an unparalleled epidemic of violence, pointing out that other periods in the past may have been equally violent or more so; that troops were required to subdue rioting farmers in 1790, rioting tax-protesters in 1794, rioting laborers in the 1870's and 1880's, rioting railroad workers in 1877; that race riots killed 50 people in East St. Louis in 1917 and erupted in 26 other cities soon after; that 57 whites were killed in a slave uprising in 1831; that the Plug Uglies, Dead
Rabbits and other street gangs virtually ruled parts of New York for close to 40 years; that rival bootleg mobs engaged in armed warfare in Chicago and elsewhere during the Capone era; that the number killed in the 1863 draft riots in New York was estimated at up to 1,000 men. It is this belief that moves men to action—action whose consequences are just as real as if the validity of the belief was incontrovertible.

Close to the core of the public imagery of violence is the urban street gang. The imagery evokes tableaux of sinister adolescent wolf packs prowling the darkened streets of the city intent on evildoing; of grinning gangs of teenagers tormenting old ladies in wheelchairs and ganging up on hated and envied honor students; of brutal bands of black-jacketed motorcyclists sweeping through quiet towns in orgies of terror and destruction. The substance of this image and its basic components of inhuman cruelty, brutal sadism and a delight in violence for its own sake have become conventionalized within the subculture of professional writers. The tradition received strong impetus in the early 1950’s with Marlon Brando and his black-jacketed motorcycle thugs, gathered momentum with the insolent and sadistic high-schoolers of the Blackboard Jungle, and achieved the status of an established ingredient of American folklore with the Sharks and Jets the West Side Story.

What is the reality behind these images? Is the street gang fierce and romantic like the Sharks and Jets? Is it a tough but good-hearted bunch of rough and ready guys like the Gang that sang Heart of my Heart? Or is it brutal and ruthless like the Wild Ones? In many instances where an area of interest engages both scholars and the public, most of the public embrace one set of conceptions and most scholars another. This is not so in the case of the street gang; there is almost as much divergence within the ranks of scholars as between the scholars and the public.

One recent book on gangs contains these statements: “violence (is) the core spirit of the modern gang...the gang boy...makes unprovoked violence...(senseless
rather than premeditated)...the major activity or dream of his life...The gang trades in violence. Brutality is basic to its system.”364 Another recent work presents a different picture: “The very few (gang) boys who persist in extreme aggression or other dangerous exploits are regarded generally as “crazy” by the other boys...Our conservative estimate is that not more than one in five instances of potential violence actually result in serious consequences...For average Negro gang boys the probability of an arrest for involvement in instances of potential violence is probably no greater than .04...”365 A third important work states: “In a second type (of delinquent gang or subculture) violence is the keynote...The immediate aim in the world of fighting gangs is to acquire a reputation for toughness and destructive violence...In the world of violence such attributes as race, socioeconomic position, age, and the like, are irrelevant...”

What is the reality behind these differences? The question is readily raised, but is not, unfortunately, readily answered. There exists in this area of high general interest a surprising dearth of reliable information. It is quite possible that discrepancies between the statements of scholars arise from the fact that each is referring to different kinds of gangs in different kinds of neighborhoods in different kinds of cities. We simply do not know. Lacking the information necessary to make general statements as to the nature of violence in the American city gang, it becomes obvious that one major need is a series of careful empirical studies of particular gangs in a range of cities and a variety of neighborhoods. The present paper is an attempt to present such information for one inner city neighborhood, “Midcity,” in a major eastern city, “Port City.”

What are “ Violent” Crimes?

The term “violence” is highly charged. Like many terms which carry strong opprobrium, it is applied with little discrimination to a wide range of things which meet with general disapproval. Included in this broad net are phenomena such as toy advertising on TV, boxing, rock and roll music and the mannerisms of its performers, fictional private eyes, and modern art. Used in this fashion the scope of the term becomes so broad as to severely vitiate its utility. Adding the term “crimes” to the designation substantially narrows its focus. It is at once apparent that not all “violence” is criminal (warfare, football, surgery, wrecking cars for scrap), but it is less apparent to some that not all crime is violent. In fact, the great bulk of youth crime consists of non-violent forms of theft and statute violations such as truancy and running away. In the present report “violent crimes” are defined as legally-proscribed acts whose primary objective is the deliberate use of force to inflict injury on persons or objects, and, under some circumstances, the stated intention to engage in such acts. While the scope of this paper prevents discussion of numerous complex issues involved in this definition (e.g., role of “threat of force” as criminally culpable), an idea of the kinds of acts included under the definition may be obtained directly by referring to Tables 3.13 and 4.13. Table 3.13 delineates 19 forms of illegal and “violent” action directed at persons and objects and Table 4.13 delineates 14 categories based on legal classifications. It is to these forms that the term “violent crimes” will apply.

Circumstances and Methods of Study

Conclusions presented in subsequent sections are based on the research findings of an extensive study of youth gangs in “Midcity,” a central city slum district of 100,000 persons. Information was obtained on some 150 corner gangs numbering about 4,500 males and females who were aged 12 to 20 in the middle and late 1950’s. Selected for more detailed study were 21 of these gangs numbering about 700 members; selection was based primarily on the reputation of the gangs as the “toughest” in the city. Study data of many kinds was obtained from numerous
sources, but the great bulk of data was derived from the detailed field records of workers who were in direct daily contact with gang members for periods averaging two years per gang. Seven of these gangs numbering 205 members (four white male gangs, one Negro male, one white female, and one Negro female) were subject to the most intensive field observation and are designated “intensive observation” gangs. Findings presented here are based primarily on the experience of these seven, along with that of 14 male gangs numbering 293 members (including the five male intensive-observation gangs) whose criminal records were obtained from the state central criminal records division.

Detailed qualitative information on the daily behavior of gang members in 60 “behavioral areas” (e.g., sexual behavior, family behavior, theft) was collected and analyzed; however, the bulk of the findings presented here will be quantitative in nature, due to requirements of brevity.\(^{366}\) Presents findings are based primarily on three kinds of data:

- **Field-recorded behavior**: all actions and sentiments recorded for the seven intensive observation gangs which relate to assault (N=1,600).
- **Field-recorded crimes**: all recorded instances of illegal acts of assault and property damage engaged in by members of the same gangs during the same period (N=228).
- **Court-Recorded Crimes**: all charges of assultive or property damage offenses recorded by court officials for members of the 14 male gangs between the ages of 7 and 27 (N=138).

\(^{366}\) Qualitative data on the nature of “violent” and other forms of gang behavior which convey a notion of its “flavor” and life-context will be presented in Miller, W.B. *City Gangs*, John Wiley & Sons, N.Y., forthcoming.
The analysis distinguishes four major characteristics of gangs: age, sex, race, and social status. Of the seven intensive-observation gangs, five were male (N=155) and two female (N=50); none of the 14 court-recorded gangs was female. Five of the intensive-observation gangs were white (N=127) and two Negro (N=78); eight of the court-record gangs were white (N=169) and six Negro (N=124). The ethnic-religious status of the white gangs was multi-national Catholic (Irish-Italian, with Irish dominant; some French, Slavic). Social status was determined by a relatively complex method based on a combination of educational, occupational and other criteria (e.g., parents’ occupation, gang members’ occupation, gang members’ education, families’ welfare experience). On the basis of these criteria all gangs were designated “lower class.” Three levels within the lower class were delineated and were designated, from highest to lowest, lower class I, II, and III. Gangs analyzed in the present chapter belonged to levels II and III: the former level is designated “higher” status, and the latter “lower.” It should be kept in mind that the terms “higher” and “lower” in this context refer to the lowest and next-lowest of three intra-lower class social status levels.

*The Patterning of Violent Crimes in City Gangs*

Study data make it possible to address a set of questions central to any consideration of the reality of violent crime in city gangs: How prevalent are violent crimes, both in absolute terms and relative to other forms of crime? What proportion of gang members engage in violent crimes? Is individual or collective participation more common? Are those most active in such crimes more likely to be younger or older? White or Negro? Male or female? Higher or lower in social status? What forms do violent crimes take, and which forms are most prevalent? Who or

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367 Details of this method are presented in City Gangs, Op. Cit.
368 IBM processing of court-recorded offenses and preliminary analyses of field-recorded assault behavior and illegal incidents was done by Dr. Robert Stanfield, University of Massachusetts; additional data analysis by Donald Zall, Midcity Delinquency Research Project. Some of the specific figures in the tables may be slightly altered in the larger report; such alterations will not, however, affect the substance of the findings.
what are the targets of violent crimes? How serious are they? How does violence figure in the daily lives of gang members?

The following sections present data bearing on each of these questions, based on the experience of Midcity gangs in the 1950’s, and utilizing information from field-recorded and officially-recorded behavior, expressed sentiments and actual actions, morally-disapproved and legally-violative acts, known crimes and officially-acted-on crimes. The first question bears on the last of the questions just cited—what was the role of assaultive behavior in the daily lives of gang members?

**Assault-oriented Behavior**

Approximately 1,600 actions and sentiments relating to assaultive behavior were recorded by field workers during the course of their work with the seven “intensive observation” gangs—a period averaging two years per gang. This number comprised about 3% of a total of about 54,000 actions and sentiments oriented to some 60 behavioral areas (e.g., sexual behavior, drinking behavior, theft, police-oriented behavior). Assault-oriented behavior was relatively common, ranking 9th among 60 behavioral areas. A substantial portion of this behavior, however, took the form of words rather than deeds; for example, while the total number of assault-oriented actions and sentiments was over two and a half times as great as those relating to theft, the actual number of “arrestable” incidents of assault was less than half the number of theft incidents. This finding is concordant with others which depict the area of assaultive behavior as one characterized by considerably more smoke than fire.

369 The definition of “violent crimes” used here would call for an analysis at this point of behavior oriented both to assault and property destruction. However, the type of data-processing necessary to an integrated analysis of these two behavioral forms has not been done for “property damage,” so that the present section is based almost entirely on behavior involving persons rather than persons and property. Behavior involving property damage was relatively infrequent; 265 actions and sentiments were recorded, ranking this form of behavior 45th of 60 forms; vandalistic behavior was about one-sixth as common as assaultive behavior, a ratio paralleled in officially-recorded data (of Table 4.13). Most subsequent sections will utilize findings based on both assault and property damage.
About one half (821) of the 1,600 actions and sentiments were categorized as “approved” or “disapproved” with reference to a specified set of evaluative standards of middle-class adults;\(^3\) the remainder were categorized as “evaluatively neutral.” There were approximately 30 “disapproved” assault-oriented actions for every instance of “arrestable” assault, and instances of arrestable assault for every court appearance on assault charges. Males engaged in assault-oriented behavior far more frequently than females (males 6.3 events/month, females 1.4), and younger males more frequently than older.

Information concerning both actions and sentiments related to assault—data not generally available—revealed both similarities and differences in the patterning of these two levels of behavior. Expressed sentiments concerning assaultive behavior were about one and a half times as common as actual actions; in this respect assault was unique among analyzed forms of behavior, since in every other case recorded actions were more common than sentiments (e.g., theft behavior, actions 1.5 times sentiments; family-oriented behavior, actions 2.2 times sentiments). The majority of actions and sentiments (70%) were “disapproved” with reference to adult middle class standards; actions and sentiments were concordant in this respect, in that both ran counter to middle class standards by similar proportions (actions, 74% disapproved, sentiments 68%). This concordance contrasted with other forms of behavior: in sexual behavior, the level of disapproved action was substantially higher than that of disapproved sentiment; in family-oriented behavior, the level of disapproved sentiment substantially higher than that of action.

Separate analyses were made of behavior oriented to “individual” assault (mostly fights between two persons) and “collective” assault (mostly gang fighting). With regard to individual assault, the number of actions and sentiments was

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approximately equal (181 actions, 187 sentiments); in the case of collective assault, in contrast, there was almost twice as much talk as action (239 sentiments, 124 actions). Sentiments with respect to individual and collective assault were supportive of disapproved behavior, but collective assault received less support than individual. Behavior opposing disapproved assault showed an interesting pattern; specific actions aimed to inhibit or forestall collective assault were over twice as common as actions opposing individual assault. Gang members thus appeared to be considerably more reluctant to engage in collective than individual fighting; the former was dangerous and frightening, with uncontrolled escalation a predictable risk, while much of the latter involved relatively mild set-to's between peers within the “controlled” context of gang interaction.

Assault-oriented behavior, in summary, was relatively common, but a substantial part of this behavior entailed words rather than deeds. Both actions and sentiments ran counter to conventional middle class adult standards, with these two levels of behavior concordant in this respect. Insofar as there did exist an element of assault-inhibiting behavior, it was manifested with collective rather than individuals’ assault. This provides evidence for the existence within the gang of a set of “natural” forces operating to control collective assault, a phenomenon to be discussed further.

The Frequency of Violent Crime

The wide currency of an image of violence as a dominant occupation and preoccupation of street gangs grants special importance to the question of the actual prevalence of violent crimes. How frequently did gang members engage in legally-violative acts of assault and property damage? Table 1.13 shows that members of the five intensive-observation male gangs, on the basis of field records of known offenses, were involved in violent crimes at a rate of somewhat under one offense for each two boys per ten month period, and that the fourteen male gangs, on the basis of court-recorded offenses, were charged with “violent” crimes at a rate of somewhat
under one charge for each two boys during the 12 year period between ages 7 through 18.\textsuperscript{371}

\textbf{Table 1.13}

\textbf{Frequency of Violent Crimes by Male Gang Members}

\textbf{By Race and Social Status}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Five Intensive-Observation Gangs</th>
<th>Fourteen Court-Record Gangs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Individuals</td>
<td>Number of Involvements$^1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White L.C III</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro L.C III</td>
<td>...5</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White L.C II</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro L.C II</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>155</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

L.C. III (8.4) = L.C. II (2.0) x 4.2
L.C. III (7.7) = L.C. II (1.3) x 5.9
White (5.4) = Negro (2.5) x 2.1
White (5.4) = Negro (3.8) x 1.4

1. Number of incidents of assault and property damage x number of participants
2. Involvements per 10 individuals per 10 month period
3. Charges on 13 categories of assault and property damage offenses
4. Charges per 10 individuals ages 7 through 18
5. Not included in study population

The 228 “violent offense” involvements comprised 24% of all categories of illegal involvements (assault 17%, property damage 7%), with assault about one-

\textsuperscript{371} Four types of “unit” figure in this and following tables. These are: 1) Incidents: an illegal incident is a behavioral event or sequence of events adjudged by a coder to provide a sound basis for arrest if known to authorities. Information as to most incidents was obtained from field records. In the case of assault incidents, this definition ruled out a fair number of moderately to fairly serious instances of actual or intended assault which involved members of the same gang or occurred under circumstances deemed unlikely to produce arrest even if known of. 2) Involvements. Incidents multiplied by number of participants; e.g., two gang members fight two others, one incident, four involvements. 3) Court Appearances. The appearance in court of a gang member on a “new” charge or charges (excluded re-hearings, appeals, etc.). 4) Court Charges. Appearances multiplied by number of separate charges; e.g., individual charged at one appearance with B &E, possession of burglars’ tools, conspiracy to commit larceny, counts as three “charges.” The “violent crime” charges of Table 3.13 represent categories of offense involving actual or threatened injury to persons or objects. The offense designations appearing in Table 3.13 were condensed from 40 categories of police-blotters designations.
half as common as theft, the most common offense, and property damage about one-quarter as common. The 138 court charges comprised 17% of all categories of charge (assault charges 11%; property damage 6%) with assault charges about one-third as common as theft, the most common charge, and property damage about one-fifth as common. The total number of “violence-oriented” actions and sentiments examined in the previous section comprised under 4% of actions and sentiments oriented to 60 behavioral areas (assault-oriented behavior 3.2%; property-damage oriented, 0.5%).

These figures would indicate that violence and violent crimes did not play a dominant role in the lives of Midcity gangs. The cumulative figures taken alone—228 known offenses by 155 boys during a period of approximately two years, and 138 court charges for 293 boys during a 12 year age span—would appear to indicate a fairly high “absolute” volume of violent crime. If, however, the volume of such crime is compared with that of other forms—with “violent” behavior, both actional and verbal, comprising less than 4% of all recorded behavior, field-recorded “violent” offenses comprising less than one quarter of all known offenses, and court charges of violent crimes less than one fifth of all charges—violent appears neither as a dominant preoccupation of city gangs nor as a dominant form of criminal activity. Moreover, one should bear in mind that these rates apply to young people of the most “violent” sex, during the most “violent” years of their lives, during a time when they were members of the toughest gangs in the toughest section of the city.

*Race and Social Status*

The relative importance of race and social status is indicated in Table 1.13 with field-recorded and court-recorded data showing close correspondence. Of the two characteristics, social status is clearly more important. Lower status gang members (Lower Class III) engaged in field-recorded acts of illegal violence four times as often as those of higher status (Lower Class II) and were charged in court six times as often. White and Negro rates, in contrast, differ by a factor of two or less. The finding that boys of lower educational and occupational status both
engaged in and were arrested for violent crimes to a substantially greater degree than those of higher status is not particularly surprising, and conforms to much research which shows that those of lower social status are likely to be more active in criminal behavior; what is noteworthy is the fact that differences of this magnitude appear in a situation where status differences are as small, relatively, as those between lower class II and III. One might expect, for example, substantial differences between college boys and high-school drop-outs, but the existence of differences on the order of four to six times between groups within the lower class suggests that even relatively small social status differences among laboring class populations can be associated with relatively large differences in criminal behavior.

Table 1.13 findings relating to race run counter to those of many studies which show Negroes to be more “violent” than whites, and to engage more actively in violent crimes. Comparing similar-status white and Negro gangs in Midcity shows that racial differences were relatively unimportant, and that insofar as there were differences, it was the whites rather than the Negroes who were more likely both to engage in and be arrested for violent crimes. White gang members engaged in field-recorded acts of illegal violence twice as often as Negro, and were charged in court one and a half times as often. These data, moreover, do not support a contention that Negroes who engage in crime to a degree similar to that of whites tend to be arrested to a greater degree. The one instance where Negro rates exceed those of whites is in the case of field-recorded crimes for higher status gangs (white rate, 1.5; Negro, 2.5). Court data, however, show that the Negro boys, with a higher rate of field-recorded crime, have a slightly lower rate of court-recorded crime. An explanation of these findings cannot be undertaken here; for present purposes it is sufficient to note that carefully collected data from one major

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372 This ratio obtains for males only; calculations which include the girls’ gangs show higher rates for whites in this category as well as the others. Data on field-recorded crimes of the female gangs are not included in Table 1.13 for purposes of comparability with court data; there were too few court-recorded offenses for females to make analysis practicable. At the time the field data were collected (1954-57) Negroes comprised about 35% of the population of Midcity; court data cover the years up to 1964, at which time Negroes comprised about 55%. 

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American city do not support the notion that Negroes are more violent than whites at similar social status levels, nor the notion that high Negro arrest rates are invariably a consequence of the discriminatory application of justice by prejudiced white policemen and judges.

**Age and Violent Crime**

Was there any relationship between the age of gang members and their propensity to engage in violent crimes? Table 2.13 shows a clear and regular relationship between age and offense-frequency. The yearly rate of charges rises quite steadily between the ages of 12 and 18, reaching a peak of about nine charges per 100 boys per year. The bulk of court action (82% of 229 charges) involved assaultive rather than property damage offenses. The latter were proportionately more prevalent during the 11-13 age period, after which the former constitute a clear majority.

The age-patterning of theft-connected versus non-theft-connected violence and of intended versus actual violence was also determined. Violence in connection with theft—almost invariably the threat of violence rather than the use thereof—constituted a relatively small proportion of all charges (14%), occurring primarily during the 15-21 age period. Court action based on the threat or intention to use violence rather than its actual use comprised about one quarter of all charges, becoming steadily more common between the ages of 13 and 20, and less common thereafter. At age 20 the number of charges based on the threat of violence was exactly equal to the number based on actual violence.

These data indicate quite clearly that involvement in violent crimes was a relatively transient phenomenon of adolescence, and did not presage a continuing pattern of similar involvement in adulthood. It should also be noted that these findings do not support an image of violent crimes as erratically impulsive, uncontrolled, and unpredictable. The fact that the practice of violent crime by gang members showed so regular and so predictable a relationship to age would indicate
that violence was a “controlled” form of behavior—subject to a set of shared conceptions as to which forms were appropriate, and how often they were appropriate, at different age levels.

Table 2.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
<th>Number of Assault Charges1</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Number of Assault Charges2</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Number of Assault Charges3</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Number of Assault Charges4</th>
<th>Rate</th>
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<td>3.2</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Charges on 14 categories of offenses (see table 4.13)
2. Charges per 100 individuals per year of age
3. Categories 1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,13,14, Table 4.13
4. Categories 2,10,12,13 Table 4.13
Participation in Assaultive Crime

What proportion of gang members engaged in assaultive crimes?\(^{373}\) During the two year period of field observation, 53 of the 205 intensive-contact gang members (26\%) were known to have engaged in illegal acts of assault—50 out of 155 males (32\%), and 3 out of 50 females (6\%). Male participation figures ranged from 22\% for the higher status gangs to 42\% for the lower. “Heavy” participants (four or more crimes) comprised only 4\% (six males, no females) of all gang members. During the same period 19 gang members (all males) appeared in court on assault charges, about 12\% of male gang members. While there is little doubt that some gang members also engaged in assaultive crimes during the observation period, and that 88\% of the males and 100\% of the females did not appear in court on charges of assaultive crimes, strengthens the previous conclusion that assault was not a dominant form of gang activity.

A related question concerns the relative prevalence of individual and collective assault. One image of gang violence depicts gang members as cowardly when alone, daring to attack others only when bolstered by a clear numerical superiority. Study data give little support to this image. Fifty-one percent of recorded assault incidents involved either one-to-one engagements or engagements in which a single gang member confronted more than one antagonist. As will be shown in the discussion of “targets,” a good proportion of the targets of collective assault were also groups rather than individuals. Some instances of the “ganging-up” phenomenon did occur, but they were relatively infrequent.

The Character of Violent Crime

What was the character of violent crime in Midcity gangs? Violent crimes, like other forms of gang behavior, consisted of a multiplicity of particular events, varying considerably in form and circumstance. Any classification based on a single system must of necessity do harm to the diversity and complexity of violence. The

\(^{373}\) Findings do not include data on property damage.
following sections use five ways of categorizing violent crimes: 1) Forms of crime directed at persons (distinctions based on age, gang membership, collectivity of actors and targets); 2) Forms of crime directed at objects (distinctions based on mode of inflicting damage); 3) Forms of crime directed at persons and objects (based on official classifications); 4) Targets of crime directed at persons (distinctions based on age, sex, race, gang membership, collectivity); 5) Targets of Crime directed at objects (distinctions based on identity of object).

Table 3.13 (column I) shows the distribution of specific forms of field-recorded assault directed at persons. In three-quarters of all incidents participants on both sides were peers of the same sex. In 60% of the incidents gang members acted in groups; in 40% as individuals. Fifty-one percent of the incidents involved collective engagements between same-sex peers. The most common form was the collective engagement between members of different gangs; it constituted one-third of all forms and was three times as common as the next most common form. Few of these engagements were full-scale massed-encounter gang fights; most were brief strike-and-fall-back forays by small guerilla bands. Assault on male adults, the second most common form (11%) involved for the most part the threat or use of force in connection with theft (“mugging,” threatening cab driver with knife) or attacks on policemen trying to make an arrest. It should be noted that these forms of gang assault which most alarm the public were rare. No case of assault on an adult woman, either by individuals or groups, was recorded. In three of the four instances of sexual assault on a female peer, the victim was either a past or present girl friend of the attacker. Only three incidents involving general rioting were recorded; two were prison riots and the third a riot on a Sunday excursion boat.

The character of violent crimes acted on by the courts parallels that of field recorded-crimes. Table 4.13 shows the distribution of 14 categories of offense for 293 gang members during the age period from late childhood to early adulthood. Charges based on assault (187) were five and a half times as common as charges on property damage (42). About one-third of all assault charges involved the threat
rather than the direct use of force. The most common charge was “assault and battery,” including primarily various kinds of unarmed engagements such as street fighting the barroom brawls. The more “serious” forms of assaultive crime were among the less prevalent; armed assault, 8%; armed robbery, 5%; sexual assault, 4%. Not one of the 293 gang members appeared in court on charges of either murder or manslaughter between the ages of 7 and 27.

The use of weapons and the inflicting of injury are two indications that violent crimes are of the more serious kind. Weapons were employed in a minority of cases of assault, actual or threatened, figuring in 16 of the 88 field-recorded offenses, and about 55 of the 187 court offenses\textsuperscript{374}. In the 16 field-recorded incidents in which weapons were used to threaten or injure, nine involved knives, four an object used as a club (baseball bat, pool cue), and three missiles (rocks, balls). In none of the 88 incidents was a firearm of any description used. The bulk of assaultive incidents involved the direct use of the unarmed body; these findings accord with others in failing to support the notion that gang members engage in assault only when fortified by superior resources.

Serious injuries consequent on assault were also relatively uncommon. There were 27 known injuries to all participants in the 88 incidents of assault; most of these were minor cuts, scratches, and bruises. The most serious injury was a fractured skull inflicted by a crutch wielded during a small-scale set-to between two gangs. There were also two other skull injuries, three cases of broken bones, three broken noses, and one shoulder dislocation (incurred during a fight between girls). While these injuries were serious enough for those who sustained them, it could not be said that the totality of person-directed violence by Midcity gang members incurred any serious cost in maimed bodies. The average weekend of highway driving in and around Port City produces more serious body injuries than two years of violent crimes by Midcity gangs.

\textsuperscript{374} On the basis of field recorded data it was estimated that about one-quarter of “Affray” charges involved sticks or other weapons.
Table 3.13

Forms of Violent Crime: Field-recorded Offenses

Seven Intensive Observation Gangs (N=205) Incidents (N=125)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person-directed</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>Percent of Known Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Collective engagement different gangs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Assault by individual on individual adult, same sex</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Two-person engagement: different gangs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Two-person engagement: gang member, non-gang peer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Two-person engagement intra-gang</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Collective assault on same-sex peer, non-gang member</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Threatened collective asset on adult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Assault by individual on group</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Assault by individual on Female Peer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Participation in general dist'ct, riot</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Collective Assault on Same Sex Peer, Member Other Gang</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Form Unknown</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object-Directed</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>Percent of All Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Damaging via body blow, other body action</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Throwing of missile (stone, brick, etc.)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Scratching, marking, defacing, object, edifice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Setting fire to object, edifice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) Damaging via explosive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100</td>
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Table 4.13
Forms of Violent Crime: Court-Recorded Offenses

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offense</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assault and Batter, No Weapons</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>32.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property Damage</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affray</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat of Force in Connection with Theft: No Weapon</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possession of Weapon</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault: Weapon</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat of Force in Connection with Theft: Weapon</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>Assault: Threat of</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
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<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property Damage: Threat of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manslaughter</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
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229 100
Data on modes of property damage similarly reflect a pattern of involvement in the less serious forms. As shown in Table 3.13, in 10 of the 37 field-recorded incidents the body was used directly to inflict damage (punching out a window; breaking fences for slats); another 10 involved common kinds of missile-throwing (brick through store window). Most of the “defacing” acts were not particularly destructive (e.g., scratching name of gang on store wall). Fire-setting was confined to relatively small objects (e.g., trash barrels). No instance was recorded of viciously destructive forms of vandalism such as desecration of churches or cemeteries or bombing of residences. The one case where explosives were used involved the igniting of rifle cartridge powder in a variety store. Of the 42 cases of court-charged property-destruction, only six involved arson; the actual nature of vandalistic acts was not specified in the legal designations.

**Targets of Violent Crime**

While much gang violence took the form of “engagements with” rather than “attacks on” other persons, additional insight may be gained by viewing the gang members as “actors,” and asking, “what categories of person were targets of gang assault, and what kinds of physical objects targets of damage?” One image of gang violence already mentioned sees the act of “ganging up” on the solitary and defenseless as a dominant gang practice: another sees racial antagonism as a major element in gang violence. What do these data show?

Table 5.13 shows the distribution of 88 field-recorded incidents of assault for 13 categories of target, and 37 incidents of damage for five categories. Of 77 targets of assault whose identity was known, a substantial majority (73%) were persons of the same age and sex category as the gang members, and a substantial majority (71%) of the same race. One half of all targets were peers of the same age, sex and race category. On initial inspection the data seem to grant substance to the

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375 Findings are based on field-recorded data only; official offense designations seldom specify targets.
“ganging up” notion; 44 of 77 targets (57%) were assaults on individuals; of the remaining 10, 4 were adult males (police, mugging victims) and one the female member of a couple robbed at knife point. The remaining 5 were same sex peers, some of whom were members of rival gangs. There was no instance of an attack on a white female by a Negro male. Partly balancing the 5 cases of collective assault on lone peers were 3 instances in which a lone gang member took on a group.

These data thus grant virtually no support to the notion that favored targets of gang attacks are the weak, the solitary, the defenseless, and the innocent; in most cases assailters and assaultees were evenly matched; the bulk of assaultive incidents involved contests between peers in which the preservation and defense of gang honor was a central issue. Some support is given to the notion of racial friction; 30% of all targets were of a different race, and racial antagonism played some part in these encounters. On the other hand, of 33 instances of collective assault, a majority (55%) involved antagonists of the same race.

Physical objects and facilities suffering damage by gang members were largely those which they used and frequented in the course of daily life. Most damage was inflicted on public and semi-public facilities; little was directed to private residences or other property. There was no evidence of “ideological” vandalism (stoning embassies, painting swastikas on synagogues). Most damage was deliberate, but some additional amount was a semi-accidental consequence of the profligate effusion of body energy so characteristic of male adolescents (breaking store window in the course of a scuffle). Little of the deliberately-inflicted property damage represented a diffuse outpouring of accumulated hostility against arbitrary objects; in most cases the gang members injured the possessions or properties of particular persons who had angered them, as a concrete expression of that anger (defacing automobile of mother responsible for having gang member committed to correctional institution; breaking windows of settlement house after ejection therefrom). There was thus little evidence of “senseless” destruction; most property damage was directed and responsive.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>Percent of Known Targets</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Number of Incidents</th>
<th>Percent of All Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups of adolescents, other gangs, same sex, race</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>Stores, commercial facilities; premises, equipment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups of adolescents, other gangs, same sex, different race</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>Semi-public facilities; social agencies, gyms, etc.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual adults, same sex, race</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>Automobiles</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target unknown</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Public facilities; schools, public transportation, etc.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual adolescents, other gangs, same sex, race</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>Private housing; premises, furnishings</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual adolescents, own gang</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of adolescents, own gang</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual adults, different sex, same race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gang Fighting

An important form of gang violence is the gang fight; fiction and drama often depict gang fighting or gang wars as a central feature of gang life (e.g., West Side Story). The Midcity study conceptualized a fully developed gang fight as involving four stages: initial attack, strategy-planning and mobilization, and counter-attack (see Appendix A for examples). During the study period members of the intensive-contact gangs participated in situations involving some combination of these stages 15 times. Despite intensive efforts by pro-war agitators and elaborate preparations for war, only one of these situations eventuated in full-scale conflict; in the other 14 one or both sides found a way to avoid open battle. A major objective of gang members was to put themselves in the posture of fighting without actually having to fight. The gangs utilized a variety of techniques to maintain their reputation as proud men, unable to tolerate an affront to honor, without having to confront the dangerous and frightening reality of massed antagonists. Among these were the “fair fight” (two champions represent their gangs a la David and Goliath); clandestine informing of police by prospective combatants, reluctantly accepting mediation by social workers.

Despite the very low ratio of actual to threatened fighting, a short-term observer swept up in the bustle and flurry of fight-oriented activity, and ignorant of the essentially ritualistic nature of much of this activity, might gain a strong impression of a great deal of actual violence. In this area as in others, detailed observation of gangs over extended periods showed that gang fighting resembled other forms of gang violence in showing much more smoke than fire.

**The Problem of Gang Violence**

The picture of gang violence which emerges from the study of Midcity gangs differs markedly from the conventional imagery as well as from that presented by some other scholars. How is this difference to be explained? The most obvious possibility is that Midcity gangs were somehow atypical of gangs in Port City, and of the “true” American street gang. In important respects the gangs were not representative of those in Port City, having been selected on the basis of their reputation as the “toughest” in the city, and were thus more violent than the average Port City gang. The possibility remains, in the absence of information equivalent in scope and detail to that presented here, that Port City gangs were atypical of, and less violent than, gangs in other cities. I would like in this connection to offer my personal opinion, based on 10 years of contact with gang workers and researchers from all parts of the country, that Midcity gangs were in fact quite typical of “tough” gangs in Chicago, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Detroit, and similar cities, and represent the “reality” of gang violence much more accurately than *The Wild Ones* or the Egyptian Kings of *Who Killed Michael Farmer*.

Even if one grants that actual city gangs are far less violent than those manufactured by the mass media, and that the public fear of gangs has been unduly aroused by exaggerated images, the problem of gang violence is still a real one. However one may argue that all social groups need outlets for violence, and that gang violence may serve to siphon off accumulated aggression in a “functional” or necessary way, the fact remains that members of Midcity gangs repeatedly violated the law in using force to affect theft, in fighting, and in inflicting damage on property, as a regular and routine pursuits of adolescence. Customary engagement in illegal violence by a substantial sector of the population, however much milder than generally pictured, constitutes an important threat to the internal order of any large urbanized society, a threat which must be coped with. What clues are offered by the research findings of the Midcity study as to the problem of gang violence and its control?
Violence as a concern occupied a fairly important place in the daily lives of gang members, but was distinguished among all forms of behavior in the degree to which concern took the form of talk rather than action. Violent crime as such was fairly common during middle and late adolescence, but relative to other forms of crime was not dominant. Most violent crimes were directed at persons, few at property. Only a small minority of gang members was active in violent crimes. Race had little to do with the frequency of involvement in violent crimes, but social status figured prominently. The practice of violent crime was an essentially transient phenomenon of male adolescence, reaching a peak at the age when concern with attaining adult manhood was at a peak. While the nature of minor forms of violence showed considerable variation, the large bulk of violent crime in Midcity gangs consisted in unarmed physical encounters between male antagonists—either in the classic form of combat skirmishes between small bands of warriors or the equally classic form of direct combative engagement between two males.

Next, a brief summary of what it was not. Violence was not a dominant activity of the gangs, or a central reason for their existence. Violent crime was not a racial phenomenon—either in the sense that racial antagonisms played a major role in gang conflict, or that Negroes were more violent, or that resentment of racial injustice constituted a major incentive for violence. It was not “ganging up” by malicious sadists on the weak, the innocent, the solitary. It did not victimize adult females. With few exceptions, violent crimes fell into the “less serious” category, with extreme or shocking crimes rare.

One way of summarizing the character of violent crime in Midcity gangs is to make a distinction between two kinds of violence—“means” violence and “end” violence. The concept of violence as a “means” involves the notion of a resort to violence when other means of attaining a desired objective have failed. Those who undertake violence in this context represent their involvement as distasteful but necessary—an attitude epitomized in the parental slogan “it hurts me more than it does you.” The concept of violence as an “end” involves the notion of eager recourse
to violence for its own sake—epitomized in the mythical Irishman who says “What a
grand party! Let’s start a fight!” The distinction is illustrated by conceptions of two
kinds of policeman—the one who with great reluctance resorts to force in order to
make an arrest, and the “brutal” cop, who inflicts violence unnecessarily and
constantly for pure pleasure. It is obvious that “pure” cases of either means or end
violence are rare or non-existent; the “purest” means violence may involve some
personal gratification, and the “purest” end violence can be seen as instrumental to
other ends.

In the public mind, means-violence is unfortunate but sometimes necessary;
it is the spectacle of end-violence which stirs deep indignation. Much of the public
outrage over gang violence arises from the fact that it has been falsely represented,
with great success, as pure end-violence (“senseless;” “violence for its own sake”) when it is largely, in fact, means-violence.

What are the “ends” toward which gang violence is a means, and how is one
to evaluate the legitimacy of these ends? Most scholars of gangs agree that these
ends are predominantly ideological rather than material, and revolve on the
concepts of prestige and honor. Gang members fight to secure and defend their
honor as males; to secure and defend the reputation of their local area and the
honor of their women; to show that an affront to their pride and dignity demands
retaliation. The centrality of “honor” as a motive is evidenced by the fact that the
“detached worker” method of working with gangs has achieved its clearest successes
in preventing gang fights by the process technique of furnishing would-be
combatants with various means of avoiding direct conflict without sacrificing honor.
Combat between males is a major means for attaining these ends.

It happens that great nations engage in national wars for almost identical
reasons. It also happens, ironically, that during this period of national concern over
gang violence our nation is pursuing, in the international arena, very similar ends
by very similar means. At root, the solution to the problem of gang violence lies in
the discovery of a way of providing for men the means of attaining cherished
objectives—personal honor, prestige, defense against perceived threats to ones’ homeland—without resorting to violence. When men have found a solution to this problem, they will at the same time have solved the problem of violent crimes in city gangs.

Assault

In the old days the two hostile forces were called the (Northsiders) and the (Southsiders). In 1850 the Northsiders still survived as a legend..(but) on half-holidays the Common was likely to be the scene of a fight...a swarm from the (Southside) slums...led by a terror...with a club...was going to put an end to the (Westsiders) forever...their champion stopped to swear a few oaths, and then swept on to chase the flyers, leaving untouched the boys who had stood their ground. The moral was the Southsiders were not so black as they were painted;...but ten or twelve years afterward when these same boys were fighting and falling on all the battlefields of Virginia and Maryland...he wondered whether their education on the Common had taught them how to die....

Henry Adams, 1905

There’ll probably be a fight Monday at the Veterans’ Day parade. We have a fight every year with the Southside kids. There’s nothing anybody can do to stop it. One of the reasons we go is to show that we’re willing if they want to start it.

Junior Bandit

We walked into Phil’s store last night, and there’s this kid over there giving me a hard look. I didn’t like the way he looked at me, so I walked over and punched him.

Junior Outlaw
Why do fights start? Well, most of the guys don’t wanna stay home at night, so they go out and hang on the street. Well, they’ll be out there and someone will go and visit his girl. Then on the way home a gang of guys will jump him. Well, most naturally he comes and gets us, and we go back and help him, and there’s a fight right there. And when you put on a dance, kids come from all over the place and try to crash the dance, and of course a fight breaks out.

Junior Lancer

Perceptions of Gang Assault

Public opinion, the press, and many scholars regard violence and assault as the central activity of adolescent street corner groups. Midcity gangs engaged in assault, but it was far from the dominant form of gang behavior. Why is assault so commonly conceived as the primary activity of juvenile gangs? Most people remain unaware of gangs and their activities until those rare occasions when events occur which are sufficiently unusual as to merit special attention. Such events are generally of the kind which, in Durkheim’s terms, “shock the collective sentiments of the people.”\textsuperscript{377} The public most frequently becomes aroused and indignant when single individuals are attacked by gangs ostensibly without cause. A single killing in New York City in the summer of 1958 became a major focus of at least four subsequent books dealing with the gangs of New York.\textsuperscript{378} The Midcity Project itself was undertaken, in part, as a consequence of public indignation at the death of a rabbi—allegedly at the hands of gang boys. A decade after this event, the Midcity community again rose in anger at the strangulation of a sixteen year old girl from a respected family. This single incident had a profound effect. At a community-wide meeting held to protest this killing—the second of its kind in ten years and the first to involve a non-gang adolescent, a mother arose and exclaimed—“This senseless killing must stop! Our children are being murdered every day!”

\textsuperscript{377} Durkheim’s Division of Labor
\textsuperscript{378} Reference to Salisbury, Stearns, Riccio, Yablonsky.
It may be quite reasonable to claim that two murders in ten years of “respected” community members are too many (although several murders of low status people by other low status people in the intervening years aroused little public concern, since their “routine” nature lacked new value), but the question remains as to why certain kinds of events which are quite rare are perceived to be of common occurrence, and why events which comprise a small part of the life pattern of gangs are taken as dominant activities. This question was addressed in the chapter on theft in considering the relatively low degree of public concern with the most common form of youth crime; why, conversely, should assault have so high a capacity to arouse intense reactions?

The question of why theft and assault evoke different kinds of public responses may be approached by comparing the consequences—first for societies and then for individuals—of weak or absent sanctions against theft and against assault. It is quite possible, on the one hand, to conceive of a society in which punitive sanctions against the unrestricted transfer of material property were limited or undeveloped. A society which permitted the free and uncontrolled transfer of material goods would be one in which the concept of individual or corporate ownership, as we know it, would not be a basic feature of the social system—but such a society, while differing in important respects from our own, could well be viable. Some known societies, in fact, have successfully conducted their affairs—economic as well as other—according to a system wherein few material objects were subject to private ownership and, consequently, to theft.\(^{379}\)

The uncontrolled exercise of assault within a society would, in contrast, make impossible the orderly operation of societal processes. A sine qua non requirement of societal viability is a set of strict and systematic sanctions against the uncontrolled use of physical force by one member of a social group against another, or by one group against another. One can scarcely conceive of a society in which intra-societal violence were not subject to stringent controls. In those extreme

\(^{379}\)Reference to Theft Chapter.

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instances where violence occurs which cannot be controlled by the authorized agencies of the state—as in revolutions, insurrections, and civil wars—the conflicting groupings can no longer be considered as part of the same society, since a social unit without the power to regulate violence among its members lacks an essential property of a society. It is not surprising, then, that perceptions by the public that uncontrolled violence is occurring within their own city or community will arouse deep feelings of vital threat—feelings which derive from a basic concern for the survival or well-being of the society as a whole.

These feelings of social indignation and apprehension reflect, and are paralleled by, a sense of threat to personal safety. A city dweller reading of attacks by gangs on adolescents or adults feels—“This could happen to me—or to my child!” The ultimate consequences of theft may be coped with or accommodated in ways that the ultimate consequences of assault cannot. To the individual, the extreme consequence of theft is impoverishment; the extreme consequence of assault, death. Loss of money or material possessions may be accommodated in numerous ways; more money can be made or possessions obtained; indeed, theft insurance is used widely by those for whom the loss of property by theft is perceived as a damaging eventuality. While it is often impossible to replace particular possessions and their special meanings, restitution through insurance can approximate the full monetary value of stolen property, and restitution can occur with little delay.

In the case of assault, there is no equivalent restitution. Pain, injury, and death are not readily compensated. The loss of a limb or of eyesight may, under some circumstances, be compensated monetarily through legal action, but such compensation is at best a poor substitute. Medical insurance does not negate the impact of severe suffering nor does life insurance restore to the survivors the value of the victim of violence. To the individual, then, the possible consequences of actual or potential assault may be of the utmost severity, while the possibility of equivalent restitution remains low. The specter of uncontrolled assault, then, poses a formidable threat both to the solidarity of social units and to the safety of the
individuals that compose them. There is little wonder that the intensity of public response to the relatively small amount of intrasocietal violence which does occur is greatly disproportionate to its actual frequency. Even a little violence, from this point of view, is too much.\textsuperscript{380}

Against the public perception that gang violence, in the 1950's, was rampant in Midcity, what was the reality of assault and violence among Midcity gangs? During the period of Project contact, not a single killing was committed by any member of the seven intensive contact groups, or by any member of the 21 study groups. The most serious instance of assault involving project groups occurred among the Junior Bandits. In the course of a fight between four members of that group and an equal number of Junior Lancers, one of the Junior Bandits inflicted a head injury that kept the victim close to death for several days. One death which at first appeared to be a gang killing, and which indirectly involved members of a Project group, occurred shortly before the start of the intensive contact period. Several members of the Brigands, the older brother group of the Senior Bandits, attacked a peer who attempted to defend his sister against what he perceived to be an attempted sexual assault by the Brigands. In the course of the brawl the girl’s brother, a young man of 21, died. Investigation showed, first, that the girl, a recent divorcee, had explicitly solicited the sexual attentions of the Brigands, and second, that the brother had a serious heart condition. The coroner ruled that he had died of an anxiety-induced heart attack, and two Brigands were charged with involuntary manslaughter. A Junior Bandit claimed to have stabbed a boy in the neighborhood. One of the Kings allegedly tried to rape and then strangle a former girlfriend. Neither of these stories, however, was confirmed, and neither resulted in official action. Aside from these serious assaults, actual or claimed, assaultive behavior consisted primarily of beatings or the threat of violence. Although knives, clubs, and

\textsuperscript{380} Explanation in terms of public perception does not engage the issue of positive functions of violence in society, e.g., purpose implied by Henry Adams. Is discussed by several authors; will be touched on in later sections.
bats were used as weapons on several occasions, there is no evidence that any group member carried or used a gun.

Midcity gangs were not in continual conflict. There is a prevalent image of gang areas as neighborhoods of constant tension that may at any time erupt into full scale battle between groups of adolescents. The press reports the rendezvous of adolescent forces for combat in a city park at night, the terrorizing of a housing project by an invading gang, the clash of gangs on the street outside a dance at the neighborhood center. Such events did occur in Midcity, but they occurred rarely and in a form considerably at variance with prevalent public images. There were fairly frequent threats of gang wars among project groups, but only once did such threats eventuate in conflict that reached the proportions of a full scale battle. Two large groups fought one another for a period of forty minutes. Weapons included the conventional knives, clubs, and bats, and also a less conventional ice pick and meat cleaver. The lines of battle, however, were drawn according to race and neighborhood rather than gangs, and at the end of combat the injured consisted of one policeman and two bystanders. In the face of these wide discrepancies between public conceptions of gang assault as rampant, violent, and uncontrolled, and the realities of assaultive behavior by Midcity gangs in the 1950’s, it is essential that actual patterns of assaultive behavior in Midcity be examined systematically and in detail.

What is Assault?

The problem of defining assault engages many of the kinds of complexities encountered in the case of theft. One source of these complexities lies in the fact that the requirements of a definition which serves the purposes of behavioral analysis may be quite different from the requirements of a definition which is used to serve legal purposes. In the case of behavioral analysis a major question is—“How best can one sector within a complex field of behavior be delimited so as to make it most directly comparable with other forms of behavior?” For legal purposes
a major question is—“How can a form of behavior be defined so as to allow the least possible ambiguity in the application of a set of legal proscriptions, and provide the maximum possibility of successful legal action under the statute as defined?”

Assault, for the analytic purposes of the Midcity Project, was defined simply as the use of physical force to inflict personal injury or pain. In order, however, to achieve some comparability between this behavioral definition and the legal definitions which provided the basis of arrests for assault—as well as to specify more precisely the actual forms of behavior included under this definition—it will be necessary to specify five kinds of distinction. These involve 1) execution versus intention; 2) accidental versus deliberate action; 3) direct objective versus undesired by-product; 4) presence or absence of mutual consent; 5) physical versus mental pain.

Legally, the act of threatening force, even if no force is in fact applied, can form the basis of criminal prosecution, and may be defined as “assault.” Under this definition, one can be held liable for an action which does not occur. One reason for considering the threat of force as legally culpable relates to the fact that force which is threatened but not executed may serve to facilitate non-assault forms of crime such as theft (robbery, essentially, is theft accompanied by actual or threatened assault) or illegal sexual intercourse (rape, essentially, is intercourse accompanied by actual or threatened assault).

In analyzing Project data, the policy of considering every threat of assault as an actual assaultive action would have produced absurd results. One of the most common forms of verbal interchange in adolescent corner groups involves repeated threats and promises of the most violent and dire forms of physical injury. For example, during an argument between two Kings, who were the best of friends the next day, one boy angrily threatened to go home, get his two revolvers and shoot his antagonist and all his supporters in the head. The boy in fact owned no guns, and, needless to say, did not carry out his threat. To have counted every threat to “use physical force to inflict personal injury or pain” as an act of assault (“Man, I’m just
going to mash you into little bits!” “I'm gonna tear you apart!”), as actual acts of assault would have resulted in a highly distorted picture. In the analysis of assault incidents, only the direct application of physical force was counted as assault; in the analysis of court appeared assault, threatened assault was counted if it formed the basis of legal action.

The question of whether assault occurs by design or accident is a difficult one, since it necessitates some estimation of the subjective states of those involved. A mobster who runs down a rival mobster with his automobile commits assault under the present definition, but so does a lady shopper who runs down a child darting from between parked cars. In this instance, actions which are very similar in their external form reflect contrasting kinds of intent, and are considered differently under law. For present purposes, the terms “deliberate” and “accidental” will be used where it becomes necessary to distinguish types of intent. The “use of force to inflict physical pain,” as a definition of assault, would apply to acts such as the extraction of a tooth by a dentist or an emergency battlefield amputation. In these instances the inflicting of pain is an indirect and undesired consequence of action oriented to other objectives. Unless otherwise specified, the present definition will apply only to instances in which the inflicting of pain or injury was one specific purpose—although not necessarily the sole purpose—of engaging in assaultive behavior.

A fourth factor which may serve to differentiate acts of assault involves the matter of “mutual consent.” In general, the law considers the degree of culpability to be lower if two individuals or parties have agreed to fight. However, the fact of mutual consent does not negate the criminal actionability of important forms of assault. Gang fights may be, and most generally are, undertaken on the basis of highly explicit agreements by both parties; the same is true for dueling. Both these forms of assault, however, are unequivocally illegal in contemporary American society. For present purposes, behaviors will be considered assaultive independent

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381 Model Penal Code, p. 134.
of agreement, explicit or implied, between the antagonists. Some legal statutes provide for prosecution on assault charges if the threat of force is presumed to cause mental anguish or pain. As in the case of intent, the utility of this factor rests on the possibility of ascertaining the subjective states of those involved. Such determination was generally not feasible in analyzing project data, and for present purposes, the term assault will apply only in cases where the inflicted injury or pain was physical.

The Nature of Assault in Midcity Gangs

The analysis of data on assault in Midcity gangs relies on indexes of assault behaviors, assault incidents, and court appearances on a variety of assault charges. Analysis of actions and sentiments makes possible an assessment of feelings and activities regarding fighting. The population of incidents shows the nature of acts that might have resulted in legal action against the actors. The court appearances demonstrate the actual conduct of agents of social control in regard to juvenile assault.  

The Patterning of Assault-oriented Behavior

Assault behaviors are, in the present context, all recorded actions and sentiments oriented toward assault by members of Midcity gangs. These behaviors concerned support of or opposition to an individual, group, or societal level. Certain of these behaviors may be characterized as having been approved by the staff of the Midcity Project; others fall into a category of disapproved behaviors. Approved behaviors are those that the workers would prefer that group members follow. The Project sought to reduce the proportion of disapproved actions and sentiments. Chart 1.13 briefly indicates the forms of assaultive behavior relative to the evaluative position of the Project.

General definitional considerations: 3 major indexes define further as used.
Disapproved actions included not only actual instances of assault but also preparations for assault. Efforts to conceal an actual or planned fight were also treated as disapproved activity. Both admiration and derogation of another’s fighting ability were regarded as disapproved sentiments. An individual who voiced the feeling that fighting was inevitable and perhaps necessary was coded as expressing a disapproved sentiment. Likewise, a statement that suggested that fighting was a good way of solving or at least of coping with a problem was coded as disapproved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency Assault</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault-Oriented Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midget Outlaws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male | 747 | 6.3 | 82 | 0.69 | 22 | 0.19 |

Female | 74 | 1.4 | 5 | 0.01 | 0 | 0.0 |
### Chart 1.13

Forms of Assault Behavior

(Relative to Ideal Middle Class Standards)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Approved by the Project</th>
<th>Sentiments Approved by the Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding gang or individual fights</td>
<td>Disapproving of gang fights, pugnacity, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discouraging or breaking up participants in gang or individual fights</td>
<td>Supporting the settlement of disputes by means other than physical violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing to avoid fights</td>
<td>Opposing the use of or possession of weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in or agreeing to conciliation following a fight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing to or engaging in reconciliation of differences or disputes by means other than physical violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions Disapproved by the Project</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sentiments Disapproved by the Project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in, planning for, or urging gang or individual fights or assaults on individuals</td>
<td>Approving of or suggesting gang fights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying weapons</td>
<td>Admiring fighting ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwarranted or premeditated assault or excessively rough handling</td>
<td>Boasting of fighting ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealment or attempted concealment of a gang fight</td>
<td>Perception of the inevitability of fights of fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling drunks or mugging</td>
<td>Stated intention or engaging in a fight, harming self or others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of assault as a feasible method of coping with a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Derogation of another’s fighting ability or derogation as a coward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definition of the self as bound to become involved in fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceiving as impossible avoidance of personal involvement in fighting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the seven adolescent street-corner groups in the study, there were 1,510 recorded behaviors that were relevant to assault. In 821 of these behaviors, it was possible to make a judgment of the quality of the behaviors as approved or disapproved. This establishes a rate of 4.77 valenced assault-oriented behaviors per group per month. As in many behavioral areas, the sex of the groups was a major basis for differentiating the behaviors of the groups. The rate of valenced assault behaviors was 6.33 for the five male groups and 1.37 for the two female groups. The boys talked and did more in the way of fighting than did the girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts</th>
<th>Sentiments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapproved</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the male groups, age seemed to be the principal dimension by which to distinguish the assault behavior of the groups. The Junior Bandits and the Junior Outlaws had a higher monthly rate than did the Kings, the Senior Bandits, and the Senior Outlaws. The rate per month of assault-oriented behavior indicates that the Junior Bandits were the most fight-oriented of the seven groups. They were exceptional in having a rate of 28 assault behaviors per month—five times greater than that of the second ranking group. Compared with the rate of the Junior Bandits, the rates of the other six groups cluster closely around a mean of 3.49 behaviors per group per month.
Among the valenced behaviors oriented toward assault, there was an excess of sentiment relative to activities. There were 481 sentiments and 340 activities. There is little discrepancy between the percentage of disapproved activities and the percentage of disapproved sentiments. The percentage of actual behaviors oriented toward assault that were disapproved was 74.1 percent. The comparable percentage in regard to expressions of opinion regarding assault was 67.6 percent. This indicates a discrepancy of 6.5 percent in the direction of more disapproved activity than disapproved sentiment.
In six of the project groups, there was little discrepancy between the proportion of disapproved actions and the proportion of disapproved sentiments. The group showing the largest difference was the Molls with the smallest number of recorded behaviors in the area of assault; variation in this group could have been random. In five of the other six groups, the percentage of disapproved activities was somewhat greater than the percentage of disapproved sentiments. This suggests that, although gang members tended to have their feelings accord with their actual behavior in regard to assault, there was a slight tendency for their sentiments to opposed rather than support their activities.

When one distinguishes assault behaviors involving the conflict of one group against another from those involving combat between one individual and another, differences emerge. In regard to assault between individuals, the number of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Rate per Group per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males Only</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females Only</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
activities and the number of sentiments is approximately the same—181 for the one and 187 for the other. In group assault behavior, however, there is an overwhelming proportion of sentiments. The 124 activities and 239 sentiments in regard to group fighting suggest that there was a good deal of more talking about fighting than actual fighting in this area of behavior.

In the area of individual assault, disapproved actions were proportionately more prevalent than disapproved sentiments, while in the area of collective assault, disapproved sentiments were more prevalent than disapproved actions. There was a 9.6 percent discrepancy in the direction of more disapproved actions in regard to fighting between individuals, and a 9.3 percent discrepancy in the direction of more disapproved sentiments relevant to combat between groups. Although there was a considerable amount of pro-fight talk and although fights between individuals flourished, there was a tendency toward forbearance in actions related to gang fights. Members of these corner groups generally regarded combat between groups as a potentially dangerous enterprise. Despite a large proportion of behaviors ostensibly directed toward promoting collective conflict, there was a sizable effort away from actualizing such encounters.

One factor that may be related to the higher percentage of disapproved actions in regard to individual-oriented conflict is the tendency for objects of such assault to be within the group itself. Over half of the disapproved behaviors regarding individual-oriented assaults involved fights between members of the same corner group. Among the Senior and Junior Outlaws, three-fourths of the behaviors related to assault between individuals involved antagonists who were members of the same group. These fights tended to be scuffles or relatively minor engagements with few serious consequences. Since the risks of intra-group conflict were not as great as those of inter-group conflict, approved action and sentiments were not so necessary in order to keep fighting under control. One reason, then, for the relatively low level of disapproved assault could be that, since little real danger was involved in these minor fights and scuffles between fellow group members,
there was less need for expressing sentiments or engaging in acts which were
designed to inhibit involvement in this type of assaultive behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Disapproved</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Disapproved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molls (11)</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>Queens (24)</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits (41)</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>Senior Bandits (42)</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens (28)</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>Junior Outlaws (105)</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits (86)</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>Kings (82)</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings (66)</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>Junior Bandits (154)</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws (89)</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>Senior Outlaws (62)</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws (27)</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>Molls (11)</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrepancy Between Actions and Sentiments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sentiments Relative to Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>-54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>-9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>-6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>-6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>-2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>-6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>73.5 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>72.6 (124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>46.3 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>41.2 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>34.4 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>14.3 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>11.5 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>52.7 (368)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>55.1 (332)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>30.6 (36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 2.13

The Pattern of Assault-Oriented Behaviors

There were 821 behaviors for 7 groups, a rate of 4.77 per group per month

The percentage of sentiments disapproved is 67.6%

The rate for males is higher than the rate for females: 6.33 vs. 1.37

The discrepancy between sentiments and acts is 6.5% more acts than sentiments disapproved

The rate for the younger males is higher than that for the older males: Junior Bandits 28.00; Junior Outlaws 5.80; Kings 4.52; Senior Bandits 4.36; Senior Outlaws 3.29

The rate for low status groups was higher than that for higher status groups at similar age levels

Discrepancy is small in all groups but one and that has smallest number of behaviors

The Junior Bandits are extraordinarily high in their rate per month: 5 times greater than the second ranking group with the other 6 groups clustered

In six of the seven groups, proportions of acts disapproved exceeds proportion of disapproved sentiments

There are 340 activities and 481 sentiments—an excess of sentiments over acts

In individual-oriented assault behavior, there are 181 actions and 187 sentiments. Proportion of acts disapproved exceeds by 9.6% percentage of sentiments disapproved. Six of seven groups show this consistently

The percentage of activities disapproved is 74.1%

Discrepancies range more widely with the Junior Bandits and Queens much more actively than sentimentally oriented toward disapproved behavior

In group-oriented assault behavior, there are 124 actions and 239 sentiments (a lot of talk). Percentages of sentiments disapproved is 9.3% greater than percentage of acts disapproved; groups inconsistent
Comparison of Theft and Assault in Event Patterning

In regard to theft, there are more assault behaviors but fewer (arrestable) assault incidents. All of the assaults were in-group fighting. Is the difference due to a high talk over action ratio as suggested in Theft Chapter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentiments</th>
<th>Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For all groups the sentiment-activity discrepancy is 6.5% fewer disapproved sentiments than acts. The most interesting differences come in comparing individual-oriented vs. group-oriented assault behaviors. Disapproved acts exceed sentiments by 9.6% in individual fights. Disapproved sentiments exceed acts by 9.3% in gang fights.
The Patterning of Assault Incidents

In coding incidents of assault, it was desired to develop an index of assault that would be comparable with the classification of theft incidents utilized in the analysis of chapter eleven. The assault incident should represent an act that, if known and acted upon by the police, might result in a criminal conviction under any
of a number of assault categories. Not all violence is likely to result in arrest and conviction. A considerable amount of fighting occurs by mutual consent of the combatants, and this rarely results in court action. The scuffling of boys riding home from a football game is also unlikely to bring about an appearance in court. In this analysis, then, assault incidents are limited to those assault behaviors that could result in arrest and court conviction.

The Model Penal Code, of the American Law Institute, establishes a definition of assault that may form a baseline for the classification of assault incidents in the Midcity Project. According to this definitive code, simple assault occurs when one, with purpose, knowledge, or recklessness, causes or attempts to cause bodily injury (that is, physical pain, illness, or impairment of physical condition) to another, or when one negligently causes bodily injury to another with a weapon, or when one attempts by physical menace to put another in fear of serious bodily harm. This definition of assault may be regarded as basic. The definitional requirements of aggravated assault, manslaughter, and murder exceed the requirements of simple assault. The use or threat of violence in robbery and rape falls, too, within the scope of this definition.

There are 87 recorded incidents of assault for the seven groups, yielding a rate of .51 arrestable assaults per group per month. The difference between male and female groups is sharp. The rate for the five boys’ groups is .69 and it is .01 for the two girls’ groups. Among the male groups, age differences and social status differences hold. The rates for the Bandits are greater than the rate for the Kings, and the rate for the Kings is greater than the rates for the Outlaws. Between the age divisions of both the Bandits and the Outlaws, the higher monthly rate of assault incidents occurs in the Junior groups.

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384 The legal definition on p. 134 of the Model Penal Code reads: A person is guilty of assault if he: (a) attempts to cause or purposely, knowingly or recklessly causes bodily injury to another; or (b) negligently causes bodily injury to another with a deadly weapon; or (c) attempts by physical menace to put another in fear of imminent serious bodily harm.
The Junior Bandits were extremely high in their rate of assault as they were in their rate of assault behaviors. The rate of 3.00 assault incidents per month exceeds that of the second ranking group by three and one half times.

The ratio of assault behaviors to assault incidents is low for the Bandit groups and Kings, and high for the Senior and Junior Outlaws. A greater proportion of the assault behaviors of the Bandits consisted of acts for which an arrest could have been made. Similarly, the Kings had a low behavior-incident ratio. This suggests that the Bandits and the Kings were the more “serious” fighters. The high ratios for the two Outlaw groups indicate that they talked big and scuffled among themselves but did relatively little in the way of violating the law by assault.

In about half the assault incidents, a group member stood alone against an antagonist or several antagonists. This finding conflicts with a popular conception that gang members will fight only when they have numerical superiority or adequate support from others. Most collective assaults were against other adolescents or adolescent corner groups.

Individual assaults were about equally directed toward other adolescents and adults. One should remember that these figures refer to incidents of assault for which an arrest could have been made. They do not indicate the considerable amount of fighting that occurred within groups. The two assault incidents coded as having targets within the individual’s own corner group are those in which the individual used a knife to threaten his comrades. About one of every four persons (one of every three males) contacted during the project period was involved in at least one assault for which an arrest might have been made.
### Table 14.13

**Group Standings in Project-Disapproved (Individual Oriented) Assault Behavior**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Disapproved</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Disapproved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queens (16)</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>Senior Bandits (12)</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits (46)</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>Junior Outlaws (74)</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits (14)</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>Junior Bandits (34)</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws (13)</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>Queens (13)</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls (4)</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>Kings (30)</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws (50)</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>Senior Outlaws (21)</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings (38)</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Molls (3)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discrepancy Between Actions and Sentiments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sentiments Relative to Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>-75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>-24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>-22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>-15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>-9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15.13

Group Standings in Project-Disapproved (Group Oriented) Assault Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Disapproved</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percent Disapproved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molls (4)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>Queens (11)</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits (16)</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>Senior Bandits (24)</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings (25)</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>Kings (43)</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws (16)</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>Junior Bandits (98)</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens (7)</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>Junior Outlaws (34)</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits (45)</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>Senior Outlaws (34)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws (11)</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>Molls (6)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrepancy Between Actions and Sentiments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Sentiments Relative to Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>-50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 16.13

#### Ratio of Assault Behaviors to Assault Incidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Ratio of Assault Behaviors to Assault Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>5.2: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>6.8: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>9.3: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>13.4: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>22.3: 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 17.13

#### Collectivity of Assault

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Three or More</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent Collective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18.13

Collectivity and Targets of Assault Incidents
(All Groups)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Intra-Group</th>
<th>Other Adolescents</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group against group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group against individual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual against group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual against individual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fifteen assault incidents that could not be coded for target have been omitted from this table.

Table 19.13

Participation in Incidents of Assault During Contact Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Ass. Participants</th>
<th>Repeaters (More than 1)</th>
<th>Repeaters (4 or More)</th>
<th>Heavy Assaulters (4 or More)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Bandits</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Bandits</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr. Outlaws</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jr. Outlaws</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19.13 does not set an upper limit on the proportion of persons who would ever be involved in such incidents. Others could have committed such acts of assault either before or after the project period. Indeed, one might reason that the percentage of any group known to have participated in one or more incidents of assault will be contingent on the length of time during which the group was observed. It is interesting to note, then, that the group with the highest percentage participation in assault incidents was the group observed for the shortest period of time. The Junior Bandits prove again to be the most assaultive of groups.
Chart 4.13

The Summary of Patterning Assault Incidents

1. There were 87 instances of arrestable assault for 7 groups.

2. The rate is .51 per month per group.

3. The sex difference is sharp: .69 for males; .01 for females.

4. The age difference and social status differences in male groups hold: Junior Bandits, 3.00; Senior Bandits, .84; Kings, .67; Junior Outlaws, .43; Senior Outlaws, .15.

5. The Junior Bandits are again extraordinarily high—about 4 times the second ranking group.

6. The ratio of behaviors to incidents shows a tendency for lower status groups to be involved in a greater proportion of assault behaviors than are arrestable. Sr. Bandits 5-1, Kings 7-1, Jr. Bandits 9-1, Jr. Outlaws 13-1, Sr. Outlaws 22-1.

7. Half of the arrestable incidents are acts by two or more against an adversary.

8. Targets of collective assault tended to be other adolescents, of individual assaults, equally adults and adolescents.

9. About 1 of every 4 persons was known to be involved in an arrestable assault during the Project period.

10. The Junior Bandits, observed for the shortest time, had half their members involved in at least one arrestable assault.
The Patterning of Court-Recorded Assault

The population of court appearances on charges of assault is examined. All such appearances by the members of the seven Project groups and nine other male groups in the area were coded. The files of the state’s probation department provided official records of court convictions for each of more than 300 individuals. These records listed each appearance before any court in the state up to the time that the record was obtained from the department. Variation in the age of individuals at the time that records were obtained introduced variation in the upper age limit of the records. For fourteen male groups, information is available on the criminal record of each of 293 individuals up through the age of eighteen years. At the time that records were requested, one had not reached the age of twenty, and eleven had not reached the age of twenty-one. There were 248 who were at least twenty-one years old. Complete records are available, then, on all individuals through the age of eighteen years, and complete records are available on eighty-five percent of the study group through the age of twenty-one.

A court appearance represents a first appearance before a court of original jurisdiction on any one of several assault charges where there is an ultimate finding of guilt. The charges include assault, assault and battery, terroristic threats, and theft offenses with the threat of violence (robbery and larceny from person). Forcible rape might have been included as an assault offense, but no such case occurred in any of the records. Murder, manslaughter, and aggravated assault, too, would have been treated as assault offenses, but no instances of these crimes occurred in the records obtained by members of groups in the Midcity Project.
All 22 court appearances for assault were made by males. The rate was .13 per group per month. The Senior Bandits had the highest rate of court appearances on assault-related charges—showing a higher rate of actual court appearances despite a lower rate of potential court appearances. The higher rate of court appearances for assault may be associated with the greater involvement of the Senior Bandits in theft. Robbery and larceny from person were included as assault charges, since such acts of theft usually involve a direct confrontation of the victim and a threat of violence. It may also be that the Senior Bandits became more vulnerable to arrest and conviction for theft. There is the further possibility that police and court policies lead to a greater rate of arrest and conviction among older adolescents. The age distribution of arrest and court appearances has a mode for assault in late adolescence. It may be that younger adolescents engage in a larger proportion of arrestable assaults, but that they are arrested less frequently than are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Court Appearances per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Groups</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
less assaultive older adolescents. Assault behavior by individuals in their late teens may be treated as a greater threat to the adults of society. Law enforcement agents may treat assault committed at a later age more seriously. Young thieves are prosecuted despite their age, because a thief at any age can offend the adults who dominate society. It takes a big boy to injure an adult, and so only the fighting of big boys brings about police and court action.

Support for the view that police and court policies account for the greater rate of court appearances for assault by the Senior Bandits is provided by an examination of the ratio of assault incidents to court appearances in the five male project groups. It appears that, the older the group, the more likely it was that involvement in arrestable assault incidents would actually result in arrest and conviction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ratio of Assault Incidents to Court Appearances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>older</td>
<td>1.5: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>older</td>
<td>3.1: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>older</td>
<td>4.0: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>younger</td>
<td>13.0: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>younger</td>
<td>13.6: 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The finding that about one of every four arrestable assaults resulted in court action should not lead one to conclude hastily that assault is a highly arrestable offense. In the process of coding assault incidents, official court records supplied one-sixth of all known incidents, which could mean that for every five arrestable assaults known to the worker, there was one unknown to him that resulted in arrest and appearance before a court. Further, about two thirds of all court
appearances for assault were for acts of assault behavior; assault incidents may considerably underrepresent the actual frequency of fighting behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Incidents</th>
<th>Appearances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>N = 647</td>
<td>N = 184</td>
<td>N = 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>N = 821</td>
<td>N = 87</td>
<td>N = 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22.13
Ratios of Known Behaviors, Incidents, & Court Appearances

There is correspondence in the ratio of incidents to court appearances for both theft and assault offenses. One of every four known assault incidents for which an arrest might have been made resulted in a finding of guilt by a court. The comparable figure for theft was one court appearance for each five theft incidents. Theft and assault were equally likely to bring about police and court action. The ratios of behaviors to incidents and of behaviors to court appearances are greater for assault than for theft. Further, while the number of theft incidents and the number of court appearances are greater than comparable figures for assault, the number of assault-oriented behaviors is greater than that of theft behaviors. There are included among the assault-oriented behaviors a large number of fighting activities that are not arrestable. These tend to be fights between members of the same group.
Summary on the Nature of Assault in Midcity Gangs

The analysis of these data has revealed the following circumstances regarding assault among Midcity gangs:

- In terms of assault behaviors and assault incidents, the Junior Bandits were by far the most fight-oriented group in the Project.
- The Senior Bandits ranked first in the rate of court appearances on assault charges during the Project period. This may be due to the particular nature of this corner group, but it may also be due to a greater tendency for the police and court to take action against older rather than younger adolescents.
- Looking at all activities and sentiments regarding assault, one finds little discrepancy between activities and sentiments in regard to the proportion disapproved.
- In regard to fighting between individuals, the proportion of disapproved activities consistently exceeds the proportion of disapproved sentiments. This
may be related to the fact that over all groups one-half of the activities regarding individual assault concerned fights between members of the same group.

- In regard to gang fighting, the proportion of disapproved sentiments tended to exceed the proportion of disapproved activities. Gang members talked big when they talked about gang fights, but they took considerable precautions to avoid open conflict.

- About one-half the assault incidents for which an arrest could have been made involved one individual confronting another individual; the other half of the incidents were collective.

- Collective assault tended to be directed toward other adolescents, but incidents of assault involving single individuals were equally directed against adolescents and adults.

- During the project period, about one of every four group members was involved in some assault incident for which an arrest might have been made. Although they were under observation for the shortest period of time, the Junior Bandits ranked first in the percentage of members who participated in incidents of assault, with at least one-half their membership involved in at least one assault incident.

By a number of indexes, the Junior Bandits appear to have been the most fight-oriented group in the project. The 252 assault-oriented behaviors of this one group account for 31 percent of the assault behaviors in all seven groups. Similarly, its 27 assault incidents represent 31 percent of the total number of assault incidents in the seven groups. The monthly rate of 28.00 exceeds by almost five times that of the second ranking group and is far from the rate of 4.77 for all groups. In the same way, the rate of 3.00 incidents per month is three and a half times that of the second ranking group and six times the rate for all seven groups. Further, during the nine month period of observation one half of the Junior Bandits were involved in
at least one incident of assault for which an arrest might have been made. The group exceeded other groups in the number of assault-related activities and sentiments, particularly in regard to fights between groups. The Junior Bandits performed 36 percent of the acts and expressed 41 percent of the sentiments regarding gang assault by all seven groups.

*Forms of Assaultive Behavior*

Previous sections have examined assaultive behavior as discrete and countable events of orientation, incident-participation, or court appearance. Throughout this analysis there has been implicit but not systematized reference to sub-forms of assaultive behavior—individual assault, collective assault, intra-group and between group assault. The present section cites and discusses several forms of aggressive and assaultive behavior found among Midcity gangs in greater detail and with attention to their general context and significance. Four forms will be cited—the two antagonist fight, the two person verbal duel, the two-group fight, or “gang fight,” and collective athletic combat.

*Dyadic Combat- the Two Antagonist Fight*

In this basic form, two antagonists—generally male but not infrequently female among Negroes—confront each other, generally within a ring of spectators. One such fight proceeded as follows. The fight occurred between two boys, aged seventeen or eighteen years, outside a school in Midcity. The combatants entered an alley behind the school, making threatening gestures toward each other, followed by several younger boys anxious to view the conflict. Delay in starting a full fight brought statements of derision from the spectators. The imputation of cowardice by means of the epithet “chicken” was frequent during a period of fifteen minutes. The spectators goaded the combatants with such remarks as: “Are ya goin’ steady or are ya gonna fight?” “Stop stallin.’ It’s gonna be time to go in.” “John, ya wastin’ ya
damn time. Ya could be fightin’ ya time away.” The combatants responded with threats toward the spectators, and one argued: “If I was chicken, I run like hell.”

Status was involved in this fight. The individual’s reputation in the school depended on his performance in this conflict. The term “chicken” was used to indicate the low status that would be accorded these individuals unless they carried through their threatened fight. One of the combatants tried to argue that his presence alone displayed his courage. If he were “chicken,” he claimed, he would run. The fact that he was willing to place himself in a dangerous and threatening position should prove his manliness, no matter what the outcome. This did not satisfy the spectators. For them, the only valid test of courage was actual combat.

In their behavior, the combatants tried to avoid actual fighting. They stalled as best they could, apparently hoping to gain their ends without risking all in real combat. They threatened each other with talk and gestures. They showed annoyance at the arrival of spectators and threatened to fight any of them who should step forward. The approach to actual fighting showed acceptance of cultural definitions regarding the proper technique in fighting. The combatants “squared off” in classic boxing style. There was no indication that this would be a no-holds-barred-free-for-all. The fight would be fair.

Each boy showed a personal need to feel right and justice on his side. He wanted to have it clear that the other was the aggressor—that the other had struck the first blow. In an effort to halt delay on this account, a spectator set up a chip on the curb and suggested that kicking it off the curb should constitute a challenge to fight. One of the combatants agreed to do so on one condition. To the other combatant, he said: “If I knock it off, it means you hit me first.” Another form of two antagonist combat is verbal rather than physical. The verbal duel between individuals is variously known as “ranking,” “playing house,” and “doing the dozens.” This contest was an exchange of insults with victory given to the individual whose insults topped those of the other. Common subjects for such

385 See Milieu paper.
insults were the impotency of the individual, the alcoholism of his father, and the promiscuity of his mother.

The verbal duel is effective in establishing status without fighting. Sessions of ranking or playing house rarely resulted in physical combat. In the record, there is only one occasion when the two participants in one of these verbal duels came to blows. In that situation, it was the victor of the verbal duel who threw the first punch. There is, then, no recorded instance in which the loser tried to gain revenge or regain prestige by physically striking his adversary. The outcome of the verbal duel was accepted as a decision.

**Collective Combat - the Gang Fight**

A delineation of the “ideal” sequence of Midcity gang fights has been presented in another publication. Variation in pattern is wide, however, and circumstances often prevent the full development of the sequence. Nevertheless, the model serves to make clear the principal elements of gang fighting. One may discern four stages in the full sequence of the gang fight:

1. Group A offends group B by a trespass of territory, a violation of privileges, an affront to honor, a challenge to reputation, an insult to a girl, or a provocative act at a dance, party, or athletic event.
2. Members of group B assault members of group A.
3. Members of group A tell other members of group A about the actions of group B. Group A decides to retaliate. Plans are made and allies recruited.
4. Group B invades the territory of group A and a full scale fight occurs.

Variations may occur at any point beyond the first step in this sequence.

Given some act of provocation by members of group A, the members of group B may refrain from attack. Though attacked by group B, members of group A may

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386 See Milieu paper.
decide not to retaliate. Despite mobilization and invasion of enemy land, group A may find it impossible to find group B, satisfy its desire for revenge by attack on isolated individuals in the area, or flee at the appearance of the police.

In Midcity, cited stages generally occurred over an extended period of days, but there were instances when the events took place within a matter of hours. This generally happens in connection with some organized activity (for example, a dance, a game, a cruise). Individuals frequently attend such social functions with the expectation that “something will happen.” Sometimes it does. The provocation may be spontaneous: a hard tackle, a nasty name, a careless word. Mobilization is swift, battle is joined, and then there is rapid disengagement. Aggrieved parties may linger. Perhaps, provocation for later conflict has been given. Such fast action is rare; it is more common for these incidents to be sharply separated in time.

The accompanying tables (appendix) present the events in fifteen actual or threatened gang fights in terms of four stages: provocation; initial attack; mobilization; and retaliatory attack.

In only one of fifteen fight situations did full scale battle occur between two or more corner groups. In the other fourteen situations, one or both sides avoided open warfare. In one instance, the enemy could not be found, and the attack was diverted to boys who did not belong to the enemy group. In another, the invading group demonstrated its force, but finding no enemy, disbanded. In a third instance, a group chose to retaliate by means of a “japing” expedition, or sneak attacks by a small group. Here, the retaliating group waylaid a few of the enemy on the street and proceeded to beat up one of them. The other situations provide a variety of behaviors followed to avoid open conflict. The threatening enemy never came down in force in a couple of cases. In one instance, anger was diverted from the offending enemy group and directed to the younger division of the corner group responsible for getting the older division in trouble.387

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387 One must consider the possibility that Midcity project workers were a great influence in preventing full-scale gang fights. Evidence indicates that the workers did make efforts to prevent
With the reality of full-scale conflict rather rare, fantasy emerges as a matter of considerable importance in assault behavior. Much assault behavior is fantasy, and incidents of assault are efforts to realize fantasy. One source of such fantasy is the journalistic conception of adolescent assault presented in the mass media. Newspapers, radio, and television report incidents of gang violence as common manifestations of teenage culture. In portraying the reprehensible behavior of adolescent gangs, motion pictures and television give the impression that marauding activities of these groups are commonplace in the slums of our cities. In the records of the project groups, Midcity teen-agers appear as imitators of those adolescents they have seen on the screen or read described in the newspapers. They seem to try to fulfill the expectations that society has for them. They are supposed to be tough; they try to act tough. Sometimes, their imitation seems poor and ineffective.

One strange aspect of these fantasies is the image of the enemy as a powerful force and malevolent power. At times, the fantasy seems to be recognized as fantasy by the gang members themselves. Nevertheless, they derive satisfaction from this exercise of their imaginations. In driving his group into “enemy territory” in order to get some athletic equipment, the worker with the Junior Bandits realized that his boys were feigning fear of an attack and that they knew they were kidding each other. A Junior Bandit, who had recently been beaten up by a Junior Outlaw, said that he was afraid to get out of the car, and other members of the gang played along tense situations from breaking into open fighting. Workers were particularly active during periods of mobilization, moving through the groups and encouraging the more reasonable gang members to argue with their comrades against retaliation. The workers suggested that the “fair fight” be used to settle differences between groups. They tried to take group members on trips outside the neighborhood at times when a fight seemed imminent. Group members welcomed the pacifying efforts of the workers. They agreed with the worker on the dangers of warfare. They considered seriously the suggestion of a “fair fight.” They accepted the worker’s counsel to stay away from places where a recurrence of fighting might take place. One group member went so far as to hint indirectly that the worker call the police in order to stop the fight. There are certain events where one can say with some confidence that the worker’s influence was a factor in avoiding conflict. The worker with the Senior Outlaws encouraged his boys to let the police handle the problem of cars that had been damaged by another corner group. The worker with the Junior Bandits convinced his group that they should stay away from a public event where they might again encounter a gang with which they had fought earlier in the day.
with his anxiety. One suggested hiding the fearful one in the trunk of the car. Another asked what should be done in case there were a full-scale attack on them. The defeated and fearful group member reveled in the spotlight of attention within his group.

Gangs tend to overestimate the strength and the efficiency of the enemy. The Kings despaired their inability to amass an adequate defense force. Once, they were able to secure only eight individuals against an expected attack by a couple hundred. On another occasion, a King complained that no more than three Kings were to be found on an evening when 150 members of a rival gang invaded the neighborhood. One of the Junior Bandits opposes fighting a rival gang, arguing that it was not a gang but an army. During one evening of tension, the Junior Outlaws talked of the toughness of a neighborhood gang. The next day, a project staff member heard some members of the enemy gang discussing the toughness of the Junior Outlaws.

These fantasies of the power and efficiency of the enemy may aid boasting and bragging by assuring the group that its opponent is a worthy adversary. It is a comfort to know, when one has won, that victory was not easy. A respect for the enemy serves another function. It encourages avoidance of full-scale combat. The relatively lower proportion of disapproved actions regarding assault in the area of gang conflict may indicate this. Despite much fight talk, there are strong efforts to avoid a direct confrontation between two groups.

There is both fantasy and reality in ideas of alliances for gang warfare. Yablonsky maintains that the hundreds and thousands of allies claimed by the leaders of violent gangs were imaginary beings. The group could rarely amass much support from other gangs. In the Midcity project, gang alliances did exist, but the numbers recruited were not large. On one occasion, the Senior Bandits were able to enlist seven other corner groups. The Junior Bandits once called on three other gangs for aid. In order to avoid full-scale combat, the Midcity gangs

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388 See Yablonsky.
sometimes applied a lesson learned in Sunday school. Like the Hebrews and the Philistines, they let the issue of their war hang upon the outcome of a “fair fight” between David and Goliath. Each of the two conflicting forces selected a champion who would meet in one-to-one combat the champion of the other group. The two groups would then watch their champions resolve the issue between them.

Project workers suggested the idea, and gang members accepted it. The worker with the Queens was responsible for suggesting it to the Kings as a means of settling conflict. The provoking incident was one in which a King had shoved the brother of a member of the other corner group. The initial reaction of the Kings to the suggestion was the feeling that it was an old-fashioned idea that would not work if the other gang jumped one guy. They began to feel, however, that the nature of the provocation made this particular method of conflict resolution appropriate. The two groups gathered for the battle of their champions. Leaders had to exert considerable effort to keep bystanders from increasing the number of participants. The offender and the offended fought. The offender lost. Gang warfare was avoided.

The gang fight situation may be seen as a struggle between two or more groups to maximize power and prestige with a minimum of personal injury. There are rewards to be gained through a show of force, and, if one can achieve these rewards without a challenge to force or resort to the use of that force, all the better. The struggle for power and prestige is satisfying while one can sense that he controls the situation, but it is fearsome to let that struggle get out of hand. One might say that a full-scale gang fight occurs when both adversaries lose control of the situation—when each is unable to avoid combat without a tremendous loss of power and prestige.

In these respects, gang fight situation has close analogues to certain aspects of global politics. Nations vie with one another for power and prestige, each striving to gain its end without resort to force. They hope that the display of force will be sufficient. In politics, there seems to come a time when war is inevitable—when men lose control of the situation and the situation now fully controls them. There
can be no turning back; the cost of physical survival is annihilation of the non-physical identity. These same factors obtained in the case of Midcity gang fights—which, seen in this light, were hardly a “deviant” manifestation, but a reflection of perfectly regular processes observed even at the highest levels of social action.

**Team Athletics**

A second major form of competitive engagement, and one which played a dominant role in gang members’ lives was team athletics. Athletics can be conceptualized as one form of ritualized assault. The game has rules that fix the limits of conflict—confining combat to a particular time and a particular place for a specified duration with the amount of appropriate contact between combatants. Some approximate the strife to death by dueling or warfare. In boxing and football, the goal of winning may be achieved through the injury or incapacitation of the adversary. Direct physical contact is a necessary aspect of such sports. In other athletics, physical contact is incidental to the efforts of participants to win. Games like basketball and hockey do not emphasize physical force as the means of attaining the goal, but the pace of the game is so fast and the area so confined that a considerable amount of personal contact of inevitable. In sports like track and baseball, the physical exertion of individuals is a component of play but this rarely brings individuals into hard physical contact. If such occurs, it is likely to be declared a violation of rules. Finally, one comes to activities that seem to lose almost all aspects of physical effort and become almost wholly intellectual exercises—card games and board games. One must finally recognize the role of spectator in any of these forms of athletics. Through identification with a combatant, an individual becomes a participant.

Athletics formed an important part in the life of Midcity corner groups. The boys followed a yearly cycle of baseball, football, and basketball. The status of the gang often depended on the outcome of these ritual wars. Uncontrolled assault seemed an ever-present threat at these athletic contests. Imminent loss, rough play
by the adversary, or poor supervision by the officials increased the desire to break loose from the constraints of the game. Scuffles occurred on the playing field. Fights sometimes took place outside the locker rooms. Occasionally, a brawl broke out. One such melee began when a Junior Bandit was tackled while returning an opening kickoff in a football game. At another football game with the Junior Bandits, a fight started between the two teams, and spectators rushed on the field swinging helmets and sticks. Such events sometimes resulted in a suspension of play. This happened at least once with the Junior Bandits and at least once with the Kings.

**The Motivation of Assault: Incentives and Inhibitives**

The incentives for fighting may be organized under five basic categories: status conferral, access to resources, social control, correcting an inequality, and pleasure.

**Status Conferral**

Status is important for both the individual and the gang. The prestige of a gang, however, probably has meaning in its enhancement of individual prestige, through the identification of the individual with his gang. There is a need for the individual to establish his status within the gang, the gang’s status in the social order, and his status in society. Individual fighting within the gang helps to establish status within the gang. Gang fights determine the gang’s status with other gangs. Individual assaults aid in fixing a person’s status in society in general.

The status-conferring aspects of assault can be achieved by forms of assault that lack violent aspects. Assault has been ritualized—bound with constraints that define appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in this context. One may seek to enhance or maintain personal or group status through (a) willingness, courage and daring in fighting, (b) skill in fighting, and (c) leadership in fighting. It is also necessary to maintain one’s status against attacks that may take the form of
incursions on one’s territory (turf) or affronts to one’s reputation (rep). For street corner groups, the territory may include the store on the hanging corner, a recreational area, a favored restaurant, or several streets in the neighborhood. Trespass on such territory may be treated as an affront to reputation. Verbal denigration may also be interpreted as an attack on reputation: accusations of personal cowardice, maternal promiscuity, and paternal alcoholism. An unavenged attack on a fellow group member may also result in a loss of reputation and thereby of a status.

Access to Resources

It is sometimes necessary to fight for one’s desires and also for one’s rights. The violence of robbery is a means to gaining money. A group may find it necessary to fight for rights to a recreational area.

Social Control

Fighting may serve as a means of control within groups; we don’t wanna fight, but we gotta.

There is throughout American culture an interest in assault behavior. Literature and entertainment rely heavily on conflict as a theme. Certain sports such as boxing and football emphasize the actual contact of individual with individual. Other forms of athletics, such as direct physical, contort but retain the effort of one party to best another. In tales of adventure and crime, the chase and the fight are essential components. In fantasy and in reality, there is a preoccupation with the danger and combat of war. Conflict is made acceptable in society by surrounding it with rules or relegating it to the realm of imagination. It should not be surprising that individuals at times break the bonds and experience the full reality of it.
The extreme consequences of violence occur when the limits of culture are exceeded. Street fighting of any form may be regarded as a violation of dominant cultural norms, but the culture of that stratum of society may accept fighting as appropriate behavior when it is conducted according to certain prescribed conditions. For combat between two individuals and for combat between gangs, there is a system of expectations regarding the fair way of fighting. The free-for-alls are very rare, and even in a free-for-all there is likely to be a limitation on the nature of blows that may be struck. When, however, one combatant acts in a way which is culturally defined as unfair, the limits are broken and there is nothing to restrain the other. Under such circumstances, an impulse act of violence may bring consequences unintended by either party at the outset. The group may punish a group member for a disapproved action by delegating one or more of its members to beat up the offender. A person punished in this way is generally described as “getting his ass whipped.” An unruly member at a club meeting may be physically suppressed or ejected. One group, hostile to its worker, beat up a member who accepted a favor form the worker. A group may condone assault by a third party to end a fight between two others. Between groups, fighting is sometimes a defensive measure to demonstrate that a group is free and not easy prey.

**Correcting an Inequality**

Fighting under these circumstances is generally seen as an act of retaliation done in anger. Such an action is sometimes condoned as justifiable. One may retaliate against an injury: the assault by another or rough play in athletics. One may also retaliate against a loss: destruction of theft of property; imminent defeat in an athletic contest. Fighting may also be perceived as an alternative means of resolving an unfair situation—e.g., a fight between two teams when the referees are officiating poorly or unfairly.
Pleasure

The act of fighting and recollections of fighting may be inherently pleasant. One may do it because it feels good and because the memory of it afterward gives further pleasure. Tales of fighting told to another can be a source of enjoyment. Inhibitive forces against fighting may be put into three basic categories: fear of pain, injury and death, risk of no gain, and risk of loss.

Fear of Pain, Injury, and Death

The threat of physical discomfort, incapacitation, and annihilation is a powerful inhibitive force against fighting. Self-preservation requires not only defense when conflict in unavoidable but escape when it is avoidable. Gang members in the Midcity project seem to avoid the issue entirely. The fear of pain, injury, or death was not explicitly stated as a reason for not fighting.

Risk of no Gain

Against the incentives for fighting, one must consider the chances that the gain or profit promised by that incentive will not be achieved. A stalemate may be inevitable. Status that should come with victory may not be forthcoming because no notice will be taken of the accomplishment. Resources that might be gained by a little force may be lost by too much force. For example, a group seeking access to a recreational area may win its rights by limited fighting but run the risk of continued warfare and denied access if the fighting gets out of hand.

Risk of Loss

In a fight to gain status or resources, one may lose what one already possesses. He who seeks to enhance status may run the risk of losing what status he has. Loss may also occur outside the area in which one hopes to gain. A loss of status may come through definition of the individual not as a brave victor but as a
bully. A gang may lose a good reputation that it has developed with adults in the neighborhood. This may lead to withdrawal of neighborhood support for teams and activities. Fighting may bring action by police, probation, and parole officials. A group may censure a member who engages in a fight of which it disapproves.

Among many basic methods of status differentiation is power over the physical survival of another. In the extreme, superiority may be demonstrated by annihilation of the inferior. In less extreme cases, it is shown through an injury or incapacitation of the other that results in mutual recognition of one’s power to destroy. This mode of status differentiation operates among both humans and other animals. It is known that animals fight to the death, but it is less commonly known that they sometimes fight to the point of surrender. The wolf that is defeated in combat with another wolf will bare its throat to the teeth of the victor, symbolically acknowledging its helplessness. The victor does not necessarily take advantage of the situation to kill, but accepts the act of surrender. In human combat, the defeated may yield or cry “Uncle.” The subjugated pass under the yoke is a token of their reliance on the mercy of the more powerful for continued existence.

Man’s intellect has devised new bases for status differentiation. Brains usually dominate over brawn—at least so long as brawn does not rise up in rebellion. The leadership of men is primarily an intellectual exercise. The leader need not be the strongest. In order to protect the physically weaker but intellectually stronger leader, society develops norms to keep his person physically inviolate. Assassination is a poor means for the transfer of total power. The social order suffered from instability brought about by the slaying of the Caesars of Rome, the Czars of Russia, the Kings of England. Regicide must be treated as the most heinous of treasons. Even in military life, where physical combat is a primary activity, the code sharply restricts the use of physical force by a soldier against an officer in the same army.

389 See Lorenz.
At those levels of society where non-physical, intellectual modes of status differentiation have developed, values against the use of physical force have developed. Combat is acceptable only as sport or as entertainment. The strata of society, then, have considerable restraints against fighting. In lower class culture, there is less reliance on non-physical, intellectual modes of status differentiation. Consequently, there has been less need to develop as extensive values or norms restricting the use of physical force. Limitations have been established, but they are not as elaborate as those at higher strata of society.

Adolescent combat in the lower class, then, may not be viewed as a breakdown of cultural values, but rather as one consequence of a less extensive (because less necessary) development of cultural values restricting the use of physical force. Fighting remains at this level of society an appropriate mode of status differentiation. There do exist values and norms defining as appropriate situations and techniques of combat. There is a ritual of combat that makes possible status differentiation without widespread slaughter. The conferral of status can usually be achieved without carrying the ritual sequence to its conclusion.
# Appendix

## GANG FIGHTS IN WHICH THE FULL SEQUENCE OCCURRED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provocation</th>
<th>Initial Attack</th>
<th>Mobilization</th>
<th>Retaliatory Attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Whites in a housing project resent an invitation to Negroes to attend a dance at the neighborhood center</td>
<td>Whites throw stones at Negroes as they leave the dance.</td>
<td>The Kings converge on the housing project and begin to fight. Police arrive and break up fighting after forty minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some Kings attend a party in the area the Outlaws.</td>
<td>Outlaws attack the Kings as they leave the area after the party.</td>
<td>Two days later, the Kings assemble with two allied groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Several Negro boys enter the store on the hanging corner of the Junior Bandits</td>
<td>Three Junior Bandits throw the Negro boys out of the store, breaking the hand of one of them.</td>
<td>Unknown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A Negro corner group is denied access to a neighborhood center on an evening when the Junior Bandits are admitted to hold a special football team meeting.</td>
<td>The Negro group attacks two Junior Bandits sitting on a bench in Junior Bandit territory.</td>
<td>Within the hour, the Junior Bandits gather together, collect weapons, recruit allies, and find a leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## GANG FIGHTS IN WHICH THE SEQUENCE DOES NOT GO BEYOND MOBILIZATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provocation</th>
<th>Initial Attack</th>
<th>Mobilization</th>
<th>Retaliatory Attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A Senior Outlaw enters a pizzeria occupied by members of another corner group and their girls. When he acts drunk, loud, and offensive, the other corner group asks him to quiet down. He challenges them to a fight, and fights with them in an alley.</td>
<td>Members of the other corner group enter the Outlaw area and beat up a Senior Outlaw. They order another Senior Outlaw out of his car and then damaged it. The next day, they break the windows of another Senior Outlaw car.</td>
<td>Four or five cars of Senior Outlaws gather one evening to fight the other group, but disband. The next night, they amass forty to fifty cars of combatants, but again decide not to invade the other group's territory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>At a dance sponsored by the Kings, a King watching the door pushes a boy who tries to crash the dance. The boy pushed is the younger brother of a member of a rival corner group.</td>
<td>Two days later, 100 members of the other corner group roam through the area of the Kings in search of Kings to attack, but they find none.</td>
<td>The Kings mobilize for defense on a corner in their area. They avoid conflict, however, by arranging a fight between the offending King and the offended brother.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GANG FIGHTS IN WHICH THE SEQUENCE DOES NOT GO BEYOND THE INITIAL ATTACK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provocation</th>
<th>Initial Attack</th>
<th>Mobilization</th>
<th>Retaliatory Attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Two Kings tease some girls, taking money from their wallets. The girls ask their boyfriends for help.</td>
<td>The boyfriends of the offended girls beat up the two offending Kings.</td>
<td>The Kings talk of retaliation but decide against any further action.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Three Junior Outlaws enter a store occupied by another corner group. One Outlaw punches a boy, because he does not like the way the boy is looking at him. A week later, the other corner group damages the car of a Senior Outlaw while it is parked in their area. They attack another Senior Outlaw on a bus.</td>
<td>The other corner group attacks immediately when they see the jackets of the Junior Bandits. The police arrest several members of both groups.</td>
<td>The Senior Outlaws express anger at the Junior Outlaws for getting them in trouble with another corner group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 The Junior Bandits go into the area of another corner group to see an annual holiday parade.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Junior Bandits avoid a public event taking place that evening, at which the other corner group is expected to be present, thereby avoiding further conflicts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 After a dance, several Kings enter a pizzeria occupied by members of another corner group. An argument starts.</td>
<td>A fight occurs between the Kings and the other corner group in a pizzeria.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 At a dance, a Senior Bandit gets into an argument with a boy from another corner group.</td>
<td>A brawl breaks out at the dance. One Senior Bandit has his hand broken, another has his head split with a bottle, a third is trampled badly when thrown bodily into a mass of onrushing Bandits.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Members of another corner group crash a private party held by the Senior Bandits.</td>
<td>Two fights occur on the dance floor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GANG FIGHTS THAT ARE VARIANTS OF THE USUAL SEQUENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provocation</th>
<th>Initial Attack</th>
<th>Mobilization</th>
<th>Retaliatory Attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 In a Junior Outlaw baseball game, a member of the other team gets angry at a call of interference. He directs his anger at the Outlaw catcher. Fight occurs.</td>
<td>Several days later, the offended member of the other team leads some other Negroes in an attack on the home of an Outlaw family. Family members fight off the attackers.</td>
<td>The Senior Bandits mobilize defensively in their own territory to fight back an expected attack. In the evening, boys and police roam through the area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Members of another corner group enter the area of the Senior Bandits and declare that they will return in the evening for a fight.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 At a track meet, a member of an older brother group of the Kings challenges two Kings to a fight and threatens to call down all his group against the Kings.</td>
<td>The Kings move together and carry sticks as they leave a basketball game the following evening.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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