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
data. A summary section will combine field and demographic data in comparing the picture emerging from this examination with classic images of the urban lower class community.

**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; 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

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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. 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.  

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,  

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>Portcityb</th>
<th>Percent in Midcity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Psus</td>
<td>No Psus</td>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
<td>Percent of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (0-9)</td>
<td>19,444</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>105,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents (10-19)</td>
<td>14,972</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>87,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Adults (20-44)</td>
<td>34,368</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>234,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adults (45-65)</td>
<td>20,022</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>151,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged (65+)</td>
<td>10,121</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>71,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ages</td>
<td>98,927</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>650,393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Class</th>
<th>Midcity</th>
<th>Port City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>males per</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100 females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (0-9)</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents (10-19)</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults (20-44)</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adults (45-65)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged (65+ over)</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ages</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>86</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,

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\(^8\) 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

Negroes and Foreign Born
Midcity and Port City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Category</th>
<th>Midcity Number</th>
<th>Percent of Midcity Population</th>
<th>Port City Number</th>
<th>Percent of Port City Population</th>
<th>Percent Ethnic Category in Midcity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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.

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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”.

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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\(^\text{11}\), 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

\(^{11}\) 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\(^12\) 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.

\(^12\) Reference to “Suburban Delinquency” study
Table 4.1

<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></td>
<td>Percent at this level</td>
<td>Cumulative Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar school not completed</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar school only (8 years)</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school not completed (1-3 years)</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school completed (4 years)</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College not completed (1-3 years)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>95.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College completed; and/or more</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median School Years</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All figures based on 1950-1960 averages

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

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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
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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manual</strong></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><strong>White Collar</strong></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>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>20,776^a</th>
<th>155,656^a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

^a 1950-’60 Average
^b Fuller descriptions in text

clerks). 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%.
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

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>Median</th>
<th>Cumulative Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 1000</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>Midcity $2,476</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 - 1999</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>$4,112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 - 2999</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>Port City $2,643</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 - 3999</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>$5,747</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4000 - 4999</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 - 5999</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6000 - 6999</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7000 - 7999</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8000 and over</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Medians: Midcity $2,476
Port City $2,643

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
Not to be used in published references without permission W. Miller June 1966
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
disrespectable, 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

17 Relevant works by these authors include: Warner, W. Lloyd and Lunt, Paul S. The Status System
of a Modern Community Yale University Press, 1942; ______, Meeker, Marchia and Eells, Kenneth
Social Class in America Science Research Associates, Chicago, 1949. Hollingshead, August B.
Elmtown’s Youth John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1947; _______ “Class Differences in Family
Kahl, Joseph A. The American Class Structure Rinehart and Company, New York, 1957. Miller,
No. 1, Summer 1961, pp 86-87; __________ “The American Lower Class: A Typological Approach”
Social Research Vol. 1, Summer 1964; __________ “The Outlook of Working Class Youth: in Blue-
Collar World; Studies of the American Worker A. Shostak and W. Gomberg, Eds., Prentice Hall,
1962.
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. 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.\textsuperscript{20} 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.\textsuperscript{21}

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,

\textsuperscript{20} Two indexes generally show good concordance; ref. to Jaffe study, reported in NY Times, 1965 or 5.
\textsuperscript{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

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
Size, Education, Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>Number Persons</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
<th>Adults 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
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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 8.1

<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
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)24--
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.25 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

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 than 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 with 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

<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? 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

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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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class II</td>
<td>14,524</td>
<td>29.1</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>

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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%.

29 The recognition of this fact is considerably wider than in even the recent past. See Miller, W. “Implications..., 1959, op. cit., page 230.
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.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.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.

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, 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.
31 See, for example, U.S. Department of Labor, 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
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

<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
21 Midcity census tracts *significant at .05 level

1960 figures only; others, 1950-60 averages

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

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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”

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>
<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

Table 12.1

Income and Social Status

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

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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>

| a Persons reporting self as not employed as of date of Census. |
| b Of male civilian labor force |

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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 14.1 Renting, Room Occupancy and Rent by Social Status

<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>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>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Level</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N units</td>
<td>28,378</td>
<td>25,606</td>
<td>20,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>25,606</td>
<td>456</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ a \] 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 Gangs, Chapter I
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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.” 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.

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 lie?--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. 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

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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

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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 life. See “Implications of Lower Class Culture..” op. cit., pp. 223-224, discussion of Discrimination” position, Chapter 2.

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.
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-istices... 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.

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.